Reversals of Exile: Williams Sassine's *Wirriyamu* and Tierno Monénembo's *Pelourinho*

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Abstract: This essay examines two novels by exiled Guinean writers in which physical space functions as a central point of reference for very different, though related, considerations of traumatized memory, identity, and exile. In Williams Sassine's *Wirriyamu* (1976), a violent and violated rural landscape becomes emblematic of a specific traumatic event occurring within the time frame of the novel and of contemporary political reality; while in Tierno Monénembo's *Pelourinho* (1995), a present-day cityscape provides consistently uncertain territory for thinking through a trauma that transcends history, that of the transatlantic slave trade. This article seeks to examine some of the ways in which contemporary trauma theory may be useful in reading Francophone West African fiction as well as some of the limitations of this theory in its applications to this corpus.

Résumé: Cet article examine deux romans d'écrivains guinéens exilés dans lesquels l'espace physique agit comme un point de référence central dans la discussion de thèmes très différents bien que reliés: la mémoire traumatisée, l'identité et l'exil. Dans le roman de Williams Sassine, *Wirriyamu* (1976), un paysage rural rempli de violence et de violations devient emblématique d'un événement traumatique spécifique qui se déroule sur la durée du roman et dans le contexte chronologique des évènements politiques contemporains; d'autre part, le roman de Tierno Monénembo, *Pelourinho* (1995) met en scène un paysage urbain d'aujourd'hui offrant un terrain de réflexion toujours mouvant sur un traumatisme transcendant l'histoire, celui de la traite transatlantique des esclaves. Cet article vise à examiner les manières variées dont la théorie universitaire contemporaine sur la compréhension des traumas pourrait être utile dans la lecture de la fiction

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francophone provenant d'Afrique de l'ouest, ainsi que les limites de son application à un tel domaine.

Key Words: Sassine; Wirriyamu; Monénembo; Pelourinho; exile; trauma

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In an interview about his 1995 novel *Pelourinho*, the Guinean writer Tierno Monénembo suggested that paying close attention to physical space can play an important role in mapping the ways in which personal and cultural memory is lost in situations of trauma ("le repérage des lieux permet de baliser la déperdition de la mémoire," quoted in Célérier 1996:112). This article explores the contrasting ways in which this is true of both Monénembo's novel and of the 1976 novel *Wirriyamu* by his *frère-pays* (brother countryman) and fellow exile Williams Sassine. It argues that each novel provides a valuable reading of trauma, rearticulating the themes of memory and exile to explore the ways in which "reclaiming space" can rebuild memory and create a discursive space for the exile when the physical return itself in some sense fails. Taking this "repérage des lieux" as a focus also makes it clear that in relation to the earlier corpus of Francophone West African novels, *Pelourinho* makes several key innovations in thinking through issues of memory and exile that may point to fresh perspectives upon some common themes in late twentieth-century sub-Saharan African literature. This focus also allows us to set out a number of key questions concerning the application of contemporary trauma theory to Francophone West African fiction.

Thinking through ideas of trauma in relation to literature raises many questions. As scholars such as Cathy Caruth (1995,1996), Shoshana Felman (Felman & Laub 1992c), E. Ann Kaplan (2005), and Anne Whitehead (2004) have sought to show, in literary studies of trauma a central problem is the inherent impossibility of the narration or representation of the traumatic event.[1] If a traumatic event by definition defies understanding, then its representation in narrative would seem an impossible task. Yet it may be politically and culturally important to attempt to portray and thus "make visible" (Whitehead 2004:3) a historically neglected or silenced trauma. This is the case in the two novels examined here, with Sassine treating the traumas of exile and colonial violence, and Monénembo exploring the ruptures in memory and identity caused by the transatlantic slave trade. Such themes and their relationship to trauma are certainly easy to identify in African literature, although they do not define an entire continent's literature, as Robert Eaglestone (2008) points out.[2] It may also then be politically and culturally important to take great care in the way in which we may foreground trauma in the study of African literature: as Laurie Vickroy asked (2002:ix), "Why consider a topic that is not only discomforting but which might futilely immerse us in a quagmire of victimization?"

Vickroy goes on to show how examining trauma may be honest and empowering rather than disabling; and we will argue that in the case of

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African literature, examining the theme of trauma may be of value at least in allowing a deepening of debate and discussion, and in creating a discursive space for injuries that have resisted healing. There is, however, a further potential problem with "trauma theory" that merits careful attention. As Anne Whitehead writes, "trauma" is a relatively recent focus of study, and "trauma theory" is a relatively new field, emerging in North American universities in the early 1990s following the recognition of the phenomenon of posttraumatic stress disorder, with many of the early leading figures all based at Yale University (2004:4). As with the field of "postcolonial studies," trauma theory may be perceived as having its roots in, and having traveled from, the Western academy, with its applicability in other cultural contexts open to question. For example, Stef Craps and Gert Buelens, in their introduction to a special issue of *Studies in the Novel*, argue that "trauma studies' stated commitment to the promotion of cross-cultural ethics is not borne out by the founding texts of the field" (2008:2); they reference in particular Caruth's work and her suggestion (which they dispute) that "trauma itself" might provide a "link between cultures" (1995:11). The basis of Craps and Buelens's concern seems to be Caruth's extensive discussion of Freud in her work, particularly his 1937 *Moses and Monotheism*. Specifically, they discuss the potential for her "founding text" to encourage a damaging sense of exclusivity in an area of study whose key lines of inquiry might then become "almost exclusively concerned with traumatic experiences of white Westerners and solely employ critical methodologies emanating from a Euro-American context" (2008:2).[3]

However, Caruth's idea of trauma as a "link between cultures" might be read as a suggestion of further work to be done, rather than as a statement of what her own work achieves, or even of what the field of trauma studies was doing by the mid-nineties. Nowhere does Caruth or any other scholar in the field lay claim to knowledge of all experience; and perceived lacunae in one scholar's work, or in a field influenced by that scholar, are surely better regarded as opportunities for others to develop new directions in a debate than as glaring omissions that undermine the validity of an entire field of study. In filling the possible lacunae identified by Craps and Buelens, Tim Woods (2007), in particular, has laid a good deal of the groundwork for thinking though the usefulness of trauma theory in non-Western contexts, and he has provided some insightful models for reading African literature via contemporary thinking about trauma.

Woods notes that "the intersection of trauma studies and postcolonialism is still in its infancy," though attention to the central role of trauma is growing (2007:8). He acknowledges that the use of any theory—whether it concerns trauma, the postcolonial condition, or any other framework—is problematic when it is "mechanistically or straightforwardly imposed to 'unlock' African literature" (2007:11). The key term here, then, seems to be "intersections": the ways in which the theoretical models of trauma studies and postcolonialism may intersect with each other, with African literary texts, and with other themes in late twentieth-century African novels

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such as exile, memory, and identity. Taking Woods as a guide, we will seek to show how we might read such “intersections” in Sassine and Monénembo in their use of physical space.

In each novel, the primacy of space is indicated from the outset by the title: each novel takes its title from its setting, giving physical space a preeminent position under the sign of which all else will take place. In *Wirriyamu*, physical space is the principal element of the narrative structure that builds dramatic tension, as characters and events converge upon the village of Wirriyamu, the rural stage for a colonial massacre; while in *Pelourinho*, a structure of alternating chapters between two narrators utterly isolated from each other within the same urban space underlines the multiple ruptures in a history that no single narrative voice can mend. The title of each novel is also highly evocative of a traumatic past, each place having a real, profound, and perhaps even emblematic historical meaning in a suggested—though contested—collective memory.

The village of Wirriyamu and its surrounding settlements in northwest Mozambique were the scene of the massacre of hundreds of inhabitants by colonial government soldiers on December 16, 1972, one of many atrocities committed during Portugal’s colonial wars of the early 1970s.[4] For Adrian Hastings, who two years later wrote a book-length account of the massacre and its significance, “Wiriyamu is not an isolated incident, it is part of a system and the expression of it, and it is those who have created and maintained the system who are responsible for its individual manifestations” (1974:109). From Hastings’s perspective, Wirriyamu—the text and the place—thus exemplifies the wider and systematic violence and trauma of colonialism.[5] For Sassine, too, the way that the village of Wirriyamu was “wiped off the map” (“effacé de la carte”; Keïta 2005:65) gives it a particular importance in the reading of colonial violence. Here the traumatized memory is threatened with a complete obliteration from the historical record.

By contrast, Pelourinho today is a district of the Brazilian city of Salvador famous for having a distinctively African population, history, and culture, although the blunt translation of the Portuguese word *pelourinho* (“little pillory”) reveals the modern place name to be the reinscription of a painful historical image: Pelourinho was among the first major slave markets in the Americas. The novel’s dedication to the anthropologist Pierre Verger also emphasizes the centrality of the trauma of the slave trade in the novel. Based initially at the Institut Français de l’Afrique Noire (since 1960, the Institut Fondamental) at the University of Dakar, Verger did groundbreaking work in the 1950s on the survival and transformations of African culture, particularly West African religions, in this part of the “New World,” studies that raised complex questions about exile, survival, and memory that are far from being resolved today.

Both places thus have great historical significance: Wirriyamu as the site of one of the worst tragedies of late colonialism, and Pelourinho as an

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example of the dislocation and loss of identity born of the slave trade and its resulting diaspora. However, neither Sassine nor Monénembo gives any kind of formal or even informal historical presentation of the real-life significance of Wirriyamu or Pelourinho within their novels, nor indeed any hint that Wirriyamu and Pelourinho are real places. Whether readers know or may find out the historical significance of these two places remains open, raising a problem of knowledge and ethics: we are reading about traumatic events that have been effaced from a dominant history, as Keïta says, but then "made visible" in fiction, as Whitehead writes. Place is thus incorporated in both novels into the ethical problem of remembering the traumatic event.

Furthermore, no dates are given in either novel, and temporality is directly problematized. The two narratives to an extent thus exist in an eternal "novelistic time," with each place providing a framework for and becoming representative of certain issues of traumatized memory and the exile's access to the *lieux de mémoire* which—it is hoped—may carry this memory. Indeed, given the complexity of the themes each writer treats, Monénembo's attention to place and the "repérage des lieux" seems apposite, as space and place in both novels, in very different ways, give the reader a kind of anchor in what are deeply disorientating questions in an area of vast historical trauma.

In terms of style, plot, setting, structure, and the specific traumatic exile and traumatized memory dealt with, however, these novels are at first reading radically different, and there seems little else beyond the choice of title and the crude fact of the nationality of their respective authors to recommend any kind of comparative reading. Furthermore, almost two decades separate the publication of the two novels. While Sassine's novel fits well into the category of 1970s African novels in French that are often grouped under the theme of postindependence "disenchantment" or "disillusionment" (*romans du désenchantement* or *romans de la désillusion*), Monénembo's novel is much more recent, and there is as yet no such widely accepted category for African novels of the 1990s. It is possible that Lilyan Kesteloot's brief mention of Monénembo as "parmi nos écrivains du chaos" (among our writers of chaos; 2001:276) might eventually lead to a category of *romans du chaos,* but criticism of African literature is not limited to the creation of categories. It is also clear from a reading of any of Sassine's writings that "chaos" was an essential part of his worldview, too, and neither novel, in any case, is principally a political critique. Instead, chaotic relationships between traumatized people and the spaces they inhabit are treated with an almost filmic insistence upon the memories that inhabit space itself.

If the theme of chaos is nothing new to African literature, then it should also be acknowledged that *désenchantement* and *désillusion* are "nothing old," in that they remain clear tropes in the present-day literature. One has only to think of the novels produced by the *Rwanda: écrire par devoir de mémoire* project, the majority of which were published in 2000, to see that African

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literature retains its sense of duty to write about—to borrow Fanon's (1961) famous title—fresh generations of the *damnés de la terre*. For these reasons it seems particularly odd that criticism of Francophone African literature has been so hesitant to engage with trauma theory, the body of theoretical writing that would seem to speak most directly to *désenchantement, désillusion,* death, destruction and damnation, and other horsemen of the "decolonial" apocalypse.[6] Perhaps the reason is indeed, as we have seen, its association with the Anglophone academy. But there is another possible explanation for this rejection of trauma theory, which merits some exploration here.

In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, Caruth says that "trauma theory often divides itself into two basic trends," and one of these is immediately striking to the reader of the twentieth-century African novel: the focus on trauma as the "shattering" of a "previously whole self" (1996:131,n.2). This particular conception of identity for the reader of African literature has a specific historical context: that of decolonization, postindependence politics, and the highly politicized though undoubtedly vital moves made to discover an "authentic" African identity distinct from and free(d) from colonial versions of "Africa" and "the African." As Trinh T. Minh-ha points out, in the context of the "postcolonial,"

> to raise the question of identity is to re-open the discussion on the self/other relationship in its enactment of power relations. Identity as understood in the context of a certain ideology of dominance has long been a notion that relies on the concept of an essential, authentic core . . . that requires the elimination of all that is considered foreign or not true to the self. (1997:415)

If Caruth is indeed right in identifying the figure of the originary, "essential, authentic" self as the essential subject of trauma and trauma theory, this notion of "an essential, authentic core" is immensely useful in terms of questioning whether trauma theory as it has been developed can in fact be universalized to all cultures. Even without raising questions about differing conceptions of the self across cultures, the idea of an independent and *recoverable* "whole self" is something that current thinking about postcolonial cultures treats as deeply suspicious; and the African experience of the historically specific and highly politicized employment of the notion of such a "previously whole self" in the guise of "authenticity" means that such a view necessarily raises certain problems. Yet both *Wirriyamu* and *Pelourinho* are based on a quest for precisely that "whole self."

In both *Wirriyamu* and *Pelourinho*, a quest and a physical journey are central to the narrative. The central character of *Wirriyamu*, Kabalango, is returning to the village of his birth after several years in Europe, but the last stage of his journey is suspended in the village of Wirriyamu as he waits for the arrival of a local bus. As Mildred Mortimer (1990) has mapped out,

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the journey of return of a central African character after a period of exile in Europe and the painful feelings of loss of identity and alienation from once-familiar places and people are common themes in Francophone African novels of the period. The classic text here is of course Cheikh Hamidou Kane's 1961 novel, *L'Aventure ambiguë*, and Sassine's novel uses many devices common to such texts such as imagery drawn from nature, a lost mother figure, and references to dreams, childhood, and loss of language.[7] Kabalango's time in Europe has not brought success, only loss of fluency in his beloved mother tongue and a gradual loss of his memories of home: he recalls that, as he struggled to find work in Europe, "the other world which haunted his memory with the lilting, strong sound of his mother's voice slowly shrank" (1980:42) ("l'autre monde qui hantait sa mémoire avec les syllabes chantonnantes et viriles de sa langue maternelle se rétrécissait lentement"; 1976:68). The country he returns to is not as he remembered it. The intense emotion is amplified by the revelation that Kabalango is terminally ill and has only a short time to complete his journey.

The narrative is thus based on this sense of limited time and also of closed space, which act to build dramatic tension: the text is divided into sections of unequal length, from a couple of paragraphs to several pages. Each section is headed with the time in italic script (*8h35*, *11h*, and so on), and some sections also indicate that the action takes place at a certain number of kilometers from Wirriyamu. This structure makes the reader conscious that "time is running out," both for Kabalango, whose constant coughing of blood reminds him and the reader that his safe return home is of the utmost urgency, and for the village of Wirriyamu itself, whose inhabitants seem somehow aware of their imminent destruction. Settings outside the village of Wirriyamu are left anonymous and vague, but they are placed at a precise and ever decreasing number of kilometers away. The village is thus placed at the center of an ever decreasing temporal and spatial spiral, as government soldiers and a handful of rebel guerrillas with their hostage, Augustinho, the son of the Portuguese commandant d'Arriaga, converge upon it. As in the use of parallel cutting in cinema, it is clear to the reader that something climactic will happen when these groups finally meet, and indeed the climax in terms of dramatic action is the massacre of the Wirriyamu villagers, followed by an apocalyptic fire and a battle between the rebel guerrillas and the government troops responsible for the massacre, leaving almost no survivors.

It is clear in Sassine's writing that the forces that destroy the village are ultimately human, but they are also positioned in some way as forces of an inexorable tragic destiny, an inevitable finale to a monstrous situation. Sassine takes every opportunity to describe the palpable tension of an approaching storm to parallel the tension of the plot; the forest itself seems to close in as the narrative moves toward its epicenter at Wirriyamu, and men, landscape, and the storm seem locked in a battle that can only end with the end of the world. The following passage captures something of the terrifying space the characters are trapped in, doubly claustrophobic as it is

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narrated from the point of view of the Portuguese hostage held by the rebels as they cut their way through the forest:

> Over their heads the thunder rumbled intermittently. With each outburst the cowed forest fell silent, and then, in their inexorable advance, the heavy breathing of their leader, like that of a woodsman, rose above this frightened green monster like man's eternal cry of victory. Then once more the forest stood erect in the entanglement of its trees, and he wanted to scream his nightmare aloud. (1980:46)

> Au-dessus d'eux, le tonnerre grondait par intermittences; à chaque éclat, la forêt, soumise, se taisait, et alors dans leur avancée inexorable, l'ahanement de bûcheron du chef volait sur le monstre vert apeuré, semblable à l'éternel cri de victoire de l'homme. Puis, la forêt à nouveau se redressait dans ses arbres enchevêtrés jusqu'à lui donner envie de hurler son cauchemar. (1976:73)

The storm brings down the bridge, the only possible escape route, and government soldiers arrive and seal off the village. The narrative structure is most effective in the scenes of horror that describe the atrocities of the massacre, portrayed in very short sections that are like flashes in a lightning storm. This would seem to be the only way in which such horror can be described; and the fragmented descriptions support Woods's sense (2007:96) that the "repetitive" and yet "discontinuous" are what characterize the traumatized memory.

While *Wirriyamu* follows the pattern of novels of the 1960s and '70s in portraying a return from exile to a home of a character's living memory, *Pelourinho* reverses the direction of return to portray a journey *from* Africa *to* a diasporic community. The central character in *Pelourinho*, a stranger vaguely and variously called "Africano" or "Escritore" by both the locals and the two narrators, is an African who comes to Pelourinho to find other descendants of a common ancestor who was brought there as a slave in a previous century, and to write a book about his research. Even from the opening sketch we can see in *Pelourinho* several important departures or innovations from the perspective of the tradition of the "modern" African novel. While a journey remains central, Monénembo's decision to stage the *return* of an African character *to* the "New World" breaks with several patterns.

First, in terms of twentieth-century West African novels it is a departure from the model of the "return" of the central character to Africa from Europe. As in *Wirriyamu* such journeys, notwithstanding the deeply personal and wider cultural trauma evoked, imagine a return from a relatively narrowly defined exile, at least in terms of time and history. This return takes place within the lifetime of the central character and focuses more upon the individual's crisis of identity, along with the present-day community that he or she returns to, than on any longer history. In contrast, the "return" that the stranger in *Pelourinho* imagines is one that goes beyond the living memory of anyone he can hope to meet. The longer memory

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invoked here—the "Longest Memory" of Fred d'Aguiar's title (1994)— is the *retour aux sources* (return to origins) of Aimé Césaire's 1947 *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (Notebook of a return to the native land). Only here the "return" is reversed, and a return to shared *sources* in the New World is proposed. Furthermore, when *Pelourinho* was published in 1995 there had been very little interest in "the New World" in novels by Francophone West African writers, compared to the interest in Europe, and specifically in France. An interesting parallel here is to be found in Lusophone African literature, as David Brookshaw (2007) has shown. A third point is that *Pelourinho* not only has a "New World" setting, but it is narrated *from* this perspective by Brazilian narrators rather than an African narrator—another rarity among in the corpus in the twentieth century.

Pelourinho is thus innovative on several levels, extending the *retour* both geographically and historically, while also reversing the direction adopted by the Caribbean *retour aux sources*. Through the web of its complex plot and various false trails, the novel extends the notion of identity and ideas of memory and exile beyond the trope of the Africa–Europe opposition and beyond the colonial–postcolonial binary. This clutch of innovations, all contained in one novel, raises a range of interesting questions about the twentieth-century Francophone African novel, about an apparent hesitation to engage with the African diaspora, and particularly about a seeming reluctance to surrender *la parole* (here, the narrating voice) to any voice but an African voice. Examining the use of space in the novel may be helpful in beginning to unpack some of these complexities.

As in *Wirriyamu*, the narrative structure of *Pelourinho* is built around physical space, but in an entirely different way and with a very different purpose. The arrival of "Africano" and his idea of a book on the transhistorical links between Africa and Brazil are here the catalysts for a mapping of physical space that is beyond any living memory. The first of the novel's two narrators, Innocencio, hears Africano's dramatic tale of the slave ancestor and sets about trying to help him find the descendants. But Innocencio misses an appointment with Africano and thus becomes partly responsible for his death: feelings of confusion and remorse lead him to a painful fascination with Africano's stories of an African ancestry that necessarily involves Innocencio himself.

Monénembo has written elsewhere that "if the United States [is] at the other end of the world, Brazil is on the opposite bank of the river to Africa" ("si les Etats-Unis sont à l'autre bout du monde, le Brésil est à l'autre rivage de l'Afrique"; quoted in Straumann 2001:118; my translation).[8] It is this awareness that makes Innocencio begin to question the importance of such a link for his own sense of self. "There is still one thing that I just don't understand," he says:

> why might I not be from Mozambique too? There's nothing, I swear, to say that I'm from Congo or Dahomey. But why should I kill myself trying to answer such a question? But I know one thing—Mãe Grande's mother is

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> from Cachoeira. She's still there, in a grave in the slaves' cemetery. No further away than that? No further, Escritore. Africa's not far away either. It's right here, just on the other side of the sea. You might as well say the door opposite.

> Il y a cependant une chose que je n'arrive pas à comprendre: pourquoi je ne viendrais pas du Mozambique, moi aussi? Rien, sur ma tête, ne dit que je viendrais du Congo ou du Dahomey. Pourquoi devrais-je me tuer à répondre à une telle question? Je sais une chose en revanche: la mère de Mãe Grande est de Cachoeira. Elle y est encore, dans une tombe du cimetière des esclaves. Pas plus loin que ça? Pas plus loin, Escritore. L'Afrique non plus n'est pas loin. Elle est tout près d'ici, de l'autre côté de la mer, autant dire la porte en face. (64)

While Africano was the visitor who came to an unfamiliar place in search of a part of his family and his identity, it is Innocencio who seems to suffer a loss of identity, and there appear to be no easy answers. Contact with Africano has changed his relationship with his familiar surroundings, and his reaction is to cling to familiar places as he works through his own past and what he has now learned.

In the opening chapter, Innocencio is trying to remember exactly where they were when Africano first began to tell him why he had come to Pelourinho, trying to attach a location and a name to this first encounter. Each of the chapters he narrates is packed with names of places: specific streets, churches, squares, shops. Words like *ladeira*, *mercado*, *lanchonete*, and *barzinho*, which are easily translatable, are left in Portuguese. This is disorienting for the reader who only reads French easily, and something of this disorientation keeps the reader conscious of Innocencio's own struggle to reorient himself in a suddenly unfamiliar space. With Africano's death, Innocencio loses his newfound link to an identity based in a historical past, and present-day Pelourinho again seems lost to its past: life goes on as it has in the generations since the town was established, but for Innocencio everything has changed. He has become in some ways an exile in his own hometown, and is the person most in need of Africano's unwritten book—or perhaps, of the second narrator's ability to connect the past to the present.

This second narrator, Leda, is blind and housebound, but she experiences visions of Pelourinho's painful past that neither Innocencio nor Africano can gain access to. In these visions, which emphasize color and scent, distressing scenes of a slave being whipped are introduced with rich, evocative pictures of a physical space that has not changed in the intervening years. Leda's descriptions of space capture precise sights, colors, smells, sounds, and movements of both past- and present-day Pelourinho. The reader is encouraged to imagine and visualize these scenes, which emphasize the point that Leda's visions of the past reveal exactly the same spaces that exist in the present-time narrative. Here the very space people inhabit contains their history, and therefore their identity: as Woods writes, the "narrative memory *transforms* the past as a condition of retaining the

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past" (2007:23). The tragedy, as Leda understands, is that no one else seems to see this. Innocencio is then just one of the many who do not perceive their past and their identity in the space around them, like the street kids whom Leda dismisses because "the main square, they don't know what it means. They just walk alongside its soul" (La place, ils ne savent pas ce qu'elle signifie, ils marchent à côté de son âme (125).

Links to the past that could help Innocencio in his state of distress surround him, but only contact with Leda could provide access to these: even the ancient jacaranda chair at Preto Velho's bar in which a disconsolate Innocencio is sitting as he sorts through his memories of Africano may well be the chair used by the nineteenth-century slave-owner in another of Leda's visions. But Innocencio's isolation from Leda in fact represents a further symbolic exile, a cruelly ironic twist of fate whose full significance only becomes clear at the very end of the novel; and it is only the reader who can grasp this, through making the links between space, history, and memory that Africano and Innocencio fail to make. Physical space in *Pelourinho* is thus made an intrinsic part of the discussion of exile and traumatized memory, with the two narrators physically isolated from each other and thus from the kind of historical identity Africano wishes to write about.

By making physical space an intrinsic part of the discussion of exile, Monénembo's *Pelourinho* thus provides a much more complex conception of exile, memory, and historical consciousness than the Sassine text does. In Sassine's *Wirriyamu* physical space is described with great effect to heighten dramatic tension, but in *Pelourinho* it is actually used to advance the discussion of the nature of exile, memory, and identity. Reading the two novels together thus shows competing ideas of "home"—of origins and belonging—and even competing models of ownership of space in the texts; these ideas ultimately seem even more important in terms of working through or writing through trauma and traumatized memory than the "quest for the whole self." Kabalango, Africano, Leda, and ultimately Innocencio are all cut off from something—or more accurately, from somewhere—that they feel is theirs. Space is thus initially invested with hope, and a search for an irrecoverable "whole self" is conceptualized as a reclaiming of space.

Both Kabalango and Africano see their destinations as in some sense their "home": for Kabalango, a home of living memory, for the stranger in Pelourinho a home of historical memory. But while Kabalango, along with many of the other characters he encounters on his journey into violent political turmoil, struggles to reidentify with changed spaces, Africano behaves as if he "belongs" in Pelourinho, and this confident sense of historical identification—even entitlement—has the effect of shattering Innocencio's sense of identity. As Innocencio tells him, "We're from the same family—the slave traders couldn't change that—but we're not from the same world" (Nous sommes de la même famille—le négrier n'y a rien pu—mais pas du même monde" [67–68]). For each of the central characters a return home is expected to restore the "whole self," but none of them

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can be fully successful. We should perhaps still note that a kind of "happy ending" is indeed accorded to Kabalango in *Wirriyamu*: he does not return home, but does survive the massacre at Wirryamu, and at the end of the novel he has found new friends and a new home in a rebel camp. In addition, his poems themselves survive in Sassine's text. Yet if each of the claims upon space and wholeness is denied for the fictional characters, exile is nonetheless made into a creative force for Monénembo and Sassine. When the physical space is denied, imagination, memory, and shared meaning can still create a rich discursive space, and in *Pelourinho*, a groundbreaking novel.

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Notes

1. Shoshana Felman's analyses (1992a, 1992b) of Camus' novels *The Plague* and *The Fall* are particularly useful early demonstrations of some "ways in" to reading trauma.

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2. Eaglestone gives the now ritual warning about generalizations that "seem to reproduce a nineteenth-century clustering of the nations and regions of Africa into a single, mythical continent"—before leaping straight into that very trap on his next page with the statement that "nearly the whole range of African literature in the second half of the twentieth century is traumatic" (2008:75,76). Eaglestone is correct that there is a great deal of writing on trauma and traumatic events in African literature in this period, especially in the novel and in theater, but the statement is too broad, particularly if we include poetry. See, e.g., Mohamed Salifou Keïta's (2005) analysis of Guinean poetry since 1950, in which the range of themes is clearly much wider than simply the "traumatic."
3. See, however, Michael Rothberg's (2008) careful response to Craps and Buelens's position in the same issue of *Studies in the Novel*.
4. *Wirriyamu* is Sassine's chosen spelling. The name is also spelled in archives as *Wiriamu*, *Wiriyamu*, or even *Wiliamo*; this latter spelling, according to Hastings (1974), was a deliberate attempt at further obfuscation on the part of colonial authorities, since the *r* and *l* have a similar pronunciation locally.
5. Hastings's view of the Wirriyamu massacre as emblematic fits with this reading of Sassine's novel. However, Wirriyamu does not feature in many published histories of Mozambique in English; and in an authoritative history, Malyn Nesbitt (1995) casts some doubt over possible political motivations for both Hastings's version of events and the timing of publication of his book. I am grateful to Hannah Lever for pointing this out to me.
6. I borrow the term "decolonial" from Richard Watts (2005).
7. For an excellent early discussion of the complexity of the themes developed in novels such as *L'Aventure ambiguë*, see Irele (1981).
8. All translations from *Pelourinho* are my own.

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