

embedded in the Zimbabwean experience, the novel has a universal significance — as testified by its winning the prestigious Noma Award. Chenjerai Hove is to be congratulated for producing such a powerful novel, his first written in English, and the reading public, undoubtedly, eagerly awaits his next book.

Baobab Books are also to be congratulated on the excellent quality of the book. Luke Tongoronga's illustrations are very striking and the cover is very attractive indeed.

University of Zimbabwe

M. Z. MALABA

Nervous Conditions By *Tsitsi Dangarembga*. Harare, Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1988, 204 pp., ISBN 0-949225-79-7, Z\$13,20.

First things first: this is a very well-written and absorbing novel. The writer's lucid prose style immediately involves the reader in the unfolding drama of the young Shona heroine growing up as she struggles to understand and to adapt to two very different cultures and life-styles. As the young Tambudzai grows up she has to come to terms with both the traditional African culture, as typified by her parents' homestead in the rural areas of the then Rhodesia, and the modern, Western way of life as typified by the mission run by her wealthy, comparatively sophisticated uncle where she is educated. The narrator, blending the shrewd innocence of the child she was and the reflective, slightly cynical woman she is now, sees both systems for what they are: unlike many African writers, Tsitsi Dangarembga does not view the rural homestead in nostalgic, sentimental terms; indeed there are several passages in the novel describing the poverty, squalor, and hopelessness of Tambudzai's parents' home with horrifying realism.

But all is not sweetness and light on the other side either. The Western way of life is portrayed as attractive, but dangerous. The strains of living in a foreign culture warp Tambudzai's uncle's essentially benevolent nature and mar his relationship with his daughter, Nyasha (whose mentality is more English than Shona as a result of spending most of her early childhood in England). Tambudzai's downtrodden mother sums up this predicament most succinctly: 'It's the Englishness, it'll kill them all if they aren't careful' (p. 202). It is partly this strain of adapting to two conflicting cultures that gives rise to the 'nervous conditions' of the title.

This novel is also about another kind of conflict, that between the sexes. It is, in the narrator's own words, 'my story, the story of four women whom I loved, and our men' (p. 204). At first, Tambudzai sees women's subordinate position as part of their poverty, but comes to realize that

the victimization... was universal. It didn't depend on poverty, on lack of education or on tradition. It didn't depend on any of the things I thought it depended on. Men took it everywhere with them... But what I didn't like was the way all the conflicts came back to this question of femaleness. Femaleness as opposed and inferior to maleness (pp. 115-16).

Each of the four women reacts differently to this attempted subjugation, and their actions and attitudes make up a great deal of the interest of this book.

All these points, though themselves very much worth writing about, would

not of themselves make a good story, but Tsitsi Dangarembga's fluid style of writing, her ability to evoke the sights, sounds and smells of the rural Rhodesia of the 1960s and her knack of portraying the events and characters in her novel in a lifelike and believable fashion make this novel 'a very good read'. Furthermore, this story, by its very nature, widens the understanding and deepens the sympathy of the reader, especially those readers who, like myself, have very little experience of life in the rural areas of this country. This book deserves the success it has achieved, notably in winning the Commonwealth Literature Prize (Africa region) in 1989.

University of Zimbabwe

CAROLINE MACNAUGHTAN

Leeds Southern African Studies Leeds, Univ. of Leeds Southern African Studies Leeds, Univ. of Leeds, African Studies Unit and Department of Politics, 1988-, pp. and price vary.

This series of working papers began in 1988 and is already into its sixteenth publication. They vary in length (20-40 pages A5) and in price (£1.50 - 2.00).

The first to concern Zimbabwe was No. 5, M. Sato's *The Organisation and Effectiveness of Cooperatives in Zimbabwe* which was published in 1988. Based on his doctoral thesis (Leeds, 1987), Sato's paper traces the development of co-operatives since 1980 and attempts to delineate their position in the changing political economy of Zimbabwe.

The next, No. 6, was D. Pankhurst's *Women's Lives and Women's Struggles in Rural Zimbabwe*, also published in 1988 and based on her doctoral thesis (Liverpool, 1982). This paper reports a study of a village in Mangwende Communal Land, undertaken in order to establish the linkages between gender relations and agriculture.

The next, No. 7, was L. Cliffe's *Prospects for Agrarian Transformation in Zimbabwe*, also published in 1988. This is an extended version of his essay, 'The prospects for agricultural transformation in Zimbabwe', published in C. Stoneman (ed.), *Zimbabwe's Prospects* (London, Macmillan, 1988). In analysing the forces at work, the author seems to have a gloomy view of the likelihood of change unless the grip of technical experts and bureaucrats can be broken.

The latest in the series to focus on Zimbabwe is L. Sachikonye's *The State and Agribusiness in Zimbabwe: Plantations and Contract Farming*, published in 1989 and also based on a doctoral thesis (Leeds, 1989). The term 'contract farming' here means out-grower production, in this case of tea and sugar, under contract to large estates owned largely by foreign capital. The study concentrates on the labour process among out-growers and the emergence of differentiation between grower and of competition between out-growers and the workers on the plantations.

R. S. R.