



UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Nationalism, Sexual Contract, and Anti-Colonial
Struggle: A Critical Reading of Frantz Fanon's *The
Wretched of the Earth* and Tsitsi Dangarembga's
Nervous Conditions.

By

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A Dissertation Submitted in Fulfilment of the Academic Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Social Science (Political Science)
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Pietermaritzburg, South Africa

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June 2024

Supervisor's Authorisation

As the candidate's supervisor, I have approved this Dissertation for submission:

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Declaration

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this to Zama David Mdletshe. My cousin, brother and best friend who passed away during this study. You are loved and missed dearly, see you in glory cuz.

I would also like to dedicate this to my nephews Melusi and Lungelo Madlala.

All things are possible to those who believe.

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the following people and parties who contributed to the success of this research:

- To my Supervisor, Professor Khondlo Mtshali, from the School of Social Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). Thank you for your patience, guidance, and support throughout my studies. You wore many hats during this process, supervisor, counsellor, and friend. I am so grateful.
- To my mother Khanyisile Mdletshe, my sister Thobeka Khumalo and my brother Nkanyiso Madlala for the advice, pep talks, prayers, and affirmation. I would not have made it without your constant support. To the rest of my family, *ngiyabonga kakhulu*.
- To my friends who checked up on me, asked me about the progress of my work and said a prayer for me. Thank you very much guys God bless you.
- MCC, ROGGC and Pst. B. Kumwenda and the morning devotion team, thank you so much.
- Thank you Mr D. Mukansi and Mr L. Bahige who made specific contributions towards the completion of this work.

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory forever and ever amen.

Abstract

Gender-based violence and gender inequalities are among growing global issues. International organizations such as the United Nations have informally labelled gender-based violence a pandemic. In light of the persistence of abuses against women in post-colonial Africa, this qualitative study uses Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* and Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and *A Dying Colonialism* as primary sources to excavate the implicit racial-patriarchal habitus that shaped the anti-colonial movement and the birth of the post-colonial state. This study begins by engaging in a critical discussion of the patriarchy concept, exploring various scholars' views regarding the concept. Centrally, there is an exploration of the complex interplay of race and gender by Pateman and Mills in *Contract and Domination*. The study further interrogates the implicit racia-patriarchal contract that is present under colonialism in *Nervous Conditions* and the anti-colonial movement in *The Wretched of the Earth* and *A Dying Colonialism*. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks which guide this study include nationalism, Pateman's sexual contract, Charles Mills' implicit contract and the racia-patriarchal habitus. The data is analysed using critical discourse analysis which allows for the interrogation of the implicit contract that legitimises patriarchy in the colonized society and the anti-colonial nationalist movement. Critical discourse analysis also enables one to investigate the tools used in attempts to oppress a group of people in society. This study argues that the pre-existing patriarchal attitudes, norms, and values are not acknowledged and addressed in the nationalist agenda. These then become the patriarchal foundations of both the anti-colonial nationalist movement and the post-colonial state. In addressing gender-based violence and gender inequalities, it is therefore important to address the racia-patriarchal habitus.

Keywords: Dangarembga, Fanon, Nationalism, Patriarchy, Racia-sexual contract, Sexual contract

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Background

1.1 Background and Outline of Research Problem

The United Nations and some national governments, such as the South African government, have informally referred to gender-based violence as a pandemic. In 2019 the World Economic Forum reported that “nearly 3,000 women were killed in South Africa between 2017 and 2018, as recorded by the South African Police Service” (Enaifoghe et al. 2021, 126). The National Library of Medicine points to “unequal power between genders” as a source of this pandemic. However, the source of this unequal power is itself contested. Liberals point to formal rights, Marxists look in the direction of the economy, and de-colonial scholars interrogate the history of this unequal power. This thesis attempts to address the broader question of the source of unequal gender power through the reading and analysis of Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions* and Frantz Fanon’s writings.

There is a lot of scholarship that links gender inequalities to Africa’s colonial past. Scholars such as Enaifoghe, Amadiume, and Sutton have discussed how colonialism brought about gender inequalities in Africa. Amadiume (1987) and Sutton (1995) detail how women of the Igbo and Yoruba cultural groups enjoyed access to power, leadership roles and resources through kinship titles in the pre-colonial era. They also highlight how colonialism uprooted this system and created a new one where men had access to education, land and opportunities. Akyeampong and Fofack (2014, 30) argue that the gender inequality present in Africa is a result of colonialism. They assert that “patriarchal alliances struck between various colonial administrations and African chiefs and elders resulted in the systematization and codification of patriarchy across African societies” (Akyeampong and Fofack 2014, 44). Enaifoghe et al. (2021) like Amadiume (1987), Akyeampong and Fofack (2015) discuss how colonialism fostered gender inequalities in Africa and consequently gender-based violence. Enaifoghe et al. (2021) state that, “gender-based violence is deeply rooted in gender inequality” (Enaifoghe 2021, 121). There is an acknowledgement by these scholars that, in the African context gender inequalities are a legacy of colonisation. However, pertinent questions are: Why was the anti-colonial movement unable to deal with this injustice? Why do gender inequality and gender-based violence persist in the post-colonial state?

Nationalist anti-colonial struggles were fought under the banner of achieving unity and a common goal. In European political tradition, Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality* suggested that the creation of a state that was to represent everybody's interest was a farce perpetrated by property owners to fool the property-less. In *Sexual Contract*, Carol Pateman suggested that the social contract that was the rallying cry of the European political philosophy was anchored on patriarchy. In his *Racial Contract*, Charles Mills initially dealt with the racial roots of the modern states and international organisations. In conversation with Pateman, Mills further expanded the racial contract into a racia-patriarchal contract. Pateman and Mills (2007) in their joint work, *Contract and Domination* discuss the complex interplay of the sexual and racial contracts, and how these create a context where some are subject to both the racial and sexual contracts. Through the reading of *Nervous Conditions*, this study interrogates the emergence of a racia-patriarchal contract and racia-patriarchal habitus in colonial Africa. By engaging Fanon's writings, this study interrogates the persistence of racia-patriarchy and racia-patriarchal habitus in Africa's anti-colonial movement and consequently in post-colonial Africa. *The Wretched of the Earth* is relevant in this study as Fanon's insights on colonization and the anti-colonial movement will enable the critical discussion of nationalism. The *Wretched of the Earth* does not give one much insight into the participation of women in the anti-colonial nationalist struggle, and this is the gap that *A Dying Colonialism* will speak to.

Furthermore, nationalist anticolonial movements suggest that the nation has a common goal and that all participants are united in pursuit of liberation and equality. However, the persistence of gender inequality and patriarchy in post-colonial societies calls for the investigation of the connection between the sexual contract and the anticolonial nationalist movement. This study uses Pateman's conceptualisation of patriarchy which acknowledges that "The original pact is a sexual as well as a social contract: it is sexual in the sense of patriarchal – that is, the contract establishes men's political right over women - and also sexual in the sense of establishing orderly access by men to women's bodies" (Pateman 1988, 2). This legitimises men's access to women's bodies and ensures their continued subjection to men.

Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* discusses the dialectical processes and relations of colonialism and the anti-colonial movement or the nationalist movement. Fanon (1963) details the oppressive colonial environment and its effect on the colonized people. Thus, the act of decolonization is an

act by the colonized group to regain their identity and autonomy. While in *The Wretched of the Earth*, women are mostly silent and invisible, in *A Dying Colonialism* women are active in the anti-colonial struggle. Since *A Dying Colonialism* shows women as active, the question is: what happened in the anti-colonial struggle that resulted in women's disempowerment in the post-colonial state?

This project, using Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, will interrogate how the gendered nature of the anti-colonial struggle fosters racial patriarchy and gender inequality in the postcolonial state. The study will also use Carole Pateman's *Sexual Contract* and Mills' *The Racial Contract* to excavate the implicit contract and epistemologies of ignorance that lead to the formation and sustenance of a patriarchal habitus within the colonized society and anti-colonial nationalist movements.

1.2 Research Problems and Objectives: Broader Issues to Be Investigated

This study explores the continuity of gender-based violence from a colonial to a post-colonial arrangement. The aim is to further investigate the extent to which the racia-patriarchal contract guided Africa's anti-colonial movement. The study also teases out the involvement of Africa's anti-colonial nationalism in the racia-patriarchal arrangement. This study is an inter-textual reading of Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* with Fanon's writings, especially *The Wretched of the Earth*. As the reader will hopefully notice, Fanon's *A Dying Colonialism* makes visible Fanon's position on gender which is at times not explicit, especially in the first two chapters of *The Wretched of the Earth*. In the context of this study, Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* illustrates the racia-patriarchal habitus that shaped women's participation in nationalist movements. Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* sketches out the race and gender power dynamics that birthed the post-colonial state. Through an inter-textual reading of Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* and Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and *A Dying Colonialism*, this study interrogates the lived experiences of sexual racial contract in a colonial African context. Finally, this study will explore how the sexual contract manifests in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* and Fanon's two works.

This study aims to answer these questions:

- What is the sexual contract and how does it relate to the racial contract?
- What is the relationship between African anti-colonial nationalism and the racia-sexual contract?
- What is the position of gender in Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, especially in "On Violence"?
- How does the racia-sexual contract manifest in *Nervous Conditions* and Fanon's works?

1.3 Research Methodology and Approaches:

This is a qualitative research study that is guided by an interpretive paradigm. An interpretive paradigm has assumptions concerning knowledge which are particularly useful to this study. Ontologically, the interpretive paradigm states that reality is socially constructed and context-dependent (Chilisa and Kawulich 2012, 10). Epistemologically, an interpretive paradigm holds that the production of knowledge is therefore not the sole product of a researcher but an outcome of the interaction between researcher and the community. The study is an attempt to understand the persistence of gender-based violence and gender inequalities in Africa's post-colonial environment. The primary data sources for this research are Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and *A Dying Colonialism*, and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. Written in the late 1950s, *A Dying Colonialism*, whose original French title is *L'an V de la Revolution Algerienne*, was a response to France's "heightened propaganda against Algeria and hyper rationalizations of French colonialism" (Gordon 2015, 95). It was against this propaganda that Fanon wrote about the Algerian family and Algerian women's lived experiences of the veil. With the original French title of *Les Damnés de la Terre*, *The Wretched of the Earth* was published in the early 1960s. It is a dialectical account of the colonial and post-colonial environment.

Borrowing its title from Jean-Paul Satre's "Preface" to *The Wretched of the Earth*, *Nervous Conditions* is set during Zimbabwe's anti-colonial war. The novel presents the reader with an opportunity to engage in the everyday lived experiences of Black people during Zimbabwe's anti-colonial war. With its focus on female protagonists, *Nervous Conditions* allows Fanon's readers to flash out some of the salient points that Fanon deals with in *A Dying Colonialism* and *The*

Wretched of the Earth. The secondary data sources for this research are books and journal articles that deal primarily with the intersection of Fanon's writings and Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. Works that deal with Africa's anti-colonial nationalist movements and its gender dimensions also form part of secondary data. This study includes older and more contemporary works as this allows for the extensive discussion of concepts such as; patriarchy, anti-colonialism and nationalism.

Through the concepts of racia-patriarchal contract and racia-patriarchal habitus, this study interrogates the potentiality of Fanon's and Dangarembga's writing to explain the persistence of gender-based violence and gender inequalities in post-colonial Africa. Anchored on these concepts, this research uses Critical Discourse Analysis, which "focuses on group relations of power, dominance and inequality and the ways these are reproduced or resisted by social group members through the text" (Van Dijk, 1995, 18). This is a fitting analytical tool as the gender inequality and power relations in the primary and secondary texts will be studied. Van Dijk (1995, 18) states that the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) enables the uncovering of what is implicit or information that is not immediately obvious. CDA allows for particular focus on the strategies to manipulate, influence and control people's lives and influence their decisions (Van Dijk 1995,18). In the reading of *Nervous Conditions*, this study teases out elements of racia-patriarchal habitus in Africa's colonial society. Similarly, the reading of Fanon's writings, in particular *The Wretched of the Earth* and *A Dying Colonialism*, excavates the elements of racia-patriarchal habitus in Africa's anti-colonial nationalism. This study is, therefore, a dialogue between the researcher and the above-mentioned texts and associated secondary literature.

1.4 Structure of Dissertation:

Chapter 1: Introduction

The present chapter is an introductory chapter with a brief review of relevant literature, research problem, aims and objectives of the study and research methodology.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This includes literature that focuses on nationalism, colonialism and patriarchy. There is extensive literature that identifies gender inequality within nationalist movements. What is not adequately

addressed by existing literature is the racia-patriarchal habitus that partly shaped our anti-colonial struggles and our post-colonial societies.

Chapter 3: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This chapter discusses concepts and theories which guide this study. The discussion opens with an engagement of the concept of patriarchy which in the context of the study takes the form of racia-patriarchy. The chapter then engages Carol Pateman's sexual contract. Inspired by Pateman, Charles Mills developed the concepts of racial contract, and later on the concepts of racia-sexual contract and racia-patriarchy. Lastly, there is a critical discussion of nationalism through the lens of racia-patriarchy.

Chapter 4: The Sexual Contract in Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions

This chapter is an interpretive reading of Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* through the lenses of racia-sexual contract, racia-patriarchy and racia-patriarchal habitus. The guiding assumption of the chapter is that pre-colonial, "low intensity" patriarchy, through colonialism, was transformed into racia-patriarchy. The chapter then shows how racia-patriarchal habitus is politically, morally and epistemologically reproduced in the novel's colonial world.

Chapter 5: Anti-Colonial Movements in Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth

This chapter reads Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and *A Dying Colonialism* through Charles Mills' racia-patriarchal contract. The chapter argues that the role of racial patriarchal habitus, in the nationalist movement, helps explain the persistence of patriarchy, gender-based violence and gender inequalities in post-colonial Africa.

Chapter 6: Summary, Conclusion and Study's Relevance

This chapter provides a summary of the study and also demonstrates how the research questions were answered.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews extant literature on themes related to the research questions and objectives of this study. As such this chapter explores Fanon and Dangarembga's writings on the following themes: Fanon and nationalism, Fanon and feminism, and Dangarembga, nationalism and sexual contract. The chapter begins with a review of literature that deals with Fanon, nationalism, and feminism. This is followed by a review of literature that deals with Dangarembga, nationalism and feminism.

2.2 Fanon and Nationalism

Fanon's nationalism has received much attention, with some scholars supporting Fanon's ideas on nationalism, while others criticised his stance. Some scholars claim that his ideas are Western and unrealistic and his account of the unity of the masses cannot be supported by historical accounts. Neil Lazarus, Homi Bhabha, Benita Parry, and Christopher Miller are among the scholars who find Fanon's nationalism problematic, and "his quest for national unity dangerous" (Hiddleston 2010, 124). Fanon's ideas are best summed up by his criticism of the nationalist bourgeoisie. In the 'pitfalls of national consciousness', Fanon (1963, 119) declares that, "nationalism instead of being the all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people, instead of being the immediate and most obvious result of the mobilization of the people, will be in any case only an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been". Fanon (1963) argues that the nationalist middle class is the weak link, they are the threat to national unity and are harmful to national liberation. For Lazarus (1993,71) Fanon's "excoriating critique of bourgeoisie nationalist anti-colonialism" is due to the nationalist bourgeoisie's motivations, which did not set out to advance the agenda of liberating the nation but their own intentions. For Fanon, the efforts of the national middle class "were geared toward a neo-colonial class consolidation: this meant that their "historic mission" was to constitute themselves as functionaries, straddling the international division of labour between metropolitan capitalism and the subaltern classes in the peripheries" (Lazarus 1993, 71). Fanon (1963) argued that the nationalist bourgeoisie "are set on simply taking the place of the colonial system" (Gibson 1999, 339).

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon (1963) writes of an “upward thrust of the people” and claims that the people of Africa “in the name of the continent, have decided to pressure the colonial regimes radically” (Fanon 1963, 10). Fanon (1963, 10) further writes of the “coordinated effort by 250 million people to triumph over stupidity, hunger, and inhumanity.” Based on these and similar statements, some critics argue that Fanon projected unity on the colonized people that did not exist. For Hiddleston (2010, 124) “Fanon’s quest for national unity was both dangerous and impossible to realise.” Lazarus (1993, 78) argues that Fanon projected “a unity and coordinated political will onto the masses of the Algerian population in the late 1950s.” He further states that the unity and discipline that Fanon ascribed to the Algerian masses, “would not have permitted itself to be so easily and so quickly neutralized after decolonization” (Lazarus 1993, 78). According to Gordon (2014, 134) Fanon acknowledged the internal differences of the people, he also highlighted that these individuals were united by their focus on their common objective, this was not a one-time thing, but a constant and continuous work which required individuals to focus on things they have in common. It is important to point out that Fanon’s position on the unity of the colonized was quite complicated. He thus writes of post-independence Africa: “African unity, a vague term, but one to which the men and women of Africa were passionately attached, and whose operative function was to put incredible pressure on colonialism, reveals its true face and crumbles into regionalism within the same national reality” (Fanon 1963, 106).

Some scholars claim that Fanon’s ideas “are saturated with essentialist, totalizing, and latently authoritarian tendencies as those of his bourgeois nationalist antagonists” (Lazarus 1993, 72). Thus Miller (1990), Martin (1970), and Hiddleston (2010) claim that this essentialism has its roots in Marxism. Hiddleston (2010) and Martin (1970) identify the Marxist lens with which Fanon views colonialism. For Hiddleston (2010, 121), Fanon used Marxism in the anti-colonial struggle to expose “colonialism as a form of racialized capitalism based on the exploitation specifically of other ethnic groups”. Miller (1990) on the other hand, criticises Fanon for his Marxism. For Miller “the Marxist approach tends too much toward projection of a Eurocentric paradigm onto Africa, a continent about which terms such as ‘class struggle’ and ‘proletariat’ need to be rethought” (Miller in Lazarus 1993, 72). Further, Miller (1990) and Lazarus (1993) claim that Fanon does not acknowledge the European origins of the concept of nationhood. Like Miller (1990) and Lazarus (1993), Mowitt (1992) affirms that “Fanon’s understanding of the nation is unavoidably European” Hiddleston (2010, 125). It is important to note that Miller’s position misses Fanon’s position on

Marxism. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon (1963, 5) advises that “Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched when it comes to addressing the colonial issue.”

Lazarus (1993, 73) unlike Hiddleston and Miller, states, “Fanon’s discourse is full of references of the Algerian people-as-nation through their struggle against colonialism.” Hiddleston (2010, 126) asserts that although Fanon’s conception of what a nation is, is influenced by European models it “can also be seen to depart from European models in its embrace not so much of a shared past but as of a collaborative present.” In addition to this Hiddleston (2010) and Mowitt (1992) question Fanon being the voice for colonized people in Algeria. Hiddleston (2010, 117) cites Fanon’s Martinican background stating that “he has little knowledge of the culture, history and experience of the Algerian people whose cause he so commends.” Mowitt (1992, 176) states that “in order for Fanon to be *with* the Algerians he must mobilize a set of categories (specifically the category of the nation) that contradicts the interests the Algerians may have otherwise formed for themselves.” Martin (1970, 382) argues that Fanon’s Martinican origins do not disqualify him from speaking on behalf of the Algerian native as Fanon was well-acquainted with the struggles of the colonized (Martin 1970, 382). The literature reviewed thus far does not consider Fanon’s position on the participation of women in the anti-colonial struggle. The next section will therefore review the feminist critique of Fanon.

2.3 Fanon and Feminism

2.3.1 *The Myth of Equal Participation*

Fanon has been heavily criticised by feminist writers such as Helie-Lucas (1999), Amrane (1991), and Moore (2003), who criticised Fanon and others for romanticising the participation of women in the Algerian liberation. Helie-Lucas (1999) states that Fanon’s work provides an inaccurate image of Algerian women being freedom fighters, equal to men, and participating in decision-making. Moore (2003, 57) argues that the female agency illustrated in Fanon’s work is “designated, structural and auxiliary”. The claim made by these writers is that Fanon creates a false impression of women having power and equality. Ismail (1992, 1677) asserts that Fanon in *The Wretched of Earth* makes “it even clearer that national agency is an exclusively male prerogative” (Ismail 1992, 1677). Helie-Lucas (1999, 272) further points to the gendered nature of the division of labour within the anti-colonial movement, with women playing roles similar to those they played at home. Men were allocated tasks, such as armed fighting, that generated power and

prestige within the anti-colonial movement. In contrast, women were allocated tasks similar to those they performed at home such as collecting food and funds, nursing and tailoring among other tasks. Based on this claim, Helie-Lucas (1999, 271) argues that Fanon mythicizes women's participation in the anti-colonial liberation struggle.

In contrast to the above perspective, some scholars praise Fanon's scholarly intervention on women's participation in the anti-colonial struggle. McClintock (1991, 105) asserts that "theorists of nationalism (Fanon notably exempted) have seldom felt moved to explore how nationalisms at every minute are implicated in gender power." In response to Helie-Lucas' claim that Fanon mythicizes the participation of women in the struggle, Sharpley-Whiting (1999) asserts that Fanon discusses factors that lead to the participation of women in the Algerian liberation struggle. According to Sharpley-Whiting, Fanon also discusses the changing nature of that participation in response to the demands of the liberation movement. Sharpley-Whiting (1999, 344) claims that Fanon acknowledges that the decision to have women participate in the struggle is made by men. He also notes that men extending "the privilege to join the struggle for Algerian independence does not mitigate the fact that women agitated and volunteered to participate in the fight for decolonization" (Sharpley-Whiting 1999, 344). In response to the claim that Fanon 'romanticised' the participation of women in the armed struggle, Maldonado-Torres (2013, 324) argues that Fanon points to "liberation from traditional gender roles, not through some abstract and preconceived notions of what gender is, but through the kind of relations that are enacted and come to be in the very de-colonial process" (Maldonado-Torres 2013,324). Fanon in *A Dying Colonialism* notes the changes to the structure of the Algerian family which is a result of women's participation in the armed struggle. There may be disagreements about the agency he attributes to the women but ultimately Fanon recognizes the change in the woman's position.

Amrane-Minne (1999, 62) suggests that women were incorporated into Algeria's anti-colonial military struggle for tactical reasons. Amrane-Minne (1999, 65) writes, "The women in the cities, the women fighters were becoming indispensable because they could be easily mistaken for civilians. In this way, they had more freedom of movement than the men." The women became an important part of the armed struggle because they could move undetected by the French. Salhi (2010, 116) states that "women's participation in the war of independence was a major vehicle of change not only so far as the roles of women are concerned but in the way these women challenged

the forces of patriarchy, changed the concept of honour, and most importantly in the way they helped change world opinion towards the Algerian revolution.”

For Sharpley-Whiting, Fanon writes about the “moral obligation” and exceptional “strength of character” that would be required of the women (Sharpley-Whiting 199, 344). The Algerian woman by participating in the struggle subjected herself to face possibilities of death and rape. Salhi (2010, 116) asserts that “the contribution made by the women to the Algerian revolution ranged from fighting alongside the men, planting bombs in urban quarters, carrying weapons, nursing the sick and wounded in the *maquis* and, above all, keeping the revolution moving forward.”

2.3.2. *The Veil*

Fanon is also criticised for praising the “revolutionary virtue of the veil” (Helie-Lucas 1999, 274). Helie-Lucas (1999, 274) asserts that the veil is a symbol of oppression to Algerian women and it is through the veil that women were continuously subjected and made to conform to tradition. She therefore condemns Fanon’s praise of this symbol of oppression. On this, Sharpley-Whiting (1999, 336) claims that “Helie-Lucas has, however, simplified Fanon’s analysis of the veil, Algerian women’s liberation and the family during the Algerian liberation struggle”. Sharpley-Whiting (1999, 336) asserts that when Fanon praised the wearing of the veil, he was praising the strategy being used by the women and that he, like others acknowledged that the veil was no longer just an “inert traditional symbol”, it had acquired significance in the revolution. Yegenoglu in Moore (2003, 61) states that through their use of the veil as a symbol of resistance “Algerian women became the agents of cultural mutation for which they were formerly the targets and, by doing so, they signify the promise of postcolonial culture”.

Indeed, Fanon (1965, 61) argues that the veil was “transformed into a technique of camouflage, into a means of struggle.” Fanon (1965, 62) writes of the re-adoption of the veil by Algerian women: “Spontaneously and without being told, the Algerian women who had long since dropped the veil once again donned the *haïk*, thus affirming that it was not true that woman liberated herself at the invitation of France and General de Gaulle.” Helie-Lucas (1999, 275) acknowledges that the veil proved useful in the liberation struggle, “it becomes for a time a symbol of national resistance to the French.” It is this usefulness that is problematic, “how, therefore, could we take up the issues of the veil as oppressive to women without betraying both the *nation* and the *revolution*?” (Helie-

Lucas 1999, 275). For Helie-Lucas it is these ‘myths’ of women’s equal participation in the armed struggle from Fanon and other sources that make it difficult for the plight of women to be acknowledged and therefore addressed.

Gordon (2015, 100) argues that Fanon took much consideration into the unveiling and veiling of the Algerian women. Fanon was at first concerned with the action of unveiling Algerian women being the idea of the French. The women themselves are not considered as their unveiling is weaponized and used to represent an achievement of conquest. For the French, the veiled Algerian women were submissive and easy to control. For the FLN the Algerian women’s veils “meant they were without suspicion when they crossed checkpoints with weapons and supplies beneath their heavily layered garments” (Gordon 2015, 100). Gordon (2015, 100-101) asserts that Fanon was concerned about the women and how unveiling and re-donning the veil affected them.

2.3.3. Not Yet Uhuru (National liberation does not mean freedom for all)

Helie-Lucas (1999) faults Fanon for creating an illusion that the Algerian woman was liberated along with the nation. Helie-Lucas (1999) highlights the continued plight of women in Algeria and how post-independence, women were still forced to embrace patriarchal Islamic traditions. For Sahli (2010, 116) “In the early years of post-colonial Algeria two ideological factions were soon to be identified, one liberal and the other conservative. While the liberal faction believed in the promotion of women’s rights and their integration into the government’s programme for the advancement of the whole society, the conservative faction called for cultural authenticity and the revival of Islamic cultural values.”

Salhi (2010, 116) argues that “at the time of the Algerian revolution and at the time of independence the emerging nation still held the promise of social equality for women, whose fundamental role in the war had been recognised by the National Liberation Front.” For Fanon this promise was illustrated by “a transformation in the Algerian family and status of Algerian women during the war” (Sharpley-Whiting 1999, 339). During the anti-colonial struggle, Fanon saw women being liberated from “time honoured traditions of silence, invisibility and sequestration” (Sharpley-Whiting 1999, 338). Amrane-Minne (1999, 62) writes, “in fact, there is a clear continuity between those women who took part in the armed struggle for independence and the women who now demonstrate in the streets against intolerance and for the right to live in peace in different ways, the mark of a constantly developing Algeria.” Thus, according to Amrane-Minne

(1999), Fanon did not create any illusions but saw the foundation of post-colonial feminist resistance being built.

2.3.4 Fanon the “Misogynist”

Fanon has been criticised for his alleged silence on gender issues or patriarchy. Consequent to this allegation is a claim that Fanon is a misogynist. Ismail (1992) claims that in both *A Dying Colonialism* and *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon displays gendered constructs of what or who the nationalist subject is. Thus Ismail (1992, 1677) claims that in ‘*The Algerian Family*’ the nationalist subject emerges only “when the native son (boy) rebels successfully against the father” while in *The Wretched of the Earth*, where “the native is male and the native with agency is violent”. Ismail uses this to support the claim that Fanon and his writings are misogynistic. McClintock (1991) argues that in Fanon’s ‘*Algeria Unveiled*’ the women lack their own national identity and function symbolically as the boundaries of the nation. For McClintock (1991) this shows that nationalisms are gendered from the onset. McClintock’s reading of Fanon is not without criticism, she is “criticized by Rabaka as being another feminist who presents a “destructive criticism” against Fanon for writing about women” (Nya 2015, 69). McClintock’s claims of the gendered nature of nationalism are echoed by Herr’s (2003) claim on the roles that are given to women in the nationalist movement. The patriarchal position of FLN (*Front de Libération Nationale*: National Liberation Front) is satirized in Fadhila Assou’s show where FLN is made to say: “Dear Women, dear mothers, dear sisters and dear wives. Be women! Always and forever remain women! Give us many children. Sweep your floors and polish your furniture. Make us good soup, and if you have time weave the wool and make some rugs” (Salhi, 2010, 113).

Sharpley-Whiting (1999, 346) argues that Fanon acknowledges the traditional patriarchal Algerian values in *A Dying Colonialism*. Fanon writes about how the male child “enjoys an almost lordly status” in the Algerian family, while the girl adopts “her mother’s attitude of acquiescence and obedience to male authority” (Fanon 1965, 105). Fanon (1965, 106) writes about the “illiteracy, poverty and unemployment in Algeria exacerbated by colonialism” that limited women’s options in the traditional Algerian society. Sekyi-Otu (1997) reads the opening pages of *A Dying Colonialism*’s first chapter as illustrating gender divisions within the colonized. Sekyi-Otu explains “The male artefact is multiply configurable, testifying thereby to the relative autonomy

of the agent in relation to the symbolic structure. The veil is, on the other hand, characterized by invariance, uniformity, formal constraint and closure” (1997, 220).

The role of the woman as a revolutionary in the struggle changed the relations and “forced the abandonment of many of these traditional modes and behaviour and customs” (Sharpley-Whiting 1999, 347). The woman in the struggle, due to everything that she has to deal with during the struggle, cannot according to Fanon remain the same. Being part of the struggle “the-woman-for-marriage progressively disappeared, and gave way to a woman-for-action... the men’s words were no longer law. The women were no longer silent... the woman ceased to be a compliment for man” (Fanon in Sharpley-Whiting 1999, 347).

This study has identified Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* and Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions* as primary texts in the exploration of the claim that the persistence of patriarchy post-independence can be understood by studying nationalist movements, and the participation of women therein. This section has discussed contending views on Fanon’s writings on women’s participation in the Algerian anti-colonial nationalist movement. The next section will discuss Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*, with an exploration of the views of different scholars on the Sexual Contract in *Nervous Conditions*. Finally, there will be a discussion of Dangarembga’s views on colonisation and the nationalist movement.

2.4. Dangarembga, Nationalism and Sexual Contract

2.4.1 The Disease of Colonialism

Torti, Kilb and Stein (1996) comment on the title of Dangarembga’s novel and trace it back to Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*. They state that “it consists in the colonisers' contradictory stance of demanding of the colonised that they be human beings while simultaneously denying that they are” (Torti, Kilb and Stein 1996, 248). The colonised people had to embrace the coloniser’s value systems; this is because the humanisation of the colonised could only be attained through such. Torti, Kilb and Stein (1996, 248) claim that Dangarembga by pluralising nervous conditions, is applying Fanon’s concept to “the domination of women by men.” In *Nervous Conditions*, Dangarembga displays how the condition of the characters is a *Nervous Condition*. According to Shaw (2007), Nyasha’s eating disorder represents sexuality and Nyasha’s fear of having a desire for an adult body which is condemned by her father, in addition to this, it also represents “the condition of the native under colonialism” (Shaw 2007, 9). A view shared in part,

by Harting (1996, 239) states that Nyasha's anorexia "can thus be seen as the "embodiment" of the devastating psychic effects of colonial and patriarchal rule."

Colonisation creates a disease where an individual has to identify with colonial values at the expense of their traditional values. For Shaw, this is the reason for Babamukuru's rejection of Nyasha; it is because "she is too identified with colonial values" (Shaw 2007, 11). Nyasha is unlike her cousin Tambu who to Babamukuru is a model of what a Shona girl is supposed to be. Nyasha's exposure to the Western or colonial world has influenced the way that she is. This influence is not viewed as ideal as "colonialism and Western influence are presented as contaminations" (Hill 1995, 79).

Nervous Conditions details the interplay of many factors that the characters have to grapple with. Dangarembga shows how the characters in the novel are not contending with just one issue but many, if not all of these issues at a particular point in time. This section will try to tease out Dangarembga's ideas on feminism and nationalism in *Nervous Conditions*. Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* sheds light on the patriarchal conditions that the women live in. Dangarembga shows her feminism by looking at the gender inequality in the domestic roles in the household, the lack of access to resources and the limits to women's agency. Shaw (1993) highlights how women resist their patriarchal context by speaking out. Shaw (2007) looks at the function of sexuality in the novel and how the sexuality of the women is resisted and controlled by the male characters.

2.4.2. *Patriarchy and Colonialism*

After she moves to the mission, Tambu "increasingly discovers that patriarchy is a universal structure" (Torti, Kilb, Stein 1996, 248). According to Shaw (2007, 14), Tambu realises that "femaleness and not poverty, education, or tradition is responsible for women's position in society." One of the key elements of patriarchy is the control of female sexuality, this is illustrated, for example, by Babamukuru's focus on guarding Nyasha's sexuality. Shaw (2007, 10) argues that "Babamukuru's surveillance of Nyasha's sexuality derives in large part from the Christianity that he learned at the mission, but also is motivated by his need to protect and promote his position in the colonial system." Hill (1995, 84) suggests that when Babamukuru tells Nyasha that "I am a respected man at this mission, I cannot have a daughter who behaves like a whore", he is seeking to restore his position as head of his household and uses patriarchal power to do so. Hill (1995, 84) criticises this act and argues that this reveals the weakness of Babamukuru's 'power'. Hill's

reading of the novel sees patriarchy in the natives as a response to colonisation. As the male loses power due to colonisation, he seeks to enjoy power by exerting it over their families.

Linking patriarchy and colonisation, Uwakweh in Alenezi (2020), like Hill (1995), argues that “Dangarembga represents African females as encountering the double oppression of patriarchy and colonisation” (Alenezi 2020, 157). The female characters in *Nervous Conditions* experience double colonization. Shaw (2007, 10) highlights the theme of sexuality in *Nervous Conditions* and argues that Nyasha’s sexuality is “crucial in understanding Nyasha’s breakdown.” For Shaw Babamukuru’s surveillance of Nyasha is an expression of Babamukuru’s patriarchal authority, his acceptance of his colonized identity as a Christian and also his adherence to Shona culture. Puritanism which he learned in Christianity meshes with traditional Shona values and therefore justifies his expectations of Nyasha.

2.4.3 Nationalism in *Nervous Conditions*

The novel is set in colonial Rhodesia in the 1960s and 70s. This period marks the insurrection and visible resistance against colonial rule in the then Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. Dangarembga has been criticised for not discussing the nationalist struggle. Alenezi (2020, 156) writes, “According to Sugnet Zimbabwean male authors wrote in the late 1980s “foreground the chimurenga struggle for national liberation, *Nervous Conditions* barely mentioned it.” Shaw (2007, 22) asserts that “the psychological effects of complicity and resistance to colonial hegemony were her prime concerns in the novel, and in it she did little to represent the armed struggle for Zimbabwean independence.” Although Dangarembga goes to great lengths to highlight the plight of the native under colonisation, she avoided “direct representation of nationalist and postcolonial politics” (Shaw 2007, 22). Hill (1995) argues that Dangarembga points to, albeit not blatantly, the nationalist movement which was happening at the time. Tambu declares: “I was not concerned that freedom fighters were referred to as terrorists” (Hill 1995, 87). Moolla (2016, 233) writes: “Maize is central to the narrative of national independence presented in *Nervous Conditions*.” According to Hill (1995, 87), Nyasha is the only character who is interested in the efforts towards liberation in South Rhodesia. Hill (1995, 79) cites Nyasha’s rebellion against patriarchal authority and uses this as a metaphor for the figures in the guerrilla war during that period.

Through the observations of Shaw (2007) and Hill (1995), one can deduce that the focus of Dangarembga was the condition of the natives under colonisation, and the condition of women

under both colonisation and patriarchy. This was of fundamental importance as the plight of women is often ignored in nationalist movements. McClintock (1993, 78) cites Fanon and his “prescient warnings against the pitfalls of the national consciousness.” She argues that to Fanon nationalism was vital to mobilizing the population and expressing their collective aspirations for freedom, and yet, “no one was more aware than Fanon of the attendant risks of projecting a fetishistic denial of difference onto a conveniently abstracted ‘collective will’” (McClintock 1993, 78). Fanon was aware of the risk that the collective will expressed in nationalism could be detached and not represent the full scope of what was happening in the life of the entire population. Dangarembga’s scant mention of the nationalist movement could be for this very reason, the struggles of women did not form part of the nationalist agenda.

2.4.4. *Tools of Resistance*

According to Torti, Kilb, and Stein, Hill and Shaw Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions* not only tells of the subjection of women but also details their resistance. According to Hill (1995, 80) Nyasha’s eating disorders, represent the condition of the natives under colonialism. It also represents sexuality and Nyasha uses it as a weapon. Hill (1995, 82) asserts that by saying “I’m full,” Nyasha shifts the site of battle from the dining table controlled by Babamukuru to the territory of her own body, which she controls. Her refusal to eat becomes a weapon of power in an otherwise powerless situation.” Shaw (2007, 11) highlights how “the family dinner table becomes a battlefield.” Babamukuru makes the association between food and obedience which results in Nyasha’s refusal to eat. Babamukuru forces her to sit at the table and to eat, “she gobbles it down, leaves the table and throws it up” (Hill 1995, 11). Many authors including Shaw (2007) see this as an act of resistance and a metaphor of the natives resisting colonial systems. Tambu also uses food to resist in a different way to Nyasha, she grew maize and sold it to pay her fees. Shaw (2007) and Hill (1995) identify the body as an object of resistance as is seen in Tambu’s paralysis or dissociative state. According to Torti, Kilb and Stein (1996, 241), the only way Tambu can express her resistance to her parent’s Christian wedding is physically “as her body leaves her in a state of paralysis.” MaShingayi goes into a depression when Tambu goes to school at the mission. She is against the decision to have her last child be educated in the Englishness that ‘killed’ her son. Hill (1995, 87) affirms that her “suffering through a depression reflects her sense of powerlessness.”

The characters in the novel learn to speak up and confront patriarchal authority. Shaw (2007,15) records the times when the women in the novel talk back, speak up and make their voices heard; “Nyasha gets into trouble because she dares talk back to her father, Tambu falls into a dissociative state when she speaks against patriarchal authority, and the wife of the patriarch speaks her mind.” This is a huge task for the women in the traditional Shona and colonial setting. Shaw (2007, 16) asserts that the courage of the women to speak out is indicative of Dangarembga’s feminist values influenced by Audre Lorde. She states that Dangarembga “reveals both the vulnerabilities of speaking up as well as its power” (Shaw 2007, 16). Hill (1995, 87) discusses how Babamukuru equates silence to being good, per his traditional Shona values. Citing when Babamukuru compares Tambu and Nyasha. Hill (1995, 87) asserts that Babamukuru considers Tambu “to be the paragon of feminine decorum,” due to her silence. Tambu speaks only when spoken to, and never questions or talks back. This quality is deemed respectful in traditional Rhodesian society. Nyasha who is outspoken, expresses herself and asks questions, does not fit into the colonized Rhodesian society.

Education in the novel is also used to represent resistance, for Tambu getting a formal education is an act of defiance, not only as a way to escape poverty but also rejecting the prescribed life for a woman. For Alenezi getting an education is about gaining power, “not physical power but power of progression” Alenezi (2020, 158). This according to Alenezi is the main purpose of colonisation, gaining material resources and therefore having power. Alenezi (2020) argues that the struggle between Tambu and Nhamo represents the struggle between the colonized and the colonizer. Hill (1995, 81) argues that “Jeremiah views Tambu’s education as interfering with her ability to learn the social roles and duties that would make her a marriageable woman.” Jeremiah tells Tambu that she does not need a formal education to fit into her role as a wife and mother, he reasons with her “Can you cook books and feed them to your husband?” (Dangarembga 1988, 15). Tambu’s desire and efforts to raise money for fees are seen as a form of resistance to a future already paved out for her. Jeremiah discourages Tambu’s love for reading as he sees it as Tambu imitating her brother Nhamo. Babamukuru also reprimands Nyasha for reading a book with sexual content, citing that it is not a book that good girls read. He despises her curiosity and that affects Nyasha.

2.5. Conclusion

This study aims to interrogate the relationship between Africa’s anti-colonial nationalism and the notion of sexual contract. In particular, the thesis addresses the position of gender in Fanon’s

writings, *The Wretched of the Earth*'s "On violence". Given the close relationship between Dangarembga's *Nervous conditions* and Fanon's writings, this thesis explores how racia-sexual contract and racia-patriarchal contract manifest in *Nervous conditions* and some of Fanon's writings. This chapter addressed the following themes: Fanon and nationalism, Fanon and feminism, and Dangarembga, nationalism and sexual contract.

There are various critiques of Fanon's position on the concepts of nation and nationalism. Some critics argue that Fanon's position is based on essentialist foundation while others accuse Fanon of projecting national unity where it did not exist. This chapter showed the weaknesses of these critiques. More importantly, Fanon has been criticized by some feminists for being misogynistic and perpetuating the myth of women's full participation in Africa's anti-colonial struggles. However, this chapter showed that an attentive reading of some of Fanon's writings, such as *A Dying Colonialism*, refutes these claims. The literature on *Nervous Conditions* deals with colonial and gender constraints faced by the novel's protagonists, in particular, with what some of the critics call double colonisation faced by the novel's female characters. However, the literature also points to counter-hegemonic practices of the novel's protagonists. Most of *Nervous Conditions*' critics are unable to locate the nationalist background of the novel hence this study takes a contrary position. The study as such explores the racia-patriarchal habitus that serves as an invisible background of the nationalist struggle. The next chapter will discuss the theoretical and conceptual framework that guides this study.

Chapter 3

Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the conceptual and theoretical frameworks which guide this study including the following notions, The Sexual Contract, Nationalism and the Anti-colonial Struggle. The section on sexual contract will discuss the conceptualisation of patriarchy by different scholars, followed by a discussion on the intersection of the racial and sexual contract by Pateman and Mills, to understand the varied experiences of oppression due to the interplay of gender and race. The sexual contract section will conclude with a presentation of the discussion on the social contract as a patriarchal habitus. In the discussion on nationalism, the concept of nationalism will be defined, followed by an investigation of the homogenizing and dividing nature of nationalism. Finally, in the section on Anti-Colonial Struggle, the participation of women in the anti-colonial nationalist struggle will be explored. Particular attention will be given to how women participated and the position that they occupied in the anti-colonial nationalist struggle.

3.2 The Contested Concept of Patriarchy

Patriarchy is systematic and reinforced but its existence is often denied. In general, patriarchy refers to male domination and to a form of gender relations in which men oppress women. It is “the power of relationships by which men dominate women” (Beechey 1979, 66). This general

understanding of patriarchy is shared by Foord and Gregson who understand patriarchy as “a form of gender relations in which men oppress women” (Foord and Gregson 1986, 198). Walby (1986) in Dahl (1995) “defines patriarchy as a system of social structures and processes where men dominate oppress and exploit women, and which is analytically independent of system capitalism” (Dahl 1995, 5). In contrast to these understandings of patriarchy, for Bell Hooks patriarchy is not independent of social context. Hooks (2010, 1) defines patriarchy as “a political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and to rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence.” In *Killing Rage: Ending Racism*, Bell Hooks (2010) particularly writes about white supremacist capitalist patriarchy.

The various understandings of patriarchy are accompanied by a varied understanding of its origin. Some scholars understand patriarchy “as a universal term for male dominance” (Foord and Gregson 1986, 194). Some scholars argue that its origin and essence are in the power of fatherhood. Thus Juliet (1975) in Foord and Gregson (1986) “sees the ‘symbolic power’ of fathers as the essence of patriarchy, but she locates patriarchy in culture and the unconscious” (Foord and Gregson 1986, 195). Pateman (1988) uses the discussion of the origins of political power to give an in-depth understanding of patriarchy and argues that the definition of patriarchy given by contract theorists such as Locke, Hobbes, Filmer and Kant who state that patriarchy is the “rule of the fathers”, is incomplete. Pateman (1988) states that paternal rule is only one aspect of patriarchy and that the other is conjugal right or sex right. Ballestrin (2022, 118-123) argues that there are three perspectives on the origin of patriarchy. The first perspective claims that patriarchy is universal, that is, it has always been there and is the same everywhere.

The second perspective argues that gender and patriarchy are the imposition of colonialism. For Lugones in Ballestrin (2022, 120) “both gender and race are colonial constructs” whose purpose was racializing and gendering colonised societies and peoples. The third perspective, which is also held by Amaduime (1987) claims that there was low-intensity patriarchy in South America, Asia, and Africa before colonialism. Ballestrin (2022, 114) links patriarchy and colonialism, this link is seen in the objectives of the ‘global feminisms’ and what she refers to as “subaltern feminisms-including postcolonial and de-colonial feminisms” (Ballestrin 2022, 114). The goal of the two

types of feminism is not the same, global feminism advocates for equality between men and women, while subaltern feminism is striving for equality between women. Ballestrin (2022) acknowledges that there is a difference in the experience of patriarchy among women and this is based on their experience of colonialism.

3.3 The Origins of Political Power

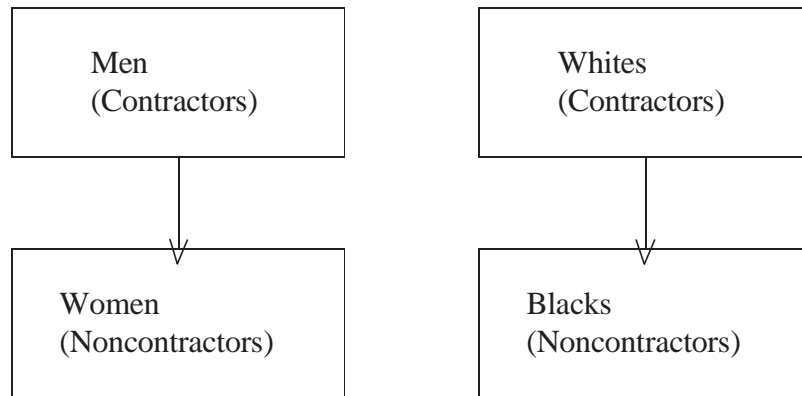
The question of the origin of political power is essentially the question of the source of political power. A tradition that supported monarchy in England claimed, “that political power was paternal power” (Pateman 1988, 3). However, this tradition was opposed by the social contract tradition of John Locke who claimed that political power is an outcome of consent, through contract, by rational individuals. The proponents of the social contract sold it as an agreement between equal participants whereby people give up their freedom to enter a contract. This position has influenced African politics, and examples are seen in Zimbabwe’s Lancaster House Agreement and South Africa’s Constitution which are influenced by this liberal position. Carole Pateman's *The Sexual Contract* is a response to this tradition. The purpose of Pateman’s *The Sexual Contract* is "subversive: to excavate the hidden, unjust male covenant upon which the ostensibly gender-neutral social contract actually rests" (Pateman 1988, 6).

According to Pateman (1988,2) "the original pact is a sexual as well as a social contract: it is sexual in the sense of patriarchal- that is the contract establishes men's political right over women and also sexual in the sense of establishing orderly access by men to women's bodies. "Pateman (1988) asserts that a sexual contract is a contract that ensures that men have access to sex and women's bodies. It is a contract that ensures the domination of the man and the woman's subordination. The social contract is "far from being opposed to patriarchy; the contract is the means through which modern patriarchy is constituted" (Pateman 1988, 2). Pateman uses the sexual contract to establish a framework to understand how the subjection of women is legitimised. Pateman’s goal was to subvert the tradition of the ideal social contract that assumed equality of all participants.

However, Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Discourse on Inequality* provides a non-ideal situation where the participants of the contract are not equal. While Rousseau’s *Discourse on Inequality* provided a non-ideal, class contract, Charles Mills developed a non-ideal racial contract. For Mills (1997, 3) the social contract "is not a contract between everybody (we the people), but between just the people who count, the people who are really people (we the white people)." Mills (1997) argues

that the social contract as a racial contract legitimized the exploitation and oppression of non-whites. Pateman's sexual contract has two identity groups, that is, men and women, while Mills' racial contract has two groups whites and blacks. As initially presented, the positions of these two scholars did not account for the overlap and intersection of these groups. As Figure 1 illustrates the two contracts are mutually exclusive of each other.

The (idealised) social contract liberal democratic polity



The (actual, non-idealized) sexual contract establishes the patriarchal polity

The (actual, non-idealized) racial contract establishes the white-supremacist polity

Figure 1 modified from Mills (2007, 171)

3.4 The Intersection of the Racial and Sexual Contract

The overlap and the intersection of gender and race are addressed in *Contract and Domination*, a book co-edited by Pateman and Mills. The intersection of racial and sexual contracts creates what Mills (2007) calls a racia-sexual contract. The racia-sexual contract creates a complex arrangement where one social group can be both privileged and subordinate. Mills (2007) provides an illustration which displays the complex interactions which are a result of the intersection of gender and race. This illustration shows “four contractual status positions with six relations of domination linking them” (Mills 2007, 174).

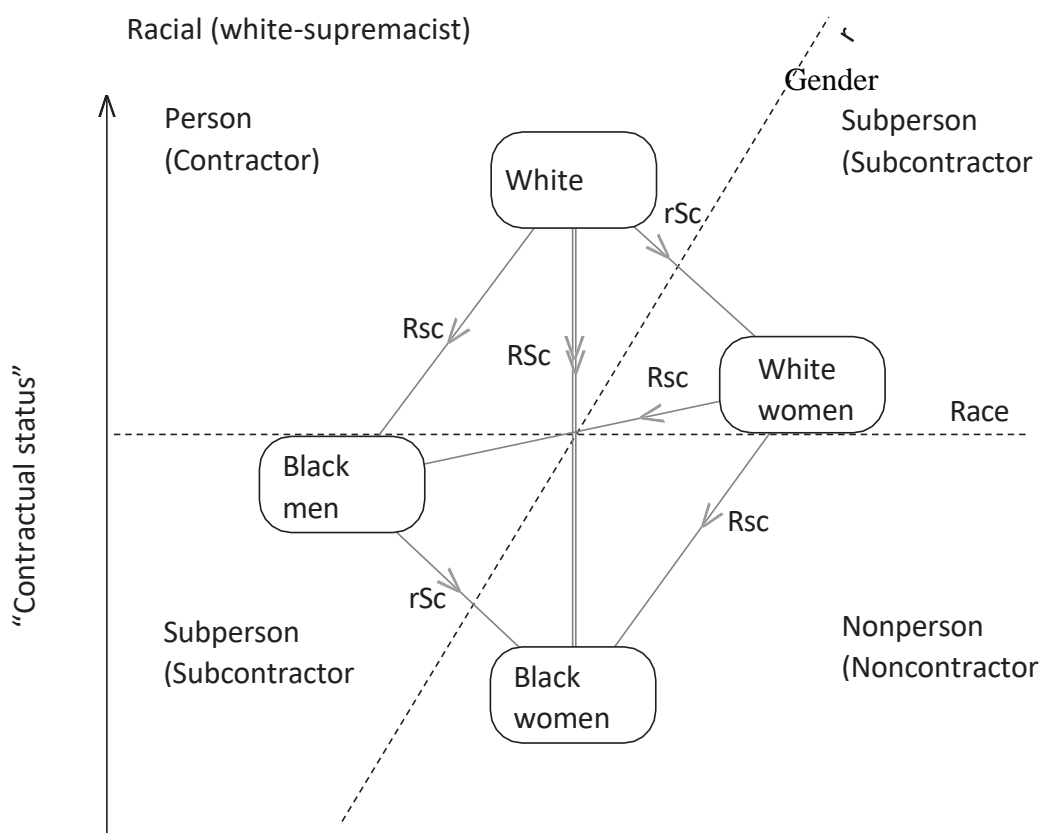


Figure 2 modified from Mills (2007, 173)

Figure 2 is a diagrammatic explanation of the relationship of domination and subordination. In the upper left quadrant for example Rsc shows that white men have a relationship of domination towards black men in the case of Dangarembga. The lower left quadrant shows that although the black man is dominated racially, they are also in a relationship of domination rSc, in the sexual contract. This domination is also evident in the colonial situation in *Nervous Conditions*.

In Mills’ six relations of domination, white men dominate and benefit from both the sexual and racial contract, while white women are suppressed by the patriarchal contract but are

‘subcontractors’ in the racial contract, as they have power when relating to black men. Black men are subcontractors in the sexual contract in relation to black women, and “[black] women are at the bottom of the structure, dominated by all three groups: by white men through the racia-sexual contract in both aspects, by white women through the racia-sexual contract (primarily) in its racial aspect, and by black men through the racia-sexual contract (primarily) in its gender aspect” (Mills 2007, 175). However, it is important to note that the critique of social contract extends beyond race and gender. Other critics have critiqued the social contract from a disability perspective while others have critiqued the social contract tradition from an LGBTQIA perspective. For Beaudry (2021, 1) social contract tradition assumes that “certain characteristics are held by the parties.” Notably, Beaudry (2021, 1) argues that Rawls “justified the exclusion of people with severe disabilities” in the scope of his social contract.

3.4.1. The Social Contract as a Patriarchal Habitus

The studying of /or proper conceptualisation and understanding of the intersection of the racial and sexual contract is important. Pateman (1988) and Mills (1997) argue that there is an implicit contract within the social contract which has implications on how society is set up. Mill’s discussion of the many contracts within the social contract is especially helpful here. Mills (1997,3) argues that the social contract is actually made up of three contracts, that is, the political contract, the moral contract and the epistemological contract. The political contract is a contract to create a social organization or a collective identity. In an oppressive environment, members of an organisation do not play equal roles in the creation of an organisation. Mills thus claims that, in a racialized organisation or society, the contract is not a contract between all people, but it is a contract between “the people who count, the people who really are people (“we the white people”)” (Mills 1997, 3). The people who really count are the people who decide on the foundational principles of a social organisation.

In the case of a racial contract, it is “the white people” who decide on the foundational principles of a racialized society. In a racial contract, the people who count control the bodies of the people who do not count. They thus control, or at least try, to control the being and doing of the subjugated people. In the patriarchal society, the ideology of hegemonic masculinity is used to control the bodies of women and subaltern men. The moral contract assigns the guidelines of what is right and what is wrong. The moral contract is “the foundation of the moral code established for the society, by which the citizens are supposed to regulate their behaviour” (Mills 1997, 10). The moral contract provides the guidelines for the dos and don’ts within a group or society.

The epistemological contract prescribes “norms for cognition to which its signatories must adhere” Mills (1997, 11). The epistemological contract prescribes what is knowledge, what can be known, and how to produce knowledge. Mills (1997, 18) states that “the Racial Contract prescribes for its signatories an inverted epistemology, an epistemology of ignorance, a particular pattern of localized and global cognitive dysfunctions (which are psychologically and socially functional), producing the ironic outcome that whites will, in general, be unable to understand the world they themselves made” (Mills 1997, 18). For Tuana (2004, 195) “an important aspect of an epistemology of ignorance is the realization that ignorance should not be theorized as a simple omission or gap but is, in many cases, an active production.” Ignorance is not by accident or a simple consequence of not being aware but is the act by which others rewrite history or choose to disregard it. Code (2014, 154) affirms this by stating that ignorance is like a “force all on its own which often blocks knowledge, stands in its place, and tacitly or more explicitly affirms a need or a commitment not to know.”

The epistemology of ignorance allows for the creation of a racia-sexual habitus, where there is no acknowledgement of the complicated system of oppression due to race and gender. Thus, the assumption by some feminists that all women’s experiences of oppression are the same is a form of epistemology of ignorance. Racially oppressed groups also make errors when they ignore dimensions of gender and sexuality. Through epistemology of ignorance hierarchies of oppression are normalized. Oppressive ways of doing and being are internalized and habituated, they become part of habitus. Habitus, a concept popularized by Pierre Bourdieu, is defined as, “a filter that individuals use to structure their perceptions, experiences and practices and which shapes one’s mental and physical being. Habitus helps mould one’s natural propensity and sense of one’s place but is also an internalization of external forces and conventions” (Koronaïou & Sakellariou 2017, 261).

The idea of a habitus as expressed by Koronaïou and Sakellariou (2017) shows the effect of an individual’s context on one’s sense of self and the effect this has on how one perceives and relates to others. It is what is prescribed and considered normal that in turn informs what expected or acceptable behaviour is in everyday life. Hooks in Mills (2007, 180) asserts that white women did not acknowledge black women, nor did they treat them as equals. White feminists advocating for women’s rights did not acknowledge black women who were oppressed because of their race. Roth in Mills (2007) confirms that “the racism that was within the (white) feminist movement was an inescapable issue, and racial division among feminists was the subject of many discussions and workshops” (Mills 2007, 180). Some white feminists

were aware of patriarchal oppression because they were also affected by it, but could not or did not appreciate their oppression of black women because they did not acknowledge that as an oppressed group, they were also subcontractors because they reinforced racial discrimination against black women.

Similarly, some black men also do not acknowledge their status as subcontractors in relation to the oppression of black women. Curry (2022, 531) notes that black men do not have the same proximity to patriarchal power, for black men are also subordinated by white males. While there was patriarchy in some African communities before the Atlantic slavery and colonialism, West European colonialism imposed West European patriarchy on the regions that it colonized. Amadiume (1987) and Sutton (1995) argue that the pre-colonial situation allowed women to have ownership of wealth, their bodies, their industriousness and to have political power. Amadiume (1987) and Sutton (1995) also record how this all changed in the 19th century which marks the arrival of colonisers in Nigeria. The period of colonisation saw the marginalization of women in Nigeria, “colonialism brought about an erosion of women’s former political and economic powers, sometimes suddenly, more often gradually” (Sutton 1995, 6). The women were stripped of the power and influence they had enjoyed pre-colonisation. Due to the new laws “the emergent county councils and district councils became political institutions monopolized by men, especially the decision-making processes” (Amadiume 1987, 147).

According to Sutton (1995, 6), women became more dependent on men, as they had fewer chances of owning land and houses. They had “limited access than men to the credit and capital needed to trade. This in turn restricted their ability to control their labour and resources or mobilize those of dependents” (Sutton 1995, 6). Colonialism therefore introduced the new patriarchal habitus. The examples above indicate how colonisation disrupted pre-existing gender norms and relations, and yet when the nationalist agenda is set there is no attempt to address these. Black men may be aware of the racial oppression that they have suffered as a group and may not acknowledge that even in their state of being oppressed, they too benefit due to the patriarchal aspect of the racia-sexual contract. This frames men’s attitudes and approaches when it comes to the nationalist anti-colonial struggle. Where national emancipatory effort is geared towards fighting against racial domination and oppression under the guise of solidarity and common interests.

3.5 Nationalism

Nationalism is a contested term sometimes used to describe loyalty to the state, but in other instances, it is "used to describe feelings of national identity, which is not so much an incorrect usage as an understandable but loose usage" (Birch 2012, 6). For Birch (2012), nationalism can also be a belief that one's way of life is superior to other ways of life. For Pamiir (1997, 3), nationalism is a term with a broad meaning "ranging from being the defining ideology of political movements seeking some form of autonomy or independent statehood; of groups striving to achieve or to improve their cultural, political, social and economic rights within a given state, of protesting groups in communities who are being threatened by state policies or by other social groups." Waentjen (2001, 122) states that nationalism is a "the product of collective mobilizations based on a variety of imagined or structural boundaries and reproduced through a complex range of discursive and practical strategies." Waentjen (2001, 123) claims that feminist theory focuses on the gender differences in nationalism, this focus albeit necessary, conceals many other factors that are at play within nationalism. The racial-patriarchal habitus is a space where both racial and gender inequalities are present, this creates a complex, multi-dimensional type of oppression.

Nationalism is built on the idea of having people with commonalities such as; ethnicity, language, shared ideas and experiences coming together and seeking rights to self-determination. These commonalities are used to unify or homogenize the citizens into a nation. Gordon (2014, 130) argues that "it was initially in efforts to cast off a shared enemy, a shared source of alienation, that people placed unequally and disparately within the polity developed a sense of a collective fate, a sense of themselves as an emergent nation." United by common interest and their desire to defeat a common enemy, people disregard the inequalities that exist within the polity.

Carter (1963, 151) points out that, anti-colonial nationalism arises in a context where the colonized have lost trust in the colonial society. Thus, in the case of South Africa, the African National Congress was formed after the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. The revival of African nationalism, in South Africa, after World War II was partly a response to land expropriation and rapid urbanisation. The elite play a pivotal role in the articulation of nationalism. Political elites who want to strengthen or establish the national identity will do so in a "top-down manner to mobilize the population for nation-building efforts or to legitimize their policies, which otherwise would not gain sufficient support" (Karelowski and Suzyski 2011, 7). Sutton (1995, 7) records how "the educational system, which became a major new

resource for acquiring status, wealth and power, was disproportionately available to men.” Kisitu and Ssebunya (2016, 260) argue that colonial education establishes a hierarchy in a society, where only educated men can occupy leadership positions. Colonial education set up a system that ensured that African men were more advantaged than African women. According to Akyeampong and Fofack (2014) colonial education, which they refer to as mission education, as the schools were opened by missionaries taught women “domestic skills” preparing them for the role of wife and mother, while the men “in addition to literacy lessons learned skills such as carpentry and masonry that prepared them for the wage labour market” (Akyeampong and Fofack 2014, 56). It is no surprise that the nationalist agenda was dominated by the male elite.

Psychologically, the process of national unity involves the introjection or internalisation of what are considered good values and the projection of what are considered bad values. Since the dominant nationalist elite were educated in Western institutions, the introjected dominant values tended to be Eurocentric. In most cases, anti-colonial nationalism took the colonial geographic boundaries as they were. The envisioned nation-state (US) was thus juxtaposed with other colonial states (THEM). Given that Africa’s anti-colonial nationalism was anchored on a racial-patriarchal habitus, this nationalism also tended to marginalise women and gender issues. Herr (2003, 136) states that the subjugation of women was not seen as a problem to be dealt with or rectified but rather as natural and therefore this state must be “maintained or restored”. Maart el (2014, 113) affirms that “the national liberation was not taking it up – sexism, rape, sexual harassment, and sexual assault was not a political issue – so why did they have to worry about it?” Mayer (1999, 6) claims that, the “national project has always been a hetero-male project.” Similarly, McClintock (1993, 62) asserts that, it is the men that set the agenda in nationalism “the needs of the nation are identified with the frustrations and aspirations of men.” It is what Saloorn (2007, 64) refers to as the “nation first, women after mentality”. Thus, the needs of women, in particular, the racially oppressed women, are deferred or postponed to be dealt with only after the success of the nationalist struggle. The racia-patriarchal habitus means that the hierarchy is nuanced, there are racial and gender hierarchies. In light of the racia-sexual contract, Saloorn’s statement would read, the nation first, women after and black women last.

Under nationalism women’s bodies may “frequently acquire the symbolic significance of the nation and set its boundary” (Herr 2003, 137). According to Herr (2003, 137), the female body is likened to the boundaries of the nation, this body is seen as vulnerable and needs protection

from invasions in the same way the nation's borders are guarded. The anti-colonial struggle becomes the fight for the land that has been invaded by foreigners. One of the roles of women within this nationalist discourse was to biologically reproduce the nation. Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989, 8-10) claim that women were involved “as biological reproducers of the members of national collectives, as reproducers of the boundaries of national groups (through restrictions on sexual or marital relations... as symbolic signifiers of national difference...)” Thus, women had to be protected and therefore controlled by men, “in the same manner that national territory is vigilantly guarded” Mostove in (Herr 2003, 90). Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989, 1) assert that when women and the state are analysed, there is “a tendency to treat women as a homogenous category...” where differences such as “ethnicity and nationality tend to be ignored” (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989, 1). It is in this sense that the concept of racial patriarchy acknowledges the heterogeneity of female bodies.

According to Herr (2003), women's participation in military operations was restricted. In cases where women participated in military campaigns, women were expected to emulate men and have to step aside “as soon as their biological limitations, such as pregnancy, prevent from full participation” (McClintock 1995, 68). Since the anti-colonial movements considered themselves representatives of the nation, the bodies of women were owned by these movements. McClintock (1993, 73) writes that women’s “subordinate, service role to nationalism was summed up in the draft constitution of the SANNC (later the ANC), which saw women’s political role within nationalism as mediated by the marriage relation, and as replicating wives’ domestic roles within marriage.” The way that women are allowed to participate in nationalist movements is within the limits of the patriarchal habitus. It is worth noting that at the inception of the ANC, the membership was primarily black. This means that the women who were in subordinated roles were African women.

Similarly, at the beginning of the ANC, women did not have membership and it was only with time that they were given auxiliary membership. It was only in the 1950s with the women's planned “pass campaign” that the ANC’s Women’s League got recognition. McClintock (1993) and Saloorn (2007, 65) assert that “women have always participated in revolutionary movements but oftentimes the role that women play has been obscured.” This is the dilemma that is faced by women who want to participate in nationalism as they have to fight to prove that they are capable and useful, and their efforts often go unrecognised. Gqola (2001, 134) asserts that the Black Consciousness Movement by identifying race as the “primary oppressive

force... pronounces a hierarchy of oppressions.” This creates a situation where all the other forms of oppression are viewed as secondary, not needing the same urgency and attention.

While some feminists have reservations about nationalism, other feminists, especially in the Global South, make a distinction between two kinds of nationalism. The first one is frightening resulting in "exclusion, xenophobia, fanaticism, expansionism, aggression, ethnic cleansing, endless, and bloodshed. The other face is: community, national sovereignty, independence, self-determination, pluralism" (Herr 2003, 139). Herr (2003) labels the first form of nationalism as ethnocentric nationalism and the second form as polycentric nationalism. While Herr (2003) points to the blind spots of polycentric nationalism, this author believes that for most feminists from the Global South, this is the best option for them to participate in their political struggles. The dilemma that feminists from the Global South have is that their independence is tied to national independence. When they try to address gender relations, they are faced with allegations of serving disunity or creating division in the nationalist struggle. The priority of nationalism is achieving national independence, and this often overshadows the plight of women.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, there was a discussion of the conceptualisation of patriarchy, which highlighted how men's domination and women's subordination are systemic. This was followed by a discussion of the sexual contract by Pateman and how the implicit contract legitimises men's access to women's bodies and resources. There was also a discussion on the intersection of the racial and sexual contract by Pateman and Mills (2007) and how this acknowledges the complicated situation that arises from the intersection of gender and race. Using the racial contract by Mills (1997) there was a discussion of the epistemology of ignorance, which informs not only what one can know but reveals that ignorance is not coincidental. Some efforts are made to reinforce what eventually becomes taken for granted, normalised and forms part of everyday life. The section on nationalism explored how racial patriarchy played out in nationalism and affected how women participated in anti-colonial nationalist movements. It revealed how the national agenda which is taken as the expression of an entire nation's common will/goal creates a situation where the plight of women is not addressed. The next chapter, chapter 4 will analyse the complex interplay of race and gender in the lives of the characters in *Nervous Conditions*.

Chapter 4

The Racia-Sexual Contract in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to make explicit the implicit racia-sexual contract in the lives of the characters in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. Section 4.2 introduces the main characters of *Nervous Conditions*. Section 4.3 discusses the pre-colonial foundation of

patriarchal habitus while section 4.4. examines the colonial society. Sections 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7 discuss the three dimensions of the sexual contract, namely, the political contract, the moral contract, and the epistemological contract. Section 4.8 discusses the destabilization of the racia-patriarchal habitus. Section 4.9 is the conclusion.

4.2 Nervous Conditions

Nervous Conditions by Tsitsi Dangarembga is a novel set in Rhodesia in the 1960s. Rhodesia belonged to what Samir Amin calls *Africa of labour reserve*. In *Africa of Labour Reserves*,

capital at the centre needed to have a large proletariat immediately available. This was because there was great mineral wealth to be exploited (gold and diamonds in South Africa, and copper in Northern Rhodesia), and an untypical settler agriculture in the tropical Africa of Southern Rhodesia, Kenya, and German Tanganyika. In order to obtain this proletariat quickly, the colonisers dispossessed the African rural communities - sometimes by violence - and drove them deliberately back into small, poor regions, with no means of modernising and intensifying their farming (Amin 1972, 519).

Furthermore, in the *Africa of Labour Reserve*, a large percentage of young African males would migrate to urban areas in search of employment opportunities. Women, children, and older people were left in rural areas.

The novel is narrated by Tambu Sigauke who is one of the main characters. The Sigauke's are a traditional patriarchal clan made up of several families. The eldest male is the formal head of the family. They have an ancestral home where Tambu and her family stay. Babamukuru is the head of his own nuclear family and is responsible for the Sigauke clan. He is part of the African elite as he performs the duty of being "headmaster and new duties as Academic Director of the Church's Manicaland Region" (Dangarembga 1988, 43). The narrator describes Babamukuru as "rigid and a perfectionist" (Dangarembga 1988, 87). While he financially provides for the clan, he is also authoritarian. Babamukuru is a brother to Jeremiah, Tambu's father, and a husband to Maiguru. Babamukuru and Maiguru have two children, Chido, a boy, and Nyasha, a girl.

Jeremiah is married to Ma'Shingayi and they have four children, Nhamo, the eldest son, Tambu, the eldest daughter, and Netsai, and Rambanai. As the eldest daughter in the family, Tambu has a lot of responsibilities such as; taking care of her younger siblings, helping with the

household chores, and assisting with farming. Nhamo, Tambu's elder brother is the first male child. He is seen as the family's hope out of poverty. Nhamo is rude and arrogant in how he interacts with his sister and is respectful when he interacts with his male elders. Nhamo's interaction with his sisters displays how patriarchal attitudes or notions are learned and exhibited from a young age. Nhamo's ability to adapt his attitude or actions when interacting with older males shows adherence to the implicit contract that governs how men and women interact. Nhamo's death marks the change in his sister's fate as she replaces him at the mission school.

Tambu details all the events that led to the hard feelings she had towards her brother. Tambu, who has been denied the opportunity to go to school because she is a girl, makes efforts to raise money for her school fees. These efforts were sabotaged by her brother Nhamo. Despite the sabotage, Tambu defies all odds and gets money to go to school. She gets an opportunity to go to the mission school after her brother falls ill and dies. At the mission, she has to navigate the changes and the new context that she finds herself in. She has to grapple with the new revelations about her uncle and his family, and she finally gets to understand Nyasha, her troubled Westernized cousin, who has lived abroad and is struggling to fit into what is expected from a young Shona girl. The novel is a tale of women's conformity to and resistance to the roles that are prescribed by their surroundings.

4.3 Pre-Colonial Foundation of a Patriarchal Habitus

In the first chapter of *Nervous Conditions*, Dangarembga (1988) gives the reader insights into the life before the arrival of colonizers in what became Rhodesia. It is through Tambu's grandmother, the repository of communal knowledge, that the reader comes to know about the forced removal of the people, slavery, and the disruption of family life which were a result of the arrival of, "wizards well-versed in treachery and black magic" (Dangarembga 1988, 18). According to Tambu's grandmother, the Sigauke clan only moved to the land that they now occupied after her marriage to Tambu's grandfather. Before that, they lived on fertile land, and her great-grandfather, "was a rich man in the currency of those days, having many fat herds of cattle, four wives who worked hard to produce bountiful harvests" (Dangarembga 1988, 18).

Tambu's grandfather traded the harvest for goods such as cloth, beads, axes, and guns. It is worth noting that the number of wives that Tambu's great-grandfather had is counted as wealth. Indicating that women were part of what was deemed wealth in pre-colonial Shona society, Dangarembga uses the phrase 'in the currency of those days'. Similarly, having sons is also

equated to having wealth. There is no mention of whether Tambu's grandfather had daughters and if one were to assume that he did, they are not viewed in the same light as his sons. Courville (1993) argues that pre-colonial Shona society had a complex, patriarchal structure with women having some economic, political, cultural, and social power. Like Amadiume's (1987) pre-colonial Igbo, pre-colonial Shona society was patriarchal, oppressive, and exploitative but "African women were not powerless victims" (Courville 1993, 36). Claiming that pre-colonial society was patriarchal with women holding a relatively inferior social position, the novel holds a position similar to that of Amadiume (1987) and Courville (1993).

The initial traders, who traded with Tambu's grandfather, did not settle, they just passed by. However, this changed as the traders began to occupy more land, and drove the people out. The indigenous people were expropriated from their land and forced to move and settle on a land "so stony and barren that the wizards would not use it" (Dangarembga 1988, 18). This is a familiar story of what Samir Amin called Africa of labour reserves. Without a means of livelihood, Tambu's grandfather moved with his family to one of the white settlers' farms. However, he realised that he "was enticed into slavery" (Dangarembga 1988, 18). He thus left his wife and children behind and went to the glittering mines "where honest men were said to make good money" (Dangarembga 1988, 18). Tambu's grandmother returned to the homestead, because "the white wizard had no use for women and children" (Dangarembga 1988, 18). We thus witness the new social division of labour with women left in the rural areas and men working in mines. It is after she learned that her husband had been killed at the mines, that she sought refuge from a different set of wizards, which according to Tambu's grandmother were different because "they were holy" (Dangarembga 1988, 19).

The missionaries took the family in and gave Babamukuru work by day, and he was educated by night. Tambu's grandmother asked them to prepare her son to live in their world. Babamukuru did well and was funded for his education; he did well even though he had to wait for schools for people like him (black people) to be built. His funding was later taken up by the government. In the history given by Tambu's grandmother, we see that the arrival of colonialism disrupted every aspect of the natives' lives, and it created divisions that are characteristic of colonial society. More specifically, there is a transition from pre-colonial patriarchy to racial-sexual contract and racia-patriarchy.

4.4 Colonial Society

The colonial society in *Nervous Conditions* is a site of many divisions. Fanon (1963) characterizes the colonial society as Manichean with political, economic, moral, epistemological and social divisions. Fanon writes

The settlers' town is a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage cans swallow all the leavings, unseen, unknown and hardly thought about. The settler's feet are never visible, except perhaps in the sea; but there you're never close enough to see them ... The town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other, and their huts are built one on top of the other. The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light (Fanon 1963, 4).

These divisions affect the quality of the lives lived by both the natives and the colonizers. These colonial divisions are evident in *Nervous Conditions*' fictional world.

The quality of life for the characters that lived at the mission school, and that of the characters that live at the homestead is different. The socio-economic experience is based on where the natives live and this in turn informs how much they have and the opportunities they have access to. The white people in *Nervous Conditions* are in a far better position financially and experience better living conditions than the natives. On her first trip to town to sell maize, her effort to raise money for her school fees, Tambu notes the beauty, and the splendour which is in the town, compared to her homestead in the village. She marvels at the traffic lights and the buildings. There is a difference between Magrosa, the local tuck shop close to the homestead, and the stores in the town. Tambu's immediate family lives in the village, with no electricity in their home, no running water indoors, and an outside ablution facility. Life at the mission for Babamukuru is completely different, he has everything that his brother's family lacks, their plates "always have meat" and there is "milk, jam, cakes and sugar" (Dangarembga 1988, 6).

The racial contract creates a Manichean society divided according to race, while the sexual contract creates divisions based on sex and gender. The difference between men and women in the novel can be seen in the gender role that they play, and in the assumptions made about what they can achieve in life. Assigned gender roles also have implications for the assumptions about

what women can know. All these constitute what chapter three of this work called the implicit sexual contract or patriarchal habitus. Charles Mills argues that there are three dimensions of the social contract; the political contract, the moral contract, and the epistemological contract.

4.5. The Political Contract

The political contract is a mechanism that establishes the foundation of a society. The racia-sexual contract creates a new social hierarchy with white men at the top of the social rung followed by white women with black men in the middle and black women at the bottom of the social rung. The racia-sexual contract provides guidelines for distributing social burdens and advantages. Thus, faced with financial crisis Tambu's family decides to withdraw her from school. However, Tambu takes the initiative to raise the necessary funds by planting maize that she will sell in town. Mr Matimba, the teacher who helps Tambu sell her maize, advises her to deposit the money with the school principal. However, Tambu's father demands that the money be given to him because "it is his money" (Dangarembga 1988, 30), since Tambu is his daughter. We witness a similar case in Babamukuru and Maiguru's marriage where Maiguru does not have a say concerning many things in their lives. Babamukuru takes her salary and makes decisions about how the money in the household is used. He has access not only to her body but also to her labour.

The political contract assigns individuals and groups their identities, their positions, and their roles within a group or society. In the context of colonialism and its indirect rule, the racia-patriarchal ideology assigns intelligence, creativity, and independence to men, women are assigned the opposite qualities. In the racia-patriarchal world of *Nervous Conditions*, it is the male members of a family, a clan, or the society that set the foundational principles. In the case of a family or clan, the oldest male member of a family has more power and the youngest female member has less power. This is best illustrated at the function held for Babamukuru's return from England where he had studied. It is at his homecoming that the significance of racia-patriarchal status in the novel is seen. The guest of honour enters first, "followed by a retinue of grandfathers, uncles, and brothers. Various paternal aunts, who could join by their patriarchal status and were not too shy to do so, mingled with men. Behind them danced female relatives of the lower strata" (Dangarembga 1988, 37). The last to enter was Maiguru, Babamukuru's wife, and his children.

As the family members are preparing to eat, Tambu is given a task to "carry in the water dishwater dish in which people would wash their hands", this task requires one to be "very sure

of the relative status of everyone present" (Dangarembga 1988, 40). After making the mistake of presenting it to Babamukuru first, Tambu is corrected by Babamukuru who directs her to give Uncle Isaiah, the "eldest surviving grandfather to wash first" (Dangarembga 1988, 40), she knelt and rises in front of male relatives in descending order of seniority, and lastly in front of grandmothers and aunts. The practice, an aspect of racia-patriarchal habitus since it is taken as normal, creates a disposition to prioritize males.

This hierarchical organization also plays an important role in decision-making. The decision to send Nhamo to mission school is taken at a clan council meeting, which Tambu refers to as "the patriarchy" (Dangarembga 1988, 36). The participants in this meeting include Babamukuru (the eldest), his brothers, Jeremiah and Thomas, and Tete Gladys their sister. Babamukuru is concerned about the future of the family. He is especially worried about Jeremiah's family. As a solution, he and the clan council decide that Nhamo, a "promising scholar", should live with him and his family at the mission (Dangarembga 1988, 42). A similar decision to have Tambu go and live with her uncle is made by Babamukuru and Jeremiah, much to Ma'Shingayi's distress. The decision made is final regardless of her feelings.

The same council made up of Babamukuru, Jeremiah, Thomas, and Tete also deals with the case of Lucia and Takesure. Lucia, who is pregnant, is accused of having sexual relations with Jeremiah and Takesure. When Babamukuru heard of the sexual relationship involving Lucia, Jeremiah, and Takesure, he instructed Takesure and Lucia to leave the family homestead. However, his instruction was not followed. Takesure is invited to the meeting while Lucia and all the women are not invited. The women, sitting in the kitchen point to the injustice of Lucia's absence and her inability to defend herself. In the meeting, Babamukuru reprimands Takesure for not consulting him as the "man of the house" (Dangarembga 1988, 37), concerning issues in Jeremiah's house. It is worth noting that Babamukuru, in this family meeting, starts by reasserting his authority over the homestead as the elder sibling. It is also evident from Takesure and Jeremiah's action of not informing Babamukuru of what was happening in the homestead that they too try to live outside of the patriarchal habitus.

When asked by Babamukuru to explain his actions, Takesure then absolves himself of guilt and blames everything on Lucia. The council believes his claim, due to Lucia's reputation of being the "immodest woman" (Dangarembga 1988, 143). The council comprising the paternal side of the family, all male except for their sister Tete Gladys, believes Takesure because he cites Lucia's 'failure' to operate within what is deemed modest in the moral contract. This action

by the council shows that they operate within the limits of the epistemological contract. They do not entertain nor explore the possibility that Takesure could be lying. As stated in Chapter 3 the epistemological contract allows people to disregard knowledge and justify this action, their ignorance is not a gap in knowledge but a preference for one type of knowledge over another. The council believes Takesure because what he says conforms to their knowledge of what constitutes a modest woman. These activities normalized the exclusion of women in decision-making. It is after Takesure calls Lucia a witch and blames her for the misfortune suffered by Jeremiah's family that Lucia barges in and interrupts the council.

In addition to assigning decision-making power to the people who count, the contract also assigns roles to different groups of people within a social organisation or society. In the colonial world of *Nervous Conditions*, black women are assigned domestic responsibilities such as cooking, washing clothes, and caring for children and other family members. The Christmas function at the Sigauke family paints a clear picture. The mornings began with "heating water for adults to wash" (Dangarembga 1988, 133). This is followed by the preparation of breakfast. The women would sometimes manage "to snatch a bite while the children were eating" (Dangarembga 1988, 134). Usually, women "had to wait until everyone else had finished" (Dangarembga 1988, 134). Breakfast was followed by sweeping the yard, fetching water, and washing clothes. Women were also responsible for the preparation of both lunch and supper. Since colonialism and labour migration had pushed men to mines and factories, women were also responsible for small-scale agricultural production. While these are socially useful activities, they were not accorded sufficient recognition.

In the racia-patriarchal world of *Nervous Conditions*, women are not allowed to be creative, ambitious, or adventurous. At the beginning of the novel, Tambu cannot go to school due to finances. She is also told that she does not need to get an education since her future roles as wife and mother do not require her to know how to read and write. In the context of the novel, Nhamo is not wrong, the idea of educating a girl child was not ascribed the same value as educating a boy child, and it was seen as a waste. This is seen again when plans to meet Babamukuru and his family at the airport are made. When Tambu's father sees that she is showing interest, he deters her and tells her to focus on making the provisions that they would need for the journey.

4.6. The Moral Contract

The moral contract prescribes guidelines for what is right and what is wrong. The colonial and racia-patriarchal world of *Nervous Conditions* has moral guidelines that are biased against women. For example, there are restrictions on what women and girls can wear. Wearing a short skirt is frowned upon because of the belief that a girl or a woman who wears it is trying to sexually attract men. Thus, Nyasha's attire was not only a controversial topic at her house but also in school. When Tambu meets Nyasha, she is not impressed with the "tiny little dress she wore hardly enough to cover her thighs" (Dangarembga 1988, 37). Nyasha's sexuality, the length of her dresses, and her interaction with boys are subjects of discussion on the school playground by gossiping school girls.

The moral contract also restricts children's, boys', girls', and women's expression. In particular, Mbatha (2009, 19) argues that "female assertiveness is taboo in African cultures." Boys and girls are not supposed to answer back to their elders. Babamukuru advises Tambu "to be good, to listen to what we, your parents, tell you to do" (Dangarembga 1988, 88). Nyasha is chided for talking back at her father. Babamukuru advises that "it is not good for a child to be talking all the time" (Dangarembga 1988, 100). When Chido tries to explain that Nyasha was not doing anything wrong with a boy but "they were just talking for a few minutes" (Dangarembga 1988, 114), Babamukuru commands him to be quiet. Maiguru is also silenced on a few occasions.

The moral contract also dictates what women and girls can and cannot do. The colonial society of *Nervous conditions* held that the life goal of women was to support their husbands. Jeremiah therefore reasoned that there was no need for Tambu to attend school since she would ultimately leave the family when she got married. The Sigauke family opposed Maiguru furthering her education. The Sigauke family believed that Maiguru travelled to South Africa and England and faced all the challenges that she faced to support her husband. Maiguru explains that she "studied for that degree and got it despite all of them – your uncle, your grandparents, and the rest of your family" (Dangarembga 1988, 101).

4.7. Epistemological Contract

The epistemological contract prescribes what is knowledge, what can be known, and how knowledge is produced. The epistemological contract is the taken-for-granted everyday knowledge and ways of knowing. In unjust societies, the epistemological contract is biased in favour of dominant groups. The epistemological contract allows dominant groups to impose their ways of knowing and ignorance on the subaltern groups. In patriarchal societies, the

epistemological contract is biased in favour of dominant patriarchal groups. At times stereotypes are taken as forms of knowledge. One prevalent stereotype is that a character of a woman may be judged by what they wear and who their friends are. Thus, for Babamukuru, the fact that Nyasha wears short skirts and has male friends is evidence that she has multiple sexual partners. Babamukuru accuses Nyasha of behaving like a whore (Dangarembga 1988, 114).

There is also a dominant belief, at least in the first few chapters of *Nervous Conditions*, that women do not know what they are doing. When her family faced financial challenges and withdrew Tambu from school, Tambu decided to plant maize and sell it to raise funds for her education. However, her father did not believe that was possible. Ridiculing her he says: "Just enough for the fees! Can you see her there? ... 'Such a little shrub, but already making ripe plans! Can you tell your daughter, Ma'Shingayi, that there is no money" (Dangarembga 1988, 17). When Nyasha was arguing with Babamukuru, Chido, her brother, commented: "The little fool...Why does she always have to stand up to him" (Dangarembga 1988, 113).

The colonial society restricted girls' and women's knowledge by restricting their reading. While both Tambu and her brother Nhamo display a love for reading books, it is commended in Nhamo and discouraged and shunned in Tambu because Tambu is not acting according to what is accepted and considered normal for a young girl. Tambu's father discouraged her from reading. He thought that reading was filling her mind with "impractical ideas", making her "useless for the real task of feminine living" (Dangarembga 1988, 34). Jeremiah's advice to his daughter is "Stay at home with your mother. Learn to cook and clean. Grow vegetables" (Dangarembga 1988, 15). Nyasha is another avid reader in *Nervous Conditions*: "She read about Arabs on the east coast and the British; about Nazis and Japanese and Hiroshima and Nagasaki... She wanted to know many things: whether the Jews' claim to Palestine was valid, whether monarchy was a just form of government, the nature of life and relations before colonisation, exactly why UDI was declared and what it meant" (Dangarembga 1988, 93). We see the attempt to control and censor her when her parents take away a copy of D.H Lawrence's *Lady's Chatterley's lover* that she was reading.

4.8 The Racia-Patriarchal Contract

Chapter three noted the intersection of the racial and sexual contract. This can also be observed in the lives of the characters in *Nervous Conditions*. A closer look at the dynamics of the oppression experienced by the women in *Nervous Conditions* shows that the experience of

patriarchal oppression differs based on one's racial identification. One example of the racia-patriarchal contract in the novel is when Tambu is taken to town to sell her maize to raise money for school fees. Some details are worthy to note in the interaction between Mr Matimba and the white woman (Doris). Dangarembga (1988, 27) notes Mr. Matimba's posture, tone, and the words he uses. Mr Matimba used "the softest, slipperiest voice" when talking to Doris (Dangarembga 1988, 27). Doris is very confident in her actions of reprimanding Mr Matimba for using the child for child labour. Doris does not exhibit the same qualities expected of Shona women (timidity, silence and being reserved).

It is important to note that Doris does not exhibit the same qualities expected of Shona women, that is, timidity, silence and being reserved. Doris' relation to black men does not serve as a good example for black girls. It is for this reason that Babamukuru objects to Tambu going to the new private school. In his disapproval, he states that "I have observed from my own daughter's behaviour that it is not a good thing for a young girl to associate with these white people, to have too much freedom. I have seen that girls who do that do not develop into decent women." (Dangarembga 1988,180). Babamukuru is opposed to Tambu attending a white private school because she might start questioning Shona norms and culture as they relate to gender.

The three contracts that have been discussed above are the means through which the sexual contract is legitimised and sustained. The political, moral, and epistemological contract provides a particular framework through which the sexual contract can be accepted as normal. The three contracts speak to the claim made by Tuana (2004) concerning the epistemology of ignorance. The way that society is structured is not a matter of chance, but there is work done and efforts made to create and sustain a racia-patriarchal habitus.

4.9. Resistance against Racia-Patriarchal Habitus

A racia-sexual contract is an implicit contract. It is a racia-patriarchal habitus in the sense that it is taken for granted, it is taken as how things should be done. In the beginning chapters of the novel, Tambu is depicted as having internalized this normality. At a distance, Maiguru also appears to have internalized the patriarchal normality. Maiguru is "concerned about everybody, she was gentle, conscientious, and caring" (Dangarembga 1988, 79). She appears as a dedicated and traditional wife who always listens to and abides by what her husband says. However, it is revealed in the middle of the novel that she went against the wishes of Babamukuru and the family and acquired her Master's degree. Maiguru resisted the limits placed on what she could

know as a Shona woman and acquired a Master's degree in a foreign land, achieving the same level of education as her husband. While Maiguru had employment outside her home, her salary was taken by Babamukuru. It is when she realises that her salary is used to support the Sigauke clan that the confrontation between her and Babamukuru erupts. Maiguru reaches a boiling point and decides to leave. However, Maiguru goes to her brother; a fact that disappoints Nyasha that her mother is going to her brother (a man) for help. The Maiguru that returned is not the same. The annual trip to the homestead is made but Maiguru refuses to spend the holiday there as usual, rather opting to visit for a day and not sleep over. The new Maiguru is happier and more assertive and this takes her husband Babamukuru by surprise.

Lucia, sister to Ma'Shingayi and Tambu's aunt, is beautiful and free-spirited. She is not afraid to speak her mind and does not care for tradition or formality. The first mention of Lucia in the text is when she is blamed for her sister's misfortune. Rumours of witchcraft follow her as she is unmarried. She is also accused of wanting to be the second wife of Jeremiah. Yet she only makes an appearance much later on in the book. Labelled as a promiscuous woman, she is pregnant and the paternity of the baby is unknown and largely disputed by the two men who are suspected to be the father. Jeremiah and Takesure (Tambu's uncle and Jeremiah's cousin) refuse to take responsibility for the pregnancy. Lucia's fate is to be decided in a meeting by 'the patriarchy', the Sigauke clan council headed by Babamukuru. She budes into the council meeting and makes a spectacle of Takesure, by pulling him by the ear and confronting his lies. Lucia's bravery and standing up for herself is an example of the everyday resistance of the women in the text. The women are suppressed and live in an environment that presents them with many obstacles, yet every so often each woman in the novel, like Lucia, has a moment or moments where they push back, stand their ground, and have their way.

Lucia is seemingly unaffected by 'the burden of womanhood' and yet we see how she too has to look to a man for assistance. Lucia pleads her case to Babamukuru and appeals to his good graces to get a job. Tambu and Nyasha have differing views on how Lucia 'grovelled' to get Babamukuru to help her. When asked for her opinion she states "Babamukuru wanted to be asked, so I asked. Now we both have what we wanted" (Dangarembga 1988, 160). Lucia is one character who knows the way that things ought to be in a traditional Shona setting, but she lives outside of what is deemed acceptable and also can conform to it, in a way that benefits her. This is seen when she confronts Babamukuru for his severe punishment of Tambu, it is as if she does not care about the repercussions or knows the limits of Babamukuru's power. Lucia continues to 'break the mould' as she "stirred the great drums of sadza at the girls' hostel and

went to her Grade One classes in the evening" (Dangarembga 1988, 160). Lucia is an example of one who broke all of the prescriptions of the different contracts and dared to live in a way that would benefit her regardless of what is deemed normal.

Nyasha who has been influenced by her years of living abroad, struggles to fit into the patriarchal Shona societal norms. Not only does she not fit in, she opposes and challenges them. With her short dresses and her speech, Nyasha challenges the idea of what a good Shona young woman is supposed to be. She challenges her father's authority and attempts to control her behaviour, "when her father angrily criticizes her conduct the explosion of "prurient sexual jealousy" that Wright noted (118). Nyasha collected answers with her philosophy of personal integrity. In effect, she tells her father that she knows how to negotiate right and wrong; others' opinions do not matter" (Shaw 2007, 11).

Shaw (2007, 11) writes: "Her dresses are too short; she cannot sit properly; she does not speak with modesty and decorum; she reads D. H. Lawrence; she asks inappropriate questions; she dances with abandon, and she flirts with boys". Nyasha dares to have her own sense of morality in a society with pre-existing morals and values. The act of talking back to her father as he reprimands her is unacceptable behaviour, as "silence and obedience are important values in Shona culture" (Hill 1995, 79).

Nyasha talking back to her father not only goes against the important values of silence and obedience but also shows a disregard for rank. Hill (1995, 79) asserts that "because Nyasha disregards rank, her speech disrupts and threatens the authority of gender- and race-determined status in colonial society". Hill (1995, 82) posits that Nyasha's refusal to eat is an act of disobedience and an attempt to regain control from her father. The dinner table becomes a place where Nyasha and Babamukuru 'fight'. Nyasha refuses to eat as she is instructed by her father and by so doing, she retains control.

Shaw (2007, 12) states that "virginity is one sign of the ability of the family, especially the men in the family, to defend its borders and secure its honour and status. Young women in Zimbabwe, like Nyasha, know that as women they become threats to the family honour". Tambu refuses to wear tampons during her menstruation because of fear of losing her virginity, even though her monthly period was "nasty and nauseating" (Dangarembga 1988, 95), as she used Rambanai's old napkins. Tambu after being convinced by Nyasha that she will not lose her virginity by wearing a tampon, learns that "although Maiguru knew that tampons were

offensive, that nice girls do not use them, she would be pleased enough to know that we were not pregnant to be persuaded to provide” (Dangarembga 1988, 96).

According to Shaw (2007, 12), "Nyasha does not accept that this is as it should be. Her particular mix of English and Shona values suggests that integrity is vested in a well-developed conscience and in an individual's ability to negotiate right and wrong". Nyasha by expressing her curiosity and sexuality defies the notion that a woman's sexuality is something to be guarded by men. *Nervous Conditions* records many of Nyasha's acts of resistance against prescriptions, ideas, and values that limit how a woman can express herself in the world.

Tambu is the model of a good Shona girl. At the mission, she, compared to Nyasha, exhibits all the qualities expected of a Shona girl. Babamukuru commends her for her good behaviour and yet, she is at his house because she resolves to get an education. The Tambu at the mission is not the same as the Tambu at the homestead. At the beginning of the novel, we see Tambu planting maize to sell to pay her school fees, which is after she has been discouraged by her mother, father, and brother. She resists the political contract that limited her to being a girl who was being prepared to be just a wife. Although her father discourages her from reading, she continues to read whatever she can find. Her initial relation to Babamukuru was that of vagueness and reverence. Her mother had pointed out that " It was unnatural; I would not listen to my own parents, but I would listen to Babamukuru even if he told me to laugh at my parents" (Dangarembga 1988, 164). While Tambu was initially afraid to confront her uncle about the dishonesty of her parent's wedding, she eventually summoned the courage to confront him. Tambu did not change her position even when Babamukuru threatened to stop funding her education. This is a defining moment for her as she regains her voice.

4.9. Conclusion

The characters in *Nervous Conditions*, although subjected to norms, practices, and values that suppress them, and try to shape them into particular moulds, as a matter of necessity break free, and express themselves. Through their expression, they have moments where they effect change in their environment. In this chapter, the divisions that arise in response to the increased presence of the colonizer set the tone for how the characters relate to each other. Using examples from the novel, this chapter discussed the political, moral, and epistemological contracts present in the novel and how this informed the interactions between the characters. Using the sexual contract, the range and reach of patriarchy were observed by looking at the sense of ownership the men have and enjoy over the women's bodies, work, and wealth in the

novel. Finally, this chapter has also shown how the sexual contract can find its expression even in an African context. The next chapter will continue to explore the division present in colonial societies by looking at Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and *A Dying Colonialism*.

Chapter 5

The Racia-Patriarchal Contract in Fanon's Writing

5.1 Introduction

Using Pateman's *Sexual Contract*, Mills' *Racial Contract*, and Pateman and Mills' *Contract and Domination*, Chapter 3 developed the concepts of racia-sexual contract, racia-patriarchy, and racia-patriarchal habitus. These conceptual lenses were used to articulate nationalism. The purpose of the present chapter is to excavate and articulate racia-patriarchy and racia-patriarchal habitus in the anti-colonial movement as articulated in Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. *A Dying Colonialism* plays an important role in filling up what appears as gender silences especially in the first chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*. This chapter begins with a discussion of colonialism and colonial contracts in Fanon's writings. This is followed by a discussion on violence. The third and fourth sections discuss the participation of women in the nationalist movement and the symbolism of the female body. The last section is a critical engagement of the dominance of men's interests in the nationalist agenda.

5.2. Colonialism and Colonial Contract

Broadly defined, colonialism refers “to colonial situations enforced by the presence of colonial administration...colonial situations [refer to] cultural, political, sexual and economic exploitation of subordinate racialized / ethnic groups by dominant racial/ethnic groups...” (Grosfoguel, 2009, 15). For Charles Mills, colonialism has the colonial contract as its foundation. The colonial contract “legitimated European rule over the nations in Asia, Africa and the Pacific” (Mills 1997, 25). Like the racial contract, the colonial contract has political, moral and epistemological dimensions. The political contract is central to the foundation of the colonial state. To perform its task, “the colonial state relied on a high degree of force and violence” (Mills 1997, 25). The colonial moral contract “paints the native as a sort of quintessence of evil” (Fanon 1963, 32). The native is labelled as “the corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him, he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty and morality” (Fanon 1963, 32). Colonialism is based on epistemological ignorance, a claim that the land was created by colonizers and a belief that if colonizers leave “all is lost, and the country will go back to the Middle Ages” (Fanon 1965, 40).

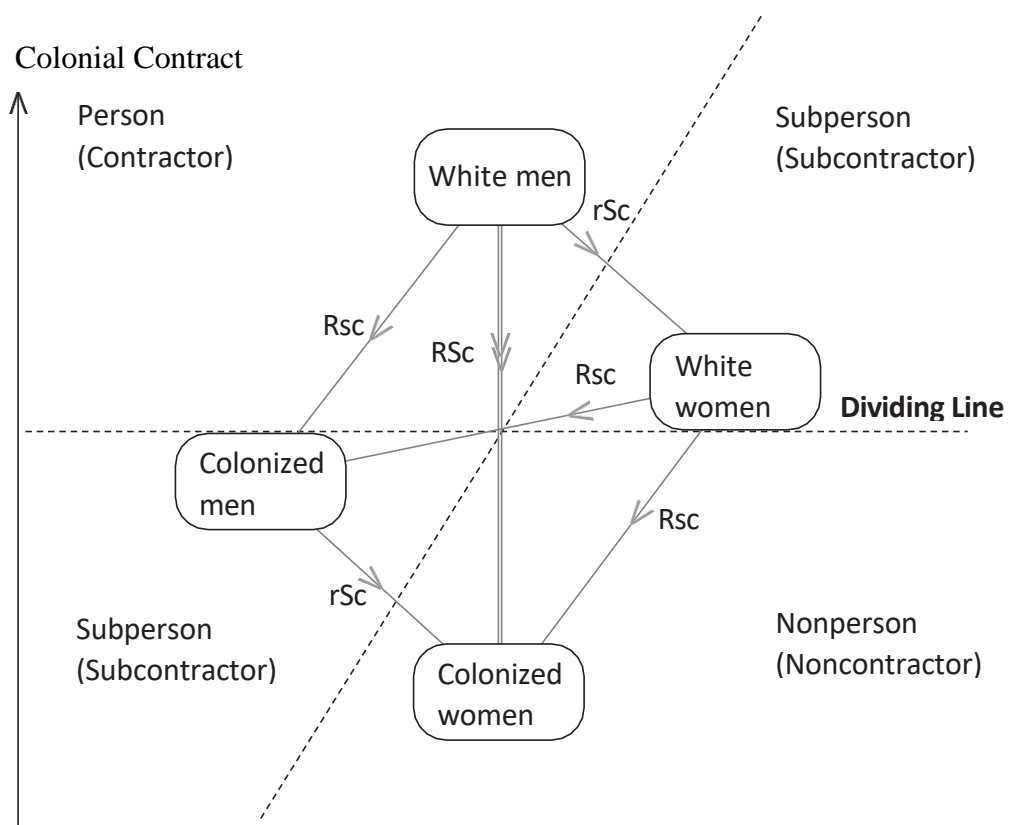


Figure 3 Modified from Mills (2007, 174)

The colonial contract can best be represented by Figure 3, above. The colonial world, as Fanon advises, is divided into two zones: the zone of the colonizer and the zone of the colonized. Figure 3 shows the Dividing Line that separates these two zones. In the colonial zone, the white men as full persons and contractors while the white women are sub-persons and subcontractors. In the colonized zone, both colonized men and women were considered sub-persons, but the colonized men were subcontractors, and the colonized women were non-contractors. In the colonized zone, the colonized men have relatively more power than the colonized women.

Schultz (2021) points out the colonial roots of racial patriarchy in Algeria. According to Schultz (2021), women played diverse and empowered roles in precolonial Algeria. What accounted for racial patriarchy in Algeria “was the suffocating effects of the colonial situation for Algerian men and the collapse of their societal power” (Schultz 2021, 5). Sekyi-Otu (1997) points out how Fanon maps a gender-divided world among the colonized. Fanon highlights that the colonised elite, mostly male, had received colonial education, some were teachers, and others worked in offices. They were more educated than the women and these educated men became leaders of the nationalist movement. Sutton (1995), Kisitu and Ssebunya (2016) highlight how men who have access to colonial education then went on to assume leadership positions.

The colonial world was Manichean. It is by violence that this compartmentalized world, with limitations on the native “represented by the barracks and the police stations” was created (Fanon 1963, 3). Most importantly, in the context of colonial Africa, race marked the divide. For Fanon “what divides this world is first and foremost what species, what race one belongs to” (Fanon 1963, 5). The upper part of Figure 1 is the colonizer’s zone while the lower half is the colonizer’s zone. According to Fanon (1963, 4) the world of the colonialist is a world of plenty, where even the “trash cans constantly overflow with strange and wonderful garbage, undreamed-of leftovers.” In contrast, “the colonized sector is a famished sector, hungry for bread, meat, shoes, coal, and light” (Fanon 1963, 4). The colonized looks at the world of the colonist with “a look of lust, a look of envy. Dreams of possession. Every type of possession: of sitting at the colonist’s table and sleeping in his bed, preferably with his wife” (Fanon 1963, 5). The world of the colonist, the world of domination, oppression and exploitation is enforced

and reinforced by violence. Fanon (1963, 4) states, “the government’s agent uses a language of pure violence. The agent does not alleviate oppression or mask domination. He displays and demonstrates them with the clear conscience of the law enforcer and brings violence into the homes and minds of the colonized subject.” Violence becomes so ingrained in the minds of the colonised that “the muscles of the colonised are always tense” (Fanon 1963, 16).

5.3 The Racial Patriarchal Habitus under Colonialism

Habitus is an accepted and normal way of being and doing. When colonialism was dominant and relatively unchallenged, the native was “the coiled, plundered creature which ... provides fodder for the processes as best he can, the process which moves uninterruptedly from the banks of the colonial territory to the palaces and the docks of the mother country” (39). In this phase, the native “is being hemmed in ... The first thing that the native learns is to stay in his place, and not go beyond certain limits” (40). This was the case in Algeria before 1954. In *A Dying Colonialism*, Fanon explains that survivors and witnesses of colonial invasion “related episodes of conquest. In many regions of Algeria, the accounts of massacres and the burning of villages were still vividly remembered ... a certain passivity encouraged by colonial domination made itself evident and gradually took a tinge of despair” (100). Furthermore, “The deep hold taken by colonial society, its frenzy to transform itself into a necessity, the wretchedness on which it was built, gave life that familiar tinge of resignation” (102). Parents encouraged their children to think about work and marriage instead of political struggle. Within the family confines, male adults and male children continue to enjoy “an almost lordly status” (103). In contrast, the girl child adopted “the behaviour and values of Algerian feminine society ... she learns the higher value of the man” (106).

The bottled-up anger of the colonized finds its outlets in dreams, “the dreams of the native are always of muscular prowess” (Fanon 1965, 40). Furthermore, the colonized “will first manifest this aggressiveness which has been deposited in his bones against his own people” (40). In addition, the colonised people’s anger “finds outlets regularly in bloodthirsty explosions – in tribal warfare, in feuds between septs and in quarrels between individuals” (Fanon 1963, 42). While *A Dying Colonialism* does not have physical violence among family members, there is symbolic violence as the girl child is made to believe that she is of lesser value than the boy child. The colonised people’s passivity and resignation are misleading as some segments of the colonized may be overpowered but are not tame. Conditions were therefore ripe for armed confrontation between the coloniser and the colonised. However, racia-patriarchal habitus gave

the colonized men a head start and hence an advantage to take the positions of leadership in the anti-colonial struggle.

5.4 The Dividing Nature of Violence

The theme of violence in Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* attracted a lot of negative critique from early scholars of his works. In general, early scholarship claimed that Fanon was glorifying violence. While *The Wretched of Earth* and Fanon's other writings deal with different forms of violence, earlier critics focused on physical violence. Later scholars such as Nigel Gibson, Jane Anna Gordon, Lewis Gordon, and Ato Sekyi-Otu, among others, called for a broader and more nuanced reading of Fanon's works.

The first chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth* is translated by some as "Concerning violence" while others translate it as "On violence". The previous section of this chapter discussed a racial patriarchal habitus that is characterized by symbolic violence as large segments of the colonized seem to have accepted their position under colonial conditions. However, Fanon indicated that passiveness was deceiving and temporary. The transition to confrontation with colonialism only happened "when official and peaceful channels [have been] exhausted" (Fanon 1965, 101). To the colonized, it appeared as if violence was the only means available to fight colonialism. It seemed "that the agents of government speak the language of pure force" (Fanon 1965, 29).

Fanon establishes from the onset that national liberation can only be achieved by using violence. Violence is the means through which the colonialists set up the divided world. The divided world is reinforced and sustained by violence. For Fanon, this divided world established by violence "can only be challenged by out and out violence" (Fanon (1963, 3). According to Castelli (2022, 327) for Fanon "anticolonial violence allows the oppressed to vent their rage against those who are truly responsible for injustices that they have suffered". Ismail (1992, 1677) argues that since Fanon does not "allow for any other form of resistance" he forges a "nationalist subject/ agent that is singularly male". In *The Wretched of the Earth*, it is the muscles of the colonized male that "are always tensed" because "he is always ready to change his role as game for that of hunter" (Fanon 1963, 16). Ismail (1992, 1678) argues that "Fanon links nationalism, patriarchy and (revolutionary) violence" in *On Violence*. The violent nature of the armed struggle already puts men in the position of leadership. It creates a situation where "the colonised man becomes the agent who can ultimately end colonialism and perhaps replace the "old man"" (Nya 2015, 70).

Fanon notes that “the people are sometimes surprised that, instead of buying a dress for their wife, the colonised buy a transistor radio” (Fanon 1963, 40). According to Nya (2015, 67), the transistor radio was “a status symbol” associated with expressing French values, purchased and owned by well-off Algerians who were fluent in the French language and culture due to their French education. It was rejected by some of the educated Algerian natives due to conflict with traditional Algerian family values. Fanon’s mention of this gives insight into the mind-set of the colonised at the time. The armed struggle was the most important and the woman’s needs are insignificant in comparison.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*’s first chapter, women are largely silent. The absence of the voice of women in *On Violence* during the armed struggle tells of a double oppression that women within the colonised group experience. The reading of *A Dying Colonialism* provides a clue to these silences. In *A Dying Colonialism* Fanon discusses the traditional patriarchal views which governed interactions within the Algerian family and the society at large. Fanon discusses how armed struggle led to changes in some of the family gender relations. As Sharpley-Whiting (1999) confirms, Fanon “is clearly aware of the hierarchical nature of gender relations, Fanon reveals how women are marginalized in the household and treated as “minors”” (Sharpley-Whiting 1999,347). The silence of the women in *On Violence* does not reflect Fanon’s misogyny but reflects gender relations in colonial Algeria.

5.5 The Participation of Women in the Nationalist Movement in Algeria

The participation of women in Algeria’s anti-colonial war has been a controversial issue among readers of Fanon. Helie-Lucas (1999) accuses Fanon and others of mythicizing the role of women in the Algerian armed struggle. Helie-Lucas suggests that in Fanon’s writings and plays, one has an image of “courageous women fighting alongside men” (Helie-Lucas 1999, 271). Helie-Lucas (1999) argues that this assertion by Fanon and others cannot be supported by the history of the anti-colonial movement and post-independence realities. On the surface, these critics seemed to be supported by Fanon’s writings. In the first chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*, the protagonists are male. It is the male protagonist with the tensed muscles who is always ready to attack the coloniser. Similarly, the antagonist is a male colonizer.

While the first chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth* does not interrogate gender divisions and hierarchy among the colonized, this is addressed in *A Dying Colonialism*. Sekyi-Otu (1997) reads the opening pages of *A Dying Colonialism*’s first chapter as illustrating gender divisions within the colonized. Sekyi-Otu explains “The male artefact is multiply configurable, testifying

thereby to the relative autonomy of the agent in relation to the symbolic structure. The veil is, on the other hand, characterized by invariance, uniformity, formal constraint and closure” (1997, 220).

The girl child in the colonial Algerian family did not enjoy the same rights and privileges that the boy child did. The girl “is always one notch behind the boy... who enjoys an almost lordly status” (Fanon 1965, 105). The colonial Algerian society like the fictional society in *Nervous Conditions* assigns the qualities of independence and leadership to men. The relationship between the father and daughter is almost non-existent. According to Fanon (1965, 106) when a girl reaches puberty her father avoids seeing her because he does not want to interact with this “new woman without a status, a childwoman” in his house. In pre-revolutionary Algeria characterized by high illiteracy and unemployment, the young woman saw marriage as liberation, because if she did not marry she would stay a minor that needs to be looked after (Fanon 1965, 107). However, the options available to women changed with the development of the anti-colonial struggle. During the struggle for national liberation the woman was no longer limited to being a wife or living perpetually in a state of being a child but, “the young girl was replaced by a militant” (Fanon 1965, 108).

The militancy of the young girl changed how the father and daughter related. The militant has to leave home at a moment’s notice to hide from the police (Fanon 1965, 108). The daughter no longer wearing her veil and staying out at night is not met with the same reaction or consequences that she would have in the past. The struggle made it such that, “the father himself no longer had any choice. His old fear of dishonour had become altogether absurd in light of the immense tragedy being experienced by the people” (Fanon 1965, 108). The struggle affected and changed societal norms such as marriage rules. Before the struggle, people entered into arranged marriages, where “it is almost always at the wedding that the husband sees his wife’s face for the first time” (Fanon 1965, 114). The increased participation of the people in the anti-colonial movement called for a change in marriage laws. For the first time, “registries were opened... marriage in the maquis ceased to be an arrangement between families” (Fanon 1965, 115).

The struggle for national liberation empowered women to voice their opinions. Consequently, the young women in Algeria “would vow to never let themselves get married to a man who did not belong to F.L.N” (Fanon 1965, 112). Fanon (1965, 112-113) claims When a husband complained about the hardship in the struggle, the wife would remind the husband that, “you

promised to come back once independence had been won” (Fanon 1965, 113). The relationship between husbands and their wives changed because of the struggle. Men and women became allies, the wife “would insist on being given certain names and addresses of militants to warn in case the husband should be arrested” (Fanon 1965, 112).

However, the equal participation of women in the anti-colonial struggle has been questioned. Nya (2015) argues that the equal participation that Fanon identifies in *A Dying Colonialism* is imagined, women’s “actions portrayed not their own will against colonial, racial and gender oppression but rather the will of colonized men who were the ones to truly want the end of colonialism” (Nya 2015,70). Women were not active participants alongside the men but were agents who did the men’s bidding. This is further evidenced by Ismail (1992) who argues that women were not able to advocate for their issues during the liberation struggle.

Women were not initially directly involved in Algeria’s anti-colonial military struggle. The decision “to involve the women as active elements of the Algerian revolution” (Fanon 1965, 48) was taken by the male leadership of the FLN. This decision was only taken when the FLN leadership was forced by the demands of war. On the part of the FLN leadership, there was an assumption that women were weak – the “revolutionary characteristic of this combat, the absolute necessity for secrecy, obliged the militant to keep his woman in absolute ignorance” (Fanon 1965, 48). The FLN leadership also set a higher standard for women’s participation, “[a] moral elevation and a strength of character that was altogether exceptional would therefore be required of women” (Fanon 1965, 48). Women were required to prove themselves, they had to “show the same spirit of sacrifice as the men” (Fanon 1965, 48). Women freedom fighters were thus expected to “emulate ‘masculine’ heroes” (Herr 2003, 137). Participation in armed struggle indeed enabled “the colonized woman to reclaim her humanity from both the colonial oppressor and the colonized man who lashed out at her due to his sudden loss of societal influence” (Schultz 2021, 9). However, it is important to note that the racial patriarchal habitus and the junior incorporation of women in the armed struggle meant that participation in the armed struggle did not generate the same social, political and military capital as that accrued to their male counterparts. These differences in power and capital accumulated during the struggle were going to shape the postcolonial state in favour of men.

5.6 The Symbolism of the Female Body

Some forms of nationalism tend to essentialize female bodies. For Herr (2003, 137) and McClintock (1993, 62), the body of the woman symbolically represents the nation. For colonial

Algeria, “[b]eneath the patrilineal pattern of Algerian society, the specialist described a structure of matrilineal essence” (Fanon 1965, 37). The motto of the colonial administration was “If we want to destroy the structure of Algerian society, its capacity for resistance, we must first of all conquer the women” (Fanon 1965, 37-38). The defeat and conquering of the woman is the first and major step in conquering the nation. When the woman is violated it is seen as an act of violation against the nation, “it becomes the national defilement by foreign forces” (Herr 2003, 137).

The veil played an important role in the Algerian anti-colonial struggle. At the beginning of chapter 1 of *A Dying Colonialism*, Fanon points out the importance of clothes in social identity. Since colonialism regarded colonized Algeria as centred on a matriarchal substructure, it was important for colonialism to unveil or de-veil Algerian women. It was claimed that Algerian women were passive and secluded, hidden behind the veil and in their houses. The unveiling of the woman was significant to the Europeans, for as the woman unveils she is making a statement of renouncing Algerian values and embracing Western values. Thus, French colonialism “framed women’s *évolution* to Western standards as proof of an unfulfilled component of the *mission civilisatrice*” (Schutz 2021, 4). Fanon (1965, 59) citing the confessions and dreams of unveiled women, likens unveiling to nakedness. The woman “relearns her body, re-establishes it in a totally revolutionary fashion” (Fanon 1965, 59). According to Fanon (1965, 60) the unveiled woman who has to relearn her body, has to deal with the pressure of being an essential part of the revolution. She also has to deal with the shock from family and friends who see that she has unveiled.

However, as Sekyi-Otu points out,

Fanon in effect warns us that the entry of women into the public realm – be it in the form of clandestine revolutionary operations, visible acts of cultural resistance, or even the exercise of rights and duties in political institutions – would be but a partial and ephemeral victory unless the habits of self-determination and willed obligation are made manifest in the home (1997, 227).

5.7 The Nationalist Agenda is the Aspirations of Men

In an unideal social contract framework, which is adopted by Charles Mills, the emergence of a political community shows the triumph of hegemonic groups. In Mills’ modified racia-patriarchal contract, white men are a hegemonic group followed by white women with black/colonized men in the middle and black/colonized women at the bottom. In anti-colonial

struggles, especially in settler colonies, there was a contestation on the participation of whites in the nationalist anti-colonial movement. Even in cases where whites were not directly involved in leadership, their presence was felt ideologically. In the first chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon criticized African anti-colonial parties for importing ideologies and structures that did not meet the needs of their contexts.

The role of a political community such as a nationalist movement is to aggregate the interests of different groups. However, in this process of aggregation, the interests of dominant groups take precedence. In a racial patriarchal society such as Algeria, the unity that was preached by the nationalist movement privileged the interests of Algerian males. Thus, FLN claimed that “women could only achieve equality by fighting for a country freed from colonial domination” (Leonhardt 2013, 48). McClintock (1993, 61-62) is therefore correct to claim that the idea of unity in nationalism is not true as it does not acknowledge how nations do not treat men and women equally. McClintock (1993) correctly points out that the needs of the nation are “identified with the frustrations and aspirations of men” (McClintock 1993, 62). However, McClintock failed to point out the importance of racial stratification.

The violent nature and urgency of the armed struggle do not allow women to voice out their needs, when they do, they are met with the empty promise of addressing those issues post-independence (Herr 2003). As it has been observed in the writings of Helie-Lucas, Amrane and Moore, the needs of women remain unaddressed post-independence. In addition to this, the freedoms once enjoyed during the struggle are stripped away as men retort, “Yes, we have a revolution. Our women helped us a lot. They continue to help, as you see. Revolutions are not for turning women into men” (Lazarus 1993, 71).

5.8 Conclusion

By exploring Fanon’s writing, in particular, the first chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth* and *A Dying Colonialism*, this chapter argued that the anti-colonial movement was anchored on a racia-patriarchal contract. The role of racial patriarchal habitus, in the nationalist movement, helps explain the persistence of patriarchy, gender-based violence and gender inequalities in post-colonial Africa. The chapter began with a discussion of colonialism and colonial contracts which was followed by a discussion of women’s participation in the nationalist movement, the symbolism of the female body and the dominance of men’s interests in the nationalist agenda. The next chapter concludes this dissertation by presenting a summary of the main findings and conclusions in relation to the stated objectives of the study.

Chapter 6

Summary, Conclusion and Study's Relevance

6.1 Summary and Conclusion

This study using Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, Fanon's *The Wretch of the Earth* and *A Dying Colonialism* set out to investigate the link between the gendered nature of the nationalist movement and persisting gender violence and inequalities in the post-colonial African state. Chapter 2 of this study reviewed selected literature which discussed nationalism, patriarchy, the anti-colonial nationalist movement, and the racial patriarchal contract. In the section on nationalism, Fanon is criticised for having essentialist views and for imposing an imagined sense of unity onto the colonised. The section found that the scholars who criticise Fanon do not acknowledge that Fanon's views on nationalism are complex. Although scholars acknowledged the gendered nature of anti-colonial nationalist movements. These scholars did not link the persistence of patriarchy in the post-colonial state to pre-existing racial patriarchal foundations within nationalist movements. This is the gap that has been addressed by this study. This study also explored the racia-patriarchal contract in *Nervous Conditions* which acknowledges the complex situation of oppression.

Chapter 3 discussed Pateman's sexual contract, Charles Mills' implicit contract, racia-patriarchal habitus and nationalism which are the theories and concepts that guided this study. These theoretical and conceptual tools enabled the observation of the way the racia-sexual contract manifests in the lives of the characters in *Nervous Conditions*. They also allowed for

the excavation of the racial patriarchal foundations of the anti-colonial nationalist movement, by highlighting the patriarchal habitus in the colonized and post-colonial society as found in Fanon's writings.

In chapter 4 the sexual contract was observed in the everyday life of the characters in the colonised society in *Nervous Conditions*. This study showed by providing examples of the political contract, moral contract, and epistemological contract from the novel how the female characters were subject to patriarchal attitudes, norms and values. The political, moral and epistemological contracts are how the racia-patriarchal contract is reinforced and sustained within the colonised group. The incorporation of the racia-sexual contract showed that the experience of oppression is not homogenous but is informed by one's contractual status, explained by Mills (2007) in Figure 4 in Chapter 3. The racia-sexual contract showed that the black men who dominate the black women, do not have the same patriarchal access when relating to white women. It is black women who are oppressed in both the racial and patriarchal aspects of the racia-patriarchal contract.

Chapter 5 argued for the importance of reading *The Wretched of the Earth* and *A Dying Colonialism* together. *A Dying Colonialism* fills in what appears to be gender gaps and silences in *The Wretched of the Earth*. The reading of these texts together allows the reader to recognize the racia-patriarchal found in the anti-colonial movement that is discussed by Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*. The traditional Algerian family values account for the silence of women in *On Violence*. The Algerian family like the Shona family in *Nervous Conditions* have similar norms and values that prescribe how women should behave, one of the prescriptions being silence. Like in *Nervous Conditions* the men in the colonised group limit the women's exposure to Western culture and education as this is a threat to the patriarchal habitus. The change in women necessitated by their participation in the armed struggle is similar to the everyday resistance observed in *Nervous Conditions*. This chapter also looked at the symbolism of the woman's body in nationalism where some scholars argue that the body of the woman is the symbol of the nation, which is why men 'have to guard it like the nation's boundaries'. Yuval-Davis and Anthias note the tendency of nationalism to homogenize. However, incorporating the racial-patriarchal contract highlights gender and racial differences within a nation. Finally, this chapter found that the national agenda is expressed in male terms, this is due to colonial education equipping men with skills that enable them to occupy leadership positions during the armed struggle and after.

The study had four questions that it set out to address. The first question asked: What is the sexual contract and how does it relate to the racial contract? This question was addressed in chapter 3. The sexual contract is an attempt by Carole Pateman to correct the omissions of social contract theories. Pateman argued that underlying the social contract is a sexual contract that legitimizes the subordination of women. Charles Mills first expanded the critique of social contract tradition by including a racial dimension. In collaboration with Pateman, he developed the concepts of racia-sexual contract and racia-patriarchy to account for the gender dimensions. What is particularly important for this study is Mills' observation that the social contract is actually an implicit contract, it is a taken-for-granted manner in which we address social and political questions. On this basis, this study proposed a concept of racia-patriarchal habitus, the everyday beliefs and practices of racial patriarchy.

The second question asked: What is the relationship between African anti-colonial nationalism and the racia-sexual contract? This question is answered in Chapter 5 which shows the racia-sexual contract, racia-patriarchy and racia-patriarchal habitus as forming the foundation of the anti-colonial movement and the subsequent birth of a post-colonial nation. The deployment of racia-patriarchy and racia-patriarchal habitus enables the reader to decipher the continuity between colonialism, anti-colonial struggle and the post-colonial state. The third question asked: What is the position of gender in Fanon's "On Violence"? Firstly, this study addressed claims that Fanon is a misogynist in Chapter 2. A review of existing literature showed that Fanon addressed gender inequalities, patriarchal attitudes, norms and values in *A Dying Colonialism* and *The Wretched of the Earth*. This research project further argued that reading *A Dying Colonialism* is important for a better understanding of Chapter 1 of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. While women seem invisible in the first chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*, they are active in *A Dying Colonialism*. *A Dying Colonialism* helps the reader to connect racial patriarchy in colonial Algeria to the anti-colonial liberation movement. The dominance of men's interests in the national agenda and the constrained participation of women in armed struggle is clarified.

The fourth and last question is: How does the racia-sexual contract manifest in *Nervous Conditions* and Fanon's works? This question is primarily answered in chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 of this study explored the manifestation of the racial sexual contract and racia-patriarchy in the lives of the characters in *Nervous Conditions*. The patriarchal habitus was identified in the roles that were assigned to the women. The political contract, moral contract,

and epistemological contract were identified in the roles that were assigned the women, the morals and the way they were restricted from acquiring certain types of knowledge. In Chapter 5 the manifestation of the racia-sexual contract was identified in the patriarchal Algerian society and they were also identified in the anti-colonial nationalist movement in *A Dying Colonialism*.

6.2 The Study's Relevance and Contribution to Knowledge

Various international and continental instruments are designed to fight the scourge of gender-based violence and inequality among women. At the international level, for example, are Sustainable Development Goals, with Sustainable Goal 5 aimed at Gender Equality. At the continental level is the Maputo Protocol on Women's Rights. Questions are usually raised around the domestication of these tools which primarily takes the form of legislation at the country level. This study implies that protocols and legislations are not enough, what is required is to transform the racia-patriarchal habitus. The racial and gendered ways of doing, being and knowing. While it is true that a lot of work has been done and is being done on Fanon and Dangarembga, this study further provokes further research into the racially gendered nature of African post-colonial states.

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