

SOMEONE TO TELL THE STORY: LITERATURE, GENOCIDE, AND THE
COMMODIFICATION OF TRAUMA IN POST-CONFLICT RWANDA

By

Kathryn Mara

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this research is to identify the significance of authorship in the literature of the Rwandan Genocide. It will examine the arguably un-interrogated condition in which literature(s) are assigned value, dependent on such qualities as the author's proximity to the events described, the authenticity of the narrative, and its aesthetic value. This trajectory goes far beyond *who* is best equipped to represent the trauma of genocide, or who "owns" its memory; instead, it hopes to determine the manner in which genocide is experienced without the author necessarily experiencing The Genocide. Most of all, it wishes to interrogate the ethics of representing an experience that may not be one's "own." will be accomplished, using a content analysis of Rwandan survivor testimony, the African Writers' Project, "Écrire par devoir de mémoire," and Western literature about the Genocide. An examination of these groups of literature will reveal that proximity to the events is valuable, but an outside voice is also useful, in representation of the Rwandan Genocide.

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I. Introduction

“Your story is my story,” a fellow “misery tourist” earnestly insisted at the end of our guide’s narration at Nyange Church Memorial, a site of memory for the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda. She continued with a solemn oath that each time she spoke of her pilgrimage to Rwanda, she would also recall Aloys Rwamasirabo, the above mentioned guide and sole-caretaker of the memorial. Incidentally, this other visitor and I both “served as witness” to the site of massacre at the same time, a day in which it was miraculously open, a surprise only as it relates to its lack of substantial funding and, arguably, its placement outside of the *official* genocide narrative- that is, the narrative the Rwandan government issued and the Western world has since employed to commemorate the Rwandan Genocide. What Aloys’s story evoked in her went beyond empathy, a feeling that connects people(s) together with a shared experience- more aptly known as *our* experience, a sentiment that follows Veronique Tadjo’s insistence that “what had happened there [in Rwanda] concerned us all. It was not just one nation lost in the dark heart of Africa that was affected” (Tadjo 3).

Instead the American tourist’s replacement of “your” with a distinct “my” recalls possession, possession of an experience that is not her own, and whether conscious of it or not, her declaration insists on a transference in the ownership of memory. Pertinently, in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub argue that:

... The listener to trauma comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event: through his very listening, he comes to partially experience trauma in himself.

The relation of the victim to the event of the trauma, therefore, impacts on the relation

of the listener to it... The listener, therefore, by definition partakes of the struggle of the victim with the memories and residues of his or her traumatic past. (57-58)

The tourist's reconfiguration of Aloys's narrative to include herself then signifies that, to her, their interaction constitutes an experience of genocide- at least, in kind. Consequently, it becomes *her* memory and *her* experience of trauma that will shape the retelling of the story, and Aloys becomes but a secondary figure in his own account. This arrangement falls in line with *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political*, in which Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou argue that the title topic "emerges as a crucial force of ontological modes of preconfigured bodies, subjectivities, communities, truth, and political economies of life," and, accordingly, displaced or dispossessed subjects, such as Aloys, are encouraged to take "their proper place instead of taking place" (18; 20).

I use the above anecdote to introduce my larger composition, as it mirrors the complexity of genocide representation and, more significantly, the development of the story or, more appropriately, *stories*. Indeed, literary representations of the Genocide abound, evidenced in the publication of a variety of novels, memoirs, poetry, and sources of literary journalism responding to the event. Whether authorship of such literature influences or impacts the nature of genocide representation, however, is an understudied phenomenon and one that is particularly significant to me, as it speaks to my validity as a white American woman writing about African experiences. Relevantly, some scholars have argued for solipsism in trauma writing, such as genocide narratives. That is to say, only those who have experienced genocide can effectively write about it. This argument represents but one perspective in the debate surrounding cultural authenticity and genocide writing. Another point of view recognizes the importance, and,

furthermore, the legitimacy, of objective journalistic writing about genocide, originating from the international community and global media.

Accordingly, my research investigates the arguably un-interrogated condition in which literature(s) are assigned value, dependent on such qualities as the author's proximity to the events described, the authenticity of the narrative, and its aesthetic value. This trajectory goes far beyond *who* is best equipped to represent the trauma of genocide, or who "owns" its memory; instead, it hopes to determine the manner in which genocide is experienced without the author necessarily experiencing the Genocide. Indeed, following Boubacar Boris Diop's departure from the "bookish vision of the realities of the African continent," I am interested in what he describes as the "relationship with the outside world, of an often-proclaimed shared destiny, and the urgency to live for the truth" ("Writing for Rwanda"). Most of all, I want to interrogate the ethics of representing an experience that may not be one's "own."

To that end, the current paper will acknowledge the importance of "voice" and self-determination in traumatic writing; however, I will argue that external, or non-Rwandan, representations of the genocide experience can be useful. Indeed, to the extent that genocide *can* be represented, the assignment of value to a particular testimony allows trauma to be codified and commoditized. Furthermore, the appropriation of an "authority" on the Rwandan Genocide not only endangers the multi-centeredness of survivor testimony, but it also renders genocide representation helpless in challenging hegemonic structures, as it, in essence, becomes one. Necessarily, the allowance of non-Rwandan-authored genocide narratives is not the primary focus of this paper, but rather the manner in which these literatures are constructed and, significantly, the moral implications that accompany the recognition of an external voice within

an otherwise burgeoning market of genocide recollections.

To examine these elements' role in various accounts of the Genocide, I will explore the following groups of literature: Rwandan narratives on the events, contributions to the African Writers' Project, "Écrire par devoir de mémoire," and Western literature about the Genocide. In so doing, I will perform a close reading of Joseph Sebarenzi's *God Sleeps in Rwanda: A Journey of Transformation* and Marie Béatrice Umutesi's *Surviving the Slaughter: The Ordeal of a Rwandan Refugee in Zaire*, as well as Koulsy Lamko's *A Butterfly in the Hills* and Boubacar Boris Diop's *Murambi, The Book of Bones*, and, finally, Philip Gourevitch's *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families* and Gil Courtemanche's *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali*.

By presenting the results of this research below, the present paper hopes to contribute to two bodies of scholarship that largely overlook each other, namely the study of genocide literature and that of ethics in an African context, in order to determine who can write about the Rwandan Genocide and under what circumstances. This is the critical problem that my research hopes to address, and, necessarily, it is the gap that the present study is designed to fill.

II. Authoring the Trauma of Genocide

Speaking of who can best represent the trauma of genocide, Giorgio Agamben asserts that “the value of testimony lies essentially in what it lacks...the ‘true’ witnesses, the ‘complete witnesses,’ are those who did not bear witness and could not bear witness... The survivors speak in their stead, by proxy, as pseudo-witness” (Agamben 34). Indeed, speaking of the victims of the Rwandan Genocide specifically, Boubacar Boris Diop insists:

Rwanda was the only place in the world that these victims could call their home. They still wanted its sun. It was too soon to throw them into the darkness of the earth. Besides, every Rwandan should have the courage to look reality in the eye... As they were perishing under the blows, the victims had shouted out. No one had wanted to hear them.

The echo of these cries should be allowed to reverberate for as long as possible. (147)

Diop continues to uphold this claim in his assertion that “the dead...too had dreams, and that their most ardent desire was for the resurrection of the living,” an indication of the mandate survivors had not only to live, but to tell their stories and the stories of those who died (181).

Further discussing survivor testimony, Alexandre Dauge-Roth, author of *Writing and Filming the Genocide of the Tutsis in Rwanda: Disremembering and Remembering Traumatic History*, states, “it is imperative to believe survivors’ words and to question the evidence of our rationality if we want to hear the[ir] suffering” (Dauge-Roth 53). In *The Era of the Witness*, Annette Wieviorka quotes Holocaust survivor Simone Weil’s assertion that she had:

‘always...been willing to speak, to bear witness. But no one was willing to listen.’ And she adds that one tended to remain silent because of ‘the foolishness of some of the questions, the doubt which sometimes met our narratives.’ (99-100)

Indeed, survivor narratives dismantle the anonymity victimhood demands, and rather create a condition in which one's name and identity is reclaimed and "one's personal experiences reinscribed in the larger flow of History... [and] it is therefore [useful in] regain[ing] one's sociality and sense of historicity" (Apfelbaum 11). Even so, testimony is challenging to hear; as Antes Krog insists, in *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa*, "the arteries of our past bleed their own peculiar rhythm, tone, and image" (51).

In regard to the aesthetic quality of literature, testimony can be defined as "a performative engagement between consciousness and history, a struggling act of readjustment between the integrative scope of words and the unintegrated impact of events" (Felman & Laub 114). Necessarily, Léo Rosten explains that the "trick to understand[ing] them... is that we need to listen to them patiently. They have their own vocabulary. It is English, French [or Kinyarwanda], and yet it is as if they were speaking a foreign language: it is the language of suffering" (qtd. in Dauge-Roth 54). Indeed, traumatic testimony, foreign to its audience can be perceived as a disruption, challenging "our commonly accepted language and our thresholds" (Dauge-Roth 55). Accordingly, the term genocide can no longer be limited to the strict parameters of its definition, which the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide describes as the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group" (OSAPG 1). Similarly, the notion of trauma must be considered within the survivor's personal experience, making their pain not just a physical infliction, but also a mental one whose full impact cannot be not known "until it imposes itself

again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor” (Caruth “Unclaimed Experience” 4).

In reference to non-survivor testimony on genocide, however, Lawrence Langer insists that “the fundamental task of the critic is not to ask whether it should or can be done, since it already has been, but to evaluate *how* it has been done, judge its effectiveness, and analyze its implications for literature and for society” (Langer “The Holocaust” 22). In *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation*, however, James Young asserts that:

the aim of an inquiry into ‘literary testimony’ is...to determine *how* writers’ experiences have been shaped both in and out of the narrative. Once we recognize that the ‘facts’ of history are not distinct from their reflexive interpretation in narrative, and that the ‘facts’ of the Holocaust [and other genocides] and their interpretation may even have been fatally interdependent, we are able to look beyond both the facts and the poetics of literary testimony to their consequences. (Young 39)

Insofar as it is necessary to listen to survivor testimony, it is further crucial that their words be incorporated into non-survivor narratives. In *War, Evil, and the End of History*, Bernard Henri Lévy argues that *our* duty to genocide victims, fallen into what he terms as historical “black holes,” is to break the international silence and to narrate their trauma (68). Locating an African-centered paradigm then becomes essential “to comprehend the culture and social heritage of African people that aid Africans as they establish relations with their social and physical milieu” (Keto 15). Significantly, such a narrow analysis can serve to complicate the “social perception and cultural fear that equate literary works of fiction with inauthenticity,

betrayal, and misrepresentation,” as well as confound the “notion of an invasive addressee, who should be an eavesdropper/voyeur now turned primary audience” (Dauge-Roth 96; Ogunyemi 12). On a final note regarding non-survivor works on genocide, Robert Jay Lifton, who has written extensively on the Holocaust, recalls a conversation with Elie Wiesel:

What he was saying... is that you must in some significant psychological way experience what they experience... it's being a survivor by proxy, and the proxy's important... you aren't exposed to what they are exposed to, but you must take your mind through, take your feelings through, and allow that in. (Caruth “Trauma” 145)

To the extent that survivor testimony can be interpreted as “historical witnessing,” however, it also possesses an inherent weakness (Cole 127). Joshua Cole argues, in “Intimate Acts and Unspeakable Relations: Remembering Torture and the War for Algerian Independence,” that “such accounts have the advantage of immediacy, and they are filled with the kinds of details that only a person who actually experienced this violence can provide,” but they are also accompanied by “an inherent subjectivity, which makes it easier for those who do not wish to accept the account to dismiss it” (127). Accordingly, non-survivor narratives are useful insofar as they provide the “detached tone and scholarly apparatus” that testimony often lacks, but they can also fall prey to a functionalist approach, that is, an acceptance of “an inevitable and reified homogenization of historical reality within... categories [e.g. “Serb” and “Bosnian,” “Hutu and Tutsi”] and a disturbingly strict separation dividing them from one another” (Cole 130). Necessarily, when *we* talk about the construction of an *official* narrative surrounding genocide, it is wise to remember that “the state, the legislator, professional educators are just as actively

involved as academics,” and so, too, are agents of cultural production and the general public (Rosello 4). Indeed, in “The Reparative in Narratives: Works of Mourning in Progress,” Mireille Rosello asserts, “an interdisciplinary proliferation of voices is collectively trying to regulate and revise, to propose some narratives as legitimate, correct old ones and choose new ones to replace them” (4-5). The process Rosello describes is not unlike the development of a marketplace of ideas, in which some narratives are inevitably assigned more value than others based on their conformity to the *official* story or, at least, their likeness to scholarly understandings of the genocide.

Finally, and in regard to the significance of the African voice, Tadjó claims that the act of bearing witness “is what remains for us in our attempt to combat the past and restore our humanity” (Tadjó 85). Appropriately, narrative accounts of the Genocide “place Africans at the center of information construction about Africans,” though they, themselves, are not immune to accusations of “morbid voyeurism, denial, and forgetting” (Keto xi; Dauge-Roth 145). Indeed, in J.M. Coetzee’s “The Novel in Africa,” a white Australian woman reflects on the title topic, and concludes that the primary source of the problem is Africans “having to perform [their] Africanness at the same time [they] write,” in order to appease a non-African, or Western, audience, which is often accompanied by the mandate of translation and the inclusion of decidedly “western” theory (13). In *Theory From the South or, How Euro-America is Evolving Toward Africa*, however, Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff reflect on “the tendency to see... [theory]- from the vantage of a neoliberal, anti-systemic, deregulatory present- as authoritarian, fuctionalist, over-determined” (48). They further insist that, within the global south:

the need to interrogate the workings of contemporary world order- to lay bare its

certainties and uncertainties, its continuities and contingencies, its possibilities and impossibilities, its inclusions and exclusions- has become increasingly urgent. (Comaroff & Comaroff 48)

In the instance of genocide narratives, however, when a perspective is privileged over another, the latter “risk[s] being silenced and dispossessed of their stories for political reasons,” a reflection of competing accounts of the Genocide in the global sphere (Dauge-Roth 145). Accordingly, *our* register for knowing and un-knowing must be challenged, and, indeed, both African and non-African accounts of the genocide must be read in tandem, in order to gain greater understanding of the *universality* of western trauma theory and the *lived experience* of African trauma, not in a way that polarizes the concepts but rather blurs the rigidity of their parameters.

III. The Story/ies of the Rwandan Genocide

In the aftermath of 1994, discourse responding to western coverage of the Rwandan Genocide emerged, necessarily aimed at counteracting the “tribal warfare” model and reframing it as a genocide. International journalist Bartholomäus Grill recalls discussion(s) about the massacre in “Prison of the Past: A Reporter Revisits His ‘Shameful’ Coverage of Rwanda,” insisting that it “was dismissed as a typically African conflict” (Grill). He also remembers a British colleague’s classification of the massacres in Rwanda as “just the Tutsi and the Hutu smashing each other’s heads in. It’s never-ending tribal warfare” (Grill). More comfortable with such terminology as “ethnic cleansing” and “mass atrocities,” the United States government was equally hesitant to use the term “genocide” in relation to Rwanda without knowing as much as possible about the facts of the situation, as Samantha Power claims, in *“A Problem from Hell”: America and the Age of Genocide*, “they were afraid that using it would have obliged the United States to act” in order to stop it (359). Unable to deny the occurrence of genocide for the duration of the violent outbreak in Rwanda, the U.S. State Department spokesperson Christine Shelly was finally authorized to acknowledge that “acts of genocide” were taking place in Rwanda, though she was not able to label all acts of violence as genocide, nor was she able to classify which acts were to be considered genocidal (qtd. in Power 363). Even so, Western powers, in particular the U.S. government, did not actively consider military intervention, they decreased the presence of UN peacekeepers, and they refrained from other meaningful forms of intervention. Accordingly, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), or the organized Tutsi rebels returning to Rwanda from exile, have ultimately become accredited with ending the genocide in their “defeat... [of] the interim government and its army” and reclamation of next-to-all of the country (Des Forges 13).

At play in any account of the Rwandan Genocide then is the mandate that it disrupt previous commentary on the events and, more specifically, that it support the “imperative that [it] be analyzed as the result of various political factors and struggles for power in order to fight racist Euro-centric views that would dismiss the genocide of the Tutsis as ethnic massacres only Africans could commit against each other” (Dauge-Roth 97). Indeed, such sources “seek to make us aware that no society, no human being, is immune to the social dynamics that were at play in Rwanda during the genocide” (Dauge-Roth 126). Subsequently, narrative searches for the cause of genocide are plentiful, and they often recognize that “the origins of African tribal war and massacre are more complex than the ‘ancient hatreds’ account allows,” particularly as they respond to the formation of Hutu and Tutsi identities (Glover 119). Not only is “the origin of the violence...connected to how Hutu and Tutsi were constructed as political identities by the colonial state, Hutu as indigenous and Tutsi as alien,” but it is also attached to the failure of Rwandan nationalism to overcome this colonial encounter (Mamdani 34).

In *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda*, Alison Des Forges emphasizes that, during the pre-colonial period, the Hutu and Tutsi people(s) “developed a single and highly sophisticated language, Kinyarwanda, crafted a common set of religious and philosophical beliefs, and created a culture which valued song, dance, poetry, and rhetoric” (31). Even though the groups lived in relative peace, however, the Hutu and Tutsi identities remained, and pliable as they were through intermarriage or socioeconomic shifts, certain binaries were formed to denote their existence. Indeed, “the identification of Tutsi pastoralists as power-holders and of Hutu cultivators as subjects” was nearly normalized throughout the country by the time the first Europeans arrived in Rwanda, and the subsequent classification of pastoralists as “tall, thin and

narrow-featured” and of cultivators as “shorter, stronger and with broad features” remained prevalent up until the 1994 genocide (Des Forges 32-33). Subsequently, the pre-existence of a power system in Rwanda, which could easily be attributed to material, as well as physical, characteristics, lent itself to the notion of the “civilizing influence of an outsider race” (Mamdani 79).

Indeed, by way of John Hanning Speke’s alteration of the Hamitic Hypothesis, which once justified slavery but now “provided European administrators and missionaries with a powerful argument in support of Tutsi domination,” the Belgian colonizers conducted a census in 1933-1934 with the intent to distribute identity cards, “making an official distinction between Tutsi and Hutu” (Lemarchand 54; Mamdani 98). No matter the categorization, “Tutsi privilege in colonial Rwanda set *all* Tutsi apart from *all* Hutu in their relation to power,” and “meanwhile Hutu, officially excluded from power, began to experience the solidarity of the oppressed” (Mamdani 98; Des Forges 38). Of course, general agreement exists among Rwanda specialists “that the roots of conflict lie in the transformation of ethnic identities that has accompanied the advent of colonial rule”; Rwandan independence saw to it that “the Hutu were ‘helped’ considerably by the Belgians, both politically and militarily” (Lemarchand 81; Des Forges 39). Accordingly, the Hutu Revolution of 1959-1962 not only saw a shift in power from Tutsi to Hutu, but also “the exodus of thousands of Tutsi families to neighboring territories” as well as the first set of massacres which would continue periodically until the *official* genocide in 1994 (Lemarchand 81).

Within Rwanda’s exiled population of Tutsis, primarily located in Uganda, the sons of

refugees would organize to form the RPF, which would invade Rwanda for the first time in 1990, but conflicts between the Hutu government and the group would persist until the end of the genocide. Given the Hutu government's perceived inheritance of a colonial legacy of ethnic identities, Mahmood Mamdani, in *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*, explains the motivation for genocide as:

the combined fear of a return to servitude and of reprisals thereafter... The irony is that... the perpetrators of the genocide saw themselves as the true victims of an ongoing political drama, victims of yesterday who may yet be victims again. The moral certainty explains the easy transition from yesterday's victims to killers the morning after. (233)

Accordingly, the development of propaganda and increased political, as well as ethnic, tension preceded the genocide, despite a peace agreement, the Arusha Accords, in 1993. Hutu extremist Leon Mugesera's 1992 call for Hutus to send the Tutsis back to Ethiopia by way of the Nyabarongo River anticipated the violence of April to July 1994. Indeed, "the river was choked with dead Tutsis, and tens of thousands of bodies washed up on the shores of Lake Victoria" (Gourevitch 53). The immediate spark in what would become the "beginning" of the genocide, however, was the Rwandan President Habyarimana's death on April 6, 1994, due to his plane being shot down by missiles near the Kigali airport, as the killing of Tutsis and Hutu moderates, as the victims of the genocide would later be classified, began that night.

The above description of the genocide is necessarily concise, not only because its history is not the primary focus of this paper, but also due in large part to its recognition that the development of an *official* genocide narrative mandates brevity. Portions of the story are omitted, and others exaggerated, in order to construct a national memory that allows understanding of and

recovery from such widespread acts of violence. In the case of Rwanda, this memory insists that *Hutus and Tutsis lived in harmony before colonization, the Belgian colonizers imposed ethnic identities that fueled inequality and later violence, and, finally, it is the failure of the international community to intervene that allowed the genocide to occur*. Of course, to deny this version of events is to refuse Rwandans' ability to narrate their own stories and to execute "ownership over the possibilities in their lives," but it cannot be the only account viewed as valuable (Keto 79). Necessarily, traumatic memory, and, in particular, collective memory of trauma, such as that which accompanies genocide, mandates the reading of both survivor and non-survivor accounts, as well as academic and personal perspectives, in order to identify meaning and gain a more conclusive, though arguably still incomplete, story.

Accordingly, researched accounts of the genocide such as those completed by Alison Des Forges in *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda*, René Lemarchand in *The Dynamics of Violence in Central Africa*, Susan Thomson in *Whispering Truth to Power: Everyday Resistance to Reconciliation in Postgenocide Rwanda*, and Filip Reyntjens in *Political Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda* are increasingly significant to the extent that they disrupt a *disruptive* discourse. Insofar as genocide narratives are disruptive, accounts that depart from preexisting models of the genocide are further intriguing, in that they reveal that "no one genre nor single voice can pretend to render the complexity of the genocide's genesis or to embrace the divergent responses to its aftermath" (Dauge-Roth 120). Indeed, they open the discourse surrounding the genocide to a greater influx of voices, and by providing support to perspectives frequently devalued by the *official* narrative, they are able to shift the manner in which testimony is assigned value.

In particular, non-survivor accounts of the genocide are effectively able to destabilize the process of myth-making the development of an *official* narrative requires. Necessarily, and in response to the growing discourse celebrating the RPF as the saviors of Rwanda and the promoters of a stable democratic government, Des Forges reveals that though “the RPF ended the genocide..., its troops committed grave violations of international humanitarian law by attacking and killing unarmed civilians” (13). Des Forges further reports that “the RPF permitted its soldiers to kill persons whom they took to be Interahamwe or other supposed participants in the genocide,” and “they executed some persons apparently because they were linked with parties opposed to the RPF” (13-14). In addition to the “thousands of civilians [killed] both during the course of combat... and in the more lengthy process of establishing [the RPF’s] control throughout the country,” the RPF also willfully neglected the opportunity to save the lives of Tutsis within the country (Des Forges 702). Indeed, they were “categorically opposed to the proposed U.N. intervention” presumably due to the contrast between the U.N’s neutrality and the RPF’s thirst for complete power (qtd. in Des Forges 699).

Reyntjens further supports this analysis in his assertion that:

Although the RPF initially gave the impression that it at least contemplated a regime of power sharing, the reality is that it wanted full and total power from day one, just as it had done before its victory in the areas it controlled during the civil war. (23)

Interestingly, and *you* will see why all the more so in the following paragraph, the RPF, militant liberators of Rwanda turned governing body, “tend to be Tutsi as the RPF is a predominantly Tutsi organization,” and “that even RPF Hutu are not entirely trusted” (Reyntjens 21). Equally problematic to the “Tutsization” of the government, the RPF’s seizure of power after the

genocide, justified first under the guise of a five-year transitional period and later extended by an additional four years, created a restrictive condition in which “civil society progressively disappeared as a result of militarization, ethnic polarization, and sheer repression” (Reyntjens 21). Although other parties were not banned from entry into the political arena by the RPF, Reyntjens argues that “Rwanda is a strong case of hegemonic authoritarianism, where under the guise of seemingly regular elections in a multiparty context the polls do not perform any meaningful function other than consolidating a dictatorship” (55). Accordingly, the progress of the RPF, and by extension Rwanda, through their *master* narrative must be challenged, not in a way that disallows their autonomy to recover from genocide in their own terms, but to ensure those terms are humanitarian.

Pertinently, Rwanda’s transition to a system of national unity “has outlawed public discussion of or even reference to one’s ethnicity- speaking of being Tutsi, Hutu, or Twa” (Thomson 108). Thomson further reveals that “individuals can speak only of being ‘Rwandan’ in state-sanctioned settings,” as it is believed that “Rwanda cannot recover from the effects of the genocide until national unity is restored” (Thomson 108; qtd. in Thomson 110). This policy was created in response to the *official* narrative’s argument that “the combination of a docile and obedient population, a legacy of authoritarian government, and the colonial policies of ethnic divisionism caused the 1994 genocide” (Thomson 110). Of course, the former Hutu and the former Tutsi are portrayed in the process of reconciliation, insofar as the *official* narrative “is broadly understood to mean that survivors (read Tutsi) forgive while perpetrators (read Hutu) tell the truth about what they did during the genocide” (Thomson 114). The collectivization of Hutu guilt, combined with the genocide’s name change to be “The Genocide Against the Tutsi,”

however, leaves very little space for other stories or identities that do not conform with the *official* narrative. Beyond the phenomenon Thomson refers to as “everyday resistance,” which goes largely unnoticed by the governmental target but benefits the resister on an individual-level, the publication and distribution of both survivor and non-survivor narratives challenge monolithic representations of genocide.

This is made particularly evident in testimonies written by survivors. Dauge-Roth argues that this body of literature “attempt[s] to forge social recognition for the personal and collective trauma that continues to haunt the victims of this genocide, so that their loss and suffering can no longer be ignored” (Dauge-Roth 26). Indeed, Kali Tal, author of *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma*, insists that “if survivors retain control over the interpretation of their trauma, they can sometimes force a shift in the social and political structure” (Tal 7).

Accordingly, Joseph Sebarenzi’s *God Sleeps in Rwanda* narrates the author’s experience as a Tutsi exile from Rwanda. His memoir reveals that the eruption of massacres in Rwanda in 1994 was not that at all, that is, an eruption. Instead, he extends the timeline of violence to 1951, and, furthermore, he indicates that the risk of violence in Rwanda did not end with the Genocide, successfully removing the Genocide from its history of isolation, but retaining the experience of genocide as an individual one. Marie Béatrice Umutesi’s *Surviving the Slaughter* similarly complicates the strict chronology of genocidal violence in Rwanda, as well as expands the notion of victimhood, in her recollection of her experience as a Hutu refugee in Zaire (present-day Democratic Republic of the Congo) from 1990-onward. My selection of these texts was intentional, as they appear to be located outside of the *official* genocide memory and, therefore, serve to challenge hegemonic understandings of the Rwandan Genocide and at least precipitate a

discussion surrounding ownership of trauma.

The African Writers' Project, "Écrire par devoir de mémoire," represents a body of literature, conceived of by two African artists, that aimed to fill a literary and cultural void, in which, for four years after the genocide, African authors had not written of the Rwandan Genocide. Founder and contributor, Nocky Djedanoum, states:

If the genocide of Tutsis and the massacre of the moderate Hutus in 1994 has prompted many thoughts in Europe amongst journalists, writers, politicians, researchers, etc., it is deplorable to notice the silence of African intellectuals on the issue... Artists, especially writers, wanted to fill a gap in their hearts; we wanted to take a position... The mourning for Rwanda, Africa, and the world had to take an immortal dimension. And therefore we came to Rwanda, listened to the Rwandese, and thus produced works, thereby opening an important page in the history of Rwanda. It was a case of Africa being committed to Africa. (qtd. in Dauge-Roth 90)

Accordingly, "Djedanoum made it a condition of their participation that each of the writers make themselves available to go to Rwanda for a period of two months,... speaking to survivors and seeing what are now called 'sites' of the genocide" (Small 86). From Chad, Koulsy Lamko contributed the novel, *A Butterfly in the Hills*, which narrates the story of Thérèse Mukandori, who was raped and murdered in the Nyamata Church massacre, and her return to the site as a ghostly butterfly. Boubacar Boris Diop, from Senegal, fictionalizes the return of Cornelius, a Tutsi exile, to Rwanda in *Murambi, The Book of Bones*, as he confronts the legacy of the Genocide and his role in it. These texts were selected due to their own commentary on genocide ownership, as well as the precarious position of their authorship, located both inside and outside

of those *authorized* to write about the genocide. As both novels are fictional accounts of the genocide, however, they admittedly represent a gap in my study.

Finally, “testimonial literature written by...authors who have not directly witnessed the genocide is thus engaged in the social negotiation of the cultural place and political response the West gives to the genocide’s aftermath” (Dauge-Roth 26). Referring to this variety of literature, Tal warns that “if the dominant culture manages to appropriate the trauma and can codify it in its own terms, the status quo will remain unchanged” (Tal 7). Tal is similarly weary of the writing and rewriting of traumatic events, as “narrative form [can]... replace content as the focus of attention” and become a weapon for political power (Tal 6). Philip Gourevitch’s *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families* is representative of this genre, in that the author, a staff writer at *The New Yorker*, assembles various testimonies regarding the Rwandan Genocide, in order to place the event in a more global order. Gil Courtemanche’s *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali*, on the other hand, dramatizes the Rwandan Genocide in the Canadian protagonist’s witnessing and representation of the events. These texts are particularly appropriate, as their popularity among Western audiences has arguably assisted in the canonization of an *official* genocide memory, and their Western authorship effectively complicates the dichotomy between *being* the authority on the Rwandan Genocide and *owning* its memory.

IV. Survivor Testimony: Possession is to Positionally

Joseph Sebarenzi, as both author and protagonist of *God Sleeps in Rwanda*, opens his memoir by insisting, “I’m not a storyteller. In Rwanda, it’s too dangerous to tell stories. There are thousands of stories to tell- about birth and life, and far too many stories about death... So you listen. You don’t tell stories. You don’t need to. Everyone knows you” (Sebarenzi 6). This introduction becomes consistent with C. Tsehloane Keto’s assertion that a speaker “is properly located when observations flow consistently from the ‘center’ of the people being studied” (Keto 17). Sebarenzi, a Tutsi exile who left his country for the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1973, returned in 1989 to leave again in 1990, and, finally, to return in 1995 and leave subsequently in 2000. Although not present for the 1994 Genocide, each of his departures corresponded to eruptions of violence targeting Tutsis:

The massacres...had come after a period of peace. Everyone thought civilians would be safe. No one believed Tutsi would be targeted again. When my father realized how wrong they were, I don’t think he ever trusted periods of peace in Rwanda to last... He was right. Violence did come again, and this time it was far worse than anyone could ever have imagined. (Sebarenzi 44)

Interestingly, Sebarenzi, though marked for genocidal violence himself, only gains authenticity in speaking about the Genocide in his attendance to his father’s beliefs. Accordingly, his father’s claim that “it’s not safe here [in Rwanda]. Violence could erupt again at any time... [and] if we are killed, you will survive,” reveals that the perseverance of Sebarenzi’s voice requires him to leave Rwanda (Sebarenzi 28). Sebarenzi’s claim to trauma in his repeated return and departure from Rwanda becomes immanent, not simply because “the experience is repeated after its

forgetting, but...[because] it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all” (Caruth “Unclaimed Experience” 17). It becomes recognizable, however, as Sebarenzi maintains “what happened... without losing a sense of existing and acting now,” because he is effectively living with the Genocide (LaCapra 90).

In the construction of his narrative, Sebarenzi inserts Kinyarwandan idiomatic expressions to articulate select cultural premises. For example, when speaking of the Hutu/Tutsi division, he claims, “‘*Turi bene mugabo umwe*,’ meaning ‘we are the sons and daughters of the same father’” (Sebarenzi 11). This proverb not only reaffirms the belief of a “cultural community of those who speak a single language, Kinyarwanda,” but it also serves “to place Africans at the center of knowledge about themselves,” an important reflection of how Rwandans configure themselves in the world (Mamdani 51; Keto xii). In addition, and in compliance with Keto’s stipulation that an African-centered paradigm not oppose “the Europe-centered paradigm of knowledge because it is Europe-centered,” Sebarenzi highlights a French proverb, “*L’homme propose et Dieu dispose*, [which translates as] Man makes plans and God decides” (Sebarenzi 204). Not only do these examples illustrate “fluency” in a local culture, if I may use that phrase, but they also acknowledge the existence and, furthermore, the value of multiple frames of knowledge production.

Pertinently, Dauge-Roth claims that by “facing a language that escapes our understanding, we are forced to estrange ourselves from our ordinary frames of reference in order to be able to listen” to it (Dauge-Roth 53). Providing substance to the notion of the English language as a global language, and more aptly a global currency, Sebarenzi selects this language

to write his narrative in order to, as he claims in his dedication, reach those “who work for peace and reconciliation in Rwanda and in other parts of the world” (Keto 36; Sebarenzi). Sebarenzi’s inclusion of terms outside of the English language, however, not only indicates a “modification of language to fit [his] communicative style and to reflect [his] cultural experience,” but it also reverses traditional notions of hospitality in language (Keto 36). Indeed, it is no longer his audience that expects him “to speak [their] language, in all senses of this term, in all its possible extensions, before being able and so as to be able to welcome him into [their] country” (Derrida 15-17). Instead, his explanation of Kinyarwandan terminology indicates that it is *he* that is welcoming them into his world. On a more advanced level, Sebarenzi’s testimony reveals “what is at stake in our encounter with works bearing witness to the genocide- an experience whose language we do not speak [both linguistically and psychologically- that is]... their ability to pass on the haunting power of the trauma they voice, stage, or depict visually, and our willingness to expose ourselves to the foreign voices they convey” (Dauge-Roth 56).

In *God Sleeps in Rwanda*, Sebarenzi finds that within his country, he didn’t have the necessary space to critique the government, nor the Rwandan Patriotic Front’s growing dictatorship. He says:

Every time a person chose to keep quiet, someone was wrongfully removed from office, or threatened, or forced into exile or killed. There is a Rwandan proverb: *Ikoni ikubise mukeba uyirenza urogo*- throw away the stick that beats your rival, because that same stick can be used to beat you. We failed to apply this wisdom... I worried that Rwanda was slowly becoming a country where no one would be left to speak out. (Sebarenzi 156-157)

In this statement, Sebarenzi illustrates that the process of “*re-telling the war in a memoir... does not merely involve the development of alternative national myths through the manipulation of plot and literary technique, but the necessary rebuilding of shattered *personal* myths*” (Tal 117). Consequently, he excuses himself from the position of speaker of the Rwandan parliament, and amidst threats of assassination, he leaves for the United States. Speaking of post-conflict reconstruction, Sebarenzi states “individual countries should not have to do this alone. While countries can do a lot within their borders to promote reconciliation, the *international community* should be ready to help” (Sebarenzi 220-231). This seeming acceptance of external policies is not problematized further, and Sebarenzi even appears complicit in this process, as he describes his departure from Rwanda as one that opened him up to an increasingly global community of “people whose vision extends beyond our own egos and our own tribes” (Sebarenzi 228). Of course, Sebarenzi’s encouragement of an international influence in Rwanda is significant to the present topic, not only because it informs the image the author would like to see in place for his country’s future, but it also allows for the possibility of external and alternative representation(s) of its past.

Pertinently, Sebarenzi’s *God Sleeps in Rwanda* also represents a collaboration; his co-authored memoir was completed with the help of Laura Ann Mullane, a white American woman who specializes in “ghost writing” and, relevantly, owns a communications firm for strategic messaging and writing. Dauge-Roth insists that “experiencing works that confer an unprecedented visibility to the genocide of the Tutsis...within our social scene requires us to measure what it means to expose ourselves and our cultural scene to this aftermath” (Dauge-Roth 56). Accordingly, Mullane’s contribution to *God Sleeps in Rwanda* must be viewed in relation to

calculation, that is, the additions and subtractions she presumably *allowed*, in order to produce an effective text for an intended audience. Sebarenzi's afterword, "Moving Toward Forgiveness and Reconciliation," is, in particular, representative of this hyper-awareness to audience, and marks a noticeable departure in tone from the remainder of the text. An idealized summation of lessons to be derived from the Rwandan Genocide, this section was strategically organized to appeal to a "universal" audience, but as Mullane's conception of a universal audience is markedly Western, the text becomes universal, insofar as the audience is foreign to genocide. Indeed, *God Sleeps in Rwanda* informs its audience how to feel about genocide, but as Rwandans already know how they feel about the Genocide, the memoir arguably produces circumstances in which the genocide narrative is made into a product for the consumption of others and, necessarily, induces a shift in ownership of its memory.

Marie Béatrice Umutesi's *Surviving the Slaughter* similarly positions the author to the events that follow early on in the narrative. She states:

I have been through Hell, have known horror, and now that I have escaped, I want to testify in the name of all the men and women who did not have my luck and who died in Hell. My point of view is neither that of the historian nor of the politician. I give testimony to what I have seen and to what I have lived. (Umutesi 5)

Umutesi's position is one of survivor, which Primo Levi, in *The Drowned and the Saved*, describes as "not the true witness," but rather an "anomalous minority" (83). Levi further argues that survivors "are the exception... [Those] who were favored by fate tried, with more or less wisdom, to recount not only our fate but also that of the others, indeed of the drowned" (83). Of course, this is also consistent with Elie Wiesel's insistence that "those who have not lived

through the experience will never know; those who have will never tell; not really, not completely... The past belongs to the dead” (314). Appropriately, when discussing her own decision to write, Umutesi that she “made a habit of writing [about the suffering of those around her] so that people could know and break their silence, but also to stop [her] own pain” (78). Umutesi’s narrative has a particularly strong mandate to make people aware, not because her audience is unfamiliar with the genocide, but rather because they are not accustomed to the story as she frames it. Indeed, her memoir aims to shift ownership of genocidal memory in her inclusion of victims beyond the *official* scope- that is, Tutsis and “moderate” Hutus- outside the *official* time frame- that is, before and after 1994- and outside the nation’s borders. Umutesi does not deny the tragedy of the genocide against the Tutsis, though she problematically elevates Hutu victimhood to the status of that of the Tutsi, in an effort to prevent the monopolization of its trauma and memory in her reconsideration of the complexities inherent in the outbreak of violence in the Great Lakes region.

Pertinently, Umutesi, as a refugee not only crossing Rwanda but also present-day Democratic Republic of Congo, is able to gather multiple local frames of reference to describe the events surrounding the genocide. Not surprisingly, community viewpoints differ drastically from the *official* story, but interestingly, though again this should not come as a startling revelation, local viewpoints contradict each other. Indeed, Umutesi recollects her experience, as well as another woman’s, in the days following the outbreak of the 1994 genocide. She states:

We were two terrified young women, both of whom had abandoned all our belongings to hide in a cowshed that stank of cow dung, and yet we couldn’t agree on who was responsible for this war. She fled the militias. I fled the rebels... Whereas for her, the

rebel advance meant that liberation was near, for me it mean, in the best case, death of exile. (Umutesi 52-53)

This discrepancy between the saviors and villains of the genocide does not end with an ethnic debate, however, as Umutesi and her companion are Hutu and Tutsi, respectively, nor is it resolved when the “rebels” Umutesi describes in Rwanda become the country’s official army, the Rwandan Patriotic Army. Indeed, Umutesi illustrates that the notion of a “rebel” is based on time and location. She insists that “the great majority of Hutu of all classes left Rwanda when the rebels [the RPF] took over,” placing “bandits, ministers, bankers, assassins, businessmen, simple peasants, and soldiers liv[ing] side by side” in Zaire’s refugee camps, effectively making them rebels in their own country (79). She continues by describing repeated attacks by the RPF against the refugees, a significant and noticeable shift in her reality formation, and later she recalls “Kabila’s rebels,” used by Umutesi to describe the group “mainly made up of elements from the RPF” hoping to overthrow the Congolese administration that had supported the Hutu-led Rwandan government (Umutesi 173). In so narrating her experience, Umutesi opens genocide narration to varying degrees of victimhood and, more importantly, to the marketplace of ideas surrounding it.

Even so, Umutesi is admittedly hesitant when describing the violence committed against the Hutu people in Rwanda. She states:

We were overcome by the extent of the tragedy. In addition to the Tutsi genocide, which was happening before our eyes, the rebels undertook widespread killing of the civilian Hutu population in the zones that they occupied. (Umutesi 62)

Umutesi’s vocabulary in describing these offenses is visibly limited, and though what she

describes clearly represents genocide, her decision not to title it as such, even though she is comfortable doing so in the instance of the genocide against the Tutsis, is alarming. The silence regarding the killing of Hutus (note the intentional omission of the modifier “moderate”) in the *official* genocide narrative and the international discourse surrounding the events bore “no witness to its truth” (Felman and Laub 83). Indeed, Felman and Laub argue that forgotten genocide testimony “imply[s] the presence of some informal discourse, of some degree of unconscious witnessing that could not find its voice or its expression during the event,” and so Umutesi’s narrative appears obligated to misplace genocide in order to be contained in its memory (83). To the extent that Umutesi emphasizes Hutu victimhood in relation to genocide, Kabila’s rebels in the DRC are deemed the perpetrators, which by the date in which *Surviving the Slaughter* was released, Kabila’s administration had already been charged with “crimes against humanity.” Accordingly, Umutesi, though her story departs from the *official* genocide narrative, seems to uphold segments of it, in order for her memoir to be a marketable product, but the extent to which she can *own* the memory of the Rwandan Genocide itself seems distant, even to her.

Umutesi’s account of her experience as a Rwandan refugee in Zaire ends in her departure from the country for Belgium. She describes the last checkpoint she encountered before leaving, which she insists was often staffed by Rwandan soldiers. She asserts that her companion spoke “loudly in Swahili and Lingala, her hands on her hips, just like a real Congolese” in order to proceed out of the country without suspicion. The inability to speak in one’s own language mirrors the phenomenon Lawrence L. Langer describes, in *Holocaust Testimony: The Ruins of Memory*, as an “imprison[ment of] the consciousness it should be liberating” (40). Umutesi

continues by closing her memoir with a brief description of her arrival in Belgium. She confesses that:

Starting to speak Kinyarwanda freely again was more difficult. Everytime I spoke a word in Kinyarwanda, I looked left and right to see if there were any soldiers in the wings.

Only when I noticed that we were surrounded by whites did I remember that I had arrived in Belgium and I that I did not need to be afraid anymore... Now, I no longer fear speaking Kinyarwanda. (Umutesi 245-246)

Accordingly, Umutesi's account of events can be read as a source of defiance- more appropriately, a breaking of the silence surrounding this otherwise forgotten aspect of the genocide-, but more so its traumatic resonance disrupts conventional vocabulary. Umutesi attempts to recall from memory her experience, and though she provides surprisingly extensive details regarding her plight, her testimony is:

not the transfiguration of empirical reality, but its *disfiguration*, the conscious and deliberation alienation of the reader's sensibilities from the world of the usual and familiar, with an accompanying infiltration into the work of the grotesque, the senseless, and the unimaginable. (Langer "Holocaust Testimonies" 2-3)

To that end, Umutesi navigates a precarious space in which her memory is not only positioned in opposition to established frameworks, but her very trauma can be interpreted as a challenge to traditional manners of thinking, but her depiction of these events necessitates a space for the consideration of her experience.

In regard to any hesitancy to believe Umutesi's story, Langer argues that the impossibility of genocide testimony "lies not in the reality but in our difficulty in perceiving it as

reality” (“Holocaust Testimonies” 40). Accordingly, Umutesi’s incorporation of exact dates and locations into her narrative, information she would presumably lack access to at the time in which the events unfolded, represents her effort “to impose on apparently chaotic episodes a perceived sequence, *whether or not that sequence was perceived in an identical way* during the period that is being rescued from oblivion by memory and language” (Langer “Holocaust Testimonies” 41). Her attention to such details should not be perceived as an icy objectivity to the matter, but rather a self-conscious recognition that her story may not be accepted in the manner that she tells it, which, of course, represents an additional and prolonged source of trauma. As for the actual content, it remains the case that she, as a survivor, is under no obligation to qualify her story, but rather it is the audience’s “challenge... to practice listening to [her]” if she is to be heard (Dauge-Roth 54). In the instance of *Surviving the Slaughter*, a narrative which challenges what has been heard about the genocide and, accordingly, what is willing to be heard, Umutesi must be granted the right to *own* her story, an unfortunate reality.

V. “Écrire par devoir de mémoire”: On Aesthetic Appeal

Lamko’s *A Butterfly in the Hills* reaffirms “Africa as [the]... “center” in any study that involves people of African descent” (Keto 13). The novel recounts Thérèse Mukandori’s recurrence as a butterfly at Nyamata Church, the site of her rape and death. Her embodiment of a butterfly is significant in that it counters a piece of Hutu Power propaganda that insists all of the cockroaches (Tutsis) must be killed, as “a cockroach never gives birth to a butterfly. It’s true. A cockroach gives birth to another cockroach” (qtd. in Chrétien 324). Thérèse affirms:

I am now a butterfly, an enormous scorched-earth colored butterfly, begot by neither man nor woman, but by anger. I emerged from the void of a ghost and from the desiccated body of an anonymous woman lying among the cadavers piled inside one of the church/genocide-museums. Before the chaos came, the whole world knew me; I was the object of adulation. I inhabited the body of a real queen: ‘The Queen of the Middleworld.’ (Lamko 13-14)

In her reclamation of her own voice, the Queen is given “the power to inscribe the haunting voices of the dead within the present of the living to keep the victims’ memories and quest for justice alive” (Dauge-Roth 136). Her interactions with the memorial site’s visitors, in particular, reveals the complexity of genocide representation. Indeed, the Queen grows angry, upon hearing a survivor tour-guide tell her story, and she argues that “the story of my life is mine and mine alone” (Lamko 31). The Queen’s insistence to narrate her own death underscores the “risk [of survivors] being silenced and dispossessed of their story” (Dauge-Roth 145). An African-centered paradigm then becomes useful insofar as it “question[s] the hegemonic perspective,” and allows for both personal and collective narratives, inevitably shaped by

national memories and political interests (Keto 23). Lamko's positionality becomes particularly significant, as his placement outside of the genocide's *official* victimhood forces him to abandon his own voice in favor of another's story, but his location within a group of elite African writers allows him to impose a new, perhaps ahistorical, voice on the Queen. Indeed, in the act of appropriating her voice, Lamko successfully restores ownership of it to her.

Regarding the Queen's physical state, Lamko's *A Butterfly in the Hills* advances the notion of "spirits [as] being made up of superhuman beings and the spirits of men who died a long time ago," as well as emphasizes their explanatory role in "the destiny of man" (Mbiti 16). Accordingly, the Queen's occupation of a ghostly form marks the failure of the Hutu's genocidal intention by enabling her to bequeath the legacy of violence to the living. Accordingly, when the Queen's niece, a Rwandan exile named Pelouse, returns to Rwanda to discover "home," the butterfly takes issue with the manner in which her niece intends to represent the Genocide. She states:

You are faced with three ways of fulfilling yourself, and you don't know which to choose. The first is called *it's necessary*; the second: *you have to*; the third, *you can*.

Nature can't stand a void. (Lamko 88)

Pelouse's quest to find her aunt, however, has been realized since the beginning, as evidenced in the Queen's assertion, "I am with her...inside her. And have been since the first day (Lamko 207). Although not originally as she envisioned it, Pelouse's inheritance is her ability to transmit the legacy of Genocide. According to Dauge-Roth, "she doesn't fear seeing herself interrupted or forced to re-envision how she sees herself and the past as she tries to respond *to* and *for* the

legacy that is passed on to her by signing *in* her own name,” an indication of cultural ownership enhanced by African anthropocentric ontology (Dauge-Roth 143). Appropriately, Marianne Hirsch, in *The Generation of PostMemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*, argues that “postmemory is *not* an *identity* position but a *generational* structure of transmission embedded in multiple forms of mediation” (33). Pelouse’s ownership of this memory comes to represent the process by which broken linkages, created by war, exile, and diaspora, are repaired, and how story formation is expanded to include not just those who lived through traumatic experience(s), but also those who reaped their effects.

On a far more reaching scale, Lamko’s *A Butterfly in the Hills* follows another trajectory in describing the international community’s representation of the Rwandan Genocide. At Murambi Technical School, Pelouse:

stared long and hard at the French flag that had been flying ever since Opération Turquoise, and repeated the guide’s words: ‘Fifty thousand people were killed in these SOS classrooms. The soldiers who came here with Opération Turquoise had to use bulldozers to push the thousands and thousands of bodies into common graves.

...

The *muzungu* [white man] with the jowls of opulence lowered his eyes... He was overcome with a feeling of guilt as vast as his homeland. (Lamko 140-141)

Lamko’s critique of globalization is made apparent in his illustration of Opération Turquoise, a French-led military operation intended to address continued problems of displacement as well as the needs and interests of those who survived the genocide within Rwanda and those returning from lives as refugees abroad. Lamko’s contribution reveals “universally defined policies [that]

are dogmatically applied to Africa as if they were universally valid,” and he further insists that these principles “take their devastating effects on African people” (Mama 3). Indeed, their supposed impartiality inevitably marks them as destructive, as well as counterproductive, as the Western adoption of Africa, paired with their refusal to consider concepts, values, direction, and priorities which they use to observe and judge world events and human developments cannot be neutral.

In regard to Lamko’s own process of story formation, he followed the instruction that contributions to the African Writers’ Project, “Écrire par devoir de mémoire,” be published in French, rather than in Kinyarwanda or English, which speaks to the initiative’s effort to establish solidarity among its Francophone writers; this solidarity, however, didn’t necessarily address the intended relationship between the writers and Rwandans, much less between Rwandans and the texts. Using the space of the Nyamata memorial site, Lamko articulates Thérèse Mukandori’s difficulty in maintaining relationships with fellow Rwandans and, more specifically, her frustration with language’s distortion of her experience. The Queen states:

I had decided to take back the Word and to print it directly on the consciences of these two unusual visitors in its unabridged, unexpurgated, original form. I couldn’t take any more of these altered, doctored speeches, any more of these insipid solos that reeked of smuggled goods and requiems. (Lamko 31)

Referring to the limitations of language, Lamko reveals that modes of representation cannot fully capture traumatic suffering, but, instead, will always require further explanation or clarification, when used in isolation. This falls in line with Keto’s argument that “the major part of the problem with language use, for history and the human sciences, arises when people who use the

language claim indiscriminate universal validity and application for all aspects” (Keto 36).

Lamko further appears to be setting parameters as to who can speak definitively regarding the genocide, highlighted in the Queen’s denunciation of her visitors who “would either pinch their noses or get overcome with nausea” (23). The Queen, however, “sympathized with the discomfort of those who by some strange association felt guilty, their fingers running through their hair and scratching bewilderedly at their bodies” (Lamko 24). The Queen’s commentary becomes crucial then, insofar as it does not reflect a restrictive measure. Indeed, it does not deny the existence of an external voice that can sympathetically serve as witness to trauma, but instead insists that the witnessing, itself, does not qualify as a trauma. In “Restoring Lives Shattered by Collective Violence: The Role of Official Public Narratives in the Process of Memorialising,” Erika Apfelbaum recalls a radio segment in which an Armenian woman recollects the genocide 1917. When her interviewer began to weep, the woman insisted “no need to cry! Tears and pity are inadequate responses, an expression of superficial empathy and emotion which betrays the gravity of the event and [prevents] from truly confronting the full implications of the situation” (12-13). Necessarily, the transference of ownership of the story does *not* occur, at least ethically, but the consideration of responsibility is a necessity when regarding the pain of others.. In the instance of Lamko and all of the contributors to “Écrire par devoir de Mémoire,” to a certain extent, Boubacar Boris Diop, in *Africa: Beyond the Mirror*, states that:

the time spent in Rwanda has become an integral part of [their] lives, notwithstanding the fact that for each one of us, the experience was different. Some of us reacted with cautious, while others used every opportunity to shout out in anger. (16)

To that end, it appears that the memory of genocide can be used- that is, shaped and distributed to a wider public- as long as it is accompanied by the author's responsibility to the people featured in his/her narrative, as well as a sincere purpose.

Boubacar Boris Diop's *Murambi, The Book of Bones* further complicates the notion of voice in its interrogation of who can occupy what spaces and under what circumstances. The novel's protagonist, Cornelius, is a Rwandan exile who returns home after the genocide with the intention to write a play. After discovering that his father organized the massacre of thousands of people at Murambi Technical School, including Cornelius's mother and two young siblings, however, Cornelius reconsiders his "story." He thinks:

Now, this return from exile could no longer have the same meaning. From now on, the only story he had to tell was his own. The story of his family. He had suddenly discovered that he had become the perfect Rwandan: both guilty and a victim.

("Murambi" 78)

This paradoxical experience of Genocide becomes "crucial for an Africa-centered perspective because it suggests that both tragedy and redemption occupy the same space at the same time" (Keto 38). Accordingly, Cornelius's precarious position is only authenticated, as long as it is used for Rwandan empowerment, as evidenced in his uncle's insistence that he "try to think about what is yet to be born rather than what is already dead" ("Murambi" 143). Not unlike his Cornelius, Diop "had trouble getting used to the idea that his imagination would be curbed by life itself" ("Africa" 9). Necessarily, by leaving out his own influential experience in Rwanda and instead developing a fictional one, Diop successfully finds a way to illustrate his assertion that "a crime committed by the father is always redeemed by the sons- morally at least," and he

further considered “the responsibility of the whole continent” to account for the events in Rwanda (“Africa” 41).

Furthermore, in *Murambi, The Book of Bones*, Diop specifies a more involved approach in accessing Rwandan culture, at least at a local level. Indeed, Stanley, a childhood friend of Cornelius’s, explains a difficult time during the Genocide, in which he attempted to gain international support to end the violence. He states:

What that whole period of my life taught me is what makes us different from other people: no one is born a Rwandan. You learn to become one. I read that somewhere else, and it fits our situation perfectly. It’s a very slow project that each one of us takes upon himself. (Diop “Murambi” 48)

Stanley’s frustration can be best viewed in relation to the Tutsi Diaspora, which Mahmood Mamdani describes as “a group that was from the region but not of the region, which was part of the region but without belonging to any particular part of it” (Mamdani 156).

Pertinently Keto’s assertion that “regions of divergence became those parts of the world that historically witnessed enormous levels of out-migration by local people to different parts of the world” equates the formation of Diaspora with the establishment of Rwandan identity (Keto 28). Indeed, within pre-genocide Rwanda, Hutu and Tutsi ethnicities were supreme, while Rwandan nationality could only be recognized outside of the nation. Consequently, the Tutsi Diaspora’s continued attachment to a Rwandan identity represents “an opportunity to contribute corrective historical insights in the analysis of the world’s social phenomena,” as evidenced in Stanley’s further evocation of the Holocaust in his discussion of the Genocide (Keto 53). Diop, himself, admitted to entering the project with thoughts of “the deplorable excesses of tribal barbarism”

that some African authors find themselves chained to, but upon spending time in the country, he states (“Africa” 7):

one is all the more entitled to write an imaginary account of the genocide since the recent history of Rwanda was largely the result of a conflict between truth and fiction. All these nightmarish delusions [regarding ancient hatreds] developed out of a certain colonial ethnology, which *fabricated* a non-African history in an African country. (“Africa” 13)

Accordingly, Diop’s commentary on Rwanda begins to correct, or at least complicate, modern understanding of the cause(s) of the genocide, and in so doing, it is restorative- that is, it returns the memory of the genocide to the country to perform it as they will.

At a more planetary-level, however, Diop’s *Murambi, The Book of Bones* considers Operation Turquoise, as the initiative allows Cornelius’s father, Doctor Karenzi, to escape Rwanda, unpunished, if not rectified, for his crimes. Indeed, the French strategists insist “that in Africa political questions get resolved everywhere with extreme cruelty” (“Murambi” 121).

Accordingly, a French colonel describes France’s relationship with Rwanda as follows:

They’re all crazy over there [in France]. They create African heads of state there in their offices. And the latter call late at late at night to grumble...: you think that’s par for the course with your bullshit about human rights yes but in your country does the radio say that the president gave his wife AIDS. (“Murambi” 121)

Indeed, France’s allowance of, and, furthermore, complicity in human rights’ violations is illustrated best in the assertion that “Opération Turquoise [is an initiative] that lots of people are laughing at. To play the kind soul after letting our protégés commit all those stupid atrocities! No

one's been fooled" ("Murambi" 122). Certainly, "the intellectual consciousness about and the historiography of, Africans and descendants of Africans still leaned too heavily on conceptual products of a Europe-centered perspective," but even a European-centered paradigm fell short in this instance, as French involvement in the Genocide indicates that the universalism of "human rights" were not seen as applicable to Africans (Keto 26).

Similar to Lamko, Diop is disgruntled by the manner in which Rwanda is represented, particularly by the international community, and though he initially anticipates narrating his subjects in a cold, if not objective manner, he ultimately finds that he cannot do so. He, and the other writers in the project, continue to ask *why* and look for signs of human life among the dead contained in Rwanda. In so doing, Diop claims to "give...the victims a soul, and even if it does not resuscitate them, it at least gives them back their humanity" ("Africa" 12). Again, the narrative appears to belong to those directly linked to the genocide, but Diop proceeds further in his description of a "decent ordinary family man dozing on his sofa" ("Africa" 13). Diop claims that "the novel is either going to pass him by, or it might awaken in him the desire to re-humanize himself," and so it can be understood as having an inherent value to humanity more largely, as long as it is them being influenced by its memory, not its memory being influenced by them.

In *Murambi, The Book of Bones*, Diop also plays with linguistic representations of the Genocide. When discussing the burial of the dead bodies at Murambi Technical School, Cornelius's uncle, Siméon, insists that "above each grave we saw little puddles of blood forming. At night, dogs came to quench their thirst" (Diop "Murambi" 152). To which, Cornelius responds, "Monsters drinking the blood of Rwanda. I understand the symbol" (Diop "Murambi"

152). Siméon clarifies that his description was not a symbol, and, in fact, he saw the scene with his own eyes. This tendency to disqualify representations of the Genocide, because they sound too poetic, places at stake “their ability to pass on the haunting power of the trauma they voice... and our willingness to expose ourselves to the foreign voices they convey” (Dauge-Roth 56). Necessarily, genocide narratives allow for instability amongst modes of representation, that is, the juxtaposition of the hyper-imagined with the excessively real, and the extremely loud with the disturbingly silent. Ultimately, however, they enable complex, and often contradictory, experiences of trauma, as evidenced in Cornelius’s assertion that:

Rwanda is an imaginary country. If it’s so difficult to talk about in a rational way, maybe it’s because it doesn’t really exist. Everyone has his own Rwanda in his head and it has nothing to do with the Rwanda of others” (Diop “Murambi” 67).

Accordingly, Diop’s narrative not only centers Rwandans in narratives about Rwanda, but also appreciates their subjectivity in creating their own paradigms and knowledge systems. Diop, in particular, demands for the “recognition of Africa’s fundamental rights as a co-contributor, not a mere perennial beggar, at the table of the world’s cultural and technical feast,” in their participation in the African Writers’ Project, “Écrire par devoir de mémoire” (Keto xvii). Their contributions further represent a solidarity not only amongst the writers themselves, of which there are nine, but also between the African writers and the people of Rwanda, and, further, between the literary accounts and their international audience(s).

VI. Western Accounts: The Austerity of Authenticity

Philip Gourevitch's *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families* is framed by the author's discussion of "the principle of *Homo Sapiens*" with a pygmy individual (Gourevitch 6). Described to him as the mandate that "all humanity must unite together in the struggle against nature," this theory is made all the more difficult to implement in the realization that humanity is part of nature, too (Gourevitch 8). This premise supports the notion that "the humanity of all people is [or should be] an essential value element in the cosmovision that undergirds an African-centered perspective" (Keto 19); however, it is not a principle that Gourevitch follows within his text. Instead of the promised neutrality in presenting how Rwandans understood what happened in their country, he imposes his viewpoint frequently. For example, Gourevitch critiques Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa for his assertion that he shares in the failures of Africa, because he is African, to which the author demands to know how "a crime perpetrated by Rwandans against Rwandans was a crime against African pride and progress" (Gourevitch 178). As Keto asserts, "one can argue forcefully for the need to correct past injustice in the present but that is not the same as an attempt to justify the commission of injustice in the present" (Keto 20). Indeed, Gourevitch, though he is reflecting on the words of others, cannot separate himself from the narrative. Staging a piece of creative fiction, Gourevitch's voice penetrates the text, and he objectifies his subject matter by wrongfully presenting himself as an authority on the genocide.

Gourevitch's *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families* cites reportage of the Genocide that aims to create a culture of violence, particularly evidenced in stories that respond to the presence of both Hutu and Tutsi violence, which equate the Hutus and

Tutsis to “a story of bad guys” (qtd. in Gourevitch 186) Indeed, Gourevitch insists that “the implication created by such reports is that because victims on either side of the conflict suffer equally, both sides are equally insupportable” (Gourevitch 185). Necessarily, Gourevitch criticizes such journalism, and contends that “the ubiquity of the blight seems to cancel out any appeal to think about the single instance,” an argument against hegemony that serves as “an ‘overdue’ corrective action of previous distortions in the conceptualization of the global past” (Gourevitch 186; Keto 4). In so doing, however, he neglects the “consequences of a Europe-centered hegemonic perspective in a culturally plural society with the study of history,” and ultimately reveals his cultural “center” not to be Africa, as made apparent in his comparison of Tutsi violence with vigilante justice in the American Civil War and after World War II (Keto 47). Gourevitch’s insistence to address the genocide in a more nuanced fashion than other sources of global media is admirable, but, ultimately, his interest in Rwanda is singular- that is, he is reporting on the genocide and the genocide alone. His memory base is vastly different from those who experienced the genocide, and as he is unable to properly locate the events in a local collective memory, the extent to which he can “own” or assign any value to his narrative should be questioned.

This line of thought continues in Gourevitch’s *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families*, as the author launches a critique against “a hegemonic approach [that] automatically renders other peoples of the world historically invisible or transforms them into ‘dehumanized’ entities.” Recalling a conversation with an American military intelligence officer, Gourevitch illustrates the following scene (Keto 55):

[The officer says,] ‘Genocide is a cheese sandwich.’

I ask how he figured that.

‘What does anyone care about a cheese sandwich?’ he said. ‘Genocide, genocide, genocide. Cheese sandwich, cheese sandwich, cheese sandwich. Who gives a shit? Crimes against humanity. Where’s humanity? Who’s humanity? You? Me? Did you see a crime committed against you? Hey, just a million Rwandans. Did you ever hear about the Genocide Convention?’

I said that I had.

‘That convention,’ the American at the bar said, ‘makes a nice wrapping for a cheese sandwich.’ (qtd. in Gourevitch 171)

Irreverence aside, the American’s critique of genocide is useful, insofar as it “provide[s] a different perspective about the critical role of historical perceptions in the construction of social knowledge on which social prognoses and policies are ultimately based” (Keto xi). Accordingly, he does not state that Rwandans are outside of humanity, but rather insists that Gourevitch critically engage with who the Genocide Convention included in “humanity,” and, further, which part of “humanity” is responsible for constructing “humanity,” before applying the term “genocide” universally.

Gourevitch’s *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families*, however, uses literary fiction in a divergent manner that becomes problematic insofar as it “organize[s] our knowledge about Africans... [using] a Europe-centered perspective based on a Europe-centered paradigm to study the African people [he] so designate[s]” (Keto 36). For example, in his introduction, Gourevitch cites a scene from Joseph Conrad’s *The Heart of Darkness*, in which Marlow, depleted after his return from Africa, states, “it was not my strength

that needed nursing... It was my imagination that wanted soothing” (qtd. in Gourevitch 7).

Pertinently, Gourevitch’s claim that “the word ‘genocide’ and the images of the nameless and numberless dead left too much to the imagination” neglects to problematize the manner in which his literary contribution serves to expand the genocidal imagination, as represented in his assertion that he felt others’ (Gourevitch 7):

stories were offered to me the way that shipwrecked people, neither drowned nor saved, send messages in bottles: in the hope that, even if the legends they carry can do the teller no good, they may at some other time be of use to somebody, somewhere else.

(Gourevitch 183)

Again, Gourevitch assumes the existence of universalities when discussing genocide, an act of entitlement that marks his possession of its memory prematurely.

Gourevitch insists that “a precise memory of the offense is necessary to understand its legacy” in the context of Rwanda (Gourevitch 19). Such a rigid conception of what it means to experience genocide, culminating in Gourevitch’s frustration with Rwanda as an “impossible country,” resembles a continued vow “to interpret the history of the world and all its diverse people using a narrowly based Europe-centered paradigm of knowledge” (Gourevitch 224; Keto 37). Furthermore, it refuses to acknowledge multi-centered databases of knowledge, a particularly problematic framework considering “no single vantage point possesses the entire truth and meaning of the event” (Dauge-Roth 157). Interestingly, Gourevitch’s success originates only in its use of others’ commentary, as they engage with and critique the experience of genocide in its aftermath, but as his own is never fully omitted, it’s a claim over an experience that is not only not his *own*, but is un-interrogated in this capacity. *We wish to inform you that*

tomorrow we will be killed with our families remains successful within a Western context precisely, or so it appears, due to the reasons articulated above. Gourevitch presents a marketable product of the genocide, using vocabulary and memory sources familiar to his audience, even if he cannot properly *own* the story.

Gil Courtemanche's *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali* begins with an equally problematic protagonist, Bernard Valcourt, who admits that, "for over twenty years, [he] had earned his bread and butter from wars, massacres, and famines" (Courtemanche 184). As a documentary filmmaker, Valcourt's travels have only left him "waiting for a scrap of life to excite him and make him unfold his wings," and, accordingly, his extended placement in Rwanda to complete a film on AIDS has left him with that interest in mind, that is, completing the film and essentially "appropriating [Black] bodies" for his professional gain (Courtemanche 6; Zeleza 9). Interestingly, however, while working on the production, he found that his subjects "confided in him with a familiarity and candor that made his heart glow," and in the development of this relationship with the Rwandan people, he fosters an attachment to the country itself (Courtemanche 83). Finally finding the nation he wants to call "home," he describes it as "a place of subtle affinities, an implicit understanding between the land and the foot that treads it," and it is in this use of his voice that he finds representation as a facilitator of "social changes that enhance human empowerment and establish interpersonal relations that are equitable" (Courtemanche 184; Keto 77). Courtemanche's selection of a fictional medium is significant here, because though his character Valcourt resembles the author at first glance, it ultimately brings attention to the "frame" of the novel, in particular what was omitted and what remained,

and for what purpose(s). Pertinently, in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag suggests that photographs, and I will argue by extension film, featuring “suffering of this extreme order [should only be viewed by]... those who could do something to alleviate it... or those who could learn from it,” a premise Courtemanche seems to support in his fictionalized account (42).

At the local cultural level, Courtemanche’s *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali* further develops the intersectionality of the Hutu/Tutsi experience, in Gentile’s cousin’s description of her precarious position:

Our common ancestor who one day wanted to turn us all into Tutsis to save our lives..., we’re over six hundred descendants on three hills here. A little over half are officially Tutsis, and some like [Gentile], have the physical appearance. The ones our ancestor’s clever plan didn’t succeed in changing, the ones he failed, are getting ready to kill us as soon as they get the word. (Courtemanche 193)

This personal history includes Gentile in a community that is neither Hutu nor Tutsi, but rather one that is quickly tearing itself apart. Her father insists that “[they] must flee the madness that invents peoples and tribes” (Courtemanche 201); preceding his recommendation, “part of the... [family] scattered, some to Burundi, where the Tutsis dominate, some to Zaire, most to Uganda” (Courtemanche 201). Interestingly, however, Gentile’s great-great-grandfather struggled against social norms that dictated Hutus as a lesser race, but in so doing, he left little space for them to negotiate the ontology of Hutu/Tutsi identities. Indeed, Gentile’s family consists of the head of the *interahamwe*, a Tutsi, and the second-in-command of the RPF, a Hutu,” and though “they don’t know this, but either one will do it- both want to kill Gentile, who doesn’t belong to either side” (Courtemanche 201). Gentile then becomes representative of

a society “suffering from complexes and disorientations they acquired under colonization by European conquerors,” and, accordingly, Courtemanche’s description hopes to enact therapy for their culture by the complex negotiation of these identities (Courtemanche 5). Again, however, Valcourt, as well as Courtemanche, acknowledges the memory and trauma of the Rwandan Genocide belong to the subjects of the documentary and novel, respectively, placing ownership securely in and within Rwanda.

Courtemanche also complicates the notion of “humanity” and who precisely it is extended to, in his insistence that:

France was condoning and feeding [the Genocide] with its arms and military advisers. In the designs of the great powers, these Rwandans were of negligible weight, people outside the circle of real humanity, poor, useless types whom the glorious French civilization... was ready to sacrifice to preserve France’s civilizing presence in Africa. (Courtemanche 97)

The United Nations’ evacuation of Western nationals, though they were not targeted for violence, perhaps best articulates the devaluation of humanity in its inability, or rather, its perceived inability, to apply to everyone. Indeed, Valcourt is convinced to leave Rwanda, because “[he] can’t do anything for them by staying here,” which mirrors popular understanding of the Western role in the Genocide to be its inaction (Courtemanche 230). Inevitably, “ideologies that are introduced from outside this African world... tend to enjoy short life spans,” not only because Africans were not consulted, but also because the “outside” does not view these policies as applicable to Africa, until it beneficial for them to do so (Keto 78). Of course, Courtemanche attributes this to a rather sordid consequence of globalization, or those policies intended to

improve the masses, while advantaging only a privileged few. The acknowledgement of these advantages, in particular, underscores Courtemanche's appreciation of his status and the value his work stands to maintain in the international community by access alone. The extent to which he can impact change on a local level, however, is lesser, as it not *his* to impart change on.

Courtemanche's *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali*, however, employs an "'incomprehensible' language [that] not only dramatizes [its] power of interruption, but also allows [it] to elude any quick appropriation...since [it] remain[s] obscure to our reasoning" (Dauge-Roth 55). Indeed, Courtemanche relays Gentile's written account of her captivity as a Hutu's sex slave. Gentile, Valcourt's Hutu wife who only appears Tutsi, writes:

*To support me in what is to come, what I have left is...[the] words I never stop reading,
and transcribe here the better to explain:*

I am daughter of a lake

Which has not dimmed

...At absurd rapes I laugh

I am still in flower

Of course, this is an aesthetically pleasing illustration of an otherwise gruesome scene, which Valcourt's mourning promptly reminds us of, but it is in this imagery's beauty that it becomes most unsettling. Valcourt's disbelief of her death, or rather his pursuit of clarification, underscores the frequent misunderstanding of traumatic language. It is in his insistence that "he would not be able to live unless he could write the story of her death," however, that Gentile's voice is devalued, and, furthermore, Gentile is positioned as an "object of history and as [part of a] people of the 'margins' in history" by a white Canadian man (Courtemanche 237). Indeed,

Valcourt's insertion of himself into the traumatic narrative calls into question who can experience trauma and when, but as it displaces the seemingly legitimate sufferer of trauma, it misplaces ownership entirely.

Finally, Courtemanche's *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali* is successful only in its self-conscious representation of the African experience. Indeed, Courtemanche is able to reference his own difficulty conveying the Rwandan Genocide through Valcourt's struggle to gain legitimacy in speaking of that which he witnesses. His development of a relationship with the Rwandan people, and to a certain extent, an attachment to the nation itself, not only allows him access to his subjects, but it also enables him to "center" Rwanda in his work. More importantly, and to the benefit of collaboration, Valcourt, and by extension, Courtemanche, are sensitive to the manner in which their subjects would like to be portrayed. Their capacity to portray them, however, represents their weakness, as their ownership of the manner in which the African experience is presented confuses whose experience it is and, ultimately, the extent to which their narratives should be authenticated.

VII. Conclusion

In closing, I will return to the anecdote with which I introduced the paper- the woman listening to the man articulate his story first in Kinyarwanda, then listening to her personal guide translate it in English, and in turn yet again, speaking to her own guide in English, so he can translate her statements in Kinyarwanda for the keeper of the memorial site. For her, Aloys's story did not possess value until it was in her *own* language, and for the countless others she promised to tell, his story would not be of worth until it was visible to them. Even then, however, the extent to which the listener, or post-observer to a trauma, is empathetic to another's suffering is largely dependent on the degree to which he/she can claim ownership over the story- that is, how it is placed in their memory and their configuration of a traumatic experience.

The narrator, or the experiencer of trauma, on the other hand, is left to qualify his or her experience with an introspective discussion of positionality to genocide, and, more accurately, he or she is tasked with the discomfort of legitimizing their ability to narrate their *own* story. Accordingly, memoirs that are positioned outside the *official* narrative, such as Sebarenzi's *God Sleeps in Rwanda* and Umutesi's *Surviving the Slaughter*, are exasperated further, as they must disrupt an already disruptive discourse, and challenge the value system by which testimony is measured. Indeed, they must lay claim to, or more appropriately *ownership* of, their own story to ensure that it is assigned value in the larger marketplace of genocide testimony.

Accordingly, authenticity in recalling the story, is significant insofar as it validates the narrative, but it is not a prerequisite to survivor testimony. Indeed, survivor testimony is credible as a micro-narrative- that is, one that describes genocide memory on an individual-scale or, otherwise, within a small community. Non-survivor accounts of the genocide, such as

Gourevitch's *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families* and Courtemanche's *A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali*, theoretically follow a different mandate, that of a macro-narrative- that is, a holistic account of genocide. Non-survivor writers then inevitably alter their relationship to the Rwandan Genocide, and in so crafting a narrative, they evoke ownership of a story, but not *the* story.

Representing a space between the proximity of survivor testimony and the authority of non-survivor accounts, however, works such as Diop's *Murambi*, *The Book of Bones* and Lamko's *A Butterfly in the Hills*, strike an appropriate balance between the mandate to tell a story and to tell *the* story. Indeed, the African Writers' Project is poised to discuss African-centered phenomenon, and the accompanying writers may do so without the relative nuisance of authenticity binding them, but even so, the Rwandan Genocide is not *their* story. Accordingly, what they lack in accurate recollection, they compensate for in aesthetic representation, and in so doing, they successfully navigate the process by which narratives are assigned value, dependent largely on authorship.

Finally, it is understandable that this paper be frustrated with the complex negotiation of this space, and perhaps reassuringly, Dauge-Roth insists that "the questioning of the host's authorial voice when it comes to witnessing the genocide allows...[the audience] to engage in a virulent criticism of... dominant representations" (Dauge-Roth 78). Consequently, it is increasingly necessary that accounts of the Rwandan Genocide are read in tandem, in order to identify the manner in which they are in communication with and in opposition to each other, as well as to deconstruct the system in which certain perspectives are assigned more value than others. Necessarily, it is not simply a question of *who* can account for the genocide, but also

under *what* theoretical guises and ethical constraints, an area of scholarship that still requires further engagement.

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