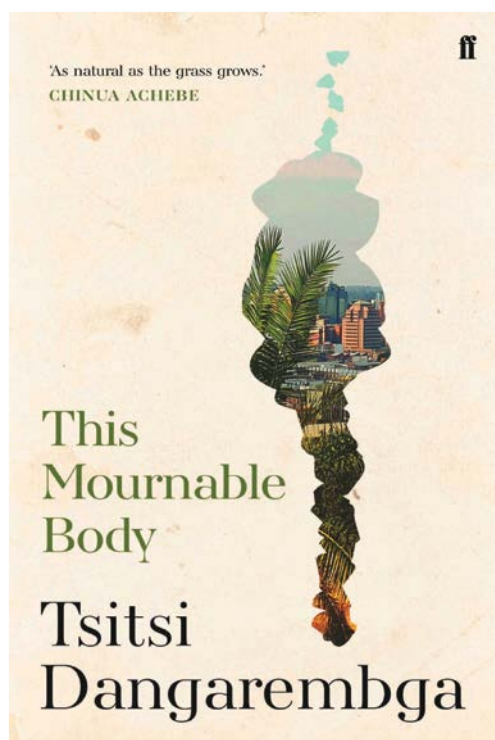




Readers' Guide



This Mournable Body

Tsitsi Dangarembga

Faber & Faber

Other novels by Tsitsi Dangarembga

Nervous Conditions (1988)

The Book of Not (2006)

thebookerprizes.com

About the author

Tsitsi Dangarembga is the author of two previous novels: *Nervous Conditions*, winner of the Commonwealth Writers' Prize, and *The Book of Not*. *This Mournable Body* is the third in the trilogy. She is also the director of the Institute of Creative Arts for Progress in Africa Trust. She lives in Harare, Zimbabwe.

About the book

In this tense and psychologically charged novel, Tsitsi Dangarembga returns to the protagonist of her acclaimed first novel, *Nervous Conditions*. She channels the hope and potential of one young girl and a fledgling nation to lead us on a journey to discover where lives go after hope has departed.

Here we meet Tambudzai, living in a run-down youth hostel in downtown Harare and anxious about her prospects after leaving a stagnant job. At every turn in her attempt to make a life for herself, she is faced with a fresh humiliation, until the painful contrast between the future she imagined and her daily reality ultimately drives her to a breaking point.

What the judges thought

'*This Mournable Body* drew an immediate reaction like a sharp intake of breath from all of us on the panel. The breakdown of the protagonist and the breakdown of a country are inextricably linked in this arresting novel from a mercurial writer.'

Discussion points

How does Tambu try to find her place in society?

Discuss how women are treated by men throughout the novel.

How has colonialism affected Tambu's actions and the ways she sees and treats others?

Dangarembga chose to write *This Mournable Body* in the second person. What effect does this have on the reader?

This Mournable Body is the final book in the trilogy that began with *Nervous Conditions*, published in 1988. How do Tambu's experiences change as she gets older throughout the trilogy? What differences do you see in her now as a middle-aged woman, compared to when she was younger?

Themed reading

Butterfly Burning by Yvonne Vera

Bones by Chenjerai Hove

We Need New Names by NoViolet Bulawayo

The House of Hunger by Dambudzo Marechera

Useful links

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/jan/24/this-mournable-body-by-tsitsi-dangarembga-review>

<https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/zimbabwe-s-chaotic-history-has-at-least-produced-some-outstanding-fiction>

<https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/this-mournable-body-the-horror-of-simply-being-alive-1.4131745>

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