

*Trauma of Colonial/Postcolonial Entanglement: Something Torn and New in*  
*Weep Not, Child*

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Published after two years of Kenya's Independence in 1964, renowned writer and critic Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's debut novel *Weep Not, Child* recreates the turbulent 1950s in colonized Kenya. This book has been mostly read postcolonially either as a resistance novel, depicting the political uprising in Kenya along with its internal ideological schism against colonial violence, or as an allegory of Kenya's course to independence. However, in this paper, I intend to establish a nexus between postcolonial theory and contemporary trauma studies, maintaining the recent postcolonial tendency of decolonizing

trauma theory. The novel exposes the trauma inflicted by the colonial settlement on the everyday, innocent colonized people like Njoroge, tracing the horrifying consequences it triggers in the lives of victims both on a personal and allegorical level. Hence, I argue how the evil of colonial ideology is not only manifested in the destruction of lives, beliefs, practices, and institutions of the native Africans but also displayed, more disturbingly, in the unsettling of the psyche of the colonized subjects. In addition, in connection with another monumental work, *Something Torn and New: Towards an African Renaissance* by Ngugi, I aim to discuss the significance of the agency of collective trauma in a postcolonial context in an attempt to both historicize and empower trauma.

Postcolonial theory has always maintained how colonial entanglement shatters and disturbs one's sense of reality and perception, forcing him/her to be at unease with one's own identity. The contemporary trauma theory, in a similar fashion, asserts that the fright and fear resulting from the traumatic experience can destroy or disorient one's sense of identity. However, unfortunately, modern trauma studies has rarely and inadequately accommodated the colonial trauma experience in its discourse. Drawing references from the prominent scholars such as Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o on postcolonial theory, and Cathy Caruth, Dominick LaCapra, Kai Erikson, and Stef Craps on trauma studies, I intend to examine the psychic injury

of the protagonist in an attempt to understand the expansive impacts of colonial chaos. My essay is primarily informed by Stef Craps's argument of decolonizing the trauma studies, Kai Erikson's concept of collective trauma as a communal force, and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's idea of re-membering/mourning in an attempt to work through the dismembered past of the colonial history. My reading of *Weep Not, Child* as a tale of trauma resulting from colonial entanglement connects Njoroge's personal ordeal with its socio-political milieu to situate itself in a collective trauma. Finally, this essay goes on arguing how the collective trauma of colonial experience can be translated into a constructive force in an act of re-membering and revisiting the traumatic past.

One cannot deny the fact that the recent trend of trauma studies is highly indebted to Holocaust studies. The pioneering figures of trauma studies, who have established it as a distinct field, such as Cathy Caruth, Ruth Leys, Dominick LaCapra, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, primarily focused on Holocaust victims and, to an extent, World War II, and their experiences. Instances of Eurocentric bias, parochial vision of history, and essentialization of trauma model are evident in the majority of the mainstream influential books published from the 1960s until the present. Stef Craps's insightful argument in *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* is one of the first complete book-length discussions on the urgency of decolonizing the trauma theory. He

finds the hegemonic definitions of trauma “culturally insensitive and exclusionary” (Craps 2013, 3), which should account for and respond to collective, ongoing, everyday forms of traumatizing violence to represent the disenfranchised. He comments: “It takes for granted rather than interrogates hegemonic definitions of trauma which are not scientifically neutral but culturally specific, and which will have to be revised and modified if they are to adequately account for—rather than to (re)colonize...” (Craps 2013, 21). He continues that trauma theory should deliberately consider the specific social and political contexts in which trauma narratives are produced, and be receptive and attentive to the diverse strategies of representation and resistance which these contexts dictate. Critiquing the usual tendency of space-bound and race-bound discussions of trauma theorists, he explicates how they largely fail to live up to the promise of cross-cultural engagement. He argues:

They fail on at least four counts: they marginalize or ignore traumatic experiences of non-Western or minority cultures, they tend to take for granted the universal validity of definitions of trauma and recovery that have developed out of the history of Western modernity, they often favour or even prescribe a modernist aesthetic of fragmentation and aporia as uniquely suited to the task of bearing witness to trauma, and they generally disregard the connections between metropolitan and non-Western or minority traumas (Craps 2013, 2).

As a result, trauma theory risks facilitating in the preservation of the existing injustices and inequalities in the system that it claims to eliminate. Therefore, trauma theory needs to be revised, modified, and most importantly, decolonized to adequately accommodate and embody the psychological pain inflicted on the underrepresented victims.

The problem with an exclusive and culturally insensitive trauma theory is that it fails to expose comprehensive situations of injustice and abuse, slamming the door, especially, on the Global South. According to the prevailing dominant model, racial colonialism fits neither structural trauma nor historical trauma. Craps elucidates that traditional cultural trauma research continues “to adhere to the traditional event-based model of trauma” of Europe, according to which trauma results from “a single, extraordinary, catastrophic event” (Craps 2013, 4), preferring fragmented, non-linear, anti-narrative forms of narratives, which is again very euro-centric. Drawing reference on the work of LaCapra as an example, Craps appreciates how his works bring conceptual clarity to the field of trauma theory in relation to history. At the same time, he also argues how he (LaCapra) falls short of accommodating racial trauma and its unique experience in his discussion. His key distinction between loss and absence is believed “to obscure the kind of long-term, cumulative trauma suffered by victims of racism or other forms of structural oppres-

sion, which fits neither the category” (Craps 2013, 4). In a similar vein, critiquing the “limited focus” of one of the influential books on trauma studies *Trauma: A Genealogy* (2000) by Ruth Leys, critic Victoria Burrows points out that it fails to keep its promise of a comprehensive study of the history of the conceptualization of trauma. She considers the book as “a text that is premised entirely upon a Eurocentric reading solely indentured to a middle-class whiteness built on concepts of Western individualism” (Burrows 2004, 17). She, therefore, calls for a remapping of trauma theory that is not white-centric and gender-blind. The “Introduction” to the book *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism* also acknowledges that trauma theory is mainly a response to the developing and changing influence of the Holocaust, at least in the West. Agreeing with Stef Craps, they assert that texts on trauma theory often “marginalize the traumatic experience of non-western cultures, assume the definitions of trauma and recovery that the West has developed are universal and often favour a distinctively modernist form in order to ‘bear witness’ to trauma” (Buelens, Durrant, and Eaglestone 2014, 5). Hence, the established discourse of trauma still seems inadequate to accommodate the experience of colonial trauma of the Global South. If trauma theory is truly an effort to trace the infinite shapes both of human suffering and of our responses to it, then it cannot handpick certain experiences of selective humans.

As Craps convincingly suggests, the significant contribution that a decolonized trauma theory can make to our understanding of postcolonial literature is that it “bears witness to the suffering engendered by racial or colonial oppression” (Craps 2013, 5). Hence, at this point, I would prefer to delve into the world of *Weep Not, Child* to situate the novel in the context of trauma studies in an attempt to understand the distinct trauma it unleashes, triggered by colonial coercion. This politically charged novel foregrounds the emotional and spiritual journey of a young boy, Njoroge, against the backdrop of the Mau Mau revolution that was organized against the British colonial rule. At the beginning of the novel, Njoroge is elated to know that he would be sent to school by his family. When his mother Nyokabi imparts the news to him, he wonders how his mother was able to recognize his “undivulged dream” (Thiong’o 2012, 4) of becoming an enlightened man. He sees himself “destined for something big, and this made his heart glow” (Thiong’o 2012, 41) because he believes only learning can make him contribute to his family and community. Amid the political tension and racial anxiety, Njoroge manages to continue his studies with the support of his mother, Nyokabi, and brother, Kamau. However, things start changing dramatically for him when his father, Ngotho, had a fight with Jacobo, who owned the land on which Ngotho lived, in a public meeting. Jacobo was considered as a traitor to his black community because of his controversial decision of taking the co-

lonial government's side when an all-out strike broke out in the village. When he took to the stage to urge people to go back to work, in a single moment, he "crystallised into a concrete betrayal of the people" and transformed into "the physical personification of the long years of waiting and suffering" (Thiong'o 2012, 62). To everyone's surprise, the hero of the hour, Ngotho rose and fought with him, leaving both of them injured. Consequently, Ngotho's family was displaced from their home, and what is worse is that he loses his job from his white master, Mr. Howlands. Ngotho was told to leave Jacobo's land despite the fact that "Jacobo found him there when he bought the land from the previous owner" (Thiong'o 2012, 65). From now on, the world Njoroge has known and dreamed of is not and cannot be the same.

The title of Part 2, "Darkness Fall", prepares one for the impending danger and atrocities lurking around in every part of the village. The uprising of Mau Mau revolution to oust colonial rule from Kenya accelerates ruthless persecution by the colonial government. Njoroge feels utterly uncomfortable when for the first time the members of his family are arrested under the curfew law. Kori, his brother, and Njeri, Ngotho's first wife, are captured by the police. While Njeri is released once the fine has been given, Kori is sent to "a detention camp, without trial" (Thiong'o 2012, 90). Earlier he was, once more, captured by the police, which he somehow managed to escape. Njoroge heard him describing the



event to his family: “We did not know where we were being taken. I feared that we might be killed. This feeling became stronger when we came to a forest and the truck in which I was slowed down” (Thiong’o 2012, 76). Njoroge’s initial phase of losing his sense of reality, and consequently, his unsettling of the psyche, can be traced in his reflection of time and space that is no longer in harmony, but in chaos. He realizes that his home is now a place “where stories were no longer told, a place where no young men and women from the village gathered” (Thiong’o 2012, 90). Later, the fall out between his father and his brother, Boro, a disillusioned soldier from World War II who condemns the older generation’s inactivity for the current situation, makes Njoroge more aware of the political tension and domination around him.

Njoroge, now almost a young man, is capable of understanding the full force of the chaos that has come over the land. On one hand, he is still sustained by his faith in education that will prepare him to play his big role when the time comes; on the other hand, he slowly starts losing his known perception of the world. During this time, Kamau informs him that the barber, Nganga, on whose land they built their new house, and four others have been taken from their houses three nights ago and have been “discovered dead in the forest” (Thiong’o 2012, 94). Njoroge finds it almost ridiculous, feeling almost creepy, to think that “one would never see the six men again” (Thiong’o 2012, 95). However, what finally

triggers his trauma is the day when he is picked up from Siriana Secondary School by two policemen and taken to a particular homeguard post popularly known as “the House of Pain” (Thiong’o 2012, 127). The following day he is interrogated in connection with Jacobo’s murder and his involvement with Mau Mau. Upon refusal, he receives blow after blow that make his body covered with blood “where the hobnailed shoes of the grey eyes had done their work” (Thiong’o 2012, 128). He wakes up from the coma late at night, and is interrogated again. Mr. Howlands holds Njoroge’s private parts with a pair of pincers and starts to press tentatively telling him “you will be castrated like your father” (Thiong’o 2012, 129). Both of Njoroge’s mothers, his father and his brother, Kamau, are arrested in connection with the murder. It is true that Njoroge has always been a dreamer, a visionary. However, these experiences have appeared as “shocks that showed him a different world from that he had believed himself living in” (Thiong’o 2012, 131).

My revisiting of the plot has been deliberate in an attempt to trace the series of events and experiences that ultimately make Njoroge collapse and vulnerable, leading him to his trauma. Defying the dominant model of trauma as a consequence of a single, catastrophic event, here, in the novel, the trauma is being inflicted slowly in the psyche of the colonized through a series of temporal and spatial events, shattering one’s sense of self, identity, spatiality, and vision. Having said that, one has to return to

the western concept of trauma, where it began as a discipline and later evolved, for the basic guidelines of its origin and symptoms. Cathy Caruth, in her highly influential book *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, defines trauma as:

a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event. (1995, 4)

She argues that trauma is much more than a pathology which cannot be defined by the event itself, but by the structure of its overwhelming experience or reception, only when it, belatedly, possesses the one who goes through it. In the same vein, Njoroge, unable to find no end, no cure for the nightmarish experiences, initially feels overwhelmed. At first, these had “a numbing effect” (Thiong’o 2012, 131) on him; therefore, he is not sure how to feel about them or how to respond to them. In the process, his mind became clear, and later fixated when “the old fear came back and haunted him” (Thiong’o 2012, 131). He, like a clinical trauma patient, feels that something is wrong with him, something is impure about him, and develops both a self-guilt and a self-negation. Blaming his friendship with Mwihaki, Jacobo’s daughter, he breaks down to his mother: “It’s

I who have brought all this on to you” (Thiong’o 2012, 131) and hates himself without knowing why. The pain, both emotional and physical, inflicted on him by colonial violence makes him both powerless and hopeless.

How can Njoroge ever forget what he witnessed when his father, Ngotho, was moved from the homeguard post? His father’s face had been “deformed by small wounds and scars,” his nose was “cleft into two” and his legs could only be “dragged” (Thiong’o 2012, 134). For four days his mouth and eyes remained shut. His father’s tragic death, who was both his hero and strength, provides him with a massive final blow that disconnects him from his sense of reality. Feeling himself of an old man of twenty, he finds himself a visionless, living dead body whose “blank stare” (Thiong’o 2012, 140) frightens children in a shop from where he was fired in less than a month. Finally, Mwihaki’s refusal to escape the reality with him destroys his last hope. The world has transformed into an empty place where he sees everything in a mist. His overpowering situation resembles Kai Erikson’s account of trauma victim: “It [trauma] invades you, takes you over, becomes a dominating feature of your interior landscape—‘possesses’ you—and in the process threatens to drain you and leave you empty” (1995, 183). In the process, his sense of the known world and the unknown collapses, and his sense of the familiar and the strange breakdowns. His past, present, and future all get tangled in a weird loop, leaving

him no breathing space from the torment: “He recalled Ngotho, dead. Boro would soon be executed while Kamau would be in prison for life. Njoroge did not know what would happen to Kori in detention. He might be killed like those who had been beaten to death at Hola Camp” (Thiong’o 2012, 145). He finally loses “faith in all the things he had earlier believed in, like wealth, power, education, religion” (Thiong’o 2012, 145). He could sense that whatever constitutes his reality is falling apart. The horror, the pain and the grief that he feels are so overwhelmingly traumatic that he waits for “darkness to come and cover him” (Thiong’o 2012, 146).

However, Njoroge’s trauma, springing from the fear and horror of the colonial predicament, cannot be read only as his personal tragedy. His choice of surrendering to death not only exhibits his psychic surrender but also exposes the heart of darkness of the colonial entanglement. In this regard, his individual trauma echoes the historical trauma of Kenya in the sense that they both suffer from paranoia and violence in a critical time when they are in a quest of an identity. One must remember that the novel was written during Kenya’s crucial transition to independence. Ngugi’s crushing ending, thus, is applicable not only to no-longer-innocent Njoroge’s life but also to Kenya’s future. A colonized individual’s destiny is intricately connected to the colonial history; so much so that separating them would result in abstraction and distortion of both personal and collective history. In *Discourse*

*on Colonialism*, Aimé Césaire, one of the founding figures of postcolonial studies, powerfully evokes the pathos of “millions of men in whom fear has been cunningly instilled, who have been taught to have an inferiority complex, to tremble, kneel, despair, and behave like flunkys” (2000, 43). Although the book, first published in 1950—long before the trauma studies became a trend—never explicitly raises the notion of trauma, it carries a similar ethos of colonial trauma. He categorically discusses how the deceptive colonialism robbed colonized societies of their essence, trampled cultures, undermined institutions, confiscated lands, smashed religions, destroyed creative expressions, and wiped out individuals’ extraordinary potential. Therefore, despite the individual’s unique experience, colonized subjects are intricately bound together by a shared experience and memory.

According to trauma studies, it is crucial to historicizing trauma to rethink the possibility of history and to understand our ethical and political relation to it. Even though the majority of the theorists limited their horizon to Western history, it is worth noting how they situate trauma in history in general. Viewing history as inherently traumatic that resists integration and expression, Cathy Caruth argues that a textual approach should not distract us from confronting history which is no longer straightforwardly referential. She claims that trauma can afford us unique access to history: “through the notion of trauma... we can understand that a re-

thinking of reference is aimed not at eliminating history but at resituating it in our understanding, that is, at precisely permitting history to arise where immediate understanding may not” (Caruth 2016, 12). On a similar note, considering trauma as a prominent feature of history, notably modern history, LaCapra argues that it is unwise to see trauma only as a purely psychological or individual phenomenon. He continues that it has crucial connections “to social and political conditions and can only be understood and engaged with respect to them” (LaCapra 2014, xi). He regrets how insufficiently historians recognize the significance of individual and collective trauma even when they write of events and processes, in which it is omnipresent, such as genocides, wars, rape, victimization, and abuse. I believe this notion is more than pertinently applicable to the history of colonization and slavery where trauma has been imprinted in the psyche, on the body, and on the land of the casualties over the centuries through subjugation and carnage.

Going back to history and *Weep Not, Child*, it is worth remembering that Ngugi also came of age, like Njoroge, during the state of emergency (1952-61) declared by the British colonial administration in an attempt to subdue Mau Mau revolution. The Gikuyu peasant movement, the nascent phase of Mau Mau, was banned in 1950, forcing its participants to go underground and to take up arms. In the process, the colonial government declared a state of emergency in Kenya in 1952, which made the situation terribly worse. This disturbing envi-

ronment is echoed at the beginning of chapter 11 of the novel: “Conditions went from bad to worse. No one could tell when he might be arrested for breaking the curfew. You could not even move across the courtyard at night” (Thiong’o 2012, 93). Evidently, thus, colonial history is embedded in the novel that Ngugi personally witnessed. Simon Gikandi, in his book-length study titled *Ngugi Wa Thiong’o*, discusses the authenticity of Ngugi’s portrayal of time in *Weep Not, Child*, which represents the collective ordeal of the colonized. He writes:

Families were displaced from their ancestral lands and forced to live in massive villages, complete with garrisons, under a state of curfew and strict control of movements from one area to another. Thousands of men and women were also arrested without trial and sent to detention camps in remote parts of Kenya. These detainees would return toward the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s to find that their families had been broken up, their children expelled from colonial schools, and their land confiscated. (Gikandi 2000, 26)

The above discussion echoes Njoroge, his family, and his fellow villagers’ reality, reinforcing the fact that Njoroge’s tale of despair and suffering is an allegory of the plight of the colonized subjects. Even if it runs the risk of essentialization, it cannot be denied that what happened to him happened to thousands of others across Kenya, even across Africa.



However, *Weep Not, Child* deliberately tells the tragic tale of Njoroge. If it was solely Ngotho's story, his traumatic journey could have been as soulfully depicted as Njoroge's. The colonial exploitation robbed him of his land, job, manhood, identity, and finally his life. Losing one son to the First World War, bearing harsh denunciation from another son because of his cowardness, and witnessing his other two sons being taken away to prison, Ngotho becomes more of a tragic figure than Njoroge. If he were alive, would he ever be able to forget the horrifying darkness that swallowed him in the detention camp, the place of his castration, where "time was a succession of nothingness," and where he had to sleep on his sides as "only his buttocks were safe" (Thiong'o 2012, 130)? Or could *Weep Not, Child* have been a story of Njeri or Nyokabi who experiences her husband's death, loses one son to the World War, and other three to the prison, and witnesses the youngest son losing himself. Or it could have been a story of one of those men who are now "beyond the call of the land, the sun, and the moon – Nganga, the barber, Kiarie, and many others ..." (Thiong'o 2012, 145). Thus, Njoroge's story is the microcosmic representation of the collective story of colonized Kenya. Similarly, Njoroge's trauma is reminiscent of the collective trauma of thousands of unnamed casualties.

Referring to the distinction between structural trauma and historical trauma, Dominick LaCapra asserts that historical trauma is "specific" (2009, 78), and not everyone is subject to it or entitled to the subject position as-

sociated with it. On the other hand, everyone is subject to structural trauma. He argues that, in structural trauma, “‘Victim’ is not a psychological category. It is, in variable ways, a social, political, and ethical category” (LaCapra 2014, 79). In this sense, structural trauma can appear in different ways in all societies and can be evoked or addressed in various manners. However, in my opinion, in a colonial context, especially in a country like Kenya or Nigeria, where colonial subjugation was at its extreme, the fine line between historical trauma and structural trauma collapses as they mutually feed on each other. Therefore, I prefer to call (which I maintain throughout my paper) this shared harrowing experience of the colonized as “collective trauma,” that is simultaneously both historical and structural, in an attempt to understand the unique condition of the trauma of the colonial casualties.

Kai Erikson explicates the positive significance of collective trauma primarily referring to Buffalo Creek survivors in his book *Everything in Its Path*. He defines collective trauma as “a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of community. The collective trauma works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with ‘trauma’” (Erikson 1976, 154). Arguing that trauma has both centripetal and centrifugal tendencies, he explains how it makes one withdraw from the col-

lective group space while at the same time drawing one back. Therefore, according to him, communal trauma can take two forms: “damage to the tissues that hold human groups intact, and the creation of social climates, communal moods, that come to dominate a group’s spirit” (Erikson 1995, 190). The most significant point he makes is that trauma is usually misunderstood as a somewhat private and secluded experience because the person who experiences it often drifts away from the everyday customs and practices of life. But, paradoxically, the drifting away is accompanied, as he asserts, “by revised views of the world that, in their turn, become the basis for communality” (Erikson 1995, 198). Therefore, trauma has the potential of making a community. Already, in a colonial setting, the individual trauma is intricately connected to historical trauma. On top of it, if communal trauma, in general, can make a community, then individual/collective trauma can work as a powerful communal force given a colonial/postcolonial society.

Ngugi in his powerful book *Something Torn and New: Towards an African Renaissance* discusses the desperate need for the act of remembering to deal with the dismembered past. Neither he uses the concept of trauma nor does he speak of collective trauma as a communal force. Yet, the whole book carries the images and traces of collective trauma. He dramatically begins the book with the narrative of the brutal killing of two important historical figures Waiyaki Wa Hinga and King Hintsia of the

Xhosa—the first buried alive and the latter decapitated and displayed at the British Museum—at the hands of the British colonial agents. Thus, he, brilliantly, portrays the colonial dismembering practices which were used “to instill fear and compliant docility” (Thiong’o 2009, 4). Particularly, the first chapter titled “Dismembering Practices: Planting European Memory in Africa,” manifests how a colonial regime is both a practice of power and a performance of power whose sole purpose is “to pacify a populace” and “to produce docile minds” (Thiong’o 2009, 4). Since Ngugi’s primary focus in this book is African Renaissance, he does not make the psychosomatic impacts of the colonial violence central to his argument. To find this connection robustly, one can turn to Frantz Fanon’s discussion on the mental disorders brought about by the colonial atrocities.

Presenting the case studies from Algerian liberation movement against French colonial rule, Fanon discusses how the number of psychiatric patients has increased since 1954 as a direct consequence of colonization. He argues: “When colonization remains unchallenged by armed resistance, when the sum of harmful stimulants exceeds a certain threshold, the colonized’s defenses collapse, and many of them end up in psychiatric institutions” (Fanon 2004, 182). It is true that not every casualty of colonial violence, both literal and symbolic, will end up being in a mental hospital. Some victims might end up running away from the traumatic memory

rather than facing it or might keep nurturing it inside not knowing what to do with it. Yet, the symptoms of psychosomatic disorders that he discusses in detail in the chapter titled “Colonial War and Mental Disorders” are closely associated with the symptoms of traumatic disorders. Commenting on the brutal colonial war, Fanon, without delineating the notion of trauma, kindles the ordeal of collective trauma: “And for many years to come we shall be bandaging the countless and sometimes indelible wounds inflicted on our people by the colonial onslaught” (Fanon 2004, 181). Unfortunately, as Craps points out, despite Fanon’s valuable insights, his work is altogether absent from most histories of the concept of trauma that “reflects the traditional neglect of race in trauma research” (2013, 132). Critic Rebecca Saunders rightly discusses the crucial need to study Fanon’s works with a lens of trauma studies to expand both the fields of postcolonialism and trauma studies. She asserts: “Though rarely read as a trauma theorist, Frantz Fanon draws attention to crucial, yet often overlooked, episodes in the history of trauma: to the specific forms of trauma produced by colonial wars, by colonization itself, and, more diffusely, by racism” (Saunders 2007, 13). Overall, Fanon helps us understand the damage of the colonized’s psycho-affective equilibrium due to the colonial onslaught. The backdrop of *Something Torn and New* is replete with the same sense of trauma, fear, loss, and amnesia that is in sync with Fanon’s argument.

One of the key purposes of my paper is to find a nexus between Ngugi's concept of re-membering/mourning and Erikson's concept of collective trauma as a communal force. Though Ngugi explicitly does not propose the idea of collective re-membering, I believe that, in spirit, what he proposes is a collective re-membering/mourning in an attempt to search for the wholeness of the African subject that has been "fragmented" (Thiong'o 2009, 29) during the colonial chaos. Since memory is the crucial link between the past and the present, between space and time, he argues that "without a reconnection with African memory, there is no wholeness" (Thiong'o 2009, 39). However, in a postcolonial context, re-membering/mourning is not a simple act of revisiting the past or events. Here, colonial memory is loaded with fear, scar, terror, pain, self-doubt, and self-loathing. Moreover, in a postcolonial context, this practice is disrupted by the presence of a powerful petty middle class who have "an almost incurable desire for the permanent identification with its Western elders" (Thiong'o 2009, 56). To them, collective re-membering is a force that contradicts with their interests, and must be suppressed to consolidate their power.

Therefore, re-membering, as Ngugi argues, is a political act. However, having said that, there is no alternative to come to terms with the traumatic, dismembered past of the history other than confronting it consciously. In a similar manner, trauma studies also suggests the im-

portance of returning to the memories in order to free oneself from the shackle of trauma despite its resistance to be shared and represented. Erikson beautifully argues how the traumatized view of the world can convey a wisdom that requires being heard in its own terms to be deciphered. He asserts: “Traumatic memories are the unassimilated scraps of overwhelming experiences, which need to be integrated with existing mental schemes, and be transformed into narrative language. It appears that, in order for this to occur successfully, the traumatized person has to return to the memory often in order to complete it” (Erikson 1995, 176). Caruth, on a similar note, emphasizes the centrality of gaining access to a traumatic history either individually or through a community going beyond the pathology of individual suffering. Arguing the necessity of connecting to traumatic history, she discusses how, through its own suffering, it can be both the site of disruption and, agreeing with Kai Erikson, the locus of a “wisdom all its own” (Caruth 1995, 156). In this regard, Ngugi’s act of re-membering can be read as coming to terms with collective trauma, which can potentially create a positive communal force, producing, as suggested by Erikson, “wisdom.”

The reason I have associated Ngugi’s *Weep Not, Child* and *Something Torn and New* is that, in my opinion, there is a thematic connection between the two works. *Something Torn and New*—beginning with a dismembered past and ending with a promise of collective awakening—

starts where the novel—replete with the narrative of fear, terror, chaos, and despair—ends. Though the novel ends with a vague consolation offered to its protagonist, suggested by the paradoxical title, Ngugi leaves traces of hope in the open-ended conclusion of the story. A close look reveals that Njoroge could not go through the suicide because of his sense of responsibility to his community, and to his family, especially to his two mothers. He is pulled back by the call of his mother, Nyokabi, who still believes in him, the same mother who sent him to school to be educated at the beginning of the story to bring honor to the family and order to the community. When he saw his mother holding “a glowing piece of wood that she carried to light the way” (Thiong’o 2012, 147), he had to confront the reality. The glowing piece of wood can be interpreted in many ways: on the one hand, as the collective rage, anger, torment, and trauma, on the other hand, as a desire of freedom, as a glowing hope, as a fiery resistance. Critic Gikandi, thus, sensibly argues that Ngugi’s “Mau Mau” novels, most notably *Weep Not, Child* and *A Grain of Wheat*, are “attempts to come to terms with a traumatic past, sort out its conflicting meanings and emotions, and give voice to a hitherto repressed discourse” (2000, 26). Published in 2009, *Something Torn and New* is evidently able to address the trauma, in Ngugi’s words “the dismemberment”, in a settled and constructive manner. Thus, the trauma inflicted on people like Njoroge and his fellow villagers evolves, in *Something Torn and New*, as a form of postcolonial resistance.



The evolution of trauma studies as a distinct field has unfolded its promise to humanity, advocating the need for a recognition of human suffering and, thereby, elevating the human spirit. Eaglestone sensibly utters the expectations from the evolving trauma theory which are “to continue to reflect on and to attempt to understand the damages that we do to each other, in so doing draw our attention to both our terrible strength and our utter weakness” (2014, 20). At this point, one can, once again, return to Craps, who, implying the decolonization of trauma as a way to more decolonization, suggests that “a decolonized trauma theory can act as a catalyst for meaningful change” (2013, 8). He argues that rethinking trauma studies from a postcolonial perspective and allowing ourselves to encounter nuanced readings of a wide array of narratives of trauma, which do not follow a Eurocentric anti-narrative model, from around the world can help us understand the “shared precariousness” (Craps 2013, 127). Critiquing the spectacularization and sentimentalization of suffering, he speaks in favor of the positive and political value of loss, trauma, and mourning. With a similar spirit, Ngugi transforms the restraining energy of suffering into a promising dynamism in *Something Torn and New*. Therefore, Ngugi’s call for decolonizing the mind and Craps’s appeal to decolonizing the trauma are connected in a single thread—freeing both actions and thoughts of the humans from the fetters of the colonial/postcolonial entanglement.

Reading *Weep Not, Child*, using the lens of trauma studies, is certainly rewarding as it reinforces the markers of a postcolonial reading of the novel. Inviting postcolonial subjects to be more historically aware, a reading such as this helps to find the traces that the colonial past has left behind for them to assimilate. The tale of Njoroge and his family's trauma is a reminder to the postcolonial subjects of their required action. As suggested by Ngugi in *Something Torn and New*, the ordeal of the dismembered past must be worked through re-membering/mourning it deliberately, both individually and collectively. If the future of trauma studies lies in understanding human suffering and torment across the globe more sensibly and impartially, then the future of the Global South, in a neo-colonial world order, lies in understanding the mechanism and agency used to inflict that suffering and torment. Hence, postcolonial-trauma studies, in reading both colonial and postcolonial literature and history, is as pertinent as neo-liberalism is pressing. As Craps argues, finally, in an attempt to untangle the trauma of colonial/postcolonial entanglement on an optimistic note: “an inclusive and culturally sensitive trauma theory can assist in raising awareness of injustice both past and present and opening up the possibility of a more just global future—and, in so doing, remain faithful to the ethical foundations of the field” (2013, 127).

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