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Mortgaged Futures: Trauma, Subjectivity, and the Legacies  
of Colonialism in Tsitsi Dangaremba's *The Book of Not*

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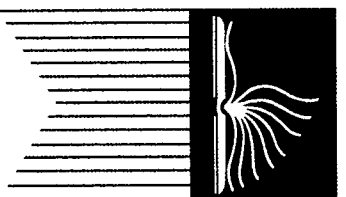
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## *Studies in the Novel*

### Special Issue

## Postcolonial Trauma Novels

### Guest Editors

Stef Craps and Gert Buelens

Ghent University, Belgium

# MORTGAGED FUTURES: TRAUMA, SUBJECTIVITY, AND THE LEGACIES OF COLONIALISM IN TSITSI DANGAREMBGA'S *THE BOOK OF NOT*

ROSANNE KENNEDY

Because it...den[ies] the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: "In reality, who am I?"

Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

I was...being transformed into a young woman with a future. What I was most interested in was myself and what I would become.

Tsitsi Dangarembga, *The Book of Not*

## Introduction

In *World Memory*, a collection of essays on trauma, memory, and witnessing in global contexts, Jill Bennett and I argued that trauma studies has been circumscribed by its predominant focus on Euro-American events and experiences and particularly the Holocaust. We called for a transformation of the field from a monocultural discipline grounded in a psychoanalytic methodology to a "mode of enquiry that can inform the study of memory within a changing global context." To facilitate this transformation, we advocated that trauma scholars engage with "the multicultural and diasporic nature of contemporary culture," and that postcolonial critics engage with trauma studies to develop frameworks for analyzing the traumatic legacies of colonialism (5). Our concern was not simply that trauma studies was impoverished by failing to address non-Western memories of trauma and loss. Rather, we were concerned

that opportunities for understanding the historical traumas and sufferings of other cultures as transmitted through truth commissions, literature, film, and visual art were being denied by the Western orientation of trauma studies. If "trauma's address beyond itself" was indeed, as Cathy Caruth proposed, to function "as a means of moving out of a 'historical isolation,'" it would be necessary for literary and cultural critics to engage with diverse testimonial practices and cultural languages of trauma (11). In recent years, trauma studies has become increasingly global, although there is still, arguably, limited dialogue regarding the core concepts and frameworks of postcolonial theory and trauma theory. In this essay, I pursue the project of "worlding" trauma studies through a reading of Tsitsi Dangarembga's recent novel *The Book of Not* (2006), which addresses issues of trauma, colonialism, and denial during the violent transformation from white-minority rule in Rhodesia in the 1970s to an independent Zimbabwe in the 1980s. This novel, a compelling contribution to the contemporary literature of trauma, expands the canon beyond Western experiences, introducing new voices, subjectivities, and legacies of colonial trauma. At the same time, it enables critics to ask to what extent Western trauma theory provides a productive lens through which to address issues of postcolonialism, racism, and identity. As I write in April 2007, stories about the political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe, the desperate state of its people, and the brutalities being perpetrated against opponents of the Mugabe regime feature regularly in the international media, a potent reminder of how the unresolved legacies of colonial trauma haunt the global future.

Along with novels such as Yvonne Vera's *Stone Virgins* (2002), *The Book of Not* is part of a recent flowering of Zimbabwean women's writing, that is concerned with, among other things, the war of liberation and its after-effects.<sup>1</sup> Much of the historical and fictional literature of the Zimbabwean war has been written by men and has obscured women's experiences of war (Lyons 26). Whereas *Mothers of the Revolution* presents oral testimony from Zimbabwean women involved in the war, Dangarembga innovatively uses irony, humor, and farce to dramatize the absurdities of racism in a colonial society and the impediments to witnessing it, thereby bringing into visibility what is unspeakable in (post)colonial Zimbabwe. The novel dramatizes the narrator's struggle to break out of a repetition compulsion, manifested in her obsessive desire for recognition, which continually leaves her deflated and depressed. Dangarembga's use of fiction to articulate the Rhodesian legacy of colonialism and racism is particularly significant given the taboo on speaking about race in Zimbabwe today. Explaining why it took so long to write this novel, she comments: "I find it difficult to write about race...having gone through so much as a result of it. I use the past tense, but racist supremacist practices still abound in Zimbabwe, and are perpetrated not only by white people. Everything I have tried to write about it so far has sounded fantastic, absurd and unreal" ("Interview" 209). Dangarembga's writing is informed by a cosmopolitan

awareness of discourses of trauma, memory, and colonialism as well as lived experiences of being a black African woman in colonial Rhodesia, postcolonial Zimbabwe, and the West. After being educated in Zimbabwe, Dangarembga studied psychology and medicine at Cambridge University in the late 1970s, returned to Zimbabwe, and in the 1990s studied and practiced filmmaking in Germany before again returning to Zimbabwe. Her first novel, *Nervous Conditions*, was published in 1988, followed by *The Book of Not*, a long-anticipated sequel, in 2006. She has directed feature films, and, more recently, films that draw on Zimbabwean myths and icons with the aim of developing a Zimbabwean national cinema.<sup>2</sup>

In *Nervous Conditions*, a coming-of-age story set in Rhodesia in the 1960s, Tambudzai Sigauke tells the story of her childhood and early adolescence. The death of her brother at the Mission school, of which her uncle Babamukura is the headmaster, gives her the opportunity she craves to further her own education. Despite the protest of her grieving mother, she happily leaves the village to live with her uncle's family. She befriends her cousin Nyasha, who has spent much of her childhood in England while her parents studied. She witnesses Nyasha's adolescent rebellion against her controlling father, which is manifested in the "un-African" (according to the white psychiatrist) conditions of bulimia and anorexia and ends with a breakdown that lands her in a psychiatric ward. While Nyasha misses a year of school, Tambu wins a coveted scholarship for African students to the Young Ladies' College of the Sacred Heart, "the country's most prestigious young women's institution" (199). Tambu's mother blames "Englishness" for Nyasha's condition—"You couldn't expect the ancestors to stomach so much Englishness"—and Tambu's anxiety about becoming "too English" is manifested in nightmares about her Anglicized cousins and dead brother (*Nervous Conditions* 207). But as term approaches, Tambu banishes her anxieties, confident that "I was a much more sensible person than Nyasha, because I knew what could or couldn't be done" (208). Dangarembga comments that she positioned Tambu as the narrator of *Nervous Conditions* because her psychological condition "was not as contorted as Nyasha's" (209) although it becomes so during the sequel. Tambu's contortion, like her cousin's, stems from colonial racism, which poses impossible dilemmas and "unhealthy, conflictual solution[s]" for the black subject (Fanon, *Black Skin* 197). While *The Book of Not*, published eighteen years after *Nervous Conditions*, exemplifies the condition of belatedness, this delay stems not only from the temporal structure of trauma, but also from the difficulties of crafting a speaking position from which to bear witness to the political as well as psychological unspcakability of racism in post-colonial Zimbabwe.

In *The Book of Not*, Tambu tells the story of her high-school years during the war of liberation and of her struggle to make an independent life for herself in the decade after national independence. She recalls her aspirational optimism: "My desires in that initial year were positive: to achieve, achieve,

achieve some more, and I knew how to realise them. I was going to learn until I had more learning than anyone about me" (21). This, then, is a *Bildungsroman* in which, by convention, the heroine should encounter and overcome obstacles in her quest for self-identity. Tambu's experiences of the traumas inflicted through the colonial education system and a colonial war, however, explode the conventions of the *Bildungsroman*.<sup>3</sup> As the title suggests, this is a novel of "unbecoming"—of the loss of identity, feeling, and attachments. Despite her concentrated efforts to exercise agency over her life, Tambu is repeatedly thwarted: by the psychic damage she sustains as a result of internalizing a Eurocentric view of her African "inferiority," by her mother's respect for tradition, and by the violent events she witnesses during the war. Looking back on her early years at the college, she notes wryly, "I went on planning my life while life was planning an insurgence" (27). Insurgency, with its connotations of rebellion, is a potent metaphor for the events taking place outside and inside the serene grounds of the college and for their psychological effects on Tambu and the narrative, which ends but does not achieve traditional novelistic closure.

Significantly, *The Book of Not* is concerned not only with the traumatic effects of extreme events; it also explores what Kobena Mercer refers to as "the darker side of postcolonial subjectivity" ("Decolonisation" 118), that is, how black subjectivity is constituted by otherness and, above all, by the traumas of colonialism. The novel articulates what Laura Brown calls the "private, secret, insidious traumas" (102) that are often experienced by women, girls, and people of color and which result from ongoing humiliation and degradation in interpersonal relationships rather than from a single extraordinary event. As an inscription of postcolonial trauma, *The Book of Not* provides insights into the constitutive relationship between the subjective and the historical, the personal and the social, the internal and the external. In narrating Tambu's struggles to become someone, and the undoing of her subjectivity, the novel dramatizes ordinary, everyday acts of racism in a gendered colonial context. By locating the story in the context of a colonial war in which the colonized are not united against the white minority, the novel reflects on the psychological and political effects of witnessing traumatic events in a culture in which no one is supposed to remember what they saw. Tambu's experiences of loss and denial are therefore not merely personal; they are symptomatic of larger national struggles.

To read the inscription of trauma in *The Book of Not*, I draw on Frantz Fanon's insights, as mediated by postcolonial critics, into the traumatic nature of colonialism. Dangarembga, like Fanon, studied medicine and psychology; she acknowledges a debt to him in *Nervous Conditions*. My aim is not simply to apply Fanon's insights to Dangarembga's novel; it is rather to create a dialogue between the two. What makes for a particularly rich exchange is that both authors are centrally concerned with questions of black subjectivity in a post/

colonial context and its implications for the future. Both recognize that the traumatic legacies of colonialism cannot be consigned to a forgotten past, and that they haunt the new nation to come. It is important, however, to recognize the different contexts and genres in which they write and the different resources they bring to the task. Fanon trained as a psychiatrist and worked with patients in a clinical context during the colonial war in Algeria. Concerned primarily with the experiences of men, he has been criticized (and defended) for his treatment of gender and sexuality.<sup>4</sup> Dangarembga writes half a century later, after feminism and decolonization. It is not by chance that she takes a young woman and her female peers and family as the focal point. In an interview she voices her view that the "shortage of role models is a critical issue for young black women in my part of the world—" ("Interview" 211). By writing novels that explore and map the tortured paths and obstacles to achieving black female subjectivity in a post-colonial African context, Dangarembga brings a contemporary diasporic and feminist perspective to Fanon's critical analysis of the psychological conditions of black subjectivity under colonialism. She also pragmatically hopes to help people "make choices about how to live" (211).

### "Becoming Dizzy": The Traumas of Colonialism and Decolonization

Frantz Fanon (1926-1961) has long been a major figure for postcolonial theorists concerned with issues of race, colonialism, and identity.<sup>5</sup> Fanon was born and raised in Martinique, a French colony in the Antilles. As a result of his colonial education, he regarded himself as French. When he went to France as a young man, however, he was shocked to discover that he was regarded, in his words, as a "Negro" and that he was perceived by Europeans through a range of cultural stereotypes and fantasies of blackness. After studying medicine and psychiatry in Lyon, he became Head of Psychiatry at a French colonial hospital in Algeria. As a result of his view that colonialism produces an "unhealthy psychology" for the black man, he resigned from the service and devoted himself to working for the Algerian revolution.

A leading figure in the psychoanalytic diaspora, Fanon asked to what extent psychoanalysis could be used to understand the psychology of the black man. In his early but now much-discussed text *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), he drew on Freud's understanding of trauma in his exploration of "the unconscious mechanisms of racism and colonialism" (Hall, "After-Life" 15). He viewed colonialism as a widespread but specific historical condition that produces a deceptive psychology that compels the black subject to internalize as his own a European image of the Negro. Fanon's work is timely because it raises issues about how the traumas of a racist environment—which contribute to the attrition of material, social, and psychological conditions—are compounded by genocides and civil war in postcolonial contexts. Fanon's insights into the traumatic dimensions of colonialism have, to some extent, been articulated and developed by postcolonial critics as well as by some trauma critics.<sup>6</sup> Informed

by this work, I propose that Fanon's analysis of colonialism, when put into dialogue with the work of critics who take the Holocaust as a paradigm of the traumatic event, should prompt critics to reconsider more closely whether the central concepts and concerns of trauma theory are productive for analyzing the postcolonial condition and its legacies.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon describes how he came to realize, once he arrived in France, that European cultural myths of blackness alienate the black man from himself. "As I begin to recognize that the Negro is the symbol of sin, I catch myself hating the Negro. But then I recognize that I am a Negro.... I try then to find value for what is bad...." The only way to "terminate this neurotic situation" is "to rise above this absurd drama that others have staged round me, [and] to reject the two terms that are equally unacceptable" (197). To avoid being identified with a Eurocentric discourse of blackness as "evil," the black man adopts a white mask: he thinks of himself as symbolically white and as participating on an equal footing in society. This solution creates a fundamental disjunction between the black man's consciousness, which is white, and his black skin, by which he is "overdetermined from without" (116). This contradiction between self-identity and identity as Other results in self-alienation. Stuart Hall contends that Fanon's major contribution was to show that the real power of the dominant culture is manifested not simply in its construction of the black person as Other in its systems of representation; more crucially, it is manifested in the power of those regimes "to make us see and experience *ourselves* as 'Other'" ("Cultural Identity" 394). When black people internalize the dominant culture's representation of them as other—when otherness becomes an "inner compulsion" (395)—they can be said to be not only oppressed but also traumatized by the colonial experience. Psychoanalyst Dori Laub, on the basis of his clinical work with Holocaust survivors, argues that what made the final solution a "holocaust" was the way in which the "inherently incomprehensible and deceptive psychological structure of the event precluded its own witnessing, even by its very victims" (80). To put Fanon's analysis into the language of trauma theory, it could be said that the "deceptive psychological structure" of colonialism makes it difficult for the colonized to witness their own oppression.

In his final work, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon concludes with a chapter in which he presents a number of clinical case studies to illustrate the debilitating psychological effects of the Algerian war. He proposed that no "one particular event" produced the disorders he saw in the Algerian and French soldiers he treated; rather, they stemmed from "a war which in whole and in part is a colonial war." Although there was already a considerable body of work on the mental pathology of soldiers, in his view, the colonial war was "singular even in the pathology that it gives rise to" (252). Algerians involved in the war suffered from "reactional disorders." Their symptoms did not arise from pre-existing neuroses but, rather, were reactions to events

and situations that occurred in the specific context of a colonial war. They suffered not only from the usual disorders of soldiers; their disorders were shaped by the psychological structures of racism and colonialism. Far from being relatively harmless, as the psychiatric establishment maintained, Fanon insisted that "[t]hese are disorders which persist for months on end, making a mass attack against the ego.... According to all available evidence, the future of such patients is mortgaged" (252-53). Fanon discusses the case of a liberation fighter who bombed a café in which ten people were killed. After the war, he meets some nationals of the former colonial power, likes them, and wonders whether he could have killed anyone like them. Around the anniversary of the bombing each year, the man suffers from insomnia, anxiety, and suicidal obsessions. As Fanon concludes, "we are forever pursued by our actions.... This is merely one of the snares that history... sets for us. But can we escape becoming dizzy? And who can affirm that vertigo does not haunt the whole of existence?" (253). Fanon's comments on the haunting of the future by the events of the past anticipates Caruth's observation that "[t]he traumatized... carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess" (5).

Fanon's insights into the damaging psychological structures of colonialism, and their survival after decolonization, inform *The Book of Noi*. For Fanon, language plays a central role in the process of colonization and identity formation. To speak the colonizer's language is "above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization" (*Black Skin* 17-18). In *Nervous Conditions*, after Tambu's brother attends the Mission school where English is spoken, he stops speaking to his family in Shona, pretending to have forgotten his mother tongue. For Tambu, being educated in English interpellates her into English cultural myths and stereotypes of Africa. It also enables her, like her brother, to distance herself from the village. As Hall points out, Fanon's "task was to unpack the inner landscapes of racism in the colonial relation between black and white—and to consider the conditions for the production of a new kind of subject and the decolonisation of the mind as the necessary subjective condition for the decolonisation of the world" ("After-Life" 18-19). Dangarembga shares Fanon's belief that the decolonization of the nation calls for the decolonization of the mind. Fanon "propose[d] nothing short of the liberation of the man of color from himself" (10), which is precisely the problem Tambu faces: how to recover from the damage of a colonial education and be liberated from the systemic racism she has internalized.

### Wounded by Witnessing

*The Book of Noi* is concerned with impediments to witnessing, both to the cumulative damage of colonial racism and to the brutalities of a colonial war in which there are no simple dichotomies of victim and perpetrator, innocent and guilty. The novel opens with a scene in which Tambu is positioned as a

reluctant witness. Her mother, Mai, takes her and her younger siblings to a *morari*—a political gathering that aims to raise support for the "freedom fighters" and instill loyalty in the villagers. Before the *morari*, Tambu anxiously walks around the homestead examining old and trusted objects "that break and cannot be fixed because the force of wholeness has abdicated" (8-9). The impossibility of repair figuratively expresses what lies ahead for her and the nation as the war legitimates violence and atrocities become common. Before the meeting,

Tambu senses her mother's hostility toward her uncle, Babamkura, the head of the family and Tambu's patron. Mai, suspicious of Englishness and grieving the loss of her son, is sorely displeased that Baba has allowed Tambu to attend Sacred Heart. Tambu, like her uncle and aunt, aspires to escape from the "moribund" (191) existence her parents live at the homestead. Although she despises her mother's lack of ambition, Tambu's mother has a hold over her that she finds impossible to escape. On the way to the meeting, her mother ominously warns the children: "Whatever you see... do not say anything. Just sing... And answer as everyone else does. Otherwise, be silent" (11). At the rally, her uncle is viciously beaten for being a "sell-out... with all of us watching and doing nothing... and Mai breathing in catches of satisfaction" (14). As a student at a European school, Tambu realizes that as "proof of my uncle's dubious spirit... I was to watch the declination of my uncle in order to instill loyalty in me" (6). While she is shamed by the failure of the villagers to speak out, she follows her mother's warning and remains silent. In an attempt to distance herself and remain unscarred, she shuts down her senses: "I tried not to look, so I would not make the mistake of saying I had seen anything when I returned to school. I tried not to hear so I would never repeat the words of war anywhere" (12).

The beating of her uncle is only stopped by another violent event. Tambu's younger sister Netsai, who has fallen in love with a comrade and joined the guerrilla war, steps on a landmine. Tambu registers the explosion in the slow-motion of traumatic time: "Up, up, up, the leg spun. A piece of person, up there in the sky" (3). As the older sibling, she feels she should do something. But she is too overwhelmed and shocked by these unexpected events, of which she cannot make sense, to act: "What I knew then is that I did not know anything and never would anymore, and I saw that no one knew anything either as no one was doing anything" (17). The *morari* prompts Tambu to reflect on the cultural prohibition on witnessing. In the car, passing through the rich white suburbs near the college, she notices the economic and material disparity in the activities and dress of the white residents and black workers (23). Yet, her aunt and uncle never comment on "these lessons learnt in transit" (24). Tambu observes: "It was as though our ancestors had placed a curse on passing observations which would bring to perceptive souls vicious retribution" (23). Only her fiery cousin Nyasha dares to speak her mind, but now even her passion is dulled due to the drugs she takes to control her moods.

When Tambu returns to school after the *morari*, she is pursued by traumatic flashbacks (27). Her distress is exacerbated by her secret "sense of inferiority that came from having been at the primitive scene." For Tambu, the *morari* disconcertingly recalls European images of Africans "from the school's films and library: cavemen dragging their women where they wanted them by the hair or bludgeoning their prey. And in the final analysis there was everyone [at the *morari*], sitting mesmerised and agreeing about the appropriateness of this behaviour" (28). Tambu is at pains to differentiate herself from European discourses of African primitivism, which she associates with the village and her mother. Yet despite her intentions, she and her dormmate, Ntombi, regularly come to blows, clawing and scratching each other, all the while aware that they risk legitimating European fantasies of racial difference.

Tambu's post-traumatic stress is exacerbated by her awareness of herself as black in a class where almost everyone is white. Looking out the window at the pine plantations, she is possessed by a memory of her sister's exploding body. Sister Catherine's request to translate a Latin sentence plunges Tambu into a dilemma: "That would mean I had to open my eyes... If I opened my eyes... the tear might fall. If I kept the eyes closed, I would not do well, rather face a lifetime of being nothing, like Mai. This because... of my young sister, Netsai!" Even when she suffers from "[t]hose thoughts [that] crept up on you just like that," Tambu is aware of the connotations of her black skin (31). As Sister Catherine rubs Tambu's hand to relax her hold on the desk, which she is clutching in fear, Tambu realizes "from the soft warmth upon my skin that Sister and I were in physical contact... my first impression was I had soiled my teacher in some way. I liked her and I did not want to do that. Sister should not touch me" (31-32). Fanon uses the metaphor of amputation to signify how the black man, weighed down by European discourses of Africa—"tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency"—comes to perceive himself as an object, other from himself: "What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage that splattered my whole body with black blood?" (*Black Skin* 112). The metaphor of the wounded body powerfully signifies Tambu's increasing self-alienation at the College. She disapproves of her "wild and irresponsible" sister, who "hold[s] the means of someone else's death strapped to her back." Yet, she unconsciously identifies with her, imagining herself, like Netsai, as damaged: "as if a vital part had been exploded away and in the absence that was left I was cracked and defective" (28).

### The "Absurd Dramas" of Colonialism

*The Book of Not* juxtaposes scenes of brutality from the war with the ongoing humiliation of racism in everyday colonial life. What Fanon refers to as "the absurd drama" of race relations, "enacted every day in colonized countries," is played out in several scenes between the black and white students, which often involve the pleasure and power of looking (*Black Skin*

197, 145). Reading Fanon through a Lacanian lens, Hall comments on the centrality of the "scopic drive" in his analysis: "Not only is Fanon's Negro caught, transfixed, emptied and exploded in the fetishistic and stereotypical dialectics of the 'look' from the place of the Other, but he/she *becomes*—has no other self than—this *self-as-Othered*. This is the black man as his [sic] alienated self-image" ("After-Life" 16-17). Power exercised through "the dialectics of the 'look'" is exemplified in a farcical scene that takes place in the school dining hall where Tambu and Ntombi share a table with their white classmates. Speaking to Tracey, Bougainvillea gazes fetishistically at the hands of the black girls:

"They've both got such fine hands. Look at those amazing fingers!"... "You know what, Tracey!"... "It's not just those two! Have you noticed? It's all of them!"... "Let's have a look!" she raised an eyebrow with a practised investigatory motion as she inclined her head forward. Ntombi/ethu stretched her hands out. "See!"... "Just look at the shape of that nail, and that crescent, it's a perfect half moon! Isn't it wonderful?" (37-38)

Bougainvillea dehumanizes Tambu and Ntombi by treating them as specimens to be inspected and classified, illustrating Fanon's insight that the black man is a "slave" of his "appearance" (*Black Skin* 116). Whereas Fanon viewed the European as obsessed with the black man's sexuality, Bougainvillea singles out characteristics typically associated with feminine beauty—the elegant hand, the shapely fingernail.

The absurdity of the relations between the black and white students produced by the allegedly "equal" but in practice inferior position of the black students is further dramatized through a transaction involving Nesquik, a luxury imported from South Africa that only the white girls can afford. After Bougainvillea inspects their hands, Ntombi capitalizes on the moment of intimacy and asks if she can have some of her Nesquik. Mortified that Ntombi should beg, Tambu is on a knife-edge, wondering whether she will touch Bougainvillea's Nesquik, and whether the white girls will regard the Nesquik as inedible if she does so. Bougainvillea relieves the suspense by spooning some of the chocolate into Ntombi's glass. Looking at Tambu with "some urgency and pleading," Bougainvillea offers her the Nesquik. But Tambu, "preoccupied with the issue of dignity," is trapped in a dilemma of her own: "Upon considering this command to consume... I could not make up my mind what in this case constituted a proper sort of personhood. There were so many angles to it. Bougainvillea wanted me now to take the powder, I would be doing her a favour, but why did she want me to have it and so was she to be trusted?" (43-44). Tambu's dilemma arises from her self-consciousness of the power of Bougainvillea's ambivalent gaze, which is at once disdainful and desiring. This scene amusingly illustrates the psychic energy Tambu has to invest in monitoring her behavior and reactions.



The construction of blackness as contaminating is reinforced by the differential way in which the waitresses serve the European and African students. When serving the former, they "move fluidly, but when they set a jug or a plate before Ntombi or me, they smack it down with a jut of the chin and spill, as though slapping a hard, crushing thing down on obnoxious crawling objects" (45-46). Tambu observes that, "[a]s this happens...Ntombi's cheeks sag until you think they will melt right off her bones like chocolate left out in the sun. I don't look at her because I don't want to see her melting, but Tracey looks and flushes once more" (45). Once again Tambu attempts to shield herself by refusing to witness her classmate's humiliation. While Bougainvillea takes a malicious delight in her scopic power, Tracey's blush betrays her shame. But Tracey chooses, a minute later, to act "cool" and copy her white classmate. Looking at Tambu and Ntombi, she asserts: "The eyes too. Just like a cow's!" (44). Manifesting guilt in her "uncomfortable, uncharacteristic giggle," Tracey declares: "It's a compliment, hey Ntombi!" (46). In the aftermath of this and other farcical episodes, including one in which Tambu is forced out of a toilet which is only for the white students, Tambu attempts to figure out what constitutes dignified or proper behavior. But given the constraints imposed by difficult material conditions—the six African students are forced to share a room meant for four, with a single bathroom between them—there is no foolproof model. She decides to follow the African philosophy of *umhu*, based on reciprocity and recognition of the other's sensitivities and moods. Yet she has so internalized an English norm of individual achievement that she continually offends her family, her African dormmates, and the headmistress. For her, the practice of *umhu* is narcissistic rather than reciprocal and, as such, becomes another false solution.

### Recognition and Mimicry

Fanon comments on how colonialism simultaneously denies the colonized recognition and results in a desire for recognition: "Since the other hesitated to recognize me, there remained only one solution: to make myself known" (*Black Skin* 115). Tambu desperately desires to be recognized by Europeans and Africans as a person of value. In her quest for recognition, she initially aims to achieve the honor roll. She devises a strategy of memorization and mimicry, "remembering every word from the teacher's mouth" (25). After she achieves high marks in her second year, Tambu believes that she can leave behind her past—her "painful memories" of the time when her uncle selected her brother rather than her to be educated, of her struggle to pay her own school fees as a child, and of the primitive life of the homestead. She recalls her boundless optimism: "My possibilities were infinite in my present circumstances!...All in all, I felt I was all right now, and so was the world. I was on a direct route to a future so bright it—or I in those tomorrows—would light up more than my community: probably, I imagined, the whole universe" (82). She next sets herself the ambitious goal of achieving the Silver Cup for the best O-Level

results, which is displayed in the school trophy cabinet: "my name would be inscribed on it for everyone for ever to see: Tambudzai Sigauke. Then people would know who I was, a person to be reckoned with and respected, not a receptacle of contempt" (114). In pursuit of her goal, she studies alone in a secret place, rather than join her dormmates as they dance to African music.

While Tambu obsessively prepares for the O-Levels, the parents of Rhodesian twins at the school are brutally murdered by the "freedom fighters." At assembly, the headmistress hands around newspapers with pictures of the girls' slain father, and announces that their mother died shortly thereafter. Her condemnation of these "acts of butchery" (129), and other "unspeakable obscene horrors" (130), causes Tambu and the other black students to shift uncomfortably. Failing to acknowledge white-minority rule and the atrocities committed on black victims by white soldiers and civilians, the headmistress legitimates the media's positioning of black Africans as perpetrators of terrorism. To distance herself from the "terrorists," Tambu positions herself with the white students, volunteering to knit for the Rhodesian troops. On Friday nights she rides the bus into town with the white girls, while they sing "this land is your land." After this betrayal of her race, relations with her dormmates deteriorate further. One day, Ntombi grabs Tambu's knitting needles from the cupboard, calling her a "sell-out," and accusing her of endangering them all. Ntombi, who pushed "beyond what it was appropriate to voice" (138), is so enraged that the others have to restrain her from attacking Tambu. Her outburst prompts Tambu to wonder what brutalities Ntombi "had been brought to witness" during the holidays (140). Rather than reflect on the conditions that produce Ntombi's rage and her own perverted identifications, Tambu is secretly pleased when Ntombi, whom she perceives as an academic competitor, receives demerit points for her outburst.

When the O-Level results come out, Tambu comes first, and Ntombi also excels, which helps to repair their estranged relationship. Tambu suffers a devastating blow, however, when she learns that the Silver Cup will be awarded to Tracey, who excels in sport as well as academics, on the spurious ground that the College seeks "to nurture well-rounded human beings" (155). After this crushing announcement, Ntombi offers to go with Tambu to question Sister Emmanuel's decision: "'Let's do it!' urged Ntombi. 'You can't let all this just happen like that! Come on! Tomorrow, hey?'" (157). Tambu rejects the offer: "I could not tell her...how fearful I was that I deserved it...There *must* have been a mistake in the results, otherwise...the headmistress would not have done it" (157). Unable to comprehend why she has been denied the trophy, which would mean giving up her faith in and attachment to the school as a beneficent institution, she wraps her pain protectively around herself in self-isolation.

Yet, Tambu desperately wants to speak up for herself. One day Sister Emmanuel summons the "inmates of the African dorm" to tell them that, "with the security situation deteriorating," the government is asking the College to be

particularly "vigilant" about the African students it accepts. Tambu, thinking of her "one-legged sister in the village," panics: "What would happen to me if they found out? What would the security forces do to us?" (73). Despite her anxiety, she is outraged by the casual manner in which Sister Emmanuel discusses the issue of quotas, "making jokes about our flesh and how some people thought it was divisible." Tambu puzzles over "what could be said to bring one's voice into the room, which at the same time did not annoy anyone? It was so impossible. I crumbled." Committed to proving herself worthy of her scholarship, she decides to remain "calm and gracious no matter what happened" (74). From within this position of compliance, she cannot find the language or courage to express her powerful but forbidden feelings and instead ends up humbly thanking Sister Emmanuel.

Despite her brilliant success, Tambu's preparation for A-levels goes badly. As the war intensifies, the science teacher from Europe does not arrive. The students studying science subjects are bussed to a segregated boys' school from which Tambu is excluded: she is left to study on her own without a teacher. Ntombi does not suffer this fate because she chooses to study languages, "to enable communication later between Africans who could not understand each other as they spoke French or English or Spanish or Arabic or Portuguese" (152). Tambu's exclusion prompts her to question her identity and allegiances: "Frustrated... I wondered, was I a Rhodesian, if I could not sit on Rhodesian seats, read formulae from a Rhodesian blackboard and press down upon Rhodesian desks?" (153). She fantasizes about refusing to knit for the Rhodesian troops in revenge for her exclusion, but she lacks the courage to take such a decisive step.

The denial of the trophy and the loss of recognition she so desired plunges Tambu into depression, which is exacerbated by the worsening crisis of the war: "I scarcely knew anymore who or where I was. I saw I would never find the route back to the place I had aimed at, yet I could not see where I had taken a wrong turning. For surely Sacred Heart could not be wrong..." (163-64). Her belief in the "objectivity" of the colonial education system renders Tambu unable to develop a critical consciousness that would enable her to see "from [her] own perspective" and work through the losses she has suffered. Instead of "standing up and looking around me in a different manner," she becomes so expert at the master's language that she is able to identify obscure grammar mistakes. But as her cousin perceptively points out, "It's not about was and were... It's about what you're meant to know and what you're meant not to know" (118). Belatedly, Tambu recognizes the difficulty of developing a critical perspective by herself in the middle of an insurgency: "*Unhu* required an elder aunt, or a *salwira*—someone you were related to not by blood but by absolute respect, liking and understanding—to go forward to the authorities in order to present your case, showing that what disturbed you was not the flighty whim of one badly brought-up individual" (164). Tambu has no *salwira* to plead on her behalf, only damaged and needy peers.

The limits of mimicry as a strategy for learning and living are further revealed when Ntombi comes to Tambu's room one evening. Assuming she has come to study, Tambu shows off by quoting Shakespeare. When Ntombi puts her head on the desk, sobbing, Tambu mistakenly thinks that she is laughing at her. As she continues her recitation, Ntombi's chokes out the horrifying details of the vicious murder of her infant cousin by Rhodesian soldiers, who suspected the girl's mother of feeding the guerrilla fighters: "Then my aunt killed herself... but they came back and now, at the homestead... No one is alive!" (172). Ntombi bitterly quotes Shakespeare, not to prove her Englishness but for the insights that Shakespeare provides into the barbaric behavior of the Rhodesian soldiers. Although Tambu shares Ntombi's grief and outrage at "the butcher's carnival" (166), she is so sunk in her own depression that she is unable to respond empathically. After this encounter, she succumbs to "strange behaviour," "unfamiliar seizures," and "fits of weeping" whenever she looks at the pine and wattle plantations that remind her of Nelsai (174). Her body testifies to a truth that she is not yet conscious of: that the colonial education system she so trusted has not only alienated her from herself and her community but that colonialism, and the war of liberation, have led to widespread atrocity, ruin, and despair.

When Tambu inevitably receives poor A-Level results, her uncle, in an act of revenge, divulges that it was her mother who told the comrades that he was a "sell-out." Stretching out his arm, he confronts Tambu with his bodily wounds from the *moroti*, expressing the psychic pain he feels as a result of her "failure" and "betrayal": "This scar came because of you!... When you received your wonderful O-Level results... I knew that even if I had suffered this, I was still whole. Now there is pain! I feel I am again being pulled into pieces!" (190). Like her, he perceives himself as a damaged body. Shamed by him, she "resorted to the usual way out... concentrating on every inch of skin... until I could feel nothing else and the sensation of me filled the entire universe. But as I was not, I could feel nothing" (187). Her use of the word "feel" indicates the centrality of affect in constituting her subjectivity: as she shrinks from feeling, she goes "numb permanently" (192). When she learns of her mother's betrayal, she vows never to speak to her or go back to the homestead. The tortured path she has travelled in pursuing her desire for recognition has resulted in a narrowing of attachments and a shrivelling of self. By the time the war is over and "liberation" won, she is deeply comforted by her concentrated exposure to Englishness at Sacred Heart, and her mother's predictions about the dangers it held are confirmed.

### **Birthing the Nation: the Haunting of the Post/colonial Future**

The new Zimbabwe is full of wounded and disoriented citizens who, like Tambu, have been through a colonial war but hide their scars and losses, pretending to normality. Even the children are not innocent. Celebrations for

Independence induce forgetting: "People throng[ed] the streets rejoicing so thoroughly that there was no place for remembering the acts that their hands and their feet and their teeth, and the fingers, boots, and mouths of their children committed" (196). Baba, beaten earlier by the comrades, is wounded by a stray bullet during the celebrations, signifying not only his ambivalent relation to the new nation but also the violence that has brought the nation into being. Unlike his scars from the *morari*, which can be hidden under a shirt, Baba's wounding at Independence visibly cripples him, confining him to a wheelchair. Despite their differing histories, allegiances, and subjectivities, Baba is identified with his freedom-fighting niece, the one-legged Netsai; neither is able to participate fully in the new nation (198). Yet, the new Zimbabweans have no rituals for mourning their personal and collective losses: "we never remembered and grieved together as women sorrow in groups many years after a birth" (196).

The repeated acting out that is characteristic of a legacy of trauma is inscribed in the narrative repetition of post-liberation scenes of humiliation and Tambu's predictable responses. After liberation, she takes a series of demoralizing jobs, eventually working as a copy editor in an advertising agency in Harare. Her colleague Dick, supported by her old schoolmate Tracey, who is now an executive at the agency, takes credit for Tambu's creative work under the pretense that she merely edits his copy rather than composes it. When he invites her for coffee, she anticipates the jubilation she will feel when he congratulates her on a brilliant ad. Imagining that she and Dick make "an intriguing new Zimbabwean couple" (234), she recalls people "looking at us and nurturing their smiles like hope at this reconciliatory, post-independence harmony" (226). This mixed-race coupling is in fact a repetition of the old colonial order in which the black woman is complicit with the white man in her oppression. Dick tells Tambu that the boss loves her Afro-Shine copy, but has asked him to present it to the client. Unable to break out of her habit of internalizing failure, she tries to convince herself that "this act that put Dick's name to my work" must be good for everyone, including herself, as she had earlier justified Sister Emmanuel's decision to award the trophy to Tracey (155).

Depressed by her failure to achieve the brilliant future of which she dreamed, Tambu decides to move into better accommodations. The Twiss Hostel for single girls, an elegant old colonial building, still bears the sign of the old Rhodesia, "right of admission reserved." Registering the irony of life in the new Zimbabwe, Tambu observes, "What a satisfaction it was to know one was now included! Nor was there need to fear one's presence might cause that infamous deterioration in standards" (203). Yet the hostel, which has only a few black residents, replicates the humiliations she experienced at Sacred Heart. In the dining room, segregation is unofficially practiced, and Tambu once again has to calculate when to arrive and where to sit so as not to appear isolated. The landlady, Mrs May, repeatedly confuses her with another resident,

causing Tambu to become irritated that "I had not been recognised...as an individual person but as a lump broken from a greater one of undifferentiated flesh!" (207). As she bitterly observes, "I couldn't even have my irritation in an absolute way—I had to have it in opposition" (209). Her attachment to the desire for recognition results in the attrition of her conditions of life: failing to be recognized, she becomes more dejected.

Yet, despite liberation, Tambu cannot relinquish her attachment to these conditions. Instead, she continues to work and live in predominantly white contexts in which she is compelled to perceive herself as Other and in which she feels she must maintain vigilance lest she confirm a racial stereotype. Tambu's repeated seeking out of familiar but damaging forms of connection could be read as acting out the legacy of trauma. Lauren Berlant's concept of "cruel optimism" suggests another reading of her attachments.<sup>7</sup> These familiar but damaging conditions are constitutive of Tambu's life; they are the only life, other than the despised homestead, that she knows: "I believed that communing with Mrs May did something for me as I had not bonded with anyone in Twiss Hostel....Mrs May made me feel a part of life, even if it was a life ignominious and incognito at best...and at worst a life at the margins of it, at the centre of exclusion. So I become soldered into scenarios I reluctantly found myself part of" (209). Thus her actions are not simply an acting out of trauma; they connect her to the social even if the forms of social connection produce misery and depression.

*The Book of Not* dramatizes the social and psychic conditions, and the prohibitions on what can be spoken, that produce denial and forgetting in the new nation. At the agency, rather than work through the losses of the past, the employees exude cheerfulness while continuing to harm themselves and one another. At the celebration for the success of the Afro-Shine campaign, Dick reminisces that he has been with the company "forever, since before...before...." The word that he cannot speak is "war." What deeds did he commit or witness during his "service" that cause him to stammer? The awkward silence is only broken when Alfonso, a Mozambican, who "could mention things Zimbabweans could not, volunteered calmly...." Since the end of the war" (240). Dick's inability to speak of the war recalls an earlier scene at the College. When Bougainvillea boldly states that "there just might be a war on," Tracey is shocked and insists that there is not a war, only "a security problem" (45). Amongst Zimbabweans, there is no shared word for the war, only words used by particular groups in particular contexts: "war," "security problem," *Chimurenga*, *Hondo*. The use of the Shona vernacular throughout the novel points to the cultural shaping of memory and reveals how language is used to silence and deny unwelcome experience. Alfonso's use of the Shona word for "war," *Chimurenga*, should also remind Western readers that, despite the apparent accessibility of the narrative, the events, the social and political context, and the psychological states of the characters are never transparent or wholly translatable.

While Dick masks his guilt over stealing Tambu's work by drinking heavily, she quietly resigns. Although her belated decision to "stop it," which Ntombi had advised years earlier, can be read as a release from her melancholic pattern of repetition, the novel ends bleakly. She returns to her lodgings dejected, only to have the landlady, who observes that she never seems "happy," suggest that she find other accommodation. In her quest for recognition, she, like Dick, has denied her links with the past. *Nervous Conditions* ended with Tambu recalling, as she was about to leave for College, "Mother knew a lot of things and I had regard for her knowledge. Be careful, she had said" (207). In her eagerness to leave the homestead, Tambu ignored her. At the end of *The Book of Not*, her mother calls to tell her that she and Netsai are coming to Harare to visit her. Sensing Tambu's reluctance, Mai demands recognition: "are you aware who gave birth to you? Can you tell me which stomach you came out of? Or do you think you dropped from a tree big and ripe like that?" (226). Tambu's mother, representative of the nation, will not let her forget her origins and her painful memories of the past. Her mother also represents connection to the future, insisting that she and Netsai, who is "still walking," even with one leg, will walk to Tambu if she refuses to give them bus fare. The novel ends with Tambu's belated recognition that her desire for success and recognition is implicated in the same hierarchical structures of colonialism that have damaged her: "I had not considered *unhu* [the good and the human] at all, only my own calamities, since the contested days at the convent. So this evening I walked empty to the room I would soon vacate, wondering what future there was for me, a new Zimbabwean" (246).

*The Book of Not* brilliantly inscribes a young woman's struggle to achieve subjectivity in the context of the ongoing denial, forgetting, and unspeakability of racism, colonialism, and war. It brings a postcolonial concern with race, identity, and subjectivity together with some of the core concerns of trauma theory: the problematic of witnessing extreme events, denial, loss, affect, and unspeakability. I am not in the position to consider the significance of this portrait of the alienated young black woman, and the "lessons learned in transit," for the new Zimbabwe. What I will consider, however, are some of the insights that the novel provides into the possibilities and limits of using trauma theory to address the legacies of postcolonialism. To what extent does trauma theory provide a useful conceptual vocabulary for reading this novel not simply as a personal story of trauma but also as an allegory of the challenges facing a postcolonial nation in denial of the legacy of its colonial past? What are the limits of using trauma theory to discuss the legacy of what Fanon described as "the colonial environment" (30) of racism?

### Trauma's Futures

Trauma theory brings to postcolonialism a concern with denial and working through losses. These are not issues that concerned Fanon, but they

are at the forefront of attempts to come to terms with traumatic historical legacies today. In an important essay, Dominick LaCapra raises the issue of the "divided legacies" of traumatic histories and the problems that nations such as post-apartheid South Africa—and, I would add, post-colonial Zimbabwe—face in "acknowledging and working through historical losses in ways that affect different groups differently." Traumatic historical events raise the "crucial issue" of whether attempts to work through problems "can viably come to terms with...the divided legacies, open wounds, and unspeakable losses of a dire past" (45). In discussing this issue, he distinguishes between historical loss and absence, which he associates with a distinction between historical trauma and structural trauma. Loss "is situated on a historical level and is the consequence of particular events" (64) whereas absence is a product of structural trauma, such as the absence of ultimate foundations. Loss can be mourned whereas absence can only be lived with. LaCapra proposes that empathy is important in responding to traumatic events in so far as it does not entail inappropriate identification with the victim. "Empathic unsettlement" describes "a kind of virtual experience through which one puts oneself in the other's position while recognizing the difference of that position and hence not taking the other's place" (78). Clearly, the issue of coming to terms with the divided legacies of traumatic histories is of concern to Dangarembga. In enabling the reader to identify imaginatively with the subject positions and experiences of various characters while recognizing their specificity, distance, and difference, *The Book of Not* exemplifies empathic unsettlement.

LaCapra proposes that empathy may have implications for narrative form. In his view, empathy calls into question "fetishized and totalizing narratives that deny the trauma that called them into existence" and that recuperate the past "in terms of uplifting messages or optimistic, self-serving scenarios" (78). His comments on the relationship between empathy, narrative form, and traumatic events are useful for comparing the non-redemptive structure of *The Book of Not*, which ends without resolution or reparation, with *Zenzele* (1996), a recent novel by a young diasporic Zimbabwean doctor and writer. Nozipo Maraire. *Zenzele* is structured as a series of letters from an African mother to her daughter, who goes overseas to study in the United States. The mother wishes to impart a series of cultural, personal, and history lessons to her daughter lest she forget her African roots and traditions. This novel, a *New York Times* notable book of the year in 1996, offers an uplifting and celebratory view of postcolonial Zimbabwe. Although many of the characters were involved in the war, no measure of suffering, loss, or trauma is conveyed. Rather, *Zenzele* is a heroic, redemptive narrative in which there is no acknowledgment of losses or recognition of how a traumatic past, with its divided legacies, mortgages the future. By contrast, *The Book of Not*, through its very act of dramatizing the daily conditions in which racism thrives, simultaneously illuminates the conditions that make acts of racism unspeakable, and counteracts denial. It

does this without recourse to simplistic black/white oppositions, without positioning some groups as victims and others as perpetrators, and without creating a stereotype of African culture as unified, less tainted, and more spiritual than Western culture. All of the characters are flawed and compromised, and forging attachments with black family and peers is no easier than making connections with whites. In acknowledging that all of the characters have suffered devastating losses in the war, and have been implicated to a greater or lesser degree, the novel appeals to the reader's compassion without promising false or hasty resolutions to the problems it has detailed.

LaCapra's discussion of working through traumatic historical events, however, raises questions about the notion of the "event." He understands historical trauma in relation to specific events while structural trauma is not an event but an "anxiety-producing condition of possibility" (82). Fanon did not think of racism as an event but as part of the "colonial environment." As he noted when treating Algerian soldiers, their disorders did not stem from a single event; they were produced by the events of war, which were exacerbated by "the arsenal of complexes that has been developed by the colonial environment" (*Black Skin* 30). Unlike structural trauma, understood as, for instance, entry into the symbolic, the notion of a "colonial environment," while inevitably "anxiety-producing," is historically specific. The question that Fanon's analysis raises for trauma theory, then, is whether the ongoing humiliations, effects, and affects of postcolonial racism can be adequately understood in terms of concepts such as the "traumatic event" and "loss." Although traumatic memory is atemporal in its structure, the concept of "event" presumes a temporality of "before" and "after." That very temporality, however, tends to obscure those ongoing investments in racialized discourses and positionings that are constitutive of identity and of a social and political environment. The colonial war is an "event" that ends, but, as Dangarembga points out, racism continues to shape the present and the future in damaging ways. As she notes: "anything that is even mildly critical of white society in Zimbabwe today is seen as antidemocratic, prejudiced and racial. It thus does not serve to unify the nation in any way, but to polarize a dangerously polarized country even further" ("Interview" 210). Like Fanon's analysis, *The Book of Not* articulates racism not as an "event" that is past and can be mourned but as an ongoing legacy that has psychological, material, and social effects that continue long after decolonization. The concept of loss, like the concept of the "event," focuses on losses that can be particularized and enumerated: the loss of a leg, the death of a person. It is difficult, I think, to conceptualize the ongoing psychological damage of racism in terms of a vocabulary of loss and mourning; other concepts are needed.

Turning to postcolonial theory, it is worth recalling the centrality of identity and subjectivity in Hall's assessment of Fanon's legacy. Hall maintains that "the traumatic character of 'the colonial experience'" can only be properly

analyzed when identity is understood as a matter of "becoming" as well as "being." As "a matter of becoming...[i]t belongs to the *future* as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture" ("Cultural Identity" 394, emphasis added). In other words, if identity is a matter of essence, it cannot be changed; if it is a matter of becoming, it can be transformed. *The Book of Not* ends by questioning what the future holds for "new Zimbabweans"; it envisions the future as the site where new national and cultural identities will be contested and forged. This task, as Dangarembga makes us aware, is not easy. Identity as a site of contestation and change suggests that, on the one hand, a post/colonial subject such as Tambu can be damaged by national discourses of identity that do not match her own identifications or aspirations. At the same time, identity is a site of future possibility. The cultural identity of the "new Zimbabwean" is what, at the end of the novel, remains to be negotiated. The challenge that Tambu and the new Zimbabweans face is how to build a nation grounded in "options other than an evacuated past and a vacuous or blank, yet somehow redemptive, future" (LaCapra 57). Tambu must figure out how to make a life in the new Zimbabwe without retreating to the fantasy that if only she had been awarded the trophy, or had been recognized for her achievements, she would be living a brilliant life. A non-redemptive solution is suggested by Ntombi, who studies languages to prepare for a future in which she is able to redress the cultural legacies of colonialism. Through her work in languages, which is central to the formation of subjectivity and cultural identity, Ntombi can contribute to shaping a new national culture. Through the figures of Tambu and Ntombi, *The Book of Not* suggests that citizens of the postcolonial nation must both look backward and forward, balancing the demands of the past with those of the future.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Daymond et al. for a survey of women writers from Southern Africa.

<sup>2</sup> I would like to thank the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities at Cambridge University, and especially the Director, Mary Jacobus, for a Visiting Fellowship in 2006, which provided conditions that facilitated this essay. In November 2006 Dangarembga presented a seminar at the Cambridge University English Department, during which she read from her work and showed segments of her new film.

<sup>3</sup> For insights into the impact of trauma on the *Bildungsroman*, see Mercer, "Art as a Dialogue in Social Space."

<sup>4</sup> Fanon used the term "man" to include both men and women, but he was principally concerned with the black man. For a reappraisal of his gender and sexual politics, see, e.g., Sharpley-Whiting; Hall, "After-Life"; and Mercer, "Decolonisation and Disappointment."

<sup>5</sup> Some of the key works on Fanon are by Bhabha, Gates, Hall, Read, Alessandrini, and Sharpley-Whiting. For a discussion of Fanon in relation to psychoanalysis and colonialism, see Khanna.

<sup>6</sup> Kaplan positions Fanon as a trauma theorist, particularly in relation to cinema. Lloyd draws on Fanon in his discussion of colonial trauma while Kumar uses the insights of trauma theory to discuss postcolonial literature of the Indian partition. Mercer brings together insights from postcolonial theory and trauma theory in his discussion of the art of postcolonial trauma (see "Art as a Dialogue in Social Space").

There is much more to say about how attachment is inscribed in this novel. My preliminary thoughts about Tambu's attachment to damaging objects of desire are indebted to Lauren Berlant's essay "Cruel Optimism" and to discussions with her about optimism and attachment.

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