

Affective Attachments and the Self-Interested, Postcolonial Subject

*A Study of Affectivity and Neoliberal Influences in Relation to Postcolonial Complicity and Becoming in
Tsitsi Dangarembga's "This Mournable Body"*

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Abstract

This thesis paper investigates how neoliberal ideology effectuates affective attachments that are harmful for individual and communal well-being in the novel *This Mournable Body* by Tsitsi Dangarembga. This novel portrays a social and historical reality of contemporary Zimbabwe around the end of the 1990s and early 2000s. The reader follows the black protagonist, Tambu, in three different phases where she has to manage life in a challenging and impoverished reality. She dreams of a better life for herself, and eventually she is given the opportunity to become successful when she starts working for a tourism agency run by a white woman. Tambu only cares about her own survival, and her selfish conduct is placed in contrast to her own Shona community who centers the collectivist and human values of unhu. Tambu ends up exploiting her own community in her quest for success, but in the end, she returns back home to her community. This thesis paper argues that the novel affectively mediates the ways Tambu embodies an ambivalent postcolonial and neoliberal situatedness. It considers how the discursive practice of neoliberal capitalism in Zimbabwe follows the racial disparity between black and white people in the nation where the white minority in the country has socio-economic and racialized advantages. Some scholars have addressed many of these aspects already, and this thesis paper draws largely upon their perspectives. However, they have not considered the affective dimension of Tambu's situated, postcolonial experience in her complicity with white capitalist exploitation of her community, and her estrangement from her relationships with the women from her community. This thesis paper attempts to address this gap by combining affect theory and postcolonial theory. It establishes that Tambu's situatedness is an existential quandary that affectively emerges in the particular postcolonial, neoliberal and socio-economic national space that she is a product of.

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Introduction

In the third part of Tsitsi Dangarembga's *This Mournable Body*, the novel's middle-aged antiheroine Tambu Sigauke, shortened for Tambudzai, has persuaded her mother to get all the women in the rural village where her mother lives to be part of a tourism project that Tambu is leading. This project seeks to give Western tourists an authentic experience of Africa by commodifying rural settings and culture in Zimbabwe in order to satisfy the tourists' interests and cultural expectations. Tambu is willing to whatever her white boss Tracey wants her to do as she is set on achieving financial self-advancement. In the two preceding parts of the novel, Tambu experiences a lot of hurdles and downfalls in her quest for a better life. Her employment at the tourism agency then finally provides closeness to the kind of success that she longs for. In this job, however, Tambu has to betray her mother and the other women in the village in order to satisfy Tracey. Tambu is eventually ordered to get the women to dance bare-chested for the tourists, which was not part of the initial plan, and Tambu conveys these new instructions to the women right before they are about to make the performance. Appalled by this sudden change of plans, the women, led by her mother, regrettably agree to follow the new instructions as they need the money that they will receive from their participation in the project to help the community in the village.

This experience is humiliating for the African women, and Tambu is herself affectively sensing her shameful culpability in betraying the women. When they are about to perform, the narrator discloses Tambu's ambivalent situatedness in the way she is positioned in-between neoliberal aspirations and her attachment to her own exploited community: "You do not enjoy anything, although dancing had always been your forte from the time you were little. Shame fills you. You want only to close your eyes and not open them until it is payday. It does not matter now whether the women rebel or not. Your treachery has been committed" (Dangarembga, *This Mournable Body* 354). The scene ends in fury when one of the tourists wants to take a photo of Tambu with her semi-naked mother. Tambu's mother responds with anger and sorrow to this, and eventually falls to the ground. In an attempt to solve the situation peacefully, after Tracey demands that Tambu needs to get her mother away from the tourists, Tambu is strongly affected by her mother's emotional distress and of her own fault in making her feel this way: "When you reach her, grief wells past the banks of a pale purple pool and rushes into your throat. You will it back. It wraps around your heart and constricts to stop it. Your heart refuses to be stopped. It grows and grows. You have no strength to lift her,

because your tears are falling onto your mother's skin" (358). This scene at the very end of the novel marks an affective shift and reorientation in Tambu's life. She moves from having had an absolute self-centered neoliberal mode of being in most part of the novel, to critically starting to consider how she impacts other people toward the very end of it.

Tambu embodies a neoliberal subjectivity where she shows no consideration for other people's well-being besides her own. In the end, however, she is transformed in terms of what the neoliberal fantasy has meant to her as she now feels how it is manifested in the shame and grief her mother and the other women feel. She then redirects her energies moving forward to reestablish the relationships that she has damaged, and to coexist with a collectivist approach that considers the well-being of other people and not just herself. The women in her Shona community focus on the human values of unhu, which centers collective prosperity. As such, their culture does not accept Tambu's individualistic approach to life. Tracey's tourism agency is then displayed as a neoliberal capitalist enterprise that is only driven by money, greed and expansion, and as such, it is indifferent to the harmful effects it has on the communities it exploits. Tambu's complicity with white capitalism, however, suggests a complicated racialized situatedness. *This Mournable Body* is set in Zimbabwe in the late 1990s and toward the turn of the 21st century, which was a period of neoliberal transitioning in the country. Tambu's reality is infused with irregular pessimism and despair in the absence of opportunities for her to succeed. Her self-loathing, selfishness and dissatisfaction with the world she lives in are therefore linked to a national history of social and economic issues that block her ability to thrive in life. She has to sustain the optimistic desire to become successful while also feeling worn out by racialized oppression in Zimbabwe. This subsequently suggests that her affective disposition is enmeshed within Zimbabwe's social reality.

This Mournable Body was published in 2018 and it is the last book in a trilogy about Tambu's life, anteceded by *Nervous Conditions* published in 1988 and *The Book of Not* in 2006 (Mhute). The novel was also shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 2020, yet Tsitsi Dangarembga's first novel had already placed her in an international spotlight as it was "hailed as one of the 20th century's most significant works of African literature" (Mhute). *Nervous Conditions* was set in Rhodesia in the 1960s when racial tensions and nationalist movements resulted in the start of a liberation war¹ for the black population to become free from white minority rule. This war then lasted from 1966 to 1979, right before Zimbabwe was

¹ Scholars refer to this war in different politicized ways: some refer to it as a civil war, and others call it a war of independence or liberation/guerilla war. Different terms therefore occur in this paper, but they refer to the same event.

formed in 1980 (Kriger 1-4). While *Nervous Conditions* follows Tambu's childhood within this extremely violent period, *This Mournable Body* portrays a middle-aged Tambu at the height of political and socio-economic crises in postcolonial Zimbabwe. As one review about the novel points out: "Dangarembga sets herself the challenge of writing about how alienated personhood becomes when life stories lose hope and in a country where effort is no longer followed by reward" (Lara Feigel "This Mournable Body by Tsitsi Dangarembga review – life on the precipice"). From this perspective, the novel mediates how the overall sense of optimism and hope are fraying within the nation, whose colonial history and postcolonial future are being negotiated in a present that feels unsettling and unstable.

This thesis paper contends that Tambu's neoliberal mode of being affectively elicits how her attachments to the object of financial self-advancement mediate an ambivalent and postcolonial situatedness. Assessed in terms of affective and postcolonial relationality, Tambu's selfishness and her complicity with white neoliberal capitalism are established as affective responses to her situated positionality in a national space where her experience of the present is suspended in-between the overlapping temporalities of past and ongoing racialization, and of neocolonial and neoliberal temporalities in the postcolonial present. This thesis paper thus considers her situated experience in terms of postcolonial displacement and entanglement, and as such, it addresses the affective modes in which the narrative mediates Tambu's becoming in the three phases that structure the novel. Her becoming is in this regard viewed as a processual navigation of these various temporalities, which this thesis paper overall considers to effectuate her suspended, ambivalent situatedness. The affective dimension of this suspended state of being is also indicative of an existential and postcolonial quandary in her contemporary, neoliberal and postcolonial lifeworld. At the basis of this situatedness lies the challenge of creating a valuable existence and sustainable livelihood in an impoverished reality where opportunities that promise upward-mobility are lacking. Tambu's self-centeredness can thus be linked to the general socio-economic struggles in Zimbabwe. The emergence of neoliberal forces within the novel's historical realism then generates opportunities for people like Tambu to strive for a better life for themselves. However, her selfish conduct is also criticized in the novel as it harms her social relations and negates the values of unhu. The affectivity caused by neoliberal ideology's centralization of self-interest thus generates an injurious social mode of being as Tambu subsequently does not consider the well-being of her Shona community. For Tambu, her destructive selfishness reaches its peak in the dance performance involving her mother and the other women as she exploits and capitalizes on her own community's culture and values by submitting herself to Tracey's

leadership. The novel is then also examined as a critique of the uneven racialized structures of neoliberal capitalism in Zimbabwe. Tambu's complicity with white capitalist exploitation of her black community is then viewed as a problematic and ambivalent positionality within the nation's contemporary, postcolonial and neoliberal landscape.

As *This Mournable Body* came out fairly recently, not a lot of literary criticism has been published about the novel yet. This thesis paper therefore mainly relies on publications about the novel written by Minna Niemi and Pauline Uwakweh. Both scholars have addressed the destructive impacts of capitalism on Tambu's Shona community and criticized Tambu's selfish behavior. Niemi focuses more on the effects of white neoliberal capitalism, while Uwakweh discusses the aspects of nationhood, identity and communal belonging in the novel. This thesis paper therefore draws consistently on their arguments and perspectives as it focuses on how neoliberal ideology affectively directs Tambu's attachments and dealings with other people in her postcolonial lifeworld. That being said, this thesis paper attempts to pursue this topic by combing the theoretical fields of affect theory and postcolonial theory. This theoretical combination has been overlooked by scholars, especially in relation to contemporary Southern African literature. This thesis paper establishes that affect theory and postcolonial theory conjointly provide important perspectives on affective dimensions of relationality in postcolonial experiences in contemporary Southern Africa. In view of this, this thesis paper considers what it constitutes to affectively and relationally live in a structurally unstable and unequal lifeworld where Tambu, as a postcolonial Zimbabwean citizen, constantly has to deal with a conflicting sense of self. This thesis paper therefore uses affect theory in the way "Affect studies understands the subject in terms of socio-structural forces, and it understands materiality as never divorced from how we feel, whom we relate to, and the histories of emotion that shape us" (Greyser 86-87). Affect theory then generally seeks to formulate affective approaches to relationality and materiality in the world of objects and people. A turn to affect is also to pay attention to what affects have the power to do: "Its [affect's] activity saturates the corporeal, intimate, and political performances of adjustment that make a shared atmosphere something palpable and, in its patterning, releases to view a poetics, a theory-in-practice of how a world works" (Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* 16). Affect then encompasses all material aspects of a lifeworld and the structural organizations that produce various kinds of subjectivities and positionings that contain different degrees of power, socio-economic statuses, and opportunities for citizens to flourish in their social worlds.

By employing Lauren Berlant's² affect theory on cruel optimism, Tambu's persistent neoliberal attachments are considered as part of a good-life fantasy that affectively effectuates challenging relations of optimism in her life. That said, this thesis paper also seeks to critique the limits of cruel optimism, but also extend its applicability to Southern Africa as Berlant centers their theory within the global North. As the novel foregrounds, neoliberalism has worldwide effects and it is therefore socio-economically present in postcolonial Zimbabwe where it affects people's modes of living. This thesis paper therefore provides a very simplified overview of Zimbabwe's political and socio-economic progression post-1980. It also intends to employ Achille Mbembe's postcolonial theory on time as displacement and entanglement in contemporary and postcolonial sub-Saharan Africa. Mbembe's central claim is that the postcolonial African subject experiences time as a set of inconsistent temporalities that subsequently are integral parts of the formation of its subjectivity. Mbembe's ideas on time is used to assess the significant aspect about Tambu's affective experiences of neoliberal temporality in relation to the temporality of pastness. This thesis paper then considers how the relation of cruel optimism works within a space that is temporally sensed as entangled with disunities concerning responsibility and belonging within the nation. This entanglement emerges in social frictions that intensify Tambu's problematic personhood. Her self-centeredness then points to how she has a destructive way of managing external pressures in her lifeworld as her response is to disregard other people in order to not deal with adversity, and thus instead concentrate fully on her own futural success.

This thesis paper also employs Berlant's affect theory on inconvenience to examine different affective modes that relationally describe how Tambu deals with coexistence. Berlant's affective concepts in relation to inconvenience also point to how Tambu fails to shut out unwanted and uncomfortable pressures from people and from her past. This thesis paper links her solitariness and her complicity with white capitalist exploitation to the postcolonial affect of haunting suggested by Michael O'Riley. The temporality of pastness then situates Tambu in an ongoing state of suspension. Inconvenience also describes how affectivity inevitably forces people to constantly adjust in and to life. Tambu's self-interested mode of being is then particularly problematic in this regard as she does not have any significant reorientation in life until the very end of the novel when she ends up betraying her own community for her own neoliberal aspirations. This thesis paper places her mode of being in dialogue with Tsitsi Dangarembga's suggestion of black individuals' complicity with white

² Lauren Berlant uses the pronouns they/them.

people as a means to survive a challenging socio-economic and racially unequal national space. Through her attachments in life, Tambu affectively mediates an ambivalent postcolonial situatedness within a contemporary, neocolonial and neoliberal Zimbabwe. In the analysis of Tambu's becoming, this thesis paper attempts to demonstrate how her attachments to upward-mobility are generating a harmful way of living and coexisting. Through the quality of unhu, Tambu's community challenges individual self-interest for the flourishing of the entire social collective. The function of unhu is then considered as a site of shared empowerment against the overpowering effects of white capitalist exploitation. These various theoretical approaches are being gathered through the social and affective modalities of optimism, pessimism and hope in the way these regulate Tambu's attachments. This thesis paper investigates her affective and transformative disposition chronologically from the beginning to the end of the novel. As such, this approach considers affectivity within the process of neoliberal (re)orientation where pessimism, optimism and hope are measured in the way she relationally envisions and experiences life in a complex situatedness.

That being said, this approach is limited and could have been more extensive. More postcolonial affect theory could have been included, but this thesis paper only briefly engages a postcolonial theorization of the affect of haunting. It would also have been insightful to engage postcolonial feminist theories more extensively as well, as this thesis paper marginally incorporates Tsitsi Dangarembga's feminist essay-collection *Black and Female*. The novel does foreground power-imbalances between men and women, but the majority of the characters Tambu encounters are women. The novel is then highly women-centered, and this thesis paper therefore intends to address some of the unequal racialized power-dynamics in the relationship between Tambu and her white boss Tracey. However, these other, but interrelated perspectives would all in all entail a much larger analysis. They are therefore excluded for the simple that this thesis paper does not have space for them. Also, as the primary focus is on the effects of neoliberal ideology in postcolonial Zimbabwe, this thesis paper focuses on affect theories that somewhat deal with neoliberal capitalist structures in combination with a theory on the contemporary experience of time and subjectivity in sub-Saharan Africa. In relation to this, it is also necessary to explicate the novel's realism as it mirrors empirical experiences of Zimbabwe's history and contemporaneity. The scope of this examination is subsequently the reason why this thesis paper does not have a comparative approach, but only concentrates on this one novel.

Chapter 1: Affectivity in Contemporary, Postcolonial Zimbabwe

1.1. *This Mournable Body* and the Postcolonial Zimbabwean Context

This Mournable Body is structured into three parts that fall in chronological order, and in which each part indicates a new phase or transition in Tambu's life. The first part is called "Ebbing", the second part "Suspended" and the third "Arriving". Each part signals an affective state in Tambu's becoming within the ongoing process of neoliberal and postcolonial nation-building in Zimbabwe. The narrative voice is an anonymous and omnipresent second-person who refers to Tambu as "you." This narrative style engenders a schism between the subject-world and object-world as the narrator is mediating Tambu's thoughts, feelings and actions as a critical observer. In view of this, Pauline Uwakweh argues that the function of the second-person narrator in *This Mournable Body* is to address all people in postcolonial Zimbabwe, which also includes the readers of the novel. She states that: "You" refers to both Tambu and her fellow postcolonial Zimbabwean subjects. It draws readers into the story's arc as characters and vicarious witnesses of the protagonist's series of "miscalculations". The reader transforms into a witness and participant in Tambu's travails in the post colony" (Uwakweh 286). Uwakweh's contention then indicates that the novel mediates postcolonial becoming and unlearning in contemporary Zimbabwe through Tambu's problematic and selfish choices, which Uwakweh perceives as "miscalculations" that eventually modifies Tambu's orientation in life.

Tambu's ambivalent subjecthood moreover ties with Eleni Coundouriotis contention that the narrative mode of *This Mournable Body* foregrounds the challenge of representation in postcolonial Zimbabwe where people have contesting narratives about history, memory, pastness and belonging. She asserts that: "The hypothetical tenor of this narrative mode permits a degree of open-endedness to interpolate a self into the space of the narratee. The novel, moreover, guides us in how to think about this challenge of accounting for oneself" (Coundouriotis 448). From this viewpoint, the second-person narrator then creates both an openness and an ambivalence around the sociality within the contemporary national space where people have different situated modes of coexisting. In the way the narrator mediates frictions between individuals and communities by referring to "you", it also appears as an external insider that is both impersonal and personal to the social and national context, to the characters and to the novel's readers. Everyone, inside and outside the narrative thus

collectively partake in the narrator's critical and reflective mode of mediating social responsibility, affective entrapment and selfhood.

In this way, the novel mediates how relationality within the collective space vary immensely among Zimbabweans by portraying how the imprints of history have different manifestations in ordinary people's lives. In contrast to people in her family and community, Tambu did not participate in the war, but was sent to her uncle's school. She was therefore somewhat shielded from the worst extremities of violence. She was subsequently able to attend university and obtain a degree in Sociology while other women in her community fought in the war and then witnessed, suffered and partook in horrible acts. After the war, Tambu could look for work in the city Harare, while her own family, on the other hand, did not have any financial opportunities to get out of their extreme poverty in the rural village where they live. These internal divisions suggest that the project of the postcolonial novel itself disrupts formal and discursive narratives about the shared social space of reality. Dangarembga's novel then ruptures politicized declarations of national identity and belonging by mediating intra-communal disunities in Zimbabwe. These empirical differences within a shared national history affect Tambu's relations with her family and other people. While Tambu has strived to get a job with her education in the city, her family still resides in the impoverished rural area where Tambu grew up. As such, they have been informed by different social and economic influences. While the family centers communal solidarity through the quality of unhu as a means to generate collective well-being, Tambu is fixated on the neoliberal merit of self-interest in order to achieve financial success. They thus embody different modes of being, which signifies disruption in communal unification.

The socio-political space in Zimbabwe thus overall comprises of multifarious and disjointed attachments to the idea of nationhood, responsibility and belonging. In the first part of the novel, the second-person narrator mediates how Tambu's solitary existence in life is tied to an ambivalent situatedness that emerged when she became affiliated with the white population when she was young. The narrator then inquires into when it was that Tambu changed from being a good, caring person who used to work hard for communal flourishing, and concludes that it happened when she attended the Young Ladies' College of the Sacred Heart. This was a secondary school for mainly white girls, but which also allowed some black girls to attend: "It must have been there that your metamorphosis took place. Yet how awful it is to admit that closeness to white people at the convent had ruined your heart, had caused your womb, from which you reproduced yourself before you gave birth to anything else, to shrink between your hip bones" (Dangarembga, *This Mournable Body* 103-104). Tambu's

involvement with white people, their power and their culture within her nation thus altered Tambu's belonging and attachments to her family and her Shona community. Yet, as the narrator also states, Tambu feels like she cannot relate to the African women from her community as they have been shaped by their participation in the liberation war. They then hold a severe hostility toward the white population in Zimbabwe, which Tambu, however, does not entirely share. The second-person narrator moreover accentuates Tambu's existential quandary and makes judgements and decisions about her life. By portraying frictions in communal cohabitation, the novel is then complicating Zimbabwean nationhood. As such, it interrogates into what kind of future that possibly lies ahead for a postcolonial Zimbabwean subject that is entangled in an ongoing history of violence, oppression and unequal access to opportunities. Tambu's neoliberal aspirations and her postcolonial situatedness as a black Zimbabwean are then problematized within this unsettling national sphere. Her involvement and complicity with white neoliberal practice mediate how her mode being is detrimental to the object of collective prosperity for her own marginalized black community.

1.2. Neoliberal Ideology and Unhu Philosophy

In order to examine how Tambu's neoliberal mode of being generates harmful relationality and affectivity in terms of well-being and coexistence in her lifeworld, it is first necessary to outline what neoliberalism is. According to David Harvey's definition of neoliberalism, "Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey 2). This general definition of neoliberalism points to both its structural mechanisms within the free market, but also its social implications. Ideologically, neoliberalism then commands a mode of being that centralizes individual self-interest as the best means in which to actualize one's well-being. This is the mentality and subjectivity that Tambu embodies from the beginning toward the end of the novel as she only acts in terms of what she herself can gain from situations with no considerations for other people. On a societal level, neoliberalism then has all-encompassing implications as the political decision-making of local governments informed by this economic theory subsequently affects civil life. Thus, as Harvey underscores, "Neoliberalism has, in short, become hegemonic as a mode of discourse. It has pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world" (3). From a political and socio-economic basis, this affects

many societal aspects, like the diminishment of state sovereignty, the organization of labor, and people's social relations with each other (3). Neoliberalism therefore dictates citizens' orientations in the world by managing global market-based demands that effectively and affectively shape people's lives. People are then constantly adjusting their lives to everchanging labor market-regulations. This subsequently makes employment and money into constant instabilities, which render our material reality in the present and toward the future more uncertain and speculative.

The idea of unhu, on the other hand, or ubuntu as it is also known as, connotes a particular mode of being and living in African culture. In her article "Neoliberal Capitalism and Uneven Development in *This Mournable Body*," Minna Niemi has already identified the conflicting presence of neoliberal self-interest and unhu philosophy in *This Mournable Body* where she provides Munyaradzi Mawere's and Tapiwa Mubaya's definition of unhu:

Ubuntu philosophy (or Unhu philosophy in Shona language) ... is generally a philosophy of humanness that underscores and embraces the spirit of sharing, love, oneness, and caring ... This means that the philosophy of unhu/ubuntu stresses the values of respect, collectivism, social cohesion, consideration for others and the respect for life and nature: it is a collectivistic approach to life as opposed to Euro-centric approaches that are largely individualistic (qtd. in Niemi 885).

The philosophical idea of unhu then centers the community in terms of worldbuilding. As such, its function in the novel is to mediate communal resilience to the individualistic basis of white neoliberal practices. The black women in the Shona community that Tambu belongs to demonstrate the values of unhu in the way they actively help and support each unselfishly. Mubaya and Mawere moreover underscore that unhu in Zimbabwean Shona culture is understood as a type of human knowledge that is separate from formal knowledge received in school: "No matter how many diplomas or degrees that person has, in the Shona and many other cultures of Zimbabwe, s/he is uneducated. The person is only learned and not educated for that individual is not socialised to properly fit in as a member of a society and can hardly contribute positively to the well-being of the society" (Mubaya & Mawere 79). Tambu fits this description as she is an educated person who has become estranged from the human wisdom of unhu. She is thus considered as uneducated by the Shona community in this sense as she no longer sees the importance of human consideration and collective thriving. Tambu's formal education and neoliberal aspirations are thus a significant contrast to her community's idea of what values and attachments that matter in the sociality between individuals and

cultures in a shared space. Tambu's self-centered neoliberal mode of being is thus an active negation of her community's culture.

1.3. Contemporary Postcolonial African Subjectivity and Temporality

Tambu is also a postcolonial African subject where the effects of various temporalities in the present disrupt her neoliberal optimism and forwardness. This thesis paper views that the haunting presence of pastness in Tambu's life is a postcolonial temporality that obstructs her neoliberal aspirations. Haunting then generates an ongoing state of multidimensional sufferings that have overpowering effects on her, and she is therefore repressing them rather than confronting them. This temporality is also enmeshed with Tambu's sense of structural determination in her lifeworld where racialized oppression in her past created impediments for black Zimbabweans. The presence of racial inequality still continues, but the present contains neoliberal possibilities to self-advance in the uncertain future. As such, Tambu is attempting to not deal with the negative and despairing affectivity of structural inequality by finding optimistic attachments in the world from a neoliberal desire to obtain a financially comfortable life. Her neoliberal forwardness then also emerges as another temporality that is being disrupted by her pastness. This temporal aspect of Tambu's situated experience of the world in contemporary Zimbabwe is then a particular entanglement and displacement.

According to Achille Mbembe, the experience of time in postcolonial sub-Saharan Africa is a mixture of ongoing discontinuities, which then is a contrast to the experience of linear time. Published in 2001, his book *On the Postcolony* concentrates on the same contemporary time period as Dangarembga's novel and questions what can be perceived as a collective existential predicament in contemporary postcolonial Africa. In this region, he contends that the experience of time is sensed as a constant entanglement with the sub-Saharan history of colonial violence and epistemic ruptures. Mbembe's propositions about African time and subjectivity therefore resonate well with Tambu's ambivalent situatedness and problematic personhood.

Mbembe is overall attempting to investigate into the contemporary postcolonial African subject while critiquing Western modernity and social theories. According to him, these have not provided adequate nor helpful models to approach the topic of the African experience of time with. Mbembe asserts that postcolonial African subjectivity is an expression of certain ruptured, nonlinear times, as: "African social formations are not necessarily converging toward a single point, trend, or cycle. They harbor the possibility of a variety of trajectories neither convergent nor divergent but interlocked, paradoxical"

(Mbembe 16). What Mbembe suggests is a way of assessing the contemporary African subject through a reconceptualization of the ongoing passage of time as emerging differently in postcolonial sub-Saharan Africa from the Western world due to the violence of colonialism (13-14). As such, he proposes that subjectivity actually can be seen as inseparable from temporality and by itself be temporality (15). He does not contend that there is an origin or center to the African self that it can be traced back to. Rather, he suggests that we should approach subjectivity as particular for a certain “spirit” or “Zeitgeist” in its age in which the postcolonial African subject subsequently is made up of a certain lifeworld that temporally conditions and shapes its experience of living (15). An age, according to Mbembe, contains multiple temporalities, which indicates that the contemporary age in postcolonial sub-Saharan Africa has many temporalities that are happening at the same time (15). An age then consists of the combination of many temporalities that the African self, in its experience in the world as a postcolonial subject, is entangled in.

Mbembe states that the postcolonial African self is in a process of being made, of becoming, in terms of “the act and context of *displacement* and *entanglement* [emphasis in original]” (15). What these two central terms refer to are the non-linear experiences of the present in postcolonial Africa whose realities have been shaped by social ruptures and discontinuities (17). As such, time has not progressed toward a cohesive and unified age of time, but is instead involves multiple ages that overlap (16). The postcolonial African subject’s displacement refers to the absence of an African origin, or essence, and in which the subject instead embodies its age by experiencing the material and social lifeworld it is part of, and of the very consciousness it has over its existence in this particular lifeworld (15, 17). He proposes that: “it may be supposed that the present *as experience of a time* [emphasis in original] is precisely that moment when different forms of absence become mixed together: absence of those presences that are no longer so and that one remembers (the past), and absence of those others that are yet to come and are anticipated (the future)” (16). Time as displacement is then interrelated with time as entanglement. The experience of the time of entanglement in postcolonial Africa is based on three axioms, which are, briefly put: 1. nonlinear in the passing of time and in which time is understood as multiple temporalities that are overlapping and constantly altering the experience of living; 2. the current time is occurring in ruptures and is causing disturbances and sudden changes that cannot be foreseen; 3. the real structure of African time, which is inconsistent and irregular, cannot be undone and entirely understood – thus it cannot be put in any simple model that attempts to create a logic

to it like Western theories do. These axioms then constitute the postcolonial experience and existence of a contemporary lifeworld (16). Time of entanglement can thus be understood as a web of social and historical relations of the various temporalities, past, present and futural.

The time that is emerging is then sensed as constellations of these multiple temporalities. In relation to futurity, Mbembe states that: “I felt that what distinguishes the contemporary African experience is that this emerging time is appearing in a context—today—in which the future horizon is apparently closed, while the horizon of the past has apparently receded” (16-17). The postcolonial present’s connection to the past has then been disrupted, and the future cannot be predicated or envisioned clearly. His view on time as displacement and entanglement in contemporary and postcolonial Africa ties with the novel’s portrayal of a present that is made up of past, present and future temporalities; the pastness of Tambu’s childhood and the liberation war in which members of her family died and fought still haunt and affect her in the present. As historical events, they have ended, but they affectively persist in their aftermaths through Tambu’s and other people’s memories. Her relationality in the material world is then affected by the presence of pastness. This effectuates a kind of suspended condition where she is situated in-between the desire for a neoliberal good-life in the future, and the undealt affectivity related to her communal belonging which she neglects. Neoliberal capitalism emerges as a temporality that both disrupts the presence of other temporalities, but provides Tambu with a future-oriented pathway. Yet, it also complicates her sense of self as a black African woman in a postcolonial lifeworld that still experiencing the structural effects of racial polarization in her country. From this perspective, she is no longer clearly situated in a coherent ontological sense. Affectively, her experience as a postcolonial African subject is in a process of becoming through the ongoing navigations of temporalities in which the novel portrays the problematic effects of self-interested directionality. Tambu thus constantly has to navigate these temporalities, which is not a simple or sensible task. Her sense of being a failure in life engenders negative affectivity that both frustrate her and cause pessimism. This occurs primarily in the two first phases that she goes through, while the third phase and part of the second phase deal with her complicated situated experience as a postcolonial African subject. In the two last parts she has to engage with women from her community, and she starts working for Tracey.

1.4. Conceptualizing Affect as Entangled Relationality

In this section, this thesis paper seeks to combine Mbembe’s postcolonial theory on African subjectivity/temporality as displacement and entanglement with affect theory in the way the

body is conceptualized as fundamentally open and relational. By centering the influences and implications of moods, feelings and atmospheres, affect theory points to all kinds of affective disturbances in people's lives. It seeks to describe different ways people are attached in and to the world materially and relationally. Affect theory then provides various frameworks on how our attachments to objects and people in our lifeworld are being ruptured, altered or (dis)continued by the autonomous power of affects. Lisa Black and Couze Venn argue that we should pay a more nuanced theoretical attention to what affects do in terms of embodiment and bodily relationality as: "This shifts our focus to consider how bodies are always thoroughly entangled processes, and importantly defined by their capacities to affect and be affected" (Blackman & Venn 9). Such a focus on the body is what this thesis paper intends to use as a theoretical basis. It considers the affective dimension of Tambu's situated experience as a postcolonial African subject who is also solely concentrated on neoliberal success. Her becoming is then modified by her management of affective impulses which illustrate that Tambu cannot control affectedness in the end despite her self-absorbed focus in life.

In addition to the usage of the term affect, the common theoretical terminology within affect studies for affect is also intensity, energy or force. Brian Massumi denotes affect as intensity, whose nature is processed and actualized corporeally (Massumi 29, 32-33). He states that "Intensity is *incipience* [emphasis in original], incipient action and expression. Intensity is not only incipience. It is also the beginning of a selection: the incipience of mutually exclusive pathways of action and expression, all but one of which will be inhibited, prevented from actualizing themselves completely" (32-33). From this theoretical outlook on affect, the modification of the body is constant openness or receptivity to affectivity, which operates through tendencies (33). What this means is that intensities can always be actualized in many forms, and they are therefore autonomous tendencies as they thus can effectuate different outcomes within the immediacy of the moment. Massumi's idea that affects are open and autonomous correlates with the theorization of affect as bodily in-between-ness through what Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth refer to as force-encounters. They provide a conceptualization of affects that underscores affects' relational dimension in the interplay between bodies:

At once intimate and impersonal, affect *accumulates* [emphasis in original] across both relatedness and interruptions in relatedness, becoming a palimpsest of force-encounters traversing the ebbs and swells of intensities that pass between "bodies" (bodies defined not by an outer skin-envelope or other surface boundary but by their

potential to reciprocate or co-participate in the passages of affect) (Gregg & Seigworth 2).

In this passage, Gregg and Seigworth signal the body's capacity to experience mutual affectedness with other bodies in the way it is fundamentally open to be transformed by external forces. As such, the body is "webbed in its relations" and always already in a process of becoming that never arrives in a state of finitude (3). The body is then not a fixed entity, or unpliant "this-ness", but instead always moving as a temporal "yet-ness" (3). "This-ness" is thus temporary and constantly transformative as affectivity operates autonomously in the relatedness between bodies, or force-encounters.

This thesis paper bridges this ongoing and processual affective state of bodily becoming with Mbembe's contention that the postcolonial African subject is also in a state of becoming through displacement and entanglement in the way the postcolonial African subject does not mediate an ontological center or origin, nor any clear trajectory in terms of its situated experience of the world. The affective dimension of the postcolonial African subject's becoming in the contemporary is then open and not emerging in any logic of prescribed course as the nature of its existence and being take form through a particular situated experience of displacement and entanglement. This relational aspect of becoming can be tied to Teresa Brennan's take on affects as she indicates how affects are transmissible from one person to another. She states that: "They enhance when they are projected outward, when one is relieved of them; in popular parlance, this is called "dumping." Frequently, affects deplete when they are introjected, when one carries the affective burden of another, either by a straightforward transfer or because the other's anger becomes your depression" (Brennan 6). This theorization emphasizes affect's socio-cultural dimension as the transmission of affects situates the body in its proximity to other bodies in the way they appear and move contextually. In Brennan's view, the transmission of affects discloses how humans are "not self-contained in terms of our energies. There is no secure distinction between the "individual" and the "environment"" (6). Her point is not that individually felt emotions and affects are irrelevant within this diffusion, but that their actualizations in the world show that "affects are not received or registered in a vacuum" (6). The transmission of affect instead demonstrates that we are enmeshed with each other's situatedness through coexistence.

For Tambu, affects' autonomous power and ability to transform her attachments in the world emerge as a process in her social and material reality. Her neoliberal desires are entangled with her nation's violent liberation struggles, colonialism and racialized oppression. Like many affect theorists, this thesis paper does not intend to distinguish affects from

emotions, feelings or moods as their differences are hard to discern. The reason for this is that they tend to occur in correlation and simultaneously, which consequently can make them categorically diffuse (6). As such, their differences are not always that important or useful, and they will therefore be employed interchangeably in this thesis paper. What is central, on the other hand, is rather the affective dimension of Mbembe's proposition about the experience of postcolonial African subjectivity as temporality. Experience involves a body that is being transformed by the very relations it is shaped by and entangled with from a structural basis, however, also in its particular, situated existence in the world where affectivity generates shifts and movements within the subject's attachments. The ideas of displacement and entanglement are then understood in terms of the contemporary age Tambu experiences the world in. This thesis paper then attempts to assess Tambu as a postcolonial African subject through affective concepts and modalities proposed by Lauren Berlant as these point to aspects of affective relationality. These affective concepts then provide different, but interrelated ways to approach Tambu's affective responses to her material reality, and of her ways of dealing with an ambivalent racialized situatedness in her neoliberal forwardness.

Chapter 2: Cruel Optimism in Tambu's Neoliberal and Postcolonial Lifeworld

2.1. The Affective Relation of Cruel Optimism

In their book *Cruel Optimism*, Lauren Berlant proposes affective modes of relationality in the contemporary neoliberal world. Berlant focuses on neoliberal good-life fantasies in the way they uphold people's optimistic attachments in their social and material worlds. A central term in this theory is the object of desire, or object-desire, in the construction of good-life fantasies. Berlant conceptualizes the object of desire as "a cluster of promises" that serve as an optimistic relation in the world in the way it contains the indication and assurance of something that seem realizable and that we want for ourselves (Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* 23). People then attach themselves to things that signify nearness to their object-desires, which can be anything, as Berlant states that "This cluster of promises could seem embedded in a person, a thing, an institution, a text, a norm, a bunch of cells, smells, a good idea – whatever" (23). What this means is that people then attach themselves to any kinds of things in the world that signify nearness to their fantasy. Berlant then centralizes the affective mode of optimism to theorize how our attachments to our object-desires become sustaining and life-binding ways for us to exist in the world (23-24). A central proposition is then that an attachment, from a general stance, is fundamentally optimistic in an affective sense in the way it directs us toward things and people in the world that signal the cluster of promises that we desire (1-2). As such, attachments generate mobility and engagement in our lives, and optimism affectively establishes our orientations in the world in the way we are dealing with things in the present and moving forward in life despite challenges.

That said, optimism does not necessarily generate positive attitudes as it can mediate the negative absence of the desired object. As such, optimism can be felt and experienced negatively (2). Berlant's states that within the relation of cruel optimism: "optimism manifests in attachments and the desire to sustain them: attachment is a *structure* [emphasis in original] of relationality. But the experience of affect and emotion that attaches to those relations is as extremely varied as the contexts of life in which they emerge" (13). As such, cruel optimism denotes a relation in the world to any object-desire that does not in fact effectuate the envisioned thriving one thought it would produce. In this way, these relations rather cause harmful impacts in our lives. Yet, we keep staying attached to the object-desires because they still contain the cluster of promises that we want to realize. In this way, relations of cruel optimism are both destructive to us in the way they block our flourishing, but also

fundamentally assuring in the way they still sustain the optimism of what the object-desires promise (2). Berlant then underpins how conventional cruel optimism is in our lives in the way neoliberal societies construct ideal socio-economic modes of living that we know are potentially unstable or dissolving (2). This can occur through anything, like employment or market-regulations or relationships with people. Berlant then states that: “At the center of the project, though, is that moral-intimate-economic thing called “the good life”” (2). Their theory on cruel optimism is then based on socio-cultural formations of conventional, neoliberal good-life fantasies that affectively: “Fantasy is the means by which people hoard idealizing theories and tableaux about how they and the world “add up to something.”” (2). Thus, a conventional fantasy about the good life then effectuates attachments to object-desires that also entail processual, affective visions of becoming where a person wants to attain a certain status or sense of meaningfulness within its socio-cultural world. Tambu envisions that she will become successful, and everything and everyone around her that indicate poverty and stagnation are things and people she wants to disengage from. Her neoliberal mode of being is in therefore assessed as an affective response to her challenging and impoverished lifeworld governed by racial and gendered inequality. In this way, cruel optimism manifests in Tambu’s general dissatisfaction in this reality, and in which self-interest enables possibilities to thrive.

2.2. Critique of Cruel Optimism in Its Applicability in Postcolonial Zimbabwe

Lauren Berlant situates cruel optimism within the rise of collective mistrust in promises of reciprocity provided by neoliberal states. Visions of what a neoliberal good life constitutes are socially created in the collective imaginary within a certain time period and shaped by the political and economic structures and infrastructures within the nation. This then affects people’s attachments to conventional good-life fantasies in society as their modes of living are becoming more unstable and unpromising. The fantasies are described by Lauren Berlant as:

The fantasies that are fraying include, particularly, upward mobility, job security, political and social equality, and lively, durable intimacy. The set of dissolving assurances also includes meritocracy, the sense that liberal-capitalist society will reliably provide opportunities for individuals to carve out relations of reciprocity that seem fair and that foster life as a project of adding up to something and constructing cushions for enjoyment (3).

This thesis paper’s critique of cruel optimism focuses on their idea of reciprocity within societal structures, infrastructures and institutions. Zimbabwe, as a nation state, does not engender the same promises of reciprocity to its citizens as Western countries that have more

resourceful and stable economies are able to do. Berlant situates their theory on cruel optimism within the formations of national and global structures in Europe and the U.S. after World War II, which then centralizes fantasies of the good life in connection to the emergence of democratic values and development in these areas (3). The general formulation of cruel optimism and its effectuation as ideologically produced within a neoliberal contemporaneity is then relevant to Dangarembga's novel. However, the political and socio-economic dimension needs to be modified to the postcolonial context of Zimbabwe. It then needs to include the multitude of contesting narratives about socio-economic and racial identity as these manage the dynamics of imbalanced power-relations within the Zimbabwean society. These involve citizens' varying orientations toward hopes for material life-improvements, which are conditioned by the economy and government in the nation.

It is thus important to consider that the effects of neoliberal capitalism are different in postcolonial Southern African nations like Zimbabwe from the Western world. Berlant self-reflexively addresses the geopolitical differences within the representations of globalizing economic systems:

At times I use terms like "neoliberal" or "transnational" as heuristics for pointing to a set of delocalized processes that have played a huge role in transforming postwar political and economic norms of reciprocity and meritocracy since the 1970s. But I am not claiming that they constitute a world-homogenizing system whose forces are played out to the same effect, or affect, everywhere. The differences matter, as do the continuities (9).

From this viewpoint, affective responses to neoliberal capitalism in relation to social collectives and individual personhood will be particular to every place and their histories. The transformative effects of neoliberalism have resulted in what Berlant often refers to as neoliberal good-life fantasies, but as they underscore, these are not universal. Although their theory is centered in the contemporary Euro-American context, the globalist impacts of neoliberalism and the societal structuring of good-life fantasies are relevant to postcolonial, developing countries as well. Yet, they need to be assessed in terms of their socio-economic and political climate, which in connection to Zimbabwean literature will be an extension of cruel optimism that also considers neoliberalism with postcolonial and post-war narratives. Tambu's object-desires emerge within a country that lacks a stable societal infrastructure and economic base. Here, the ineffective organization of work within the public sphere is producing a wider and more desperate level of precarity for the entire population than in Western neoliberal states. This thesis paper therefore seeks to modify the idea of reciprocity

within the neoliberal good-life fantasy in the way Tambu's attachments are not about fearing the reproduction of dissatisfying labor and the subsequent cruel optimism this generates. Her attachments are instead necessary means to keep going in the present in order to cover elementary needs. As job opportunities are lacking within the nation on such a widespread level, impoverishment and unemployment are part of the ordinary.

2.3. Neoliberal Capitalism in Zimbabwe Post-Independence

In order to critically extend the application of cruel optimism, this thesis paper will provide a general and simplified overview of the socio-economic and political conditions in Zimbabwe to contextualize Tambu's postcolonial and neoliberal subjectivity. In the 1990s, neoliberal capitalism in Zimbabwe emerged within a national space that was already shaped by its colonial history, liberation war and then decolonial restructuring. In 1980, the country officially became independent from its colonial rulers that descended from the British Empire after a violent liberation war (Mlambo 5). The new government in function was now the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front which was represented by a black majority rule led by Robert Mugabe (5). After independence, the nation was initially optimistic toward the future, and the government introduced various positive policies that improved people's living conditions (194). However, this changed in the 1990s as the affective atmosphere in the nation was changing: "the optimism of a good life for all was dissipating. In its place was a deepening sense of despair in the face of mounting inflation and unemployment, declining household incomes, the informalisation of the economy, growing poverty, particularly in the urban areas, and severe housing shortages for the urban poor" (194). Zimbabwe still dealt with systemic inequality that originated during colonial rule. In 1981, this unequal distribution of power and capital was measured: "while Africans accounted for nearly 97.6 per cent of the population, they commanded only 60 per cent share of wages and salaries, whereas whites received 37 per cent of the same although they comprised only 2 per cent of the population" (206). The nation then faced huge economic challenges that followed racial inequality and that needed restructuring.

However, the turn to neoliberal policies was unsuccessful, and it actually worsened the socio-economic reality for most Zimbabweans. Neoliberal restructuring was most significantly marked by the adoption of programs introduced by international finance institutions:

In a bid to revamp the economy, government resorted to the IMF/World Bank-sponsored Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1990.

Government's decision to embrace the reform programme was hurtful to the working people. (...) The result was 'permanent joblessness, hopelessness and economic insecurity' for the majority and the mortgaging of Zimbabwe's economy to foreign capital (214).

The political initiatives to face the social and economic challenges within the nation by implementing neoliberal structures were then not only unsuccessful, they eventually worsened most people's already disastrous living standards, as: "The 1997 *Poverty Assessment Study Survey* revealed that 74 per cent (as compared to 65 per cent four years earlier) of Zimbabweans were poor and 45 per cent of Zimbabwean households were living below the food poverty line" (220). Zimbabwe was instead left in massive debt and did not see the infrastructural modernization and development that were intended with these programs (217). The nation was then by the mid-1990s experiencing collective unrest and general dissatisfaction as the ESAP had "prescribed, among other things, financial deregulation, labour retrenchments, removal of subsidies and import barriers, all of which accelerated deindustrialization and led to a rapid decline in living standards and to political discontent" (Mbiba 219). Although this is an extremely general and simplified account of the socio-economic trajectory of Zimbabwe post-independence and leading up to the spatio-temporal realism of Tambu's lifeworld, it underscores how the turn to neoliberal structures transformed the social reality in Zimbabwe by increasing the unemployment rates and worsening people's general living standards as the majority of Zimbabweans lived in poverty. This is the socio-economic context that Tambu is situated in and whose deficiency is something she constantly has to adjust to. As such, the future is impossible to predict for Tambu, and merely subject to speculation. Individual self-interest then appears as the best means to create a good-life for oneself as the political landscape, infrastructure and economic base are failing to provide for the society as a whole. Tambu thus has to find optimistic attachments within a lifeworld where the overall optimism and trust in the national promise of prosperity after independence are declining if not gone.

This Mournable Body then mirrors a period in Zimbabwe's history marked by failed neoliberal restructuring and the implications this has had on individuals and the black population. As Minna Niemi underscores: "In the story of Tambudzai, we thus follow the trajectory of alienation from older cultural values and national independence struggles and movement toward a prioritisation of self-interest" (Niemi, "Neoliberal Capitalism and Uneven Development" 872). From Niemi's viewpoint, Dangarembga's trilogy portrays the evolution of societal changes in Zimbabwe and the subsequent deleterious effects on Zimbabweans'

sustenance and ways of living. In the third novel of the trilogy, Tambu then has to adjust to this new developmental stage in her country's history where neoliberal policies have failed to improve the national economy and people's living conditions. Yet, they nonetheless implicate modes of being that respond to neoliberal capitalist demands. As Achille Mbembe contends, the implementation of these structural adjustment programs in postcolonial Africa in general in this time period had significant impacts in terms of "the political and cultural effects they [SAPs] are producing and of how those effects are undermining the postcolonial compromise, emasculating the traditional instruments of state power, and bringing about a profound modification of social structures and cultural imaginations" (Mbembe 57). Consequently, these programs affected not only the national economic bases, but also the postcolonial imagination for the future, which now, materially, became more uncertain, politically turbulent and dismal. Langton M. Dube likewise underscores how the political and cultural spheres in Zimbabwe were critically divided by contesting social positionalities where "the memorialisation of loss, whiteness, restitution, liberation, and post-colonialism in contradistinction to the neo-liberal discourses of self-interest, market efficiency, and the obduracy and venality of neo-colonial forces drove the post-colonial state into a cul de sac of contestations (Dube 102). The social and racial tensions of this political divide in Zimbabwe subtly underlies the frictions of coexistence and individual survival in *This Mournable Body*. While neoliberalism informs Tambu's mode of being, her affective responses are as much intertwined with the effects of political disunity and racialized inequality in a postcolonial Zimbabwe. This is what causes an existential despair in her life as the present and future are unfolding in an unsettling, financial unpredictability.

The societal anticipation of reciprocity in Berlant's theorization of cruel optimism between the state's obligations to its citizens and vice versa, is not valid in the same sense in postcolonial Zimbabwe. The nature of optimism in this locality is as mentioned predicated on anticipated uncertainty. This means that good-life fantasies can only be estimated in terms of possibilities and an element of luck, which engender a cruel relation of optimism as the fantasies may never become realizable. Yet, this cruelty is then also a conventionality; it is the testimony of the status quo as general impoverishment and joblessness affect the majority of the population. To not succeed financially subsequently constitutes the ordinary socio-economic condition for the postcolonial African subject. The experience of time as displacement and entanglement then negates the social construction of neoliberal good-life fantasies in themselves. In other words, it is not the realization that the promise of reciprocity may not hold and is fraying, as Berlant points to, but that it is a foundational mistrust in the

socio-economic system itself of not being capable of providing an all-encompassing and well-functioning societal infrastructure, labor, hopefulness or material improvements for its citizens. A neoliberal fantasy is then less structural and more contingent upon chances and self-centeredness. This reality then shapes Tambu's egoistic personhood who is responding to the predicament of socio-economic and existential uncertainty by firmly attaching herself to neoliberal aspirations. Affectively, the undesirability of Tambu's socio-economic, displaced and entangled situatedness then move in-between estimations of optimism and pessimism in the way Sara Ahmed argues that these two opposites are always directed toward a future possibility that contains one or the other, and which subsequently entails an affective quality (Ahmed 173-174). According to Ahmed, the present orientation toward the future then either feels complete or incomplete as: "both optimism and pessimism involve the temporality of the promise: they see the future in terms of what it promises to deliver or not deliver, in terms of what there is or is not left to drink from the glass of the present (174). From this perspective, optimism and pessimism are affectively measured in a future-oriented manner from an anticipatory stance in the present.

Tambu's object-desires may feel impossible at times to actualize in the present due to the absence of opportunities in her lifeworld and her overall dissatisfaction with life. This subsequently affects her stance on futurity as hanging unstably between the potential optimistic or pessimistic outcomes. Her affective disposition, measured between optimism as pessimism in the present toward the future, is then also tied to a sense of hope. As Ahmed states: "Hope is a feeling that is present (a pleasure in the mind) but is directed toward an object that is not yet present. Although of course to place one's hope in something might depend on past experiences: you estimate that something would or will be delightful" (181). Hope is in this regard an anticipation about an object's potentiality to actually become realizable at some point in the future. This thesis paper attempts to assess Tambu's attachments to object-desires in the way they are modified by Ahmed's conceptions of optimism, pessimism and hope. The relation of cruel optimism in Tambu's neoliberal good-life fantasy is within changeable attachments to object-desires that contain the promise of financial self-advancement. These follow the basic instability of her poverty and impoverished social reality. As such, they are not part of a functioning societal infrastructure, and they are therefore not constant or solid attachments. Instead, her search for opportunities to self-advance is anticipated within a social reality that is overall mediating unsustainable relations. Her relation of cruel optimism and her good-life fantasies are then the persistent

cling for upward-mobility, which she maintains despite feeling disaffected, depressed and defeated or like a failure.

2.4. The Object-Desire of Upward-Mobility

Tambu's affective attachment to a neoliberal good-life fantasy is especially one of irregular optimism in the first part of the novel. Her disposition to her current lack of work, loneliness and poverty is manifested as a sense of overpowering disappointment. Her ordinary days are both empty and potential, and affectively switch from optimism and pessimism. As the title of the first part indicates, Tambu is within an emotional state of "Ebbing" where life is measured as overall pessimistic. She is in a troubling state of financial discomfort, which thus signals how she is in a critical material condition in her social reality. She has to find a new place to live as well as looking for work in a tough and marginal job market in the nation's capital, Harare. Eventually she manages to procure a room to rent in a house owned by an old, affluent widow. In the interview, she is asked if has a job, in which Tambu states: "Working? Of course, yes. I am not one of those who just sits. I'm a worker, a real one" (Dangarembga, *This Mournable Body* 32). The nature of this lie discloses a state of crisis in Tambu's lifeworld and her distressed affective coping strategy in managing this by lying. Work here then more broadly represents a socio-economic object-desire that is absent and should have been part of her material reality. To not have a job means that she does not earn money, which is a precarious state in the way she has to pay attention to immediate survival needs in the present, like having to acquire a simple room to rent in order to not be homeless.

Tambu's sense of dissatisfaction in her life thus instigates her firm self-interested directionality forward. When she arrives at the house again, this time to move in, and then realizing her room's filthy conditions, she promises to not remain in her current impoverished state of material discomfort: "Packing your things in grimy drawers, you swear that when the time comes to move away, you will not go down the widow's drive the way you walked up it – with nothing" (43). This promise of material improvement that she gives to herself instigates her persistent quest to reach financial self-advancement. Further into this scene, Tambu is then positively energized by living on the widow's estate for its signifying possibilities for upward-mobility through the object of marriage. While in a distressing state about her poverty, unemployment and grim futurity, Tambu discovers that her landlady has adult sons. Her despair shifts to a cunning optimism when she first sees one of the men that are one day set to inherit the widow's estate. The narrator then mediates Tambu's reactive thoughts: "It is a stepping stone to another life you crave, away from this nowhere and the

days that gape empty behind you. You do not think of love, being obsessed only with what the gentleman can do for you, how the widow's son will be an insurance against your absolute downfall" (47). Tambu is calculating her chances, perceiving each of the men as a "target" in which she will start with the one she assesses as the most "powerful" (56). Her thought-process aligns with the neoliberal quality of self-interest, which she manifests fully in her directionality in the world. Well-being is then considered entirely in terms of solipsism where other people, like the sons, are commodified by being assessed in terms of their estimated financial value. They are then only evaluated as assets that she can utilize as means to achieve financial self-advancement.

However, Tambu does not end up making any moves toward any of the sons, but is remaining in a state of inaction and of merely fantasizing about what opportunities she has of interacting with them as she is overwhelmed by feelings of disappointment with her life. As Niemi argues, "The novel depicts Zimbabwe's deep turn-of-the-century economic crisis and its effects on the urban poor, in whom it generates strong feelings of pessimism and anger as individuals try to cope in highly demanding circumstances" (Niemi, "Neoliberal Capitalism and Uneven Development" 879). For Tambu, optimism is evaluated from a basis of hope, but also rationality, which affectively evokes pessimism due to her poverty, unemployment and lack of opportunities. The novel is thus mediating the affective process of worldmaking in Tambu's life, which is both a conscious and unintended part of coping in challenging conditions. Tambu's irregular and pending states of hopelessness and hopefulness are what induce an ambivalent stuck-ness in her life and destabilizes her sense of control. As she one day thinks to herself while feeling worn out by her impoverished material condition: "Finally, rest being as futile as everything else, you climb out of bed to stare over the yard, into the knowledge that you do not have the courage for anything you want – neither emigration, nor ensnaring one of your landlady's sons" (Dangarembga 73). She recognizes that her desire for upward-mobility still persists as it is the optimistic attachment she has toward futurity. Yet, the overwhelming sense of pessimistic defeat in the current moment thus tend to intensify and dominate as an affective mode in the present. At this point, marriage is then merely the only proximate object that signals the possibility of money, but beside this promise it is in no way a desired attachment for her. It is therefore negated by Tambu in the end, and she is now left without any opportunities to self-advance.

Tambu's self-perception is infused with the shameful of not having secured a financially stable and comfortable life. Characteristic of her instability in the first and second parts of the novel is her mental and affective state in the way she perceives herself as a failing

neoliberal agent. She then juxtaposes her education with her family's general disadvantageousness. Her affective responses are in this sense tied to a wider context than the immediacy of city poverty. Tambu is a solitary figure in Harare who has not had significant contact with her family and Shona community who reside in the rural village where she grew up. As she has no sustaining material or social attachments to the world, she is fearing that she eventually will want to end her life. This reflection subsequently engenders a self-directed blame, as: "Thinking this induces a morass of guilt, yet your mother endures even more bitter circumstances than yours, entombed in your destitute village. How, with all your education, do you come to be more needy than your mother?" (45). In this scene, her affective state is responding to the neoliberal failure of not having created a comfortable life for herself. This knowledge is also present in her voluntary distancing from her family, who later when they meet for the first time in years, shares this disappointing fear after hearing rumors about Tambu's unemployment: "'What we heard all the time is that you were not working. That's what was said, that that degree of yours was just a piece of paper sitting, silently rotting'" (302). According to Tsitsi Dangarembga, Tambu's condition in this phase, within the confines of the novel's portrayal of a particular spatio-temporal reality in Zimbabwe, would render her as someone who would be judged as unsuccessful and defeated: "She was an educated woman approaching middle age in the 1990s, with a degree, and couldn't sustain herself. She would have been considered a failure in that society at that time" (Dangarembga, "After a Writing Break, She Returned as a Booker Finalist"). Tambu is thus aware of her low status in society as she now embodies a shameful, failing figure.

She subsequently perceives herself accordingly, which is what generates her negative self-image and hopelessness. This is mediated in her fear of being exposed by the landlady, not only as a liar, but as this sociocultural failure, and she contemplates on the subsequent implications: "She [Mr. Manyanga] will put two and two together and realize that while you are educated, you have nevertheless become a failure. A notice letter might well follow, as you still do not have a job" (Dangarembga, *This Mournable Body* 70). This state of desperation then leads to the undesired alternative of contacting her cousin Nyasha, who also was fortunate to receive education and attend university. Yet, she went abroad to Europe and explored opportunities outside of her impoverished nation. Tambu envisions that she could also turn to the logic of leaving the continent and "becoming a European" as her poverty is so immense that she struggles to buy enough food (70). However, Tambu decides to not send a letter to Nyasha after all, viewing this option as an impossibility that she is incapable of doing. As stated by the second-person narrator:

Instead, you tear it up and laugh bitterly at yourself: If you cannot build a life in your own country, how will you do so in another? Were you not offered an escape from penury and its accompanying dereliction of dreams through many years of education provided by your babamukuru, your uncle, first at his mission, then at a highly respected convent? All this you threw away with your wilful resignation from Steers et al. advertising agency (70-71).

Tambu used to have a proximity to financial stability in her previous job as a copywriter at an advertising agency, and retrospectively blames herself for her decision to quit. Her thought-process here also indicates the self-directional affectivity of neoliberal ideology in which she perceives herself as responsible for achieving her own success. Her failure in not having sustained a profitable living then effectuates introspective, self-defeating blame.

This scene modifies the relation of cruel optimism where the previous job provided a sense of stability and control in her life. Her work created a sustainable and predictable worldmaking, but she chose to resign as it was a harmful relation to her own well-being. Within this workplace, she experienced racial and gendered discrimination, and she was never promoted for her work while others were. This sense of injustice wore her out, and also disrupted her sense of agency as hard work did not pay out due to the presence of structural inequality. In retrospect, Tambu is ambivalent about having resigned from her previous job where she worked as a copywriter because it did provide her with a sense of social status and financial security. Yet, in both an ironic and sincere tone, the narrator expresses her sentiments: “You should have endured the white men who put their names to your taglines and rhyming couplets. You spend much time regretting digging your own grave over a matter of mere principle” (46). The job then did provide her with financial stability and security, but it did not give opportunities for black, female Zimbabweans like her to thrive. The job at the advertising company was despite its signifying optimism thus enforcing systemically oppressive practices in order to exploit her efforts and block her possibilities for further advancement. In this unemployed phase in her life, her existence dwells in the ambivalence of past regrets and the dubiousness of futurity. The future is thus an openness that is still unfolding, but her projections constantly shift between optimistic and pessimistic estimations based on past events and persistent attachment to the future-oriented and hopeful object-desire for financial success.

Tambu’s overall feelings of disaffection and despair in the novel are thus affective responses to the systemic organization of socio-economic conditions in her lifeworld. In an impoverished social reality where racial and gendered inequality exists in both the public and

private spheres, Tambu is attempting to make a life for herself. For Tambu, opportunities are lacking and she subsequently has to deal with a lot of blockages as she wants to prosper financially and make a successful career. According to Tsitsi Dangarembga, to be a working black African woman in an increasingly more neoliberal Zimbabwe is to have possibilities without guarantees as their agency is structurally and socially diminished. As Dangarembga states: “A woman’s career achievement is de-normalised and rendered atypical. It is constructed as an event that has to be atoned for” (Dangarembga, *Black and Female* 98). Black women in Zimbabwe attempting to create a career for themselves thus face the challenge of being allowed to occupy powerful positions in workplaces. Dangarembga further asserts that: “This kind of silencing of women’s ambition works together with the exclusion of African feminists from work, and thus from sustainability and thriving and flourishing” (98). Although Tambu is an apolitical African woman, her disposition toward the Zimbabwean society is one of disempowered frustration over this type of structural marginalization. As a neoliberal agent who wants to build a life for herself, these gendered and racialized constraints exhaust her and amplify her sense of overpowering defeat.

Tambu eventually gets employed as a teacher at a high school, which is an opportunity that enhances her hopefulness in terms of getting a good-life. Yet, this position, although it entails a financial stability and improvement from her current situation, does not signify closeness to her good-life fantasy. While in a discussion with the school’s headmistress in her office, Tambu is affectively disturbed by its material inadequacy as it is “devoid of elegance, reminding you of your seedy quarters at Widow Manyanga’s. However, you ignore these indications that you are but buying time, having still far to go on your way up in the world” (Dangarembga, *This Mournable Body* 108). Tambu is thus fixated on a good-life fantasy that entails more than merely the minimal comfort of financial stability. The school becomes an impossible place for her self-advancement as it exhausts her and induces a state of ongoing depression. As the narrator states in terms of her inadequate performance as a teacher: “as has been the case all your adult life, you are failing dismally” (116). Her encounters with disrespectful students enhance her frustration, self-loathing and sense of displacement in her world. For instance, while inspecting the outdoors area of the school, she encounters a group of students who openly are drinking and smoking. Instead of hiding this, they face Tambu and mockingly laughs at her, which affects her self-perception: “You perceive the unwavering eyes as mockery, the laughter as scoffing at everything you have become” (112). Tambu subsequently feels insufficient in her life as the students’ indifference to her authority as a teacher enhance the feeling of truly remaining a socio-cultural fiasco. Her lifeworld is

saturated with what feels like unpromising objects and where the good-life fantasy is dissolving due to her feeling of existential dismay.

The financial promise of the work, however, is a relation of cruel optimism in the way it does not enhance her well-being, but generates the affective state of existing in an unwanted space that depresses her, but which nonetheless is the only option for her to earn a living. Ironically, it is both what provides her with means to survive and what becomes an unsustainable attachment for her. Later, Tambu suddenly attacks an innocent student in her class. The dissatisfying feelings of stuck-ness as a teacher and of not being able to change the students' disrespectful behavior are suppressed to a point where she bursts into violence. While she attacks the student in the classroom, "Two or three women pull at you. This has no effect. Instead, you escape yourself into an unbearable radiance" (120). After this incident, Tambu is treated for depression at a mental institution in which she reveals to her doctor: "I don't have the things that make be better. I want to be better. I want the things that make me" (136). The teacher job thus engenders a relation of cruel optimism in the way it is attached to the object-desire of financial self-advancement within her neoliberal imagination. However, even as a temporary phase, it becomes unbearable in its failure to produce the feeling of optimism. The overpowering sense of existential pessimism is then accentuated within this job, which results in her violent attack on an innocent student. Yet again she is situated in a material impasse without any opportunities, and existentially feeling the exhaustion of being a failure who has to live with its detrimental consequences.

Chapter 3: Inconvenience and Affective Dimensions of Coexistence in Tambu's Lifeworld

3.1 Inconvenience as Affective Relations of Entanglement

Tambu's hospitalization, however, effectuates a transition in her life as her cousin Nyasha takes her into her own home for Tambu to recover. The second part, "Suspended", thus marks a new phase in Tambu's where her life is, as the title indicates, in a form of impasse. Yet, in this phase, her self-centered mode of being is problematized in her dealings with women from her community. In order to approach the affective dimension of Tambu's neoliberal orientation in the world and her estranged connection with her community, this thesis paper employs affective concepts related to the affect of inconvenience theorized by Lauren Berlant. This thesis paper will therefore first explain Berlant's theory before it ties the theory to Tambu's way of relating to other people. Her individualistic aspirations for a better life underscore that her attachments in the world are selfish. The object of self-interest thus generates an affective response to external pressures from the women that maintains her relation of cruel optimism as she is not yet open to unlearn or transform her idea of individual responsibility and thriving.

In *On the Inconvenience of Other People*, Lauren Berlant theorizes the affective concepts of sovereignty and nonsovereign relationality, infrastructure, and object-looseness. These are conceptualized as part of the multidimensional modality of the affect of inconvenience. Their theory on inconvenience then describes an affective framework that provides different modes of assessing the processes and impacts of what it socially means to exist with other people and things in the world. However, Berlant intentionally seeks to not reproduce theory, and therefore proposes alternative conceptualizations of grappling with current states of affairs in the contemporary world (Berlant, *On the Inconvenience of Other People* 28). As such, Berlant's affective concepts reconsider how we view relationality by creating alternative perspectives about the world and our lives within it. Their theory on inconvenience and its interrelated affective terms are then more general than cruel optimism and less contingent upon the conditions within a particular geography like cruel optimism initially is. Berlant states that their book on inconvenience does have the same focus as *Cruel Optimism* on the crumbling fantasy as a site that structurally governs people's belief in societal reciprocity. This refers to the perception that people believe that their work and participation in society will pay off at some point (12). The geographical focus in the book on

inconvenience is also primarily Western, but it does give more attention to marginalized communities. Inconvenience is then more conceptualized as a general affect in the social dimension of coexistence. As such, inconvenience can be assessed in all kinds of modes of coexistences and relations of entanglement in any location.

Thus, this thesis paper does not critique Berlant's theory on inconvenience as this theory describes technical terms that can be applied in any social collective. Instead, this thesis paper intends to extend its use to Southern Africa by putting it in dialogue with the novel's postcolonial and socio-economic situatedness, and in the ways the affective concepts relate to Mbembe's ideas on the experience of time in contemporary and postcolonial sub-Saharan Africa. This thesis paper thus employs Berlant's affective concepts to examine affective modes in which Tambu's neoliberal orientation in the world clashes with pressures from other people within her racially tense and unequal national space. The affect of inconvenience is then used to illustrate how Tambu affectively is being modified by *unhu*, which is central to her community's culture, and by her complicity in the racialized practice of white neoliberal capitalism, which happens when she starts working for Tracey's tourism agency. This thesis paper then assesses how entanglement and displacement collide with Tambu's cruel relation to her neoliberal good-life fantasy in the way people relate to her self-centered mode of being. This will underscore how the sense of belonging and well-being are propagated differently by people, which underscores how Zimbabwe, as a social collective, does not operate with the same kinds of possibilities for all of its citizens, and that neoliberal self-interest can be harmful for the black community, but also be modified by them and used in a way that benefits people collectively. This will also point to how Tambu, as a contemporary postcolonial African subject, is experiencing time in the situated condition of displacement as she is estranged from her community and becomes complicit with white capitalist exploitation. The experience of time as entanglement will also appear in the way her pastness haunts the present and affectively generates suspension. This will demonstrate how she is a person that does not have a coherent and constructive sense of belonging in her lifeworld as her suspended condition is what enables her complicity.

Berlant conceptualizes inconvenience as affect in the way it engenders openness for a person to absorb and generate intensities. Inconvenience here works reciprocally within people's relations to one another and the world as "the affective sense of the familiar friction of being in relation" (2). Berlant views people's existences fundamentally as sets of relations in and to the world they inhabit, and that these relations operate affectively because we are always affected by and affecting our environments. Inconvenience as affect is thus simply

understood as the sense of being disturbed by other people, and of how we likewise can be a nuisance to other people (28). It is then a general affect for all kinds of interactions in the world that people have with each other and things, whether these are intentional and desired, or inevitable in our coexistence in a shared world. In this way, Berlant states that inconvenience is related to attachment:

“Inconvenience” in this sense is more like “attachment”: a description of a relation so foundational to coexistence that it’s easy to think of it as the whatever of living together and not a constantly pulsing captivation of response. Attachment, one might say, is what draws you out into the world; inconvenience is the adjustment from taking things in (6).

The description of attachment here suggests a closeness to phenomenological relationality. It is conceptualized as a function within our material world where we are drawn toward things and people. The relations between beings in the world are thus attachments, and they can be desired, unrecognized or unwanted. As such, attachments are manifested both consciously and unconsciously by people. Inconvenience in relation to attachment then denotes the common and general disturbances of other beings, which underpin how we are not existing alone in the world. We inevitably are part of the world and affected by it in all kinds of ways, which to Berlant is always ongoing processes of adjustments. Inconvenience is then to Berlant a useful concept in these affective world-dynamics that operate in each person’s lifeworld as inconvenience indicates the inevitable and pressing intensities of coexistence. Thus, things, institutions, politics, other people and everything that organize and affect our lives are simply part of what it means to live in a social and material world. We are thus relationally bound and affectively adjusting to these things in both a collective and individual way.

In connection to Tambu’s neoliberal aspirations and good-life fantasy, inconvenience operates through her attachments to object-desires which modify how she is affected by people and her material world. If she discerns an opportunity or a person she associates with her desire to self-advance, she is positively drawn toward it, like the Manyanga men. Yet, these attachments can also have negative effects as she feels distressed or ashamed of not having acquired the kind of life that she craves and of being a failure. Their presences can therefore remind of their past and ongoing absences in Tambu’s life, and make her self-conscious of the negative things that she does not want but that are part of her life, like poverty and unemployment. All things and all people are then inconvenient to us because of our attachments to them, whether they generate feelings of optimism or pessimism. Inconvenience as an affect then constantly works in the way we have to adjust to how we feel

about the status of our attachments, which implies that attachments essentially are transformable. Berlant underscores that inconvenience does not have to be sensed as confrontational or dramatic: “the minimal experience of inconvenience does not require incidents or face-to-faceness: the mere idea of situations or other people can also joint into awareness the feel of their inconvenience, creating effects that don’t stem from events but from internally generated affective prompts” (2). Inconvenience thus operates in both direct and indirect ways as there does not have to be a confrontational episode or situation to engender the affect of inconvenience.

Attachments to things, people, lifestyles, ideas or fantasies then also affect us from a distance in the way they also can be mentally or imaginatively manifested. Berlant moreover suggests that inconvenience modifies the inexorable social dimension of affects where people are enmeshed in each other’s worldmaking through coexistence. As they contend: “We cannot be in any relation without being inconvenient to each other” (7). From this viewpoint, Berlant argues that inconvenience is then what modifies our changeable openness or closedness to things and people (9). This refers to our perceptions of things in our lifeworld and what they mean to us. We hold opinions about why certain objects or people are good or bad for us, and this subsequently affect how we are more open to adjust to some attachments and not others. For Tambu, people and objects either signify proximity to her dream of upward-mobility or they mediate attachments to undesired material conditions and their negative affectivity.

The affect of inconvenience is theorized as the affective basis for other modalities that generate the disturbances of other people and things in life. This brings me to the affective concepts of sovereignty, sovereign relationality, infrastructure and object-looseness in this book. Berlant proposes a shift in focus from structure to infrastructure in their framework on inconvenience as affect, but without rejecting structure. They contend that “infrastructure is the living mediation of what provides the consistency of life in the ordinary; infrastructure is the lifeworld of structure” (20). This thesis paper views that this focus on infrastructure provides nuanced perspectives on individual life in connection to collective community-building as infrastructures suggests pathways, possibilities, hindrances and impasses. As Berlant highlights, societal infrastructures, encompassing the economy, political policies, public and private institutions are part of the social organization of cohabitation in nations whose failures, especially in developing countries, force people to adjust to transmutable material realities (21). This societal level of infrastructure then has implications on the people’s relatedness in the world as it can cause shifts and amendments. As Berlant states, “The consistency-making, resource-distributing processes are mediations that bind worlds

together along with ideas about what the world might be” (21). From this perspective, infrastructure indicates the absorption of the multiple directionalities in the world, or the many ways of seeing and experiencing it as: “Infrastructure, then, is another way of talking about mediation – but always as a material process of binding, never merely as a material technology, aesthetic genre, form, or norm that achieves something. Mediation is not a stable thing but a way of seeing the unstable relations among dynamically related things” (22). As such, to view individual lifeworld as infrastructural is to consider the ways a person is affectively adjusting to life as it progresses. It is also to reconsider the temporal experience of problems and inconveniences as not conclusive, but as a way to view life and the world as organized (23-24). This indicates that life affectively is not overdetermined by structural forces, although it may be organized as such.

Berlant’s idea of object-looseness is simply about transforming an object’s meaning to you. This is also described as a process in which we “unlearn its objectness” (28). Object-looseness is then not about getting rid of the object, because these objects can be structural bases that organize civil life and thus also what it means to be an individual that belongs to a social collective. As Berlant states: “You can’t simply lose your object if it’s providing a foundational world infrastructure for you” (28). An object in this sense can be anything that constitutes our worldview and our perceptions of ourselves and other people. Berlant exemplifies this by asserting that one cannot choose to no longer be racist or misogynistic (28). Thus, any kind of positioning one has in life is an object that describes a relational and material basis in our world, and we cannot remove these objects, but we can unlearn what they represent or signify to us. Inconvenience and the loosening of an object are about our need and want to be with people and objects and the kind of disturbances they generate in our lives, as: “it’s about the problem of wanting that finds oneself wanting in maintaining yet disturbing relations and thus about the problem of transforming objects that aren’t only toxic, necessarily, but difficult to negotiate” (28). As a kind of affective process, an object is reconfigured in terms of its attributed meaning, which also concerns our relationality in the world of objects and people. Object-looseness is then applied in the way Tambu is fixated on neoliberal success as an object that promises a good-life. This object is then challenged by other people’s relationality to Tambu. Tambu, however, fails to negotiate the object-ness of her object-desire. It remains within a self-centered forwardness until the end of the novel which is when she is affectively transforming. Her neoliberal fantasy is then not “lost”, as she cannot lose a world-binding object, but her relation to it is rearranged by her unforeseen openness to other people.

Berlant argues that the concept of sovereignty is an imagined state of being and of our power over things and people in the world (3). We are always responding to our relations in the world, to external forces and demands that pressure us to act and think in certain ways that produce terms that govern our coexistence. To Berlant, sovereignty is then a misleading idea about one's power to deal with these forces and demands: "sovereignty is the name for a confused, reactive, often not-quite-thought view that there ought to be a solution to the pressure of adapting to "other people" and to other nations' force of existence, intention, action, entitlement and desire" (3). Berlant stresses that the affective modulation of inconvenience, which is of having to deal with each other's presences, thus underscores how people are fundamentally nonsovereign: "Inconvenience is another way of pointing to the experience of nonsovereign relationality. It does not always produce a sense of injury but *does* [emphasis in original] always signify the pressure of what to do with coexistence. Whether or not one has the management skills for it, it produces the injury of nonsovereignty" (18). The injury is of not being in total control of things and oneself, and of sensing how one is inevitably affected by and enmeshed with the energies from the outside-world.

Tambu's infrastructural shift at the end of the novel marks a change in her openness to her lifeworld. Her reorientation demonstrates Berlant's point about how the inconvenience of other people proves that individuals cannot choose to live unaffected by each other as we are relationally bound to one another. Tambu then does not have the "management skills" to constructively deal with other people in the world. Her neoliberal subjectivity is regulated by the logic of a success/failure dyad, which does not take into account how other people have the power to affect a person merely through their coexistence in a shared social space. Tambu attempts to control this affective, relational web she and everyone around her collectively have to their material world, to the histories, structures and infrastructures that bind them together, and which also constitute her own empirical experience of the world. She does this by asserting an impossible self-governance that tries to shut everything and everyone out so that she cannot be externally affected. She wants to have total control over her being, and by opening herself up to external energies in the world, she would make herself vulnerable. She therefore tries to have an entirely self-absorbed approach to living where she can consume the things she wants and dismiss the things she does not desire and the people she cannot use for her own advantage.

3.2. The Inconvenience of Other People and Unhu

As the autonomous modality of affects is not in one person's power to control, Tambu cannot disengage from its fluxes and movements. Even her ongoing disaffection is an affective response to her poor existential and financial state. Thus, her affective disengagement with her community and social relations are indicative of the injury of nonsovereignty in her life. From this stance she embodies an injured neoliberal subjectivity as her neoliberal mode of being is disrupted by her attachment to her community and her complicity with white capitalist exploitation. As these collide, the injury of her complicit situatedness emerges at the end of the novel. The notion of successful neoliberal individualism cannot take form as she eventually is affected by how her self-centered conduct impacts other people negatively to the point that she becomes regretful and transforms. The object-desire of financial self-advancement is then altered as its object-ness decenters the self and instead encompasses a neoliberal fantasy where the community can prosper collectively. As such, the object of unhu, practiced by Tambu's mother, Christine, Nyasha and her aunt Lydia, mediates an alternative infrastructure to a lifeworld that seemingly appear overly structured. They modify what neoliberal self-interest entails and display how it can be loosened and rearranged so to not be achieved in an exclusively individualistic way. They thus work to obtain it by following an infrastructure where co-participation and support are rewarded in the end as a form of sustainable reciprocity between the members of Tambu's community. This section seeks to employ the affect of inconvenience sovereignty, nonsovereign relationality, infrastructure and object-looseness to the second part of the novel "Suspended". As the title indicates, Tambu's becoming is placed on hold, and this is where she spends time with women from her community and encounters Tracey.

Tambu consciously acts in a selfish manner to build a life exclusively centered around her own success and well-being. As certain people have the affective power to pressure Tambu's neoliberal egoism, her response is to dispose of them or exploit them for her own self-advancement. This is evidence of how she has a total self-centered orientation in the world in her quest for a better material life. As such, she is not receptive to positive interactions with people if these do not accommodate her self-interested desires. This is particularly evident in her relation to Mrs. Manyanga's niece Christine, also known as Kiri, and her cousin Nyasha who recently moved back to Zimbabwe from Europe with her German husband. As a former freedom-fighter in the liberation war and a friend of Tambu's family, Christine reminds Tambu of a pastness she wants to disengage from. As the narrator discloses: "The only reason for Christine's closeness to your family while being a stranger to

you was that their bond was formed during the war when you were absent from the village. That period of strife was the one in which the gap between you and your homestead widened” (Dangarembga, *This Mournable Body* 84-85). Christine has the power to stir undesired sentiments in Tambu by reminding her of her responsibility toward her family whom she has neglected for a long time. The narrator also discloses that Christine has a closeness to Tambu’s family because of their shared sufferings and experiences of violence from the war that Tambu herself cannot relate to.

Christine reminds Tambu that her family has tried to reach out to her and sent her a parcel which Tambu has chosen to ignore. Unlike Tambu, Christine cares about social responsibility and of maintaining good relationships with people in the Shona community. Thus, when Christine becomes aware that Tambu is ignoring her family, she confronts her careless disposition: ““Anyone can see that you’re not kind,” she resumes after a while. “What did that do to you, cutting off your legs like someone who has been to war, so that you couldn’t even come and get your parcel?”” (84). Tambu, however, is too absorbed by her own self-interest to pay attention to Christine’s remarks and feel any responsibility toward them. She views Christine’s interference as blocking her optimistic attachments and disrupting her self-centered mentality. She therefore concludes that: “Christine has shown that she cannot contribute to any progress in your life” and that Tambu subsequently is “resolving now to keep your distance from the ex-combatant as your next step toward advancement” (105). Her neoliberal mentality is thus determinedly persistent in the way she clings to her object-desire: “You do not yet know how, but come what may, you will focus on the prize until you possess it” (170). Her worldmaking is then operating via a normative reclusiveness as she finds refuge and comfort in the absence of intimate closeness to people as they have the power to generate unwanted affectivity. In her quest to achieve her neoliberal good-life fantasy, Tambu is acting as if she has sovereign control in life. In the way Berlant proposes that the idea of being a sovereign agent is illusive and false, Tambu is then self-deceptively thinking she possesses the power to intentionally shut affectivity out and move forward unaffected.

People like Christine who challenge Tambu’s self-interested orientation in the world are sensed as inconvenient within the attachments she has to sustain in order to achieve self-advancement. The illusion of sovereignty continues even after Tambu had a mental breakdown after working at the high school and is invited to stay at Nyasha’s place to recover. Like Tambu, Nyasha also received an education and studied at university, but she sought opportunities in Europe and was abroad for many years. Tambu has always perceived Nyasha of being capable to succeed more than her in life. When Tambu then encounters Nyasha, her

German husband and their two children have moved to Zimbabwe, but to Tambu's surprise, the family is not rich, and Nyasha is organizing a non-profit workshop for women in the community unselfishly. Like Christine, Nyasha cares about her community and works to help other people advance in life. Tambu therefore views Nyasha disappointingly as a failure: "your cousin has given into chaos, is wildly wasting her entire upbringing and her immeasurable advantages. The disorder emphasizes to you that well-being demands choices more astute than Nyasha's" (165). Tambu is disappointed in Nyasha, as she assumed that she who was better than her in school and even left Africa to explore opportunities outside of her geographically impoverished region, would have reached an impressive level of financial success. Tambu is then also feeling ambivalent about Nyasha's contentment, as: "You feel like she has let you down immensely without herself being disappointed" (164). Nyasha is displaying contentment with her material condition that Tambu herself would be completely dissatisfied with, as well as a sense of purpose with her workshops that are meant to help women in her community.

Nyasha's and Christine's care for other people mediates the object and infrastructure of unhu as an alternative to neoliberal self-interest. According to Minna Niemi, the novel uses the idea of unhu, as a contrast to neoliberal self-interest, as: "the novel juxtaposes Tambudzai's growing individualisation with the concept of *unhu* [emphasis in original], focusing on social responsibility, and hence posits an alternative for understanding social responsibility in contemporary Zimbabwe" (Niemi, "Neoliberal Capitalism and Uneven Development" 884-885). The contrasting values of unhu and self-interest are placed in Tambu's relations with women in her community. Tambu's estrangement from her community is especially evident in a scene at Nyasha's place when Tambu and Nyasha also are in the company of Christine and Tambu's aunt Lucia. The women are helping to cook food for Nyasha's workshop from a place of solidarity. Lucia mediates her and Christine's altruistic desire to help Nyasha: "'When you have two women who know what has to be done like Kiri and me, it is like you have ten. Didn't we say we will always support you? And it's better to support a woman who is supporting other women, isn't it?'" (Dangarembga, *This Mournable Body* 186). The object of unhu then guides the women's social relationships and effectuates an infrastructure where they can constructively and selflessly rely on each other. Tambu, on the other hand, feels uncomfortable in the company with these women where she feels like a stranger, and she does not see the point in helping Nyasha: "Added to everything else, you have no intention of cooking for a gang of young women who only Nyasha truly thinks are worth the effort. After all, you came to your cousin's not to be a chef but to

continue your recovery” (189). In this scene, Tambu does not truly feel like a part of the women in her community as they actively want to enhance each other’s well-being. Pauline Uwawkeh argues that the women from Tambu’s community “are represented as foils to Tambu, whose own disconnection from her kinship identities is signified by her homelessness and alienation in the new nation” (Uwakweh 283). Their collectivist mode of living is thus a mediation of a community-centered infrastructure that Tambu denounces through her inability in recognizing its usefulness. For her, only the object of self-interest contains valuable promises that are worth going after.

While staying at Nyasha’s place, Tambu also senses an enduring friction between her and her cousin as their copresence manifests how different their values are. Tambu eventually recognizes that Nyasha cannot help her become successful: “Your mood plummets as you realize you will gain little from living with your cousin, who has turned out not much better than yourself in spite of all her childhood advantages” (Dangarembga, *This Mournable Body* 153). Tambu’s reclusiveness and hostility toward fostering positive relationships with people are persistently part of her world-receptivity. Minna Niemi argues that Tambu is influenced by a neoliberal orientation in the world in the way “neoliberal forces rewrite the notion of social responsibility as a concept that would otherwise connect the conscientious individual to the well-being of other members of her [Tambu’s] community; people are not morally bound to think about others’ suffering, because everyone is responsible for his or her survival only” (Niemi, “Neoliberal Capitalism and Uneven Development” 877). This viewpoint then asserts that neoliberalism is indifferent to communal happiness, and that Tambu embraces an entirely individualistic approach to secure her own well-being. Tambu thus follows the logic of self-interest within neoliberal ideology in the way she only cares about how she can use people for her own benefit, without any considerations for their well-being.

Tambu no longer believes that Nyasha has what it takes to succeed like she plans to do. She assumes that she and her husband subsequently are saddened about this as they must “have dressed discouragement up in the glamour of intellect” (Dangarembga, *This Mournable Body* 188). Nyasha’s presence and her way of thinking of other people’s well-being, especially women’s, vexes Tambu, as: “You grow increasingly galled by your cousin and her assumption that everyone has the luxury she has of surviving without being obsessed with one’s own person” (189). Nyasha is affectively disturbing Tambu’s self-advancement because she does not share the same solipsistic perspective, nor does she live a life that aims at accumulating her own financial wealth. Nyasha’s unhu-oriented mode of being is then bothering Tambu in two ways; she is dissatisfied with the fact that Nyasha cannot be an asset

to her. However, Nyasha's mode of living strengthens Tambu's neoliberal ambitions. The narrator mediates Tambu's self-centered mentality: "You suppress a shudder of pity for your cousin, who, notwithstanding her education and ideals, never will amount to anything. Nyasha does not belong. Like her husband, she is a kindly import. For the first time in your life you feel significantly superior" (215). The frictions that stem in-between the two cousins, both in their direct encounters and the Tambu's negative assessments of Nyasha's life, enhance Tambu's decision to only prioritize herself. She cannot understand that Nyasha and her husband are truly happy without neoliberal prospects. Tambu thus embodies a neoliberal mode of being fully, and she cannot relate to people who are content in life without having money and status.

3.3. The Object of Neoliberal Self-Advancement as Affective Response to Political Dissatisfaction in Postcolonial Zimbabwe

The affective duration of pessimism in Tambu's life arises from her distrust in political changes. Tambu attempts to disengage from her entanglement with the politicized postcolonial promise of optimism after Zimbabwe's independence by expressing a nonpolitical attitude: "you had never in your life been concerned with politics. You understand that people like you, who are clawing their way forward, do not have time for it" (235). Her political disengagement is an intentional decision to not deal with politics as this seems futile in the quest for a better material life. For her, individualistic aspirations and not collective efforts are what can potentially result in more comfortable lifestyles. Yet, she is inevitably affected by the political and socio-economic structures in her lifeworld. The narrator mediates that Tambu thinks Zimbabwe is a "hopeless country" and that she would rather live in Europe, and like Cousin-Brother-in-Law, "be part of a stable, prosperous nation like his" (183). Discontentment for her country is further enhanced by the experience of unjust treatment in her past, at her former workplace as a copywriter and at school. Tambu shares the collective sentiment of being drained by the empirical experience of living in structural stagnation that is still post-independence enmeshed in unjust and unequal power-dynamics. Subsequently, there is an atmospheric hopelessness in terms of working toward collective prosperity in the national space where racial disparity causes tensions. Tambu's neoliberal orientation is thus an affective response to the impasse of the postcolonial project of nation-building where development has stagnated and the economy is declining.

Tambu's encounter with Tracey while recovering at Nyasha's place is affectively rupturing her focus on neoliberal forwardness as it brings about negative feelings from the

past. In school, Tracey had the advantage of her skin color as it was in this institution Tambu was imposed her racial otherness. In this unexpected encounter, old memories come back to Tambu, concerning the segregation of rooms and toilets and their highly differentiated standards at school where the allocated facilities for black girls were impoverished and dysfunctional. An episode then comes to mind of the headmistress addressing the problem of “the “African girls,” their dirtiness, and their cost to the school” (207). This memory appears contextually disjointed, but is evidently evoked upon meeting Tracey who then reminds Tambu of her racialized and structurally disempowered situatedness in society. However, as other memories come forward, she attempts to block their infiltration, thinking “no, I will not think of this” (208). Tambu learns that Tracey also resigned from the advertising agency where she was Tambu’s boss because she found it exhausting. However, Tracey describes it as a “cushy” job (235). This utterance surprises Tambu as the adjective does not coincide with her own experience of structural oppression in the job. Pastness thus still affectively haunts Tambu in the present despite her desire to suppress these memories. Her affective response to the overpowering effects the haunting of pastness have on her is to ignore them and not let them ruin her sense of optimism. Her reaction thus accords with what Sara Ahmed states the affect of injustice generates: “Indeed, the very act of recognizing injustice in the present is read as a theft of optimism, a killing joy, a failure to move on or to put certain histories behind us” (Ahmed 162). Tambu’s attempt to make a life for herself is to not to again be entrapped in stagnation. Haunting manifests itself as undesired absences that temporally pressurize Tambu in the present; she cannot unlearn the ontological effects of racism, and she cannot forget the affectedness of institutional racialization.

Memories from the past thus still affect her personhood in the present, disturbing her mode of living in the entanglement and displacement of her racially situated subjecthood. The haunting of pastness then generates a temporal state of suspension, which implies a state of interruption in her becoming. In the novel’s transnational realism, the presence of haunting is what Michael O’Riley conceptualizes as an intricate postcolonial affect where:

the deployment of haunting in postcolonial theory represents a suspended condition, in-between because it is symptomatic of an era posed between the traces of an increasingly inoperative colonial history and uncertain transnational forms of hierarchy and oppression. As new forms of neoimperialism and transnational capital become commonplace, active imperialism characterized by visible and situated forms of conflict related to nation-states has receded to a great extent. However, while we might say that colonial history becomes inoperative in this way, it is not necessarily

easy to locate tangible forms of neo-imperialism, particularly given their transnational nature” (O’Riley 2).

In this ongoing state of suspension, the self does not progress into a unified sense of self. Instead, it is situated in-between a structurally oppressive past, and a present and future with uncertain possibilities under pending socio-economic and political transformations. This postcolonial affect can thus be linked with Pauline Uwakweh’s argument that: “Tambu’s identity crisis is captured by her sense of unrelieved uncertainty. The postcolonial Tambu is placeless despite her educational attainment” (Uwakweh 286). Referring to Tambu’s many moves and instances of belonging and nonbelonging in life, Ukwaweh asserts that: “Tambu negotiates patriarchy and racism in order to sustain her educational dream, to escape from the weight of her womanhood, the burden of her race, and class status” (288). As an effort to concentrate on her dream of neoliberal success, Tambu intentionally denies these memories to have valence in the present and affect her career-focus. She then modifies her conflicting subjecthood in order to not be defeated by oppressive forces, and to be able to create a successful life for herself.

As such, Tambu embodies an ambivalent situatedness in the way it is informed by a pastness she tries to negate. Uwakweh argues that “Tambu’s actions are rather the expressions of a distorted identity than resistance to any of the forces that have shaped her current condition” (288). This resonates well with Tambu’s self-centeredness, as she does not act with any political motives. Her way of being is rather responses to societal blockages and opportunities which produce overpowering defeatism. Her response is to actively disengage from politics and only focus on herself where her worldmaking is centered around her own self-interest as this priority is what appears to contain the potentiality of reciprocity in the end. Yet, in practice, neoliberal success as a good-life fantasy is not accessible to achieve in the same way for everyone as Tracey can obtain her object-desire for self-advancement without compromising her sense of self while Tambu has to be willing to betray her family and community. This dissimilarity then mediates what O’Riley identifies as ongoing and intricate “situated forms of conflict” in relation to the affect of haunting in postcolonial, transnational neocolonial regions. In her attachments in the world, Tambu becomes situated in-between her marginalized black community and white capitalist forms of neocolonial exploitation of her community.

Tambu’s self-interested mode of being is an affective response to her social and racial situatedness in her lifeworld. Her neoliberal fantasy is a cruel relation of optimism she attempts to sustain to the end of the novel. She does not change focus despite her disaffection

in her nation and the external pressures from women in her community who do not agree with Tambu's individualistic and greedy mode of living. Tambu's persistent stance is conveyed by the narrator already in the first part of the novel where her attachments to neoliberal object-desires are envisioned as a plan she has to stick to: "Piece by piece you device a plan. You will go somewhere where there are no people like the landlady's niece, who constantly hark back to the days of war and injustice. At the same time, you must insulate yourself from the shocks that result from engaging too much with white people" (Dangarembga, *This Mournable Body* 105). In her realization that she needs to distance herself from Christine and likeminded women from her community, Tambu is aware of how she needs to be close to white capitalist enterprises in order to succeed. Yet, as the narrator mediates, Tambu has to negotiate her proximity with different racial groups in society. Her own community is not open to her selfish approach to life and well-being. White people like Tracey, on the other hand, have a neoliberal culture that embraces individualistic self-interest and that has a superior socio-economic power. As such, they provide more opportunities for Tambu to be able to make a comfortable living. However, Tambu's closeness with white people indicates a problematic situatedness as white capitalist culture in Zimbabwe is in a position to exploit racially marginalized communities.

3.4. Neoliberal Success and Tambu's Complicity in the Phase of "Arriving"

Tambu's problematic complicity with white capitalist exploitation is manifested when she is given the opportunity to work for Tracey. When Tambu unexpectedly runs into Tracey, she informs her that she has started an ecofriendly tourism agency called Green Jacaranda Safari that seeks to attract Western tourists to explore African culture and heritage. The material shift from being at Nyasha's home in a process of recovery thus transitions the impasse of having nothing going for her to suddenly being rerouted toward her neoliberal good-life fantasy. Tambu's anticipation of soon being offered a job by Tracey, and the visions of what such an opportunity potentially could provide her in the future, generate a sense of ease and contentment, as: "your heart beats calmly in your chest. After your period of troubles, events are finally conspiring for you and not against you" (211). Tambu is now in a headspace of processing this change after having lived in a suspended condition where she has been hoping for an opportunity while also fearing the possibility of its nonarrival. This encounter with Tracey thus instigates a new beginning, marking how "A failed episode is not evidence that a project is in error: by definition, forms of common life are always going through a phase, as infrastructures do" (Berlant, *On the Inconvenience of Other People* 116). Finally, Tambu is

given an opportunity to become a successful and achieving person, and does not have to remain a failure in society. This thus marks a new beginning that unfolds in the last part of the novel. Its title, “Arriving”, however, can be viewed as a duplicity in the way Tambu anticipates that she arrives at a pathway that will result in her desired good-life fantasy. On the other hand, this pathway becomes negated and she in the end arrives “home” to her community.

The infrastructure within Tracey’s workplace requires modifications that fully accord with a neoliberal orientation in the world. Tambu has to commit herself fully to Tracey’s demands in order to keep her job. From this perspective, Tambu has to be willing to be complicit in order to maintain her attachment to her object-desire. Tracey’s company demands a work performativity driven by competition among the employees and pushes their moral boundaries for market-regulated profit. At the workplace, Tambu has to compete with a young, black receptionist named Pedzi who also has firm neoliberal aspirations to self-advance at the tourism agency. According to Minna Niemi, “Tracey, Tambudzai and Pedzi epitomise these new types of citizens, ready to maximise their own benefits at the expense of others” (Niemi, “Neoliberal Capitalism and Uneven Development” 884). Referring to the neoliberal restructuring and the uneven distribution of resources in rural and urban Zimbabwe, Niemi argues that these three women at the tourism agency embody a similar selfish personhood as they work toward neoliberal aspirations by exploiting the impoverished, disempowered areas in the country. This exploitative approach to build a successful business is expressed by Tracey who states that: ““Our corporate values are investment, building the future, not wasting it”” (Dangarembga, *This Mournable Body* 239). Furthermore, there is a tense friction between Tambu and the receptionist Pedzi, who secretly works on her own ideas for a tourism project and arranges meetings with Tracey. Pedzi is able to sell her idea of turning the urban ghetto into an attractive tourism adventure that Tracey finds convincingly as it is “sound and marketable” (256). Pedzi’s is rewarded for this initiative as she is being promoted to Ghetto Gateway’s project manager. This change in the office subsequently shifts the initial stability as she now occupies the same position as Tambu. Tambu is then constantly fearing being outcompeted by Pedzi, and she constantly feels the expectations of performing work-tasks in an impressionable manner. Tracey’s management style thus implies that the laborers work individually as competitors and as such that they have to concentrate on their own self-interest despite collectively working toward the advancement of the company. Employment is thus not guaranteed as Tambu constantly works with the uncertainty of losing her job by no longer being viewed as an asset to Tracey and the agency.

Tambu subsequently becomes complicit in Tracey's racialized exploitation of Tambu's Shona community as she is firmly set on becoming successful. In order to expand the company, Tambu is given the task of leading a new project called Village Eco Transit. Tambu's rural homestead where her family and community live is chosen as its destination. This project is supposed to meet the demands of Western tourists who want to experience African authenticity. Tambu visits her impoverished homestead and convinces her mother to partake in the project and getting other women in the community to participate in entertaining the tourists. That being said, her mother is skeptical about Tambu's boss, stating that "These white people, they say something and they do it too, but the way they do it, you just never know what it is they first said they were doing" (318). This is ironically the unwanted, but unsurprising outcome, only that Tambu herself takes part in this betrayal. One part of the program is for the village women to perform a traditional dance in traditional costumes, which they have agreed to do. Tracey, however, later instructs that the project needs to be more interesting than it currently is. She states that: "'It's got to sound like fun, not under development, soil erosion and microfinance'" (292). Tracey's neoliberal management-style is to capitalize on Tambu's poverty-stricken homestead by making into an exoticized product in order for it to be sellable to a Western audience. However, Tracey has no moral constraints in her neoliberal approach to commodify the community's culture as she requires that the women have to dance bare-chested. This custom is typical for male dancers, and both Tambu and Pedzi are thus taken aback by this demand as it entails an uncomfortable fetishization of the women's bodies. This does not matter to Tracey, as the women's bodies are in this financial estimation perceived as commodities that have the potential to increase the project's value.

This scene in particular illustrates how the construction of racialized subjectivity in Zimbabwe modifies different neoliberal orientations in the world. Although Tambu finds this request problematic, she still sides with Tracey and obeys this work-task. In view of this, Niemi argues that "Tracey does not need to think about her survival, whereas Tambudzai and others struggling in poverty have everything at stake" (Niemi, "Seductive Promises of Wealth" 127). Like Tambu, Tracey also embodies a neoliberal mode of being. However, she appears to be ignorant of the consequences her decision-making has on marginalized, black people in Zimbabwe. Niemi moreover underscores how Tracey therefore demonstrates that white capitalism has a superior position in Zimbabwe: "While promises of success are made to everyone, some people, like Tracey, are actually "meant" to succeed while others are not" (127). A sense of underlying guilt affects Tambu when she is about to give the dancers these

new instructions right before they are about to perform. However, she also knows that this betrayal is necessary in terms of her neoliberal responsibility toward her own survival: “Your tongue dries out, but you have been made the queen of the village. You open your mouth once again and deliver the message concerning the women’s torsos” (Dangarembga, *This Mournable Body* 353). Despite affectively registering her complicity with Tracey, Tambu still conveys the new orders. As such: “Tambudzai emerges first as a great hope for the village because she is promising economic growth. However, she goes too far, as for her there is no other moral rule than economic success” (Niemi, “Seductive Promises of Wealth” 131). Tambu thus chooses to be complicit in the exploitation of her own community because she is set on becoming successful. She stays firm in this belief and to the problematic choices the job’s infrastructure demands her to make despite affectively sensing how her betrayal generates unease.

Tambu’s neoliberal subjectivity collides with postcolonial struggles and racial inequality as she chooses to distance herself from social responsibility. Neoliberal self-interest justifies a mode of being where she can prioritize herself, and to not be obligated to altruistically help her family and community. Her neoliberal mentality then also morally rationalizes the eventual exploitation and commodification of her community’s values and culture. As a mode of being in the world, she only has to be responsible for her own well-being and future, as this is an individual project in itself. Subsequently, she is not meant to feel liable for the damage her conduct potentially causes other people. Her neoliberal subjectivity, however, then follows a logic of racial cultural differentiation and exploitation. As with her relationship with Tracey, Tambu wants to impress and satisfy her boss despite the underlying presence of racial inequality that Tambu recognizes, but which Tracey seems ignorant of. In view of this, Minna Niemi argues that “there is something almost masochistic about Tambudzai’s decision to work for Tracey because of everything she has suffered due to her. It is in her relationship with Tracey that her mental slavery is most pronounced” (“Neoliberal Capitalism and Uneven Development” 881). As in Tambu’s previous job as a copywriter, she has already experienced how Tracey is a leader who appears to be indifferent to the exploitation and racial discrimination she enables in the workplace. Also, in their relationship, which traces back to their days at the same school, Tracey does not seem to acknowledge how her whiteness has given her institutional advantages while Tambu, on the other hand, had to put up with the consequences of being racially oppressed by colonial structures. Niemi states that “Bringing Tracey’s character into the last novel suggests a repetition of the same move: once again, Tambudzai will be at the mercy of this white woman

who has all the power over Tambudzai's career, and again Tambudzai will be disappointed" (881). Tambu is then not really facing the reality of unjustness in her lifeworld although she is aware of them. She is still willing to submit herself to the leadership of Tracey who shows no understanding or sympathy of Tambu's and other black Zimbabweans historical and ongoing marginalized situatedness.

Tambu's complicity with Tracey's racialized exploitation of Tambu's own culture therefore enhances the disruption of her communal belonging. According to Arun Kundnani, "Race enables the limits to the universalisation of neoliberalism to be naturalised and dehistoricised: political opposition to market systems mounted by movements of the global South or racialised populations in the North is read by neoliberal ideology as no more than the acting out of cultures inherently lacking in traits of individualism and entrepreneurialism" (Kundnani 64). This definition of the constraints of neoliberalism in universal practice denotes a discrepancy in the world between the individualistic neoliberal agents and marginalized populations that resist the neoliberal object of exploitation as entrepreneurial freedom. This subsequently reproduces racial dominance in neoliberal discourse in the way resilience to neoliberal ideology is used to rationalize inequality, power-imbalances and uneven resource distribution within hegemonic structures. Tambu's positionality within neoliberal practice is in this regard complex. She shares the collective memory and experience of the black population's historical and ongoing situated precarity in Zimbabwe as Africans and nonwhites. She is thus aware of the racial power-imbalances within her nation and the subsequent effects of colonial and neocolonial exploitation of the very marginalized community that she belongs to. Yet, she desires the neoliberal individualistic freedoms and promises of self-advancement and judges her own community for not sharing her neoliberal mentality. To her, they seem stuck in the impasse of impoverishment, and she has condescending views on their collectivist modes of living. Her way of relationally deal with members of her community is then to disengage from their collective projects and interests as these produce blockages to her own individualistic neoliberal pathway.

The novel foregrounds how white neoliberal capitalism holds a superior position through neocolonial exploitation, and that Tambu's neoliberal mode of being mediates the problematic opportunism of neoliberal discourse. Tambu's affiliation with neoliberal capitalist exploitation of her own community's culture and values is indicative for a state of postcolonial suspension generated by the affect of haunting. In relation to his argument about how neoliberal ideology rationalizes white capitalist dominance and its capitalization of marginalized populations on the free market, Kundnani points to the postcolonial African

subject's affective state of anxiety in the contemporary. As Western superiority within capitalism faces the challenge of accounting for this hegemonic positioning in universalist neoliberal discourse, Kundnani states that "Neoliberalism is thus haunted by its failure to universalise its market order; a racial idea of culture is the means by which this anxiety is managed and worked through" (53). Kundnani here points to a complicated status quo in the contemporary, global market-regulated world where Western culture produce a discourse about universal opportunism within neoliberal ideology that does not actually mirror the practical reality in the world. White capitalism that then is in a position and with the power to exploit African culture and not vice versa. This imbalance is then based on racial cultural differences, and Tambu partakes in the justification of white superiority in her frustration with her own community's dissociation with individualistic self-interested neoliberal aspirations. Her situated experience is evidence of how there is no unified version of a postcolonial African self in the way various neocolonial and transnational forces disrupt the present and pressure adjustments to neoliberal capitalism that generate different responses. Tambu recognizes neoliberalism's individualistic potential for self-advancement, and she therefore holds a complicated and ambivalent situatedness as it enables a complicit mode of being that reproduces racialized unjustness and capitalist exploitation of her community's culture. In this way, neoliberal ideology does not consider the multilayered state of precarity that marginalized communities have. Nonetheless, the affectivity of haunting still saturates the national space in the novel.

Tambu's process of becoming a successful neoliberal agent thus becomes an affective state of suspension because she cannot achieve this goal in a constructive manner within white capitalist exploitation. Her complicity moreover signifies her postcolonial displacement and entanglement in the way it is a way of coping in a financially challenging and racially unequal reality. The encounter between Tambu, her mother and the German man who wishes to take a photo of them then generates the affect of haunting as it mediates situated, affective responses to neoliberal and neocolonial exploitation in the contemporary postcolonial space. As mentioned in the introduction, the scene where the bare-chested women dance for the Western tourists result in an emotional turning-point for Tambu when one of the tourists wants to photograph her with her mother who reacts with anger and humiliation to this. There are two different temporalities in this scene that overlap then. One is the modern European temporality of capitalist productivity in the commodification of objects, like a photograph, whose meaning and value becomes arbitrary. The other temporality is the continuation of colonialism in the form of neocolonial exploitation under the guise of neoliberal ventures like

foreign tourism. The German tourist who wants to take a photo of Tambu with her bare-chested mother after the performance is misunderstanding the signification of his act, which is sensed as a ridicule by the mother. At the very moment Tambu stands next to her, she throws his camera away and screams to him: ““I am your picture, me!”” and ““Me, that’s what you think I am. Not a someone, but that I am whatever you want to put in your picture”” (Dangarembga, *This Mournable Body* 356, 357). Pauline Ukwaweh contends that in this scene: “She [Tambu’s mother] resists a neocolonial venture by *stopping* [emphasis in original] the camera, thus baring the white photographer’s attempts to objectify and commodify the women’s images, to perpetuate stereotypes, and maintain the inferiorization of the postcolonial subject” (Ukwaweh 294). Tambu’s mother is thus sensing the pastness of colonial exploitation in that moment as the Western foreigner attempts to take possession of her body and her agency, thus disempowering her, with a camera-shot that he will own and redistribute. This encounter situates her mother in suspension, in-between a colonial past that has not discontinued as it emerges in the present through neocolonial exploitation enabled by the neoliberal enterprise Tambu works for.

These affective responses, however, mediates different situated experiences between Tambu and her mother as Tambu’s suspension is established through her complicity. Her in-between-ness in the entanglement of these various temporalities is much more ambivalent and problematic due to her affiliation with neocolonial and neoliberal practices. Tambu’s complicity with white capitalist exploitation of her own community is thus affectively indicative of the postcolonial African subject’s experience of time as displacement and entanglement in the contemporary. Tambu is navigating the various temporalities in the situated encounter within a racialized social space. Her blackness and postcolonial African subjectivity are then distorted in the way Tambu chooses to side with white capitalist culture. In her essay-collection *Black and Female*, Tsitsi Dangarembga identifies the contemporary and postcolonial condition for black people as relationally being “not-I” as the world they inhabit is structurally organized around the “I” of white people (Dangarembga, *Black and Female* 143). Dangarembga asserts that black people in Southern Africa today are affectively responding to this racialized unequal existential predicament in various ways. Their sense of disempowerment is also then manifested in their very bodies, which “become an object of terror to themselves”, as relationally constituting the “not-I” to whiteness (143). Dangarembga states that whether they affectively deal with this reality by being angry, or depressed and impassive: “Both are reactions to the interruption of their being, historically in the displacement and other traumas experienced by their forebears, and today due to the

interruption of their hopes and aspirations through the imposition of the category of blackness” (143-144). These two affective responses to a structurally unequal lifeworld can be discerned in the novel in the juxtaposition between Tambu’s pessimism and carelessness, and the other women in her community that actively work against oppression and that react with criticism and anger to inequality, exploitation and Tambu’s self-centeredness

This identification of the differences in the postcolonial African condition can be linked to Mbembe’s ideas of displacement and entanglement as constituting the temporal experience of the postcolonial African subject’s situatedness. It is a state of a racialized existential quandary that results in different modes of management. Dangarembga argues that one form of dealing with this difficulty has been to become complicit with white culture and their structurally superior position, as: “To these black people, colonialism was benign” (144). In Tambu’s experience of entanglement with socio-economic structures that benefitted the white population, and in the embodiment of the black “not-I” in this reality, Tambu’s way to manage her postcolonial state of rupture, or suspension, is to then be complicit. This is her affective response to a racially unequal lifeworld, which has, however, somewhat accommodated her because of her education, career-aspirations and her alienation from her communal belonging. As Dangarembga states about complicit black Africans:

They go out of their way to cooperate with and uphold structures. Complicity may be conscious or unconscious, and such complicit melanated people are often rewarded for their acquiescence to the demands of a white world with economic elevation, or with other rewards that are valued in that world, such as social stature (144).

However, complicity as a way of managing an unjust and challenging reality could be perceived as the most logical solution in terms of survival (144). As Dangarembga states: “If the education, job or military uniform that enabled one to live in relative peace came at the price of making the body useful to the colonial enterprise, so be it” (144-145). In relation to Tambu’s situated experience as a postcolonial African subject, complicity is then a form of survival in a difficult social space. Yet, it is also her particular experience of displacement in the contemporary, as she is in-between the transformative influences of neoliberal opportunities, but therefore also detached from a collective situatedness with her Shona community.

3.5. The Infrastructure and Object-ness of Unhu as Resilience to White Neoliberal Capitalist Exploitation

In Tambu's ambivalent situated experience in the world, her affective disposition in and toward life is affectively sensing how she is a nonsovereign agent through her relations with her black, female community. She resigns from her job after her mother's emotional breakdown, and she is too ashamed to talk with anyone from her homestead for a while. As the narrator states in this point in her life: "Your umbilical cord is buried on the homestead; in the empty space that widens within at every step, you feel it tugging" (Dangarembga, *This Mournable Body* 361). She is thus realizing how her betrayal against her own community and the hurt she has caused are now also hurting her. However, she does not continue in the same self-centered fashion where she only cares about her own well-being. As Pauline Uwakweh argues about Tambu's treatment of other people in the scene with her mother and the tourists: "Her action turns out to be a major miscalculation on her part, another betrayal, and compromise with the oppressor. To be worthy, Tambu must shed her distorted identity, embrace community, and operate within the tenets of Unhu humanity and reciprocity" (Uwakweh 294). Tambu is subsequently now working toward the affective term concerning object-looseness as she affectively attempts rearrange what the object of her neoliberal good-life fantasy means to her. The cluster of promises the good-life fantasy provides is no longer centered around individual wants. Her neoliberal mode of being has instead been challenged by communal solidarity and cooperation. Eventually she is able to speak to people again, like Nyasha, Christine and her aunt Lucia. The three women, however, are showing an unforeseen openness to Tambu. Nyasha asks if she should ask Lucia whether Tambu could be employed at her security company, which is now going very well. To this act of benevolence, Tambu is grateful for a change, as the narrator conveys: "Humbled and expecting nothing because you know everyone has seen you at your worst, you give your cousin your consent" (Dangarembga, *This Mournable Body* 362). Her aunt employs Tambu, who is then given minor and simple tasks to perform in the beginning.

Tambu is adjusting to her new circumstances and she affectively transforms in the way she is now becoming receptive to the values of unhu. At the very end of the novel, Tambu's aunt Lucia teaches Tambu about the object of unhu, which Tambu now is affectively open to: "Over the course of several months, she [Lucia] delivers several lectures when she joins you in the premises' kitchen or on occasions when she gives you a ride home in her car, concerning the unhu, the quality of being human, expected of a Zimbabwean woman and a Sigauke who has many relatives who either served or fell in the war" (362). However, the

presence and function of unhu in the novel utilizes neoliberal infrastructures to not oppose neoliberal aspirations, but to modify the object-ness of neoliberal success. As such, unhu contains an infrastructure that aunt Lucia intertwines with neoliberal infrastructures in a way that benefits a collective group of women. The communal infrastructure centered around unhu thus loosens the object-ness of self-interest to accommodate the values of cooperation, respect, love and collective prosperity. Mainini Lucia has become quite rich through her work with her company AK Security, but she does not let Tambu aspire for promotions in the same progressive manner and speed as she did at the tourism agency. Tambu has to demonstrate that she exhibits the values of unhu by doing small tasks willingly, and also by helping others selflessly. This she eventually manages to do as Christine notices how Tambu's disposition is transformed: "she says, your education is not only in your head anymore: like hers, now your knowledge is also in your body, every bit of it, including your heart" (363). The object of self-advancement within the neoliberal good-life fantasy is then not rejected. As a socio-economic construct and infrastructure, it does provide a conventional pathway that promises the possibility of making a profitable and comfortable living. The object of neoliberal success is thus rearranged within Tambu's neoliberal good-life fantasy as she is unlearning her selfishness and transforms her aspirations in accordance with communal prosperity. It is a relation of optimism that is no longer cruel in the affective sense, but rather constructive as her selfish disposition has changed. Thus, the idea of unhu and the women's collectivist way in building a shared and codependent future are changing the conditions of the empirical experience of neoliberal practice.

To be entangled with various temporalities within a postcolonial, neoliberal lifeworld is to deal with challenges as they emerge, and one can deal with them in many ways, as the novel illustrates. Tambu's self-centered neoliberal mode of being thus points to how her complicity with white capitalism navigates her displacement and entanglement as a postcolonial African subject. Tambu's desire for a better material future for herself does not follow a solid societal infrastructure that contains the promise of reciprocity. Individualistic neoliberal self-interest, on the contrary, does promise that hard work potentially will provide success. However, she fails to sustain the neoliberal orientation that Tracey has as she recognizes her betrayal and transforms her affective disposition toward a collectivist mode of living. In view of this, Minna Niemi argues that Tambu fails to fully embody this neoliberal subjectivity in the long-run because the logic of exploiting the marginalized black population is produced within white capitalism ("Neoliberal Capitalism and Uneven Development" 887). Niemi states that: "Tambudzai's white capitalist ambitions are considered almost a sickness

from which she can be cured. Her immoral actions, fuelled by neoliberal rational subjectivity, seem to be a bad phase in her life, in which she behaves as a ‘sellout’. As she is brought back to the circle of female patriots, she is gradually released from this mentality” (887). In this way, the black Zimbabwean female community does not accept the ideological modality of individualism that neoliberalism operates through as a means to protect their own culture and create sustainable modes of living. That said, they do not reject neoliberalism to impact their lives, but they find ways of adjustments that do not entail compromising unhu and their collectivist approach to living in order to create profitable work. They thus mediate an infrastructure that loosens the object of racial disempowerment within white capitalism by collectively working toward communal progress and prosperity. This is then a way of negotiating the presence of haunting and its affective state of suspension as the women find spaces where they can maximize neoliberal profitability that does not have to harm their own cultural values.

Tambu is thus transformed by the affectivity generated by her complicity with white capitalist culture in the way it damages her community. When the recognition of her complicity is affectively manifested by Tambu in the bodily relationality with her mother and the other women in the community, her sense of displacement and entanglement is then disrupted. With the other women from her community, they all constitute the exploited and nonwhite “not-I”, and Tambu becomes aware of how she bodily then is not situated in the same positionality as Tracey and the other Western tourists. She is rather in-between, in a state of nonbelonging, but she chooses to be part of her black community in the end and unlearn her state of complicity. This is affectively as shift in infrastructure where unhu modifies the idea of success in a neoliberal world that does not compromise collective well-being. The women in Tambu’s community instead find means to work toward collective-interest, which is a conscious form of embracing the affective dimension of nonsovereign relationality. In this way, prosperity is effectuated by the community as a whole, for the community as a whole. This negation of Tambu’s complicity is then also a modification of the ide of reciprocity. Unhu as an object promises reward when individuals partake in the collective project of cultivating good and supporting social relations in the community from a place of care and without selfish agendas.

Conclusion

This thesis paper has focused on how the affective social space in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *This Mournable Body* operates in connection to postcolonial sociality and neoliberal racialization in Zimbabwe. As this thesis paper has argued, Tambu embodies a dual and ambivalent subjectivity shaped by neoliberal ideology and her attachment to her black, unhu-oriented Shona community. It has examined ways in which the novel affectively mediates the ambivalence of her complicated neoliberal and postcolonial situatedness in her experiences and dealings with black women from her community, and in her complicity with white capitalist exploitation of her very own marginalized community. The thesis paper has identified that the multilayered and intertwined aspects of relationality and affectivity have been generally overlooked by scholars who has written about the novel. By combining affect theory and postcolonial theory, this thesis paper has attempted to address this gap by engaging intellectual positions from Southern Africa and from the European tradition. Achille Mbembe's theory on the postcolonial African subject's experience of time as displacement and entanglement describes an existential condition that also can be used to assess the ongoing temporality of racialization in addition to the emergence of neoliberal temporality. As a state of being, the postcolonial African subject's situated experience in the contemporary sub-Saharan region also indicates an affective relationality, which this thesis paper has placed in dialogue with Lauren Berlant's affect theory on the relation of cruel optimism and neoliberal good-life fantasies, and their theory on the affect of inconvenience. These theories collectively illustrate that Tambu's dreams of becoming successful and her self-interested mode of being can be located within cruel optimism as these attachments are harmful for her and other people's well-being. Her neoliberal good-life fantasies and selfishness haven then been tied to the wider political, socio-economic context where her particular situated experience as a black African woman places her in a state of suspension generated by the affect of haunting. Michael O'Riley's describes this postcolonial affect as a response to the multifarious effects of delocalization which can be linked to transnational and neocolonial forces in the contemporary world. This thesis paper has connected the affect of haunting to Tsitsi Dangarembga's argument about black complicity as it considers Tambu to fit this categorization in her decision to be complicit with white capitalist practices in order to create a better future for herself.

This thesis paper has also argued that this self-centered, complicit mode of being is Tambu's particular experience of situated suspension, and also an affective response to

survival within a structurally unequal reality. As an existential quandary, this constitutes her experience of displacement and entanglement as a postcolonial African subject. However, this thesis paper has also demonstrated, by using the affective concepts of sovereignty, nonsovereign relationality, infrastructure and object-looseness, how Tambu's reorientation from neoliberal self-interest toward unhu is an affective transformation that point to the ways relationality is not static, but is always affectively open to adjust to objects, people and even structures. The function and object of unhu in the novel and for Tambu is to provide another and more constructive infrastructure that seeks to empower the collective flourishing for her black and female community. As a postcolonial novel, Tambu's lifeworld, situated experience and eventual homecoming mediate Tsitsi Dangarembga's black feminist perspective on collective prosperity and potentiality in the future for black women in Southern Africa:

While white feminists imagine a world patterned along the lines of white private ownership patriarchy, in which rewards are merely redistributed, black feminists imagine a new world that has not been seen before. We imagine a world in which, in the words of Reni Eddo-Lodge, 'all people who have been economically, socially and culturally marginalised by an ideological system that has been designed for them to fail' are liberated from the destructive effects of divisive, ranking ideologies (*Black and Female* 101-102).

Dangarembga's statement echoes her identification of the black, female and inferior embodiment of the "not-I" in relation to white bodies in Southern Africa. Unhu and the creation of a strong, black female community in *This Mournable Body* loosens the overpowering objects and functions of racialization and structural disempowerment in their national space. Their collective resilience and cooperation instead create an infrastructure that embraces the affective relation of nonsovereignty that bravely work toward uncertain, but prosperous possibilities within the future where the project of decolonialization is still ongoing.

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