Exchange of Fictions: Exploring the Intersections of Gendered Self-narration and
Testimonio Representations on the Rwandan Genocide

Thesis

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Abstract

This paper will examine the narrative construction and varied perspectives of two novels that with others make up the Fest’ Africa Commemorative Project “Rwanda: Writing as a Duty to Remember”. The two texts are Boubacar Boris Diop’s Murambi, *the Book of Bones* (Bloomington, 2000) and Véronique Tadjo’s *The Shadow of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda* (Johannesburg, 2002). Diop is a famous Senegalese journalist, screenwriter, and novelist. His most recent novel *Doomi Golo* (Dakar, 2006) is among the first few novels written in Wolof. Tadjo was born in France and grew up in Côte d'Ivoire. She is a poet, writer, and novelist, also well known for her creative illustrations in children’s books. Some of Tadjo’s works include the novel *A vol d'oiseau [As the Crow Flies]* (Paris, 2001) and *Talking Drums* (England, 2000) *an anthology of poems from various African artists*. Fest’ Africa was a Francophone African initiative formed with the purpose of conveying experiences of the Rwandan genocide as well as the authors’ own experiences during their visit in 1998, four years after the massacre. A number of questions necessarily arise for a representational enterprise of this sort. How are the traumatic experiences of Rwandans tellable? What renders texts like Diop’s and Tadjo’s legitimate in wider discourse on the modes of production, memory, and the archive of testimonies on traumatic experiences of the genocide? Can we ‘read’ Patricia Yaeger’s concept of ‘empathy-denial’ in these testimonial narratives? Where in these
stories does one find spaces of "empathy contestation" in their depiction of the actors involved with the event? Could it not be argued that what occurred in Rwanda in 1994 pushes against the very limits of the narrative conventions and frames that attempt to make sense of the event? What are the sites of disruption of one’s usual expectations of a testimonio, autobiography, or fictive account when a text attempts to capture the sheer horror of what someone saw or was subjected to? These two novels create a space for an analytic examination of the questions above. Each novel pays particular attention not only to the incommensurability of the genocide but also the relationship between the representations of Rwandan women in the genocide and the women’s negotiation of the self in a “post genocide” era. It is this negotiation of the self through testimony by the Rwandan women that has created a new genealogical form of entitlement to resources in Rwandan society today. This genealogy is based on the women’s experiential identification with the genocide and it positions them as advantageously as individuals and/or collective with traumatic experience(s) in relation to the event. The representations of the traumatic experiences by the testifier and mediator, and consumer also engage with the struggle between the global “Culture of Intimacy” and the politics of truth on the genocide in the production and dissemination of the two novels.
Dedication

Dedicated to a lifelong fighter for education and understanding
Andrina Floyd (1963-1994)
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the African-American and African Studies Department at The Ohio State University. I owe many thanks to Dr. Kwaku Korang for helping to develop this project and aid in my understanding of the theoretical and methodological approaches applied to my work as it took form. I also owe many thanks to Dr. Lupenga Mphande who has been of great guidance in maturing my thesis ideas and keeping the project on a track that would lend to the other disciplines and issues of interest for future research. I would like to greatly thank Dr. Maurice Stevens whose discussions have always provided my work with a deeper sensitivity to the thesis work theoretically and further, an understanding that goes beyond what is written on the page. Special thanks to my M.A. cohort in the AAAS Department for their unyielding support and friendship during our M.A. studies.

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Vita

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CHAPTER 1: “Traumatic Representations on the Rwandan Genocide and the Struggle to Testify”

The Rwandan genocide of 1994 is a dynamic event that begs the attention of the public for the grand scale of the traumatic affects it had on the individuals who experienced this extreme event. The genocidal tactics used were personal and brutal, with the killings carried out sometimes among family and friends using machetes, genocidaires used gardening tools, or any object capable of killing their targets. Schools, churches, and fair grounds served as sites of mass slaughter instead of refuge for those fleeing. Neighbors, lovers, and friends were coaxed into believing that their Tutsi counterparts would kill them if they did not get to them first. It involved not only the death of Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa but of expatriates and United Nations Peacekeepers. The bodies of women and young girls were used as instruments of war, repeatedly raped by peasants and militiamen. Propaganda through hate radio, press, and television fed the insecurities and anger of the people. Ethnicized and “tribal” portrayals of Hutu and Tutsi in conflict dominated the international airwaves and television. They gave reductive accounts of the complex experiences of Rwandans and their relationship with the rest of the world. These reductive accounts have created a monolithic representation of the traumas that occurred, enshrining a binary of Tutsis as victims and Hutu as perpetrators. Moreover, Rwandan women are predominantly seen as idle actors while men are presented as active participants. These dominant accounts carry disproportionate political
and economic weight in their circulation in the world, and they have marginalized narratives that do not conform to the conventions they have made official. Many of the perpetrators, though most were not major orchestrators, were Rwandan peasants seeking land and monetary gain. The brutality of these accounts and confrontation between official discourse and marginal testimonies are caught in a paradox of memorialization of the event.

**Lines of Inquiry for Traumatic Representations of the Genocide**

This project is concerned with the following questions: How does one speak to the necessity and impossibility of representation? What are some of signs of struggle by the witness to recuperate what is lost? What does testimony do for the testifier in the testimonial narratives? How does the testifier navigate ethical dilemmas? What is the role of the archive in building ethical communities? How do archives grant agency in their testimony to the individual survivors in a “politics of recognition”? How does the testifier incorporate the self in the historical narrative? How does the mediator translate an experience into a tellable, marketable product? Where can one find contradictions in representations by the testifier, mediator, and consumer in the narrative? How does the mediator respond to the absence of the real in the production of the experience? How does the mediator negotiate extraordinary versus ordinary historical events? What are the mediator’s aims in using the testifier’s experience in production? In what ways are the testifier’s experiences coopted? How does the mediator’s representation conform or disrupt formal conventions in testimonies on the event? What are the consumer’s expectations of the mediator? How do the consumer’s demands for testimonies affect the testifier’s present and future livelihood?
By using the above questions to interrogate literature and social and historical events on the Rwandan genocide this study aims to move past simply giving an account of the event. Research that heavily relies on statistics and facts to convey this extreme event does not bring to light what deep-rooted psychological affects inform Rwandans’ participation in their society. Representations require more contextualization in light of the dynamisms of human experiences. By the questions set out above, this thesis thus interrogates the general representations that offer a uniform interpretation of the Rwandan event. It seeks instead to establish that extreme event has generated an assemblage of unique of testimonies, that these testimonies are necessarily negotiated in telling, and thus make for a polyvocal production of the traumatic experiences born of the Rwandan genocide.

With understandings of representations as heterogeneous assemblages, then, this thesis to approaches terms such as ‘tradition’ and ‘norm’ as contested sites of narrative agency. As representations that are not static, narratives presumed to uphold tradition can tell us more about the assemblage of dominance and the spaces of agency that the powers-that-be grant. What this means is that other narratives that are held to be untraditional are denied social efficacy when their ‘evidence’ supports certain claims of legitimacy for the actors whose stories they retell.

This thesis seeks further to interrogate and analyze the following aspects of, and responses to, the Rwandan genocide: the expansive production of narratives that do/do not ethically engage with their audience; the stereotypical representations of gendered participation in media; and lastly, the notion of a “post-genocide” Rwanda. In framing these representations as productions this thesis wants to allow for a deeper understanding
of many dimensions within retelling—such as how historical accounts are constructed; the complex interpersonal/institutional relationships that assign and transform meaning in traumatic representations of events; and how complications of these kinds provide a space to explore the social, political, and psychic divisions that the terms of representational expression mediate as they are deployed in genocidal discourse on Rwanda.

**Historical Background**

Rwanda is a land-locked east-central country in Africa with an area of 10,169 square miles (26,338 square kilometers) and a total population of 10.62 million.¹ The population is estimated to have an ethnic distribution of 85 percent Hutu, 15 percent Tutsi, and 1 percent Twa; they predominantly share a common language, religion, and culture.² Ninety percent of the population works in the agricultural sector. The use of ethnicized rhetoric in “post-genocide” Rwanda is highly discouraged though ethnic divisions were the platform during colonialism and post independence for access to schools, education, jobs, and wealth breeding a highly politicized ethnic divide between the Hutu and Tutsi. This ethnic and racial division orchestrated by European rule has been and still remains a component of the discriminations seen today. It further informs how people engagement with society on the whole and with one another.

One of the major players in the Rwandan conflict was the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF); a military trained rebel group of Tutsi expatriates primarily living in

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Uganda after earlier conflict and forced migration that began in 1959 with the formation of *Le Parti du Mouvement de l’Emancipation* Hutu (PARMEHUTU). The Belgians and French supported the PARMEHUTU, pro-Hutu government in their takeover of Rwanda. Using rhetoric of liberty and freedom, the colonial powers further pitted the Hutu against the Tutsi. The RPF was voted into office in 1994 in response to Tutsi persecution by extremist Hutu Rwandans and as stated above, the French and Belgians. The RPF waged brutal attacks primarily from the border of Uganda in Northern Rwanda and later the interior, combatting the Hutu militiamen, winning approval by West for their actions in ending the genocide of the Tutsis. This approval of RPF leadership was also fueled by the highly documented and humiliating inaction of the West to stop the event in media.

President Paul Kagame, former leader of the RPF, continues to hold the presidency today. Commentary surrounding his efficiency as president has ranged from glorification by the international community because development has superseded the event. The government of Rwanda has gone to great lengths to invest in technology. Kagame has also received scrutiny for being an authoritarian dictator who denies the majority of Rwandans social advancement today.

The genocide led to 1 million internally displaced people (IDP), and an additional 1 million expatriates, several of whom later returned to revitalize their country. The

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3 By 1962 250,000 Tutsis had fled Rwanda and 7,000 had been placed in the Nyambata camp for refugees as well as 15,000 throughout Byamba, Kinsenyi, and Astrida districts. The migration of the Tutsis in the 1950s through the 1960s was fueled by the fear of violence and marginalization that was exacted on the Hutu under the Belgian/German support of Tutsi authority for the majority of formal colonial rule. Edmund Abaka and J.B. Gashugi, “Forced Migration From Rwanda: Myths and Realities,” *Refuge* 14, no. 5 (October 1994): 20.

4 Kathleen Malu, “An International Look at Educating Young Adolescents,” in *The Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education* (Charlotte: Information Age Publishing (IAP), 2009), 182.
genocide had a drastic impact on the country’s gender balance with a population that was 70 percent female in its immediate aftermath. Women are still the majority today at 51 percent. Men were murdered, imprisoned, or exiled. For women, rape and displacement were the main forms of persecution during the genocide. Many lived through it and now bear witness to the consequences of the massacre. Women now head thirty-one percent of the households in Rwanda. Orphanhood, cultural segregation, access to gacaca courts, poverty, and a lack of access to education are some of the issues that women must work to improve in the reconstruction of their country. Fifty-seven percent of Rwandans are living below the poverty line, making less than one U.S. dollar per day. Gender disparities still persist in economic, educational, and social domains. Forward strides have been made in female representation in land ownership and local government in villages, with women appointed to ‘managerial’ positions so they speak on issues affecting their communities. The government had a 56 percent female parliament in 2008, a feat no other country has accomplished. The genocide’s widespread use of sexual violence led to the spread of the HIV/AIDS virus, which can be seen as a lasting effect of the event.


The *gacaca* courts are a traditional Rwandan court system, created in the aftermath of the genocide, where the community calls the guilty or perpetrators to trial. This court system is a state initiative to serve as a process of reconciling survivors and perpetrators and helping them to move past the genocide of 1994. Those called to stand trial are then meant to testify on their participation in the genocide and the community decides their fate. This model partially emulates the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) set up in South Africa after Apartheid as a way to reconcile the pains and grievances of the many atrocities carried out by the Apartheid government. The *gacaca* courts have been criticized by nonprofit organizations such as Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International for their lack of efficient prosecution of groups and individuals. Those who confess, depending on their level of involvement are either exonerated or serve short sentences. This is possibly an incentive for a hasty or unapologetic confession to crimes. Since the majority of those who can bear witness are women, threats of physical and sexual violence loom over them if they decide to accuse a member of the community. These are just some of the issues that face Rwanda in the “post-genocide” era. Under the heading, ‘The RPF has renounced itself’, The Tribun du Peuple---though considered a supporter of the RPF--in August 1997 stated that the ‘revolution’ had failed and that the new regime was plagiarizing the methods of the former government. It denounced the misappropriation of funds, nepotism, clientelism, and corruption and asserted that the ‘liabilities of the Habyarimana and company’s

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management of the country at the end of the first 15 years of his time in office, had been largely attained by the new leaders of the country over the last three years’.

Filip Reyntjens highlights the inaccuracy in assuming that democracy followed the defeat of the Hutu-led Habyarimana regime in July after the RPF took power of the country. The result of their active participation in halting the Rwandan genocide, especially when the international community had been well informed of the events taking place gave the RPF the privileged position as hero after the war. By January 11, 1994 General Roméo Dallaire, commander of he UN peacekeeping force, was sending telegrams that stressed the need for stronger mandates that would bring in more troops to protect the people. These messages of the predicted massacre were met with excuses such as labeling the conflict a “tribal war,” purposefully convoluting the situation to deny responsibility, and in the case of the United States, notably stalling the use of the term genocide. Belgium, the U.S. and France were well aware of the severity of the situation and denied the UN forces the support necessary to stop the massacre.

In “post-genocide” Rwanda, structural adjustment goals and democratization were still not meeting the needs of the people. The economy only further depleted while ethnic tensions heightened again. Ethnic tensions and economic underdevelopment have continued to manifest themselves in an arbitrary and rigid discourse surrounding the status of the Rwandan people and their relation to the state and international community. President Paul Kagame abolished the use of ethnicity cards in order to create a unified

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Rwandan nationalism, a ‘many as one’ national agenda seen superficially as inclusive of all. Examined critically, however, one can find many exclusionary tactics implicit in this phrase that correspond to the disparities stated in the introduction of this section and below. Some other initiatives of the new Rwandan state include the rewriting of an official history in the constitution, the refusal to date to prosecute the RPF for genocidal acts and war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal of Rwanda (ICTR), and the expedited release of prisoners in jail who confess to their crimes as an effort to swiftly reunify the state. In general massacres and injustices that predate the 1990s are ignored. This less than satisfactory process of reconstruction has had skewed effects on the representation of the genocide and hampered smooth interactions among Rwandans. As those prosecuted are predominantly Hutu, this has created an overrepresentation of the implication of Hutus in the massacre while the RPF, having committed many similar crimes in the summer of 1994 are exonerated from responsibility and documented as the sole emancipators in the war. These institutionalized practices have perpetuated a segregated state. They have excluded justice, reconciliation, and punishment for those victimized by the RPF or others who participated in war crimes but do not fall under the categories of Hutu and Tutsi. Little is mentioned of the precarious situation the Twa who make up 1 percent of the state and the role they played in the genocide. The gacaca courts as well as the ICTR have been criticized for their use of the coded terms survivor and perpetrator, which can be viewed as parallel to Tutsi and Hutu. Public discourse is navigated through terms such as survivor (Tutsi survivors of the genocide), old caseload refugees (majority Tutsi exile returnees from the diaspora), new caseload refugees (majority Hutu refugees from the Congo or nearby internally displaced camps in the
region), and suspected *genocidaires* (perpetrators and/or conspi- rators of the genocide).\textsuperscript{13} These legally sanctioned categories dictate privilege and rights to land, financial support, education, health, and access to other daily needs. As will be explained below these categories are not black and white and have made citizenship in Rwanda even more difficult for individuals who do not fit in them. The use of the terminology above delimits the proper spaces and contexts for expression of the genocide and in doing that privileges certain groups. This delimitation also leaves Rwandans locked into categorical boxes that are ill equipped to depict the complex conditions of past and present circumstances, despite the fact that some of these categories can be negotiated. By looking at women’s participation in the negotiation of these terms in the narration of their experiences during the genocide in 1994 and afterward the reader is able to find the creative spaces they inhabit. In these spaces they employ traumatic experiences as platforms to earn the privilege of securing their livelihoods, to the exclusion of others.

**The “West vs. the Rest”: Rwanda and the International Community**

The involvement of the international community in exacerbating and deepening the impact of the genocide also deserves analysis. In *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda* Alison Des Forges states, “The Germans, who established a colonial administration at the turn of the century, and the Belgians who replaced them after the First World War, ended the occasional open warfare that had taken place within Rwanda and between Rwanda and its neighbors. Both Germans and Belgians sought to rule Rwanda with the least cost and the most profit.”\textsuperscript{14} Alison Des Forges explores the social


\textsuperscript{14} Alison Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story Genocide in Rwanda* (Human Rights Watch, 1999), 34.
and political transformations taking place in Rwanda among Africans under the rule of Yuhi V. Musinga of the Nyiginya royal court from 1896-1931. She demonstrates the political centralization that takes place at the turn of the century under Musinga’s father Kigeri Rwabugiri. This political centralization demonstrates the relationship between colonial vision and Rwandan government through transformations in the royal courts, religion, and changing socio-economic identifications. The royal court and colonial indirect rule became co dependent of one another in administration and expansion. In “Colonialism, Ethnicity, and Rural Political Protest: Rwanda and Zanzibar in Comparative Perspective,” Catherine Newbury also demonstrates the pre colonial struggles taking place that led to the centralization of power and the restructuring of vulnerability among varied groups once colonial powers imposed themselves on the territory. These transitions spread differently depending on the location of the people and colonial and/or royal court investment in the territory. During World War I, Germany was driven out of its East African territories by Belgium and Britain, leaving a military post they had inhabited from 1898-1916. The League of Nations mandated Belgium rule over Rwanda years later though they had been present since 1916 in the territory and remained in the territory until its independence in 1962.\textsuperscript{15}

Though conflict between Hutus, Tutsis, and Twa was not uncommon, Europeans created new forms of difference to afford them the easiest and cheapest way of gaining access to Rwanda’s natural resources. Both Germany and Belgium contributed to the stratification of the socio-economic difference between the Tutsi and Hutu with ‘ethnic’

favoritism.\textsuperscript{16} The Twa were given significantly less attention in maintaining the colonial regime due to their small numbers within the territory. One of these transformations was from variable ethnic identities or more fluid “instrumentalist views”\textsuperscript{17} to rigid ethnic identities that reflected class formations and the social/political changes supported by the colonial agenda.\textsuperscript{18} These identities became signifiers of status in society whether those that identified with the categories reflected that status or not with client-ship, educational advancements, and policy reforms implemented by chiefs instilled with power by the colonial administration. Colonization by Europeans introduced dual colonization in Rwanda, one run by the Europeans and one by the elite Rwandans as a process of creating rule by chiefdoms was spread over the territory. The elite chiefs favored their regions and kin and maintained authority with the support of the colonial power in exchange for their services as administrators of colonial rule. This primarily involved the implementation of exploitative land policies and taxes. This system of client ship became an efficient way for the colonial administration to wield power over the population.

The second form of difference that fused with the first transformation was the racialization of bodies. This system of classification was founded on the Hamitic hypothesis created by German linguist Carl Meinhof who used the “myth of the curse of the black descendants of Ham” to help fuel the paternalistic theories of rule and partition of Africa by European colonialists. An aspect of the Hamitic theory asserted that Africans of lighter skin color were descendants of Europeans and therefore elite. It led to a

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\textsuperscript{18} Ibid. 254.
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segregation of those deemed descendants of Europeans, Caucasian from the descendants of Ham, and their elevation above Africans darker in complexion such as the Bantu. In the context of Rwanda the Tutsis are considered to have lighter skin, taller stature, and smaller noses than the Hutus and to have migrated from North Africa. The Belgians introduced ethnicity cards to the people as a way to further solidify the feelings of difference between those who were assigned and/or identified as Hutu or Tutsi. Privilege became tied to racial markers.\textsuperscript{19} Racial theory acted as a validation and maintenance of colonial administration as well as a measure for international intervention.

The Belgian occupation in Rwanda coincides with the French presence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and subsequently Rwanda. Many of the missionaries in the DRC were Flemish. The independence of Rwanda from the Belgians in 1962 brought on the attention of the French, using discourse of liberation and retribution by the Hutu to secure access to Africa’s rich central regions. Though the French did not colonize Rwanda, their neo-colonialism in the 1980s through 1990s supported the agenda of pro-Hutu dominance politically and monetarily in Rwanda.

By looking at the relationship between France and Rwanda, specifically the encouragement the French government gave to the Hutu regime, Jean Francois Bayart is able to disprove the idea that the genocide in Rwanda is only founded upon ethnic binaries. Like Newbury and Des Forges he finds that the motivations supporting of the

\textsuperscript{19} The Belgian administration instated a territory wide initiative of ethnic division in the 1920s by requiring the use of ethnicity cards to control the movement of Rwandans as well as the privileging of the Tutsis in access to socioeconomic advancements. The pro-Hutu government continued to use these identity cards to marginalize the Tutsi after independence. Though ethnic and regional favoritism was practiced the majority of the population Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa were excluded from the small retention of wealth and power. Edmund Abaka and J.B. Gashugi, “Forced Migration From Rwanda: Myths and Realities,” \textit{Refuge} 14, no. 5 (October 1994): 9-12.
divisions are complex. France had great economic and geographic interest in Rwanda’s location relative to the DRC, which was not a part of its empire. The French were against U.S. and British advancement in the territory stemming from earlier conflicts over rights to the African interior during the scramble for Africa.\textsuperscript{20} This vested interest informed their support for the majority Hutu state in the independence era as a way to secure a French presence and subsequently for the genocide nearly two and a half decades later.

France provided military and technical support to Habyarimana’s Rwanda in defense of its assets.\textsuperscript{21} If the Tutsi were the majority ethnic group would the French have simply supported them so long as they complied with French presence? Through French support Rwanda became an ethno-democratic state. The legacy of racial theory leads scholars such as Mahmood Mamdani in \textit{When Victims Become Killers, Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda} to assert that this was a Native’s genocide in Rwanda and further that the identities Hutu and Tutsi were trans-ethnic, political identities not predicated on ethnicity but on race. He states, “It was a genocide by those who saw themselves as sons—daughters—of the soil, and their mission as one of clearing the soil of a threatening \textit{alien} presence. This was not an “ethnic” but a “racial” cleansing, not violence against one who is seen as neighbor but against one who is seen as foreigner…one that seeks to eliminate a foreign presence from home soil, literally and physically.”\textsuperscript{22} If we read the categories Hutu and Tutsi as political and socio-economic, as opposed to historicized ethnic difference, we can begin to understand how the present

forms of testimonies of trauma, privilege, and loss work to further stratify the state in
their positioning of subject-hood in the construction of the testimony.

The promulgation of colonial administration and rule through local chiefs and
sub-chiefs was predicated on the imagined narrative that Tutsis were considered more
similar to Europeans thus superior to the Hutu and Twa in Rwanda. Colonial and
neocolonial European powers have always supported political dominance by either the
Tutsi or Hutu to advance their own interests. Rwanda has a traumatic history; it rises not
only from he resentments harbored from the genocide in 1994 but also from negative
outcomes of struggles over scarce land; from elite domination, colonial rule, and the
recycling of historical structures of domination for new political rule has played a role in
the frequent disruption of society.

Critical Problems in Traumatic Representation

In pursuit of these lines of inquiry this study will address some critical problems
having to do with traumatic experiences in representation under three main categories.
These are not prescriptive but act as contextual tools for interrogating subjective lived
experiences as they are retold through literature. Firstly, problems that arise are questions
of the communicability of extreme experiences. This issue emerges in the retelling of the
event. This project refers to Cathy Caruth to argue for the understanding of trauma as an
experience that dislocates the individual(s) from the original event in both a
psychological and physical manner. Trauma manifests within a crisis of knowing and not
knowing the entirety of the experience. Ten percent of the population was killed; there is
doubly a loss of entire communities and of one’s senses to reconcile the event. The
transmission of these experiences from person to person with this understanding of
trauma asks how one is able to communicate or receive the horrors of the genocide not only as a testifier but also as a mediator and consumer. What is gained and lost in representations as they are told to the public? Patricia Yaeger’s notion of “empathy-unfriendly” will be used to address the crisis of communicability as it is found in narrative expression by testifiers and mediators to readers. Michael Rothberg’s concept of “traumatic realism” is employed in the project not only to examine the complexities of periodized accounts of genocide in their assemblage in a narrative but also the implication of multiple actors in mediating traumatic spaces.

Secondly, questions of convention and form when these extreme experiences are produced and received in production will be explored. These are questions about the adequacy of representing these experiences; about the commodification of grief, and about how representations become official modes of understanding Rwandan testimonial history. The use of Alexandre Dauge Roth’s concepts of “symbolic violence” and “hospitality” address the adequacy of narrative expression’s mediation of extreme events between the author and reader. These concepts criticize standard reception by the public of the events and the construction of official representations that discard or commoditize obscene experiences to position themselves as the “true remembrance.” Adetayo Alabi’s reconstruction of the use and recognition of autobiographies as “Black autobiographies” will be employed in this project to understand the similarities that can be drawn in using both Véronique Tadjo and Boubacar Boris Diop’s works to represent experiences of genocide. Both locate self-narration in representation as a key aspect of testimonial work in their narratives. Subjugation and racial marginalization in Black autobiographies though experienced differently throughout the African diaspora, can create common
ground for an analysis of individuals who share ‘othered’ positions globally and choose to locate the self in their texts on other marginalized experiences. An important question is how adequate these representations are at constructing loss?

The instrumentalization of these forms in literature are examined in great detail with Madelaine Hron’s critique of the production of the Fest’ Africa Commemorative Project’s works which were heavily supported by the French government. Paul Eakin’s examination of the understanding of the self in narrating one’s life is helpful to link the idea of a processional identity always caught in the present with the examination of traumatic representations that disrupt traditional chronologies.

Thirdly, questions of justice and ethics as they are deployed in literature and on the ground in Rwanda will also be analyzed. How are testimonies assembled for global consumption, and are there sites in the assemblages that also grant the testifier agency? Can the agency, if found within the narrative be a contestation to the failure of presumed justice in standard representations? How are narratives constructed to produce an ethical bond between the testifier and foreign public? Is it possible to construct a narrative that does not simply allow a superficial participation in the experience by the public but an engagement with the experience that can produce new forms of understanding the subjectivity of justice in a “post-genocide” era? The use of Bhaskar Sarkar and Janet Walker’s adaptation of “Culture of Intimacy” will be used as a cultural scene to layout the deployment and reception of the experiences on the genocide of 1994. It is with the understanding that contemporary technologies foster a close relationship between testifiers and second witnesses that designate social norms and responsibility
Three Elements in Traumatic Representations

For this project there are three elements (actors) involved in the production and demand for traumatic representations of the Rwandan genocide; the testifier, mediator, and consumer. These actors drive the process of traumatic production and play a role in the assemblage of experiences on the genocide. This paper analyzes the relationship between these actors. In this project the testifiers are individuals or collectives that recount the event and have witnessed the genocide firsthand. The mediators are individuals, collectives, and/or institutions that mediate the production of the experiences testified by primary witnesses. Those who were not present during the event but have shown an interest and demand for the production of the traumatic events are the consumers. They can also be referred to as the second witness, experiencing the testifier’s experience secondhand. Different questions arise in the interrogation of each of these categories, which are not mutually exclusive but can be delimited in different discursive spaces.

Traumatic Representations in the Novels Murambi, the Book of Bones and The Shadow of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda and the Recasting of Women’s Narratives

Diop and Tadjo’s works are well placed to anchor my discussion of the above issues for three main reasons. First, because their novels were both created as a part of the Fest’ Africa Commemorative Project “Rwanda: Writing as a Duty to Remember,” an artistic collective of nine Francophone artists who were sent to Rwanda in 1998 to create a work on the genocide with the intention of memorializing the event. Both works create a space to analyze their content in relation to the authors, both ‘insert the self’ into the
texts as a means of distancing their witnessing from primary witnesses (this is a practice between the author and the characters as well as between characters in the text). This opens up the space to discuss ethics and witnessing from afar on extreme experiences. Second, these works allow for a discussion of the involvement of the West in the perpetuation of the genocide and in the production of narratives of it for consumers. Lastly, these narratives pay particular attention to the experiences of women who were and continue to be the majority sex in the country. This fact is one that is instrumental in understanding how representations of the events in 1994 have been gendered. They also offer a depiction of the aftermath of the genocide that enables a discussion of the manifestations of trauma and how testifiers, mediators, and consumers respond to the realities of Rwanda today through these traumatic representations.

**Rationale Behind the Study of Rwanda**

The Rwandan genocide of 1994 can be used as an event to interrogate numerous issues regarding the traumatic affects of extreme experiences and how multiple actors commoditize them. Many accounts of the events that took place in 1994 ranged within a narrow spectrum from spontaneous violence to an ongoing ethnic battle between the Hutu and Tutsi, eradicating the existence of the Twa from the struggles entirely. Not only were there simplistic, if changing, accounts of the significance of ethnic difference to the conflicts, but also the minimal coverage of influence that the West had on the conflict in past and present circumstances. What makes Rwanda especially critical for research is the continued suppression of the freedom to testify to the events of the past in any manner outside of what is agreeable with the official history in the constitution. There are still many untold stories that deserve expression today. The response to the genocide by the
international community attests to the inadequacies of the West to produce a
collaborative, efficient response to genocidal acts. In the wake of this inactivity by the
international community an authoritative government under President Paul Kagame head
of the RPF has succeeded in maintaining a stronghold over the state. The West has
turned a blind eye to the divisions that persist in the country. The slogans “never again”
or “do not forget” born out of the witnessing of the Jewish Holocaust seem to apparently
respond to the deep impact of the genocide but have impacted little on the participatory
integration of the nation. These phrases have aided in cultivating passive responses and
shallow understandings of the recent genocides such as in Rwanda, Cambodia, the
Balkans region, and Sudan.

There is an assumed ethical responsibility in testifying to an event by the testifier
as well as the secondary witness. This assumption is produced in the traditional forms of
documentation that aim to represent a realist or truthful account of events. Traditional
historians use testimony to adhere social and historical realities together; testimonies
become a piece of the official truth. Further, once pieced together the compilation of
representations is considered one finished product, so events are shown as capable of
having a beginning, middle, and end. This chronology of events informs the past
(memory), present, and future representations of the genocide. This is a realist concept of
a natural progression beyond an event. Researchers, academics, or other institutions that
use periodized rhetoric in representation to support their findings or agenda will use
commentary like “the past is the past” or “history must lay down” to maintain the idea
that societies can be narratized along the lines of a standard progression. The first stance
begs in elegant expression the audience’s attention and memory of the unique brutality of
the event while the last seeks to leave past experiences of the testifiers behind. Instead of fostering ethical responsibility in the global age these ideas have instead fostered an ‘innocence of superficiality’. ‘Innocence of superficiality’ creates ignorance or amnesia of atrocities due to the indifference the paradox cultivates. In *The Writing and Filming of the Genocide of the Tutsis in Rwanda* Alexandre Dauge-Roth states that it is insufficient to document the horror humans can inflict on other humans if one addresses neither the ethical dimension of remembering nor the implications of what awareness the past generates within the present of our actions.\(^{23}\) Nobody would agree that the events of the Holocaust should be forgotten so why was recognition and active participation in aiding the Rwandans when genocide was recognizably taking place lost in US bureaucracy? Memory alone has not served well to address genocides such as in Rwanda. This is why critical engagement with traumatic events is needed; documentation of traumatic events should not simply be a repository of information to gaze upon. Genocide is disturbing, uneasy, and disrupts our security in understanding human interaction. The public has become accustomed to receiving information about a traumatic experience in ways that grant it a privileged position of invasive watcher. Representations are constructed in a manner that superficially show a one-sided view of experiences. This false sense of wholeness allows the foreign individual or consumer, a space to empathize and own the experience. These representations are founded upon an illusion of finality in experience that delimits and constricts further testimonies or evidence that do not align with the accepted narrative. Simply presenting images or asking to remember is not enough to

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understand how one is implicated in an event; especially one in whose unfolding they
were not physically present. Witnessing from afar requires sensitivity to contextualization
of what is being produced and presented. Testimonies, images, videos, and documents are
evidence of divergent accounts of the massacre that can disrupt the dominant discourses.
If there are testimonies, events, or experiences that disrupt popular opinion on the
genocide, where can they be found? What makes the conventions and forms of these
narratives engaging and/or problematic in their representations of the event? As witnesses
from afar how do we make decisions on what representations to accept or deny, knowing
that these accounts are constructed forms of knowing?

An overarching aim in this project is to question the global implications of
assigning frameworks of commensurability in representations of traumatic experiences.
Drawing upon Murambi and The Shadow of Imana to discuss more “glocalized”
understandings of the complexities involved in conveying such extreme experiences. The
interplay between global considerations in the world economy and localized specificity in
the representational production of extreme experiences and events is complex process
and it requires nuanced attention. Literature provides the space for a comparative
analysis of the perspectives that inform entrepreneurial trends in recognition of violent
events and their relationship to the construction of acceptable forms of narration for
justice or common good. By using the theoretical approaches below from trauma theory,
genocide studies, and narratology this work gives an interdisciplinary analysis of the
above questions and concerns to expand upon the literature addressing traumatic events

and representations of the Rwandan genocide in 1994, as multiple actors mediate them. It is predominantly qualitative but incorporates quantitative data as well to locate intersections and divergences in representations. It examines the material effects of these experiences on witnesses whose positionality is engendered by the value assigned to their experiences in the production of official discourse on the genocide.
CHAPTER 2: “Trauma, Narrative, and Ethical Dilemmas within a
“Culture of Intimacy””

Today, as a more ‘global’ public emerges where telecommunication is readily available and new media forms for testimonial accounts are constantly being produced and transformed people are seeking new ways to participate in the telling of experiences. Accounts of events that attempt to retrieve a lost history tend to focus on empirical evidence as the main form of documentation. These historical accounts do not adequately address the psychological dimensions of testifying to genocide. Normative representations hinder a diverse understanding of the event and an understanding of the motivations behind the demand for these traumatic experiences by the public. In the case of genocide where experiences are extreme or irretrievable, where does the psychical dynamic of individual and collective trauma situate itself when testifying to these events? In Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History Cathy Caruth examines the referential experience for the subject(s) as one “taken out of the space of the event” that is repeated in unexpected ways in the form of “traumatic neurosis.”\(^{25}\) The survivor is subjected to reliving the experience against his or her will.\(^{26}\) How does one come to terms with the responsibility to (re) present this traumatic experience to the global public as a survivor, an author, or from institutional standpoints? One finds that there is a production

\(^{26}\) Ibid. 2.
of sense of responsibility found in intellectual culture that fosters the perception of an intimate global community. This intimacy consists of local and global networks of testimony via audio, film, press, and internet outlets that creates a band of citizens connected by access to one another’s experiences. The assemblages of testimonies are deployed as apparati, or technologies in building an archive of suffering. They are used to convey the traumatic experiences of the witness(es) while also setting parameters for acceptable forms of testimony and archive in various locales. These technologies produce a close proximity between those who directly and indirectly experienced the events. They build a global affective bond between, for example, those who survived the Rwandan genocide on the ground and those who viewed the horrific events from the United States on television and in other press.

In *Documentary Testimonies, Global Archives of Suffering* Bhaskar Sarkar and Janet Walker use “telemediatization,” a term coined by John Tomlinson to describe the network of these technologies that influence our emotional sensibilities and ethical horizons to discuss what has become universal information on those who have historically been considered far away. These technologies create a window into the experiences of others and prime us for emotive responses to them. These responses in media reflect a fascination with suffering: the reification of suffering as prime-time spectacle. The process of making the events a spectacle desensitizes the affect of the event on the public. It is induced by the excessive exposure to morbid imagery, the self-

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valorizing aspects of projective identification, and the specious nature of remote charity work.”

By virtue of the technology of mass mediation one is able to assume a position as second witness. The second witness is granted a privileged set of eyes on the world and this privilege allows one to witness severely traumatic and dangerous events from the comfort of home. Images of Africans killing Africans, machetes, and discourse that solely privilege Tutsi innocence circulated in the media. These representations and the discussions that followed fostered an emotive involvement of the distant public with the Rwandan events. There appeared in them narratives that created normative depictions, defining what is acceptable and what is not in representations of the genocide. The genocide’s telemediatization for a global community has been fraught with what Alexandre Dauge-Roth calls “symbolic violence,” a process that occurs when representations of the past attempt to position themselves as the ‘true remembrance’ or more generally as authentic objectification of knowledge. Symbolically violent narratives ground their legitimacy in the ignorance of their conditions of production leading to a contextual erasure preventing any positional awareness; excluding or severing cultural and social processes to define what is worthy of memory. A wide spectrum of experiences are not represented in the narrow framing of genocidal discourse, given the limits set on that discourse by the current Rwandan president, Paul Kagame and institutions such as the (ICTR), the gacaca courts, and non profit organizations such as

29 Alexandre Dauge-Roth, Writing and Filming the Genocide of the Tutsis in Rwanda: Dismembering and Remembering Traumatic History (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishing Inc., 2010), 18.
Human Rights Watch. It is with an understanding that there are conflicting representations of discursive levels that we ask: how are alternative subjects outside of or in contestation to official discourse being produced and identified according to categories of survivor, perpetrator, and Returnee (i.e. the Diaspora of Rwandan descendants returning to Rwanda from other countries) after the genocide of 1994?

In *Traumatic Realism, the Demands of Holocaust Production* Michael Rothberg examines the relationship between both holocaust studies and cultural studies with three main aims: to argue the necessity in understanding how extraordinary and ordinary aspects of genocide intersect in holocaust representation, to compare and contrast reflections on the means and modes of representations of the holocaust, and to present an alternative approach to understanding the demand for confronting the holocaust. Rothberg uses the contentious status of realism, modernism, and postmodernism to situate holocaust studies in intellectual debates. These concepts are typically viewed as specific periods of time and modes of thinking. Rothberg’s concepts can also be seen as responses to demands for historical documentation in which the authoritative construction of temporal and spatial difference in the respective disciplines’ mediations of genocide are rethought, as are the political implications borne within those respective disciplines. The demands for representation of the Holocaust include the demand for documentation, the demand for reflection on the formal limits of representation, and lastly the demand for the risky public circulation of discourses of events. 30 The mediation of these demands has led to a theoretical debate between scholars over representations of the Holocaust, the

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realists versus the anti realists. The realist approach to the Holocaust considers the event to be knowable; the experiences can be documented and understood using scientific approaches. Common vocabulary of the realist would be terms like modern, science, and modernity. The antirealist detaches the extreme from the everyday, with terminology like transcendence, obscenity, irresolvable, incommensurable, and tremendous. The realist incorporates the extreme into an official chronology of historical events and social constructions. The antirealist approach to the Holocaust is the belief in the irretrievability of the event or experience, an unknowable account in any holistic form of representation that leads to the need for new forms of acquiring knowledge for documentation. It is with the conflicting approaches and representations of the genocide in real and anti real debates that Rothberg offers “traumatic realism” as an aesthetic and cognitive solution to the conflicting demands inherent in representing and understanding genocide. Traumatic realism mediates between the realist and anti realist position in Holocaust studies and marks the necessity of considering how the ordinary and extraordinary aspects of genocide intersect and coexist. Traumatic realism, as Rothberg theorizes, at once requires realism, the objectification of documentation; modernism, the narrative abstractions of documentation; and postmodernism, the economic force behind traumatic demand. Rothberg makes traumatic realism a response to heightened need for differentiation/definition of the real in a global age where “new forms of testimonial, documentary art, and cultural production” have complicated further the periodization of what is modern or postmodern. These technologies create a space to see the conflicting

32 Ibid. 9.
and overlapping representations in media. It is with these issues in mind that historians, postmodernists, poststructuralists, cultural studies scholars, psychoanalysts, literary scholars, and the like engage in “theory wars” between the real and anti-real representations of events. The irony of the creation of discrete, formal signs of each response as Rothberg points out is that the existence of real, modern, and postmodern is a modernist approach to documentation, further proving that these forms cannot be seen as the inexistence appearing in strict chronological succession. Each response/period is contingent upon its present imposition on another’s representation.

Rothberg’s multidisciplinary approaches to genocide are used for the interrogation of what is represented as the everyday and complexity of experiences regarding the Jewish Holocaust in contemporary cultural production. He analyzes survivor accounts of the genocide, and the economic motivations behind the representations of traumatic experiences in films such as Schindler’s List and Sophie’s Choice, and in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM).\(^{33}\) Rothberg argues that all of these experiences can operate within the same time or space showing that these responses to demand for documentation cut across historical constructions. Traumatic realism provides an aesthetic and cognitive solution to the conflicting demands inherent in representing and understanding genocide and mediates between the realist and anti realist position in Holocaust studies. It marks the necessity of considering how the ordinary and extraordinary aspects of genocide intersect and coexist.\(^{34}\) Traumatic realism allows for the access of new understandings of the manifestation of trauma for the

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\(^{34}\) Ibid. 9.
testifier and public. These streamlined historical accounts risk engulfing the particularities of the traumatic experience that to some extent can be retrievable with a new understanding of the ‘collision’ or contradictions of essentialized phases and representations.\textsuperscript{35} This “constellation” that Rothberg maps out is able to give a new form of narrating and understanding extreme experiences that does not rely on the partition of past and present but on the connection of different moments in time.

In “Realism as a Form of Production” Michael Rothberg describes the concentrationary universe, a space of immense trauma, where concentrationees are “set apart from the rest of the world by an experience impossible to communicate.”\textsuperscript{36} The specificity of traumatic experiences leaves a legacy of the extreme with the survivor. It’s an unrelenting connection that transcends the space of the encounter imposing upon present, future, and past events (memory). Trauma illuminates the relationship between the everyday and the complexity of the event.\textsuperscript{37}

A further elaboration of Caruth’s points cited above claim the repetition of the trauma speaks to the necessity and impossibility of confronting death or the reality of the situation. She makes this statement as a counter to the post-structural view that the diverse rhetoric and perspective of individual experience cannot give validity to a collective one. Post-structuralisms take the stance that any representation of a collective only undermines the individualist reality of experiences. Examining multiple perspectives of WWII, disrupting the notion of a linear chronology of historical events, and analyzing

\textsuperscript{35} Michael Rothberg, \textit{Traumatic Realism: the Demands of Holocaust Representation} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 9.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid. 116.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid. 6.
some of the ways trauma is embodied in testimony, Caruth provides sites of redemptive history. It is a space between the shock and belated experience of trauma, a knowing within the crisis of not knowing the totality of an experience. It is in the indirect access to the event or experience of loss that we are able to retrieve a closer understanding of the manifestations of a traumatic event in its retelling. With Caruth’s understanding of the irretrievable and its new mediation of the relationship between the testifier and the public, understanding the experience is no longer about replicating an official discourse on genocide but about engaging the nonconcentrationary world in the event.

In relation to concentrationary space questions arise for this project that mark a major difference in the relationship between perpetrators in the concentration camps and perpetrators in the Rwandan genocide of 1994. The violence exacted on the Jewish population was different from the very personal destruction against Tutsis, moderate Hutu, and the reprisal killings in Rwanda. It was carried out in churches, schools, and homes of friends and family. What happens when all spaces are the concentrationary universe? Does the space become a genocidal universe where the spaces of loss and irretrievability are a further fusion of public and private space for the testifier (past, personal relationships with venues)? Jews in the Holocaust were shipped away and killed in masses and in impersonal ways, possibly by neighbors but this was not common in comparison to Rwanda. In Rwanda, it was an effective massacre that relied on the manpower of the people using basic tools to kill such as the machete. This contrasts with Europe where the Holocaust involved industrial networks that relied less on communal manpower and focused more on the individual(s), using gas chambers and building specific sites for both labor and death camps. This is not to say that the Jewish Holocaust
was not a group motivated/executed event but to question how these different technologies can affect the relationship between representations of the spaces of complexity and the survivor’s mediation of the ‘sacredness’ of trauma as they are staged in memorialization for those who were not present or did not survive.

With the immense amount of scholarship and varied representations of the genocide in Rwanda from filmic portrayals such as *Hotel Rwanda* to politico-geographical accounts like Mahmood Mamdani’s *When Victims Become Killers, Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*, how is the global public in relation to genocide primed to witness the event? What is involved with the production of these traumatic experiences of the *other* at the level of content, form, and deployment of trauma? Rothberg’s inquiry into the production of traumatic narratives on genocide and their contradictions in approaches raises useful issues in concepts of space and time. Representations that incorporate the genocide into history as a natural event risk drowning out the extremity of the event that testimony provides. Popular media documents this when representing traumatic experiences. Janet Walker and Bhaskar Sarkar explore the ‘politics of truth’ in the abundance of testimonial apparati that creates windows onto the mass witnessing of experiences of trauma. Understanding that these productions are a part of a “Culture of Intimacy” where contemporary technologies engender a more intense impression of proximity and engagement and dictate which mediations are suited to testify to atrocities such as genocide, one finds that the audience
has a long standing history of a consumption of intimate experiences of the Other in many narrative forms.  

Ethics in Fictional Narrative: Responsibility and Representation in Testimonies

Stories of past atrocities, for instance, may enable their hearers to empathize with distant victims, but they often do not tell their listeners how to turn empathy into usable knowledge in the present. Fiction may inspire us, but they do not give us a clear picture of how to be responsible for what we see (Peters: 2001: 722).

In “Witnessing: US citizenship and the Vicarious Experience of Suffering” Carrie Rentschler discusses the political implications of witnessing as a modern mass mediated experience of suffering in the US. The way in which these images and stories are disseminated creates certain empathetic bonds between the consumers and those deemed victims who testify. In the above quotation Rentschler advances the view that ‘fiction’ or fictive narratives have limitations as to how far their reconstructions can mobilize ethical responses to events by their readers. The above statement also calls attention to a hierarchical structure of narrative representations of extreme events to inform the public. Can ‘fictive’ narratives be human rights testimonies? Rentschler’s article argues fiction is an inspirational tool, easily exploited by media for mass witnessing of atrocities. She examines representations of atrocities that create a sense of citizenship or nation-hood among publics that are held ethically responsible in reception of the extreme event.

Wendy Hesford states, “Testimonio and autobiography share the affirmation of the speaking subject,” but testimonio destabilizes traditional conventions of

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38 Bhaskar Sarkar and Janet Walker, Documentary Testimonies, Global Archives of Suffering (New York: Routleage, 2010), 22.
40 Ibid. 296.
autobiography through its “affirmation of the individual self in a collective mode.” The affirmation of the individual and collective self allows for the collision of a multi-voiced truth. It is with polyvocal experiences that do not conform to prescribed social representations or “scripts” that we can analyze the materiality of traumatic experiences such as rape. These scripts are a part of the focus of this paper, the constellation of experiences that are not meant to superficially cover the genocide but uncover agency that is sought by witnesses or testifiers in Rwanda. A testimonio is meant to attest to truth, an autobiography acts as a self-narration of one’s life. Autobiographical text/narration (s) can be used as a testimony but is also seen as distanced from a fuller reality by virtue of its singular perspective. Testimonio is taken as evidence that is meant to justify or disprove a larger event or experience. Testimonio accounts can stand-alone as single voice or in collective engagement with an event. They can validate and nullify truths in the eye of the public. Here I diverge from Wendy Hesford and choose to use concepts of autobiographical form to analyze traumatic representations because these accounts can be informative about the realities of individual and collective experiences. Autobiographic form as a means to explore the traumatic production of the genocide of 1994 in novels not only provides a space of affirmation of self/selves but also underwrites a mode of acquisition of resources by Rwandans living with the legacies of event. This project views traumatic production as an assemblage operating on multiple levels whereby trauma is defined and transformed by actors as it becomes available in their different spaces of communication. There is both the production of trauma and the act of

production that is traumatic in the process of representing extreme experiences. Traumatic representations are not without exclusion in their delimitations of the expression for individuals. Extreme representations are a process of inclusion and exclusion in testimonial production on the genocide. The question becomes how to prevent these violent experiences such as genocide from taking place? How do the individuals involved in traumatic production articulate their stories in a way that enables beneficial growth in security of their daily lives and gives the foreign community of those who were not present a depiction of the atrocities that fuels more ethical communities instead of merely recycling images of the genocide? In looking at the usage of trauma as an apparatus specifically for women to access resources within and outside of state borders, extreme narratives that privilege autobiographical construction can be seen as making specific cultural claims on grievances to the public that also generates a freer space to interpret the problems of cultural norms in representations.

These genres, testimonio, autobiography, and fiction, all reflect a negotiation of truths in their construction that present perspectives that are instrumental in the creation and transformation of what exists on the genocide. They can be deployed as a tools of propaganda or violence, as forms of healing or memorialization, and as many other means of imagining a reality into existence. Because realities are reified by representational constructions one can see why novelists and poets are imprisoned for their work: when what is deemed fiction and non-fiction begin to merge in representations. These representational conflicts expose the fragility of societal norms by presenting competing forces in the works.
In the Fest’ Africa narratives examined in this project the need for discourse that counters normative representations is what leads to the use of autobiographical fiction and testimonio in the analysis of the Rwandan genocide. Murambi, the Book of Bones and The Shadow of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda act as (re) presentations and creative approaches geared toward informing the public and countering the normative history of the event. Seeing the novels in this manner and deploying empathy-denial as a tool to investigate how authors and their characters are implicated in the production of the trauma can lead to new understandings of extreme experiences. The Rwandan genocide provides the audience not only with an understanding of the events that problematize common representations but show the complex interactions between people and societal demands. The intersection of ‘subtle dialectics’ or methods to create a truth exposes the unreliability of representations that are used as official evidence. In “Literature, Community, and Violence Reading African Literature in the West, Post-9/11” Richard Priebe states, “The unthinkable, the unimaginable can be thought, imagined, and spoken in literature with an impunity not granted us in real life, yielding an understanding we find hard to abstract from real events.”43 The novels Murambi, the Book of Bones by Boubacar Boris Diop and The Shadow of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda by Véronique Tadjo can be studied as constellations, a montage in which diverse elements are brought together through the act of writing. It is meant to emphasize the importance of representation in interpretation of history as the in between space that ties together the present and past of spatial and temporal overlap in historical representations of the

genocide that extract new understandings. This means that one can find testimonies within the narratives that struggle to be recognized as unique but are also connected to larger accounts of the event. These testimonies, as sites of unique extremities, create a space that allows for an understanding of the dynamism of realities between testifiers, mediators, and consumers who negotiate extraordinary events. This inquiry aims to use sites of self-narration by both the authors and characters that push against the limits of objective categories set in Rwanda and also seeks to respect that the most ‘enlightened’ state of understanding is the understanding that one cannot understand everything that has and continues to happen in Rwanda. These theoretical concepts and criticisms influence the analysis of varied self-narrations and testimonies below on the Rwandan genocide and reflect a new temporal understanding of it. This new understanding shows conflicts borne out of mythologized, normative narratives of representation. By conducting an intertextual analysis in the novels they are both seen as both singular works that are comprised of multiple perspectives. Novels as spaces of layered meanings can inform an interrogation of other readings by the consumers that inform extratexual realities of life in Rwanda such as governmental documentation. This reading approach can engage the reader in a way that leads to critical appreciation of the constructedness of texts in general rather than relying on the texts’ label as official or nonofficial, fact or fiction.

Each work uses autobiographical narrative construction to problematize gendered representations of agency in their account of traumatic experiences of the genocide in

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1994. This is due not only to marginalization of voices of women but also their undeniable presence in reconstruction. *Murambi* and *Shadow of Imana* confront the historicity and legacy of how traumatic events manifest themselves in public and private discourse that has required the highly monitored representations of women. The novels invoke a species of knowledge production that they define, reject, and transform in their representations even as they expose traumatic values in testimony on the genocide. This is the second inquiry to not only look at how these narratives mediate and reflect traumatic events experienced by women but also to show through analysis of fictitious autobiographical accounts how these testimonies are producing new modes of individual and collective agency in Rwanda and the globalized world.

**Gender and Trauma in Self-narration: Finding Spaces of Agency in Rwanda**

Categories such as victim, survivor, and perpetrator continue to discriminate against ethnicity, region, and gender to suppress voices of Rwandans who threaten dominant powers in the country. These persistent discriminations allow us to see the financial motivations behind the production of narratives whose founding is dependent upon Rwandans’ differential positions with respect to the genocide. This economy of traumatic experiences is negotiated at three levels; the state as recipient of resources from the international community; Rwandan women as recipient of resources from the state; and Rwandan women as recipient of resources from international community. These resources range from monetary aid, water, housing, and education to access to microloans or asylum in another country. Dominant narratives of sexual assault, Tutsi victimhood, orphan-hood, and the spread of HIV/AIDS entitle Rwandans to access education, healthcare, and land ownership depending on which categories they represent.
In “The Economy of Narrative Identity” Paul John Eakin theorizes aspects of narrative the fusion of the ‘narratized’ self in the everyday with the vision of the identity imposed on oneself by one’s economic circumstances in a “narrative identity system.” The “narrative identity system” is the positional meaning generated out of the testifier’s understanding of the self and the economic value assigned by a dominant socioeconomic power to identities that are socially deployed in everyday life. The identities reflect the spaces of opportunity created by dominant powers such as the Government of Rwanda, in which identities are refashioned and reinterpreted. The self in narration has always been responsive to societal demands: the question this project asks is how actors are involved not only with their own construction of identifications but also how and why other actors impose identifications upon them in and for their self-representation. Eakin states, “I write my story I say who I am,” we do not invent our identities out of whole cloth. Instead, we draw on the resources of the cultures we inhabit to shape them, resources that specify what it means to be a man, a woman, a worker, a person in the setting where we live our lives.” How do women access a “narrative identity system” to refashion their positions in “post-genocide” Rwandan society? How does the refashioning testify to the event in 1994 but also speak in order to secure new positions for persons in Rwanda?

In *The Illusion of Cultural Identity* Jean Francois Bayart exposes the dynamic relationship between cultural representations and political practices in popular modes of political action and imagination. He posits that there is no essential national identity but

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only strategies of identity. 47 These identities represent and give access to personal and political agency. Identifications as effected in representation are platforms upon which to recognize Others as within or outside, of a group and they delimit levels of agency that can be viewed as assemblages as social subjects claim them.48 Globalization, Bayart argues, has greatly multiplied the use of identities in the free market. With regard to this multiplying of identities he raises the question: Does globalization’s free market actually release subjects from constraint or are many of the traditional systems of inclusion and exclusion simply repackaged in globalization?

This project responds in part to these questions by showing that strategies of response by subjects are fueled by demand, in certain constrained ways, for representations of the subject’s reality. Testifiers have had to work to change the expressions of media by which they voice grievances of inequalities in order to access the capitalist market. With this being said the use of identifications in order to establish entitlement is not a new phenomenon. What emerges in the narrative on the Rwandan genocide is a genealogy of struggle over narrative agency in reconstruction of the state between different constituencies engaged in state building in Rwanda. Women’s testimonies can be seen as voicing inequalities and untold stories in the context of the reconstruction of the state. These testimonies express a responsibility to witness and also

48 This project uses a concept of assemblages as variable roles of relation that are both material and expressive. Secondly, assemblages exercise different sets of capacities in relation to their deployment and can stabilize (territorialization) or destabilize (deterritorialization) the identity of an assemblage. These processes can work simultaneously on an assemblage and produce different components that lead to the production and participation of other assemblages. See Manuel DeLanda, “Assemblages and Totalities, ” in A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity (London: Ashford Colour Press Ltd., 2006) for further information on assemblages and their variable components.
enact women’s entitlement to aid; they enable women’s ability as agents to acquire resources while bearing witness to the genocidal event. As mentioned above, women were initially 70 percent of the population after the genocide and are still the dominating sex in the country. Though the urban and rural community will not be discussed in great detail here, poor Tutsi and Hutu women who were present during the genocide primarily live in the rural communities while the Diaspora community of Tutsi returnees dominates the urban areas, which are wealthier and attract more international attention. This is neither to posit women’s experiences as more important than men’s nor to reduce their participation in the genocide as actors furthering state repression. Their varied participation and representation will be discussed in detail in the forthcoming chapter. It is rather to attend to the uniqueness of the country being predominantly female immediately after the event and to the continued marginalization of women’s narratives. This is what generates this project’s interest in women’s varied perspectives that are or are not uphold in Rwanda. Women provide a window into not only gender disparities but provide insight into other dimensions/interconnections that also induce conflict - i.e., ethnicity, geographical location, economics, class, and politics. And that also accounts for the privileging of their experiences in this analysis. Discussing the conflicts between dominant narratives and women’s representations allows for an analysis of not only how narratives are gendered but also the divisions that mediators and consumers participate in perpetuating in traumatic production.
Trauma is defined by Wendy Hesford as “the state of mind that ensues from an injury.” This definition is useful by remaining open to include narration on trauma that expresses the daily, habitual wounds of injury on selves versus the common depiction of trauma that requires a monumental experience or overwhelming encounter to be deemed ‘legitimate’. With this understanding of trauma, as a positional concept that is deployed daily and defined differently among actors, it also moves away from the idea that trauma is a static descriptor for experiences. These representations all mediate shifts in the use of trauma by subjects of different modalities who interact with others similar to and different from themselves. The representation of women in Rwanda’s history has been very reductive. They are presented as victims or complacent figures, and as dependent upon men. Women’s experiences can ignite discussion on issues that are not only concerned with gender but media’s power to shape the reader whereby the latter becomes a second witness engaging with the testimonies. Common media portrayals can be understood as working within scripts or extratextual realities (physical being outside of literature) that are accepted by the dominant powers. The interrogation of narrative representation provides the reader with a close view of women’s agential use of trauma narratives as a means to combat silence.

Misrepresentation and Norming in Self-narration: Positioning Black Testimony and Fest’ Africa’s Commemorative Project

The appropriation of written literature by the West, but also by governments such as Rwanda, during state and nation building can be seen as an example of traumatic production. It educates future generations and establishes links between the country and

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historical origins of different groups of Rwandans. Literature has become a valuable tool of social inclusion or exclusion from public and private institutions. Literature draws its power from its longevity to create and represent experiences, events, and/or people. Literature is not only appropriated by dominant powers but also by marginal subjects who have access to the use of writing. It can also be a tool of liberation, a space of expressing injustices. Autobiography has been a topic of great debate on whether or not this genre of writing is European.

In Roger Berger’s “Decolonizing the African Autobiography” he problematizes the notion that the autobiographical narrative is a specifically European construct and cites Gayatri Spivak’s discussion of ‘the problematic self’ as the incommensurable and discontinuous Other that projects and transforms the imperialist self for itself.\(^{(50)}\) Berger states, “Post-colonial literary theory situates post-colonial literatures within the contexts and conditions of their production.”\(^{(51)}\) The theory is grounded in the subjectivity instituted at least in part by power of European colonialism. Colonialism changed the structure of African society by imposing racialized and governmental divisions that degraded many Africans but also privileged others of whom it conferred administrative and different kinds of power. These changes affected the construction of the self.

The identifications that Africans produced in response to societal changes under systems of colonial administration comparable with for struggles over agency by subjects of African descent elsewhere who suffered enslavement. This insight informs Alabi’s


book, *Telling Our Stories, Continuities and Divergences in Black Autobiographies* is an analysis of the construction of Black autobiographies by among others Olaudah Equiano, Maya Angelou, and Wole Soyinka. He gives a cross-cultural, postcolonial analysis of texts to get a better understanding not only of the authors’ narrations but also of their relatedness as Black autobiographers. Autobiography, as defined by the Oxford dictionary, is the story of a person’s life written by himself or herself. Alabi advocates for a new understanding of autobiography that speaks to the legacy of oral traditions and communal expression in narratives written by those of African descent, moving away from the Eurocentric term “autobiography,” -graphy where the affix carries the Greek meaning “written.” 52 People of African descent inhabiting societies that have been and continue to be affected by racial and colonial subordination by Western powers can perform in their self-narrations implicit resistance to racist dominating powers through strategies of narrative subversion. This is in spite of their having been “constituted in part by European” power. The subversive narrative trend of Black autobiography can be demonstrated in both Véronique Tadjo’s and Boubacar Boris Diop’s works representing the Rwandan genocide.

Alabi also addresses the subversive trend by Blacks in response to the systematic denial of a valid place in history and their downgraded status. Under systems of racialized degradation Black figures existed in a liminal status as subjects, represented as stagnant non-contributors in the construction of the western world. Systems of exploitation such as slavery and sharecropping imposed on Blacks brought great financial

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success to the Western powers. Blacks were also heavily involved with the day-to-day operations of maintaining the households.\(^{53}\) The influence that Black figures have had on the building of Western identity had been repressed in historical documentation and literary representation. Blacks were systematically excluded from education and financial security to maintain a system of white hegemony.

Frantz Fanon coined the phrase “fact of Blackness” to indicate ontological commonality in experiences, slave and colonial, of subjects of African decent. Black autobiography, as Alabi uses it, relies on Fanon’s coinage to connect these Black autobiographies through time and space as well as to redefine Black identity. Alabi uses the term Black autobiographies as coming from people of African descent who continue to be affected by imperial subordination by western powers. Self-narration, with the use of Black autobiography, relates the societal systems that the individuals and collectives negotiate on multiple levels to the literary genre. To understand these autobiographies as uniquely Black he uses the term “African oral autobiographies.” In doing this he validates forms of Black self-narration that goes beyond the restrictive notion of autobiography as European and superior to other historical productions of autobiography. This redefinition is a move from preoccupation with written text as the only legitimate form of self-representation. Black autobiographies recast self-narration such that the individual is able to recount their personal experiences while also acknowledging the presences of communally based constructions of the self in which oral traditions are vital.

In this reconstruction autobiographical writing as a mode of expression in Black

autobiography produces a resistance to fight the exploitative legacy of white supremacy and to create a space to understand the individuals of African descent in unique ways who use it. Black autobiographies have the power to testify against individualist Western ideologies in their expressions of multiple positions as subjects. Black autobiographies engage in literary and political relations of struggle and that is their ontological status as representations.⁵⁴

In this essay, preference is given to the understanding of Black autobiographic construction instead of autobiography ‘proper’ to understand representational commonalities in narratives on the Rwandan genocide of 1994. Black autobiographies enable us establish a correlation between these representational works and larger societal transformations such as gendered or geographic difference which one would find, with close analysis, of the genocide and in its aftermath that raise issues of the efficacy of reconstruction in a post-conflict atmosphere. The novels under review in this study *Murambi* and *The Shadow of Imana* are by African authors and in the manner pointed out by Alabi, each of these work shows characteristics specific to traditions found in Black autobiography and which differentiate it from the Western. Audience reception and participation in response to both Diop and Tadjo’s works are insightful in understanding struggles listed above and Rwanda’s local/global position in a “Culture of Intimacy.” Understanding these narratives as created within a space of cultural intimacy we are able to discuss the transformation of societies through a study of its use in creating the neighborly proximity to racialized *Others*.

There are two main points that Alabi makes when assessing the use of fiction and autobiographical construction. The first is that autobiographifiction, autobiographical writing, gives upon “the power of the experience,” supporting the view that the creation of fiction and autobiographies move away from the power of a single truth in self-narration. The second point he makes is that autobiographifiction compromises the Black traditions in self-narration, becoming Afro-European literature. This form of autobiography is still viewed by Alabi as a use of autobiography proper, a move from a communally centered retelling to an individualist perspective. There is an implicit negotiation of the art or craft of constructing a narrative that renders oneself tellable to an audience. Alabi’s concept of Black autobiographies is useful in understanding firstly; the relationships between Black autobiographies, secondly; the competing and conflicting voices within the Black self-narration and lastly how subversive spaces are created within Black autobiography that defy historical representations of events.

This study is going to address the psychic dimensions of Black self-narration, which Alabi’s theses fell short of incorporating in their analysis Black autobiographies. The emphasis on the psychical dynamics of trauma as they are expressed in novels that use autobiographic form can enable space not only for multiple identities by the testifier(s) but also greater understanding of positionality in the metanarrative of the genocide in 1994.

In choosing to look at the production of trauma in narratives and representations of the Rwandan genocide, the authors that comprise of the Fest’ Africa Project, a group of ten Franco-African artists including Senegalese author Boubacar Boris Diop and Ivoirian Véronique Tadjo this work seeks to use the writers’ unique but also shared
ontological position as *Other* to express traumatic experiences on the Rwandan genocide. Being themselves *Other*, they bring relational experience of subjugation to traumatic events experienced by others who, like themselves, are heirs of oppressive systems of racial domination. The Fest’ Africa writers’ perspectives as *other* inform their expression in writing about this extreme event that was predominantly experienced by Rwandans who also happen to be *others* to the Western world. It is with the above concerns in mind along with the genesis of the Fest’ Africa project, whose official title is “*Ecrire par Devoir de Memoire*” or “Rwanda: Writing as a Duty to Remember,” that Murambi and *The Shadow of Imana* as novels adopt the Black autobiographic form to convey the complexities of genocide. The authors were asked to travel to Rwanda in 1998 to complete a commemorative work on the genocide. Remembrance of the genocide, as discussed in the historical section, has been a site of contestation involving dominant powers who seek to maintain the official history of the event and those whose marginal accounts threaten that domination. There are those who support the exclusion of the RPF from documenting any genocidal actions they carried out in 1994 and these are predominantly GOR members and supporters. There is also a struggle over the representation of the involvement of the West, including the French, Belgium, United States, and other colonial and neocolonial actors involved in the event. This struggle over genocidal representation provides insights into the durable tensions between consumers, mediators, and testifiers all of whom are represented in the Fest’ Africa endeavor.

Fest’ Africa’s multicultural initiative attempts to memorialize and inform the global public on the complexities of *istembo bwoko*, the Kinyarwanda term for the genocide, which is also referred to as “the event” in Rwanda. This group of authors and
the production of their works are also part of a representational machine that coopts the specificity of experiences of the event refashioning it in the “simplistic tale.” Accounts of the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and other traumatic experiences such as those retold in child soldier narratives that tends to rely on the “simplistic” tale, that gives an account of the event that only slightly varies from representation to representation. In “Itsembabwoko ‘à la française’? – Rwanda, Fiction and the Franco-African Imaginary,” Madelaine Hron discusses the problems surrounding popular narratives that simplify the event in an effort to render a story comprehensible to Westerners unaware of the complex cultural and political milieu in which the events unfold. This simplistic ‘stability’ narrativity gives the consumers of the text an attainable recollection of an event they are secondary to in reception. With child soldier narratives there is a dominant discussion of heterosexual relationships with child brides, the desert trek, and encounters with wildlife. These narratives prime the reader or consumer to demand prescribed stereotypical accounts of the experiences of child soldiers. Narratives of lost innocence of the children and the need for (Western) paternalistic methods of international intervention are played up in order to bolster global human rights discourse of a certain kind. The same is true of narratives on the Rwandan genocide pertaining to ethnic separatism and gendered participation. Authors are bound by these representational norms. Hron states, “[Authors] therefore face the dilemma of demystifying Rwanda’s history and culture…Many opted, for example, to deal with this difficulty by adopting a child’s perspective.”55 This simplification can trivialize the complex experiences of individuals and the horror of the event.

Hron, as Alabi does above, critiques the preference for European narrative style in her analysis of the Fest’ Africa writers through linguistic favoritism and the mediation of the authors representations of the participation of the West in the genocide. The bias has been for novels translated into the English language in her analysis of the Fest’ Africa writers as well as what she finds to be the unsatisfactory ways the authors represent the West’s participation in the genocide. As a consequence Rwandan writers Jean-Marie Vianney Rurangwa and Venuste Kayimahe have received significantly less attention from the international community and this is partly due to their content and partly due to the fact that their texts have not been translated into English. English is used as the universal language/language of transaction but its dominant use in mediating Rwandan realities results in slippages that suppress social and political expression of events by the testifiers. Language slippage, as occurs in translations, changes the context of the extreme event’s representation depriving it of the specific weight and purchase of the language used in an original work. This does not mean that the expression has necessarily become less valid but it is compromised; mediators and testifiers transform representations of the experiences. Hron points out the irony in Fest’ Africa projects’ monetary base predominantly being funded by the French government who were the largest supporters of ethnic divisionism and neocolonial sponsors of the reign of the Hutu regime. The French Ministry of Culture played a key role in the production of the Fest’ Africa texts. The authorial and publication struggles above are the main subject of Hron’s study on the relationship between the French Ministry of Culture and the production of the Fest’ Africa commemorative works.

Testimony without Intimacy: Understanding of a “Politics of Truth”, Representation, and Agency as Trauma is Deployed in Self-narration to the Public

In “Eye and I: Negotiating Distance in Eyewitness Narrative,” Paul John Eakin analyzes the distance negotiated between eyewitness accounts and the concept of one truth on an event. He further investigates the relationship between the distance between an event and the testifier with the conflicts a witness experiences when recounting a traumatic event. Stories, especially those involving traumatic experiences become much more difficult to convey in representation due to the primary witness(es) inability to absolutely know the violent event as it occurred. The ob-scenity in the irretrievable is what leads Yaeger to coin the concept empathy-denial, “…The moments that refute our compassion and constitute zones of experience that may be empathy secluded, empathy-unfriendly.” Empathy-denial is the empathetic disruption itself in narration, an act by the testifier whereas hospitality is more representative of the incorporation of the experience by the listener to acknowledge the inaccessibility of the experience, which would form a more ethical understanding. In Writing and Filming of the Genocide of the Tutsis Alexandre Dauge-Roth uses ‘hospitality’ to describe the mediation between survivors and those who were not present. He states, “[i]t is the willingness on the part of the heir of the traumatic experience/testimony (listener/viewer/second witness) to confront the ob-scene in their cultural scene (constructed culture norms that define the ‘real’ in societies, a positioning in the traumatic experience), the level of reception of ‘ob-

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scenity’ can also be seen as an interruption to one’s reality.” To critically engage, accept testimonies and literature about the genocide into our scenes forces us to question both our willingness to confront disconcerting human behaviors and our sense of cultural hospitality, when hospitality is understood as “interrupting oneself.” Empathy-denial, similarly to Dauge-Roth’s concept of hospitality, is a refutation of the consumption of the traumatic experience by the testifier as the narrative is presented. This does not mean that trauma is not to some extent presentable but the scene shifts, denying consumptive understanding by the listener or the reader where the self was able to simply assume the position of the other. Affective agency by observer creates a complex system of agential struggle between them and the testifiers. Self-narration, fiction, and autobiography are not simply literary forms but are spaces of self-production that (re)establish life. Empathy-denial is meant to engage the reader actively in the process of listening to the testimony, finding sites that counter passive empathy and call upon an ethical, testimonial reading of the work. The reinsertion of fiction as a genre is now appropriate as it is a narrative form considered to be outside of the reality of measurement due to its capability to function in multiple realities.

To form a better understanding of what is at stake in autobiographical and fiction narrative an exploration of the criticisms of their construction and use in communication will be examined. Dan Shen and Dejin Xu’s “Intratextuality, Extratextuality, Intertextuality: Unreliability in Autobiography versus Fiction” explores the unreliability of the autobiography in opposition to fiction’s unreliability. They describe the shifting

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58 Alexandre Dauge-Roth, Writing and Filming the Genocide of the Tutsis in Rwanda: Dismembering and Remembering Traumatic History (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishing Inc., 2010), 49.
59 Ibid.
public and literary opinions of the autobiography as non-fictional narrative, “Moreover, one writer can produce more than one autobiography covering the same period(s) of his or her past life. As there is only one “reality” involved, the discrepancies between the two or more accounts would naturally throw into doubt the factualness of the accounts, a problem that will not arise in the domain of fiction.”

In autobiography the relationship to the extratexual, ‘reality’, is always called into question. In *Fictions in Autobiography: Studies in the Art of Self-Invention* Paul John Eakin states, “…the autobiographers access to the past is necessarily a function of his present consciousness of it. That is to say that the past that any autobiographical narrative records is first and foremost the period of the autobiographical act itself.”

Eakins’s response becomes useful for this analysis that it is impossible to create a fact driven autobiographical sketch that is devoid of present meaning in narration. Narrative technologies such as manipulation of perspective and digital mediations infused in narration as it takes form reflect identifications of the self in relation to temporal transformations. Narratives are not susceptible to closure, and they require the use of fictive chronological devices if one is to construct a tellable experience. This fact alone denies any claim in knowledge production to ultimate truth. This point is further demonstrated in a consumer, mediator, and testifiers need for a production of the event/knowledge that supports their claims or expressions that are produced.

*Testimonio*, as already mentioned, is similar to autobiography in being open and, further, can be an event or experience in itself. Janet Walker and Bhaskar Sarkar explore

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60 See Frederick Douglass’ three autobiographical works: A Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave (1845), and My Bondage and My Freedom (1855), and Life and Times of Frederick Douglass (1881) in Dan Shen and Dejin Xu, “Intratexuality, Extratexuality, Intertextuality: Unreliability in Autobiography versus Fiction,” *Poetics Today* 28, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 45.

the ‘politics of truth’ and cite Dori Laub who points out that it is not simply a factual given that is reproduced and replicated by the testifier, but a genuine advent, an event in its own right. Analyzing the case of a woman’s verbal testimony as an eyewitness to the Auschwitz uprising in which inmates attacked the crematoria with explosives, testimony that was later recognized by historians to be exaggerated since only one chimney, rather than the three she recalled, was actually blown up, Laub argued that historians have much to gain from attending to the “subtle dialectic” between what the survivor did not know and what she knew.\(^\text{62}\) This woman’s account becomes questionable due to rigorous standards of verification put on knowledge production and narrativization about the events that took place in Auschwitz. As an experience of reality the account of the explosion speaks again to the complexities of narrations as they are retold to those not present. This testimony held a certain authority in line with the ‘one’ truth until it was proven deviant from the veridic narrative. Shen and Xu further state, “In “factual” unreliability in an autobiography, attention is usually focused on whether the narrator or author’s account is in keeping with the reality involved.”\(^\text{63}\) It is with these issues of narration in mind that issues of authorship and ownership of the production and representations of experiences are seen as highly complex. In Rwanda where there is an official history that is disseminated for public use, where do narratives that implicate groups such as the RPF in atrocities locate themselves in the given space?

The RPF was granted amnesty from prosecution after the war and as a part of the official history they are legally innocent though many accounts and reports contest this


representation. These contestatory narratives become resistance literature, a threat to the dominant ‘reality’ as produced by those in power. The reality involved becomes a very important, dangerous factor in the production of works on events such as genocide where voices have been and continue to be misconstrued and suppressed in the interest of hegemonic powers. The danger in multiple realities, stories, is that they call into question the dominant narrative(s); they have the potential to break from the normalcy constructed in the institutional confinement of official histories. This policing of literary and testimony space is another aspect of investigating these narratives. Aspects of Diop and Tadjo’s work problematize narratives of “tribal wars” and gendered passivity and present narratives of individuals of the African diaspora as well as the West that engaged in the events. These texts also depict narratives of women who pass as both Hutu and Tutsi, women who raped, and women who suffered great loss due to fragmentation in the nuclear home. Murambi and The Shadow of Imana, as non-static realities, counter dominant narratives and provide the reader with insight into the instability of the construction of history.

**Rwandan Subject-hood and a Melancholic History**

One needs to distinguish ethnicity as an identity, on the one hand, from ethnic mobilization as a political force on the other, and to differentiate between individual and corporate concepts of identity. As noted above, the categories Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa predated colonial presence in Rwanda. Yet before the twentieth century they had not been mobilized as categorical imperatives in Rwandan history, across region, clan, kinship, or class. Alterity is an essential element in
grasping this new context.\textsuperscript{64}

The state of alterity or “one’s status of otherness,”\textsuperscript{65} for Rwandans, is one of diverse historical and social significance. Otherness, as it is constructed and assigned meaning in relation to the self and one’s surroundings is, among others, a discursive existence, one between the self and its environment. These discursive actors that will be explored in this study include but are not limited to dialogue among Rwandans, between individual/collective Rwandans and the Government of Rwanda (GOR), the GOR and the international community (predominantly Western powers), and between individual/collective Rwandans and the international community. These actors negotiate what is historically significant to the longevity of their agendas, whether this is to obtain an education, memorialize the genocide, educate the public on Rwandan historical events, maintain the GOR, or acquire a larger donor base for financial support. These aims as well as many others work in relation to the production of representations of the traumatic events of 1994. Alterity is not ‘rooted’ in unchanging identifications even if that is what is purported in dominant representations of Rwandan history. One finds through analysis that otherness is a dialogic position where identifications are informed by the distance between the self and different levels of power. The question becomes how these dominant narratives take form and how they effect the representations of Rwandan selfhood through time: How do different actors deploy alterity as an exclusionary and unifying tactic? How these questions speak to the relationship between the testifier, mediator, and consumer in the production of experiences on the Rwandan genocide?


\textsuperscript{65} Ibid. 17.
“The subject loses itself to tell the story of itself, but in telling the story of itself seeks to give an account of what the narrative function has already made plain.” 66 Judith Butler discusses the ambivalence and circular discussion of the implication of agency in the reiteration of power by the subject as subjection has created that space. The subject is imposed upon by (and internalizes) the subjection of power. This statement highlights the mediation of power; assumed and reiterated by the subjected as an effect of the subjection imposed by power. The assumed power of the subject originates in the power’s conditions of subjection for the subject (creating the subject) in the first place. As power denies the subject of knowing himself or herself the desire turns from an external power to both external and internal (social and psychic), preferring a social, subjected existence to none. This subordination in power is an attachment to the social existence of a self (not whole but coming out of subjection). Butler further expands on the inadequacy of power to act definitively, wherein what it imposed or regulated is never completely aligned with the ideal intentions. By the same token, what is produced in the making of the subject when the subject assumes the power to resist subjection to this power is not identical to what it existed as in the previous conditions. It is important to note that powers is not autonomous and also that the agency of the subject as agent has been created out of conditions of subjection that “Exceeding [for the subject] is not escaping, and the subject exceeds precisely that to which it is bound.” 67

Discourse of escapism, freedom, hope, and liberalism in President Paul Kagame’s move to eradicate the use of ethnicity cards skirts over the relationship between the

67 Ibid. 17.
locus/movement of power and the creation of the subject, the self in Rwanda. The ‘turning on oneself’, the mortification of subject-hood and further the desire to know oneself authentically is displaced by the desire to be subjected, as an alternative to not existing (figuratively or literally). Beginning in 1994 the statewide initiative that requires citizens to identify only as Rwandan was enforced. The new law is a new form of subjection that reifies the idea that Rwandans are all unified and equal in society. This identification combined with the GOR’s approach to historicizing the relationship among Rwandans and the West supports an idea that before European contact disparities did not exist. Rwandans are returning to a place they once were. Legal exclusion naturalizes systems of division and stops them from being recognized. Spatial and temporal changes are a constant, present disruption to this ideological reversion to the past. The concept of an unbound self, that is ironically heavily regulated not only on a national or state level but is by the international community too shows little promise in endeavors for a ‘free’ Rwandan state. Rwandan, as the socially accepted category for self-identification, becomes an ambiguous but constituted umbrella term that discriminates against gender, age, and ethnicity in the state. Tutsi and Hutu identifications are considered discretions; people are labeled as having genocidal or terrorist thoughts if they use them. Rwandans use terms like survivor, victim, perpetrator, and Diaspora as identification to prove innocence in the acquisition of status of the subject in and through compliance with the terms of interrogative law.68 People are forced to work within and outside the law and linguistic limitations of the national identity. People are able to avert being labeled a bad

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citizen while assuming a power that speaks simultaneously to their subjection and resistance. The ambiguity that creates agency in subjection is where the production of traumatic experiences as forms of resistance and means of acquisition of resources begin to take form. This is where the narration of loss, sexual violence, betrayal, hate, and abandonment in trauma becomes a space for negotiation and redefinition in the emergence of ‘new’ Rwandans. A closer analysis should be given to show how these narratives problematize existing norms as they are produced and regulated by dominant powers. To see these subjects as not only being acted upon in their emergence in subjection, we find power functions in multiple ways and not only oppresses but creates opportunity.

*The Shadow of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda* is a telling title by Veronique Tadjo that can act as a space to explore alterity, trauma, and the significance of Anne Cheng’s term, “racial melancholia” in paratext. Cheng builds upon the Freudian term melancholia “a psychical refusal to substitute the loss/grief of an object” and develops in racial melancholia- a theoretical framework to find a new vocabulary to discuss the experiences of racialized others. Cheng claims that with the use of racial melancholia a critical analysis of the psychical experience of racialized subjects is capable of demonstrating the complexities of grief and loss in ways that show not only the discriminations but transformative powers of the subjects in the construction of an American (white) identity. This analysis frames the racialized other in their psychical experience that is meant to not only speak to the norm categories such as race, gender, or ethnicity but to the experiences that cannot be explained. Racial melancholia finds meaning in the immaterial space that the subject negotiates. The negotiations subjects
make within the process of racial melancholia is also an indicator of the identifications being constructed (willingly and not) of the self. There is a need for an intellectual understanding of racial grief that can better articulate the social/political racial grievances being made that previously, under paradigms of multiculturalism and authenticity, have been absent. Essentializing categories neglect the complexity of the racialized other. They are not adequately explored in studies and depict more about the keenness of hurt versus the actual cure of grief.69

Cheng does not attempt to naturalize injury of the other or create deterministic experiences of the other but to show that there is subjectivity in the melancholic experience that can speak to the unquantifiable conditions of the social and political categories that are created. She argues that academic fields like sociology, anthropology, and history are preoccupied with established categories in study. Cheng tracks two dynamics of one of rejection and one of internalization in the construction of American racial culture. She states, “…First, dominant, white culture’s rejection of yet attachment to the racial other and, second, the ramifications that such paradox holds for the racial other, who has been placed in a suspended position.”70 She demonstrates that racial melancholia is a framework that enables an understanding of the simultaneous creation of an American identity and “nightmare” of subjection for racialized subjects. Racial melancholia counters and sustains normalized identifications of subjects; their agency exists in the subjective. “Racial grief,” describes the psychical racial experiences that are both contradictory and productive for the racial subject. Returning to Tadjo’s title The

70 Ibid. xi.
Shadow of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda, ‘heart of Rwanda’ invites an inter-textual reference to Heart of Darkness, by Joseph Conrad\textsuperscript{71} which depicts its hero travel into an abyss, and there experiencing the horror of the revelation that the other is within the self. Thinking more broadly about the impact of the genocide it was a war among Rwandans, geographically positioned in the heart of Africa. The continent has had a history of marginalization, as the West gives racialized subjects Africans attention only with financial opportunity in mind. This has been an historical existence that negotiates agency and abjection, contestation and shame in subject-hood not only for Rwandans but also the West. The genocide is representative of the manifestation of racial grief at its worst. Racial grievances helped to fuel the violent atmosphere, the Hutu who were stereotyped Bantu by the West during colonialism, enforced retributive laws such as the Hutu Manifesto that outlined both the superiority of the Hutu and degradation of the Tutsi that all citizens needed to abide by in the state. There is the legacy of Tutsi domination that generated these actions. The socialization of Rwandans in this racialized and highly stratified economic/political environment shows that racial melancholia leads to the use of racial grievances in the making of traumatic demands. Forms of socialization such as memorialization or legality are partly occasioned by those lost in the genocide and those who lacked social recognition but also partly by the disillusioned because they needed aid by the West that did not arrive. Racial melancholia accounts for deep seeded grief of racialized others and that particularities involved in its articulation that at times may

\textsuperscript{71} See Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness (1902), a novel that centers on Charles Marlow, an Englishman sent to work in the Congo by a Belgian trading company as a riverboat captain. He explores the darkness of Africa but also the darkness of cruelty of European traders and their treatment of Africans. He travels deeper into the darkness as he works and is assigned to find Kurtz, an agent who has been ‘lost’ to the Dark Continent.
counter the subject’s initial use of grievances for agency. Cheng states, “When it comes to facing discrimination, we need to understand subjective agency as a convoluted, ongoing, generative, and at times self-contradicting negotiation with pain.”

Further, in this project using psychoanalysis as a framework can take us outside the confines of the accounts of genocide that render it in superficial ethnic or “tribal” representations. As Cheng depicts, the psychoanalytic framework can help us critically address the perpetuation of delimited identities set under conditions of imagined group/corporate self-hood and autonomy. These conditions of identity leave the agency of individuals or collectives contingent upon the negotiation of those identifications. By focusing particular attention on the psychic damage subjects incur we are able to move into a realm of analytic analysis where time and space can be articulated in terms of their saturation of grief and grievances.

As stated above, between the Hutu and Tutsi, the genocide generates immense racial grief. Could this massacre, which was highly publicized, be considered a ‘coming out’ into the traditional historical scene for Rwanda? If we consider the repression of Rwandan agency in the international market and the pains of the colonial legacy felt by both the dominant powers and subjected that exploded into history, is the genocide a racial grievance? A position where exclusions from historical documentation and agency have been negotiated with the West via telemediatization, NGO presence, and structural adjustment programs. This negotiation includes the mediation of traumatic representations of the event and is also influenced by the West’s melancholic relationship with their response to the event that was heavily covered in media. Humanitarian

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intervention is an important part of American (Western) identity. Westerners’ guilt in their inadequate response to the event leads to a demand for reproductions of representations that restore good faith in the West. This reproduction can be and are done with a view to an erasure of the West’s involvement but also with a view to a ‘restoration’ of the relationship with Rwanda today.

This form of analysis of subjects, in this case Rwandan survivors and the mediation of their testimonies in novel form, can give us insight into the accounts that do not lose analytical nuance and complexity even when the study uses fictional works. Diop and Tadjo’s novels are a part of the complex representation of the contradictions seen in both the text and the ‘real’, a melancholic merger of fantasy and desire for traumatic representations.

The understanding of racial melancholia as an affective experience that inhabits the psyche of both the dominant culture or group and the other (s) further helps to deconstruct and interrogate the binaries between the West (consumers and mediators purporting a “Culture of Intimacy”) and Rwanda (testifiers of traumatized representations that feed this global identity) to show an assemblage of many micro and macro narratives. This understanding can also destabilize the oppressed/oppressor dynamic that is so popular in the depiction of the expression of power (Hutu versus Tutsi; colonizer/colonized) and the mechanisms used that deny and privilege people in different spaces and discourses (different means of deployment of agency). Racial melancholia is also able to examine the conditions that enabled the Fest’ Africa project, to fund the ten African writers. This project was a celebration of the multiculturalism in African societies, funded by the
French government’s Ministry of Culture. This relationship speaks to the attempt to reclaim a lost history. Yet there occurs in this attempt a loss of traumatized history on Rwanda and the suppression of the existence of African creativity or authorship of accounts of experiences. The irony is that this reclamation of lost representation by the mediators and testifiers is also part of the support of a questionable multiculturalism that privileges Western identity.
CHAPTER 3: “Trauma, Production, and Gendered Space in Warfare: Textual Analysis of Representation and Participation in Murambi, The Shadow of Imana, and Narratives of Agency in Rwanda”

In addition to envisioning how their writing could echo survivor’s suffering and respond to their demands as they passed them on, they also had to determine what kind of resonance their literary works could shape for such a traumatic past within their readers’ present, keenly aware that the echoes and cries of the past always run the risk of being muted or too nicely orchestrated when officially scripted for political gain.73

-Michael Dauge-Roth

In 1998 when the authors of “Rwanda: Writing as a Duty to Remember” came together a large body of images and narratives already regarding the genocidal event on such as Philip Gourevitch’s We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families: Stories from Rwanda and other narratives such as the French attempting to rewrite their involvement with the genocide. An investigation was launched by the French military that led to the commission head, Paul Quilès, to clear the French army and government from the genocide as well as glorify the French-led “Operation Turquoisé” for having saved thousands of lives though this ‘operation’ showed the contradictions of humanitarian assistance instead of civility. Many Hutu Extremist were granted exits through the “Operation Turquoisé” bases on the borders of Rwanda. This allowed many of the guilty Hutu extremists an escape from capture by the GOR and other

73 Alexandre Dauge-Roth, Writing and Filming the Genocide of the Tutsis in Rwanda: Dismembering and Remembering Traumatic History (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishing Inc., 2010), 103.
Western factions of persecution down the road. For those who identified as Tutsi, fleeing through French channels or seeking refuge on their bases became new sites for mass murder that the French set up to enable the Hutu to easily exact upon the Tutsi. The French blamed the RPF for the genocide as a political strategy to further deny any blame or humiliation by the international community for their guilty participation. Other ongoing efforts included the processing of overcrowded jails full of Hutu awaiting trial for accusations of genocidal actions, and finally the belated apologies coming from politicians such as Bill Clinton the former President of the United States and Kofi Annan the former Secretary General of the United Nations. The writing and memorialization of the genocide could not be a neutral practice. As authors and contributors to the archive of competing representations of the Rwandan genocide, Véronique Tadjo and Boubacar Boris Diop have had to write their mediations in relation to dominant discourse. The duty to remember goes hand in hand with the duty of self-reflexivity within the author’s works that are in constant dialogue with past and present representations. Prior representations of the genocide are used in these narratives to intensify the dilemmas involved in envisioning this traumatic event.

Dauge-Roth has identified the authors’ struggles as a “dismembering esthetics” that proposes these authors engage in ethical remembering. Ethical responsibility in memory making acts as a double awareness of remembering the event against existing work and the author’s own positionality as mediators relaying extreme accounts to consumers. It was a strategic task among the authors of “Rwanda: Writing as a Duty to

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75 Ibid. 105.
Remember” to relocate the self and narrative in a scene that forces the reader to confront obscene experiences that would not be received as legitimate knowledge or memory on the genocide. Both Tadjo and Diop can be found using this esthetics throughout their works. “Dismembering esthetics” that deny social realism are not automatically ahistorical, the authors mediate their work in larger discourses. Tadjo weaves together a travelogue or a travel diary of her own experience in 1998 with short stories and poetry based on the interviews she collected in Rwanda. Her own accounts bear witness to her responsibility and inability to comprehend all of what happened during the genocide. This distance between her account and the testifiers acts as a relentless questioning of the legitimacy of belated witnessing. This explicit distance in the narrative also seeks to establish a sense of common humanity shared by all regardless of their identifications, that distance is a shared part of mediating trauma. Diop’s account uses the main character, Cornelius Uvimana as a fictional double to the author. Uvimana, who was not present during the genocide, returns in an attempt to understand what happened in 1994. He goes through struggles similar to Diop as: how to navigate distance witnessing as an outsider, how to mediate preexisting literature; how to negotiate the power relations that govern what should be remembered; and how to produce representations that would get at the ‘heart’ of the event, if possible. The consumer’s distance from the extreme event is three-fold. They must navigate their own absence, the author’s absence, and the absence of a unified retelling of the event by the testifiers.

One can find that the author’s use of “dismembering esthetics,” the use of narrative conventions and form to dismember their connection to the extreme event and many narratives already produced on the event has given way to transformative
representations of Rwandan women in Murambi and The Shadow of Imana. As ethically engaged mediators of the testifier’s accounts, Diop and Tadjo provide spaces to (re)present the women’s experiences. As pointed out in the previous chapters of this project, representations of women have been reductive to the public although women are heavily involved in the processes taking place on the ground. With the inclusion of women’s testimonies, these works present not only a wider spectrum of representations but also “dismembering” by the testifiers as they recount the event in the narrative. The construction of spatial distance between the testifiers within the text and between the testifiers and the second witness (mediator/consumer) enables recognition of the struggles over representations of traumatic events at different levels of mediation.

This chapter will first explore the localized representations of women in the Rwandan genocide that question traditional representations of the event and uncover self-narrations that deny understandings that support the idea that there is one truth in the genocide. These representations go further to problematize chronologies of the history and memory on the genocide that are created in a linear fashion. Secondly, this chapter will use the testimonies of women in the narratives that have survived the event and respond to contemporary issues that have resulted from the genocide in 1994. These testimonies will provide the space to interrogate the concept of a “post-genocide” era in Rwanda with a look at the deployment of testimonial positions. “Post-genocide” discourse has required individual and collective recognition of identifications and memorialization supported by the state to maintain its hegemony over other counter discourses. Recognition of experiences of traumas in relation to the genocide both grant and disadvantage Rwandans in their testimonies. These issues are both a part of the
driving force behind the demand for traumatic productions and also create new forms of entitlement to aid for women today. Lastly, an analysis of the state and international institutions involved in the construction of the “new” Rwandan will be undertaken in the chapter which leads to an interrogation of the implied multiculturalism, reconciliation, and peace building in Rwanda.

We can now turn to the narratives and look at representations of two females in Murambi and The Shadow of Imana that defy the stereotypes of women as passive during and after the genocide. In Murambi Jessica Kamanzi’s involvement in the event as an undercover soldier during the war and the agency she is able to acquire not only as a woman but also because of the ambiguity involved in the construction of ethnic identifications between the Hutu and the Tutsi enables mobility under the strictest regulation. Gendered narratives of the participation of women in war such as passivity, inherent innocence, and victimization have given woman some freedom in extreme events to move within the most hostile atmospheres. They are not typically expected to play in undercover operations. In The Shadow of Imana Isaro is a woman dealing with the death of her husband; dealing also with the communal humiliation associated with her husband who has been labeled a perpetrator, and the interacting with the surviving father of the family her husband is suspected of killing. Both of these representations of women are atypical in going against the grain of female testifiers negotiating their status in Rwanda. Jessica Kamanzi is one of the main characters in Murambi. She is presented as a strong and wise woman who believes in sacrifice and justice. She states, “If one falls in
combat, the two who are left will free Rwanda.” She is presented as having strong psychological resilience amidst the panic of the genocide. She feels a personal responsibility to defend the citizens of Rwanda, regardless of ethnicity. Her approach to defeating ‘madness’ is to hide in plain sight and in doing so she witnesses a spectrum of experiences. Jessica carries a fake identification card while she works as a spy for the RPF stationed in Kigali. Her journey through the genocide is a fragmented representation of the people she meets while undercover. Encounters with woman surviving by hiding out, looting the houses of the dead, and some who barter sex for safe havens are a few of the conversations expressed in Jessica’s experience.

Throughout the book Jessica comes into contact with other women facing extraordinary circumstances such as the Hutu nun Félicité Niyitegeka. Félicité helps hundreds of Tutsis flee to the Congo. She dies among the Tutsis, refusing to stop trying to save lives. Her friend Theresa Mukandori accompanies Jessica in the beginning of the novel. Theresa, like so many others in Rwanda, met her death in church, which she thought would be a place of amnesty. Theresa states, “Jessie they’ll [Interahamwe] never be able to do anything, knowing that God can see them.” She could not comprehend the idea of a group of people trying to kill her. The cycle of violence and hate stemming from the past and into the present had created a cloak of denial for those living in “extremities” everyday. Genocides have occurred before in Rwanda, the denial of a mounting implosion in Rwanda, for Theresa, is the last act of hope. Theresa appears later in “The Return of Cornelius,” hoisted up, decaying with a pole lodged in her vagina.

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76 Boubacar Boris Diop, Murambi, the Book of Bones (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 31. 77 Ibid. 73.
Every detail of her grim last moments is there on display, for people to remember that the impossible can come true. Jessica’s journey sheds light on the complexities of relationships such as Theresa’s and Niyitegeka’s as well as their ends. She never talks explicitly about her own experiences. Her job is to track others. Diop’s use of Jessica’s self-narration of the event creates another layer of polyvocal mediation in the text. The reader is confronted with the loss of testimony in the fleeting, but impactful presence of multiple stories. This marks a difference in normative narratives, where the consumer or reader would be accustomed to receiving an holistic representation they must instead recognize an intangibility in of the traumatic representations.

In “His Voice,” Tadjo displays the complex relationship between Isaro, her deceased husband Romain, and a man named Nkuranya. Romain is suspected of killing Nkuranya’s wife and children during the genocide. The village shuns Isaro. Isaro is ashamed to reveal that she believes her husband killed them. Romain ultimately commits suicide. Isaro imagines Romain’s return daily, unable to recover from the guilt of not believing him but also the life she had before genocide unfolded. She receives an anonymous phone call from a man asking to meet her. Isaro assumes that it is Romain and agrees to meet him. This phone call is the threshold where Isaro has began to unknowingly move into a shared space of trauma. It was Nkuranya on the other line. Nkuranya wants to confront both of their grievances by building a relationship that honors all who have fallen due to the genocide. He states, “I know that I must not let time stand still. We must carry our memories of them within us and let those memories become a part of our daily lives. We must not separate memory from life--we must
integrate it.” Tadjo’s story sheds light on the possibility of reconciliation. Here it is a struggle and choice, not a remedy to loss in the personal form of reconciliation between Nkuranya and Isaro. This form of reconciliation interprets loss as something to continuously be carried by its witnesses. The retelling of Nkuranya’s loss, shared with the retelling of Isaro’s loss is the link for Nkuranya and Isaro to move on with their lives. This relationship between them testified to their memories that bear witness to the events but also the problematic categorization of victims and perpetrators in their testimonies on lives lost due to the genocide. Many different people in relation to the event experience survivor’s guilt. Isaro and Nkuranya are both survivors.

*The Shadow of Imana* presents women as the link to the path of forgiveness. This can be taken as addressing two points. First, that it is necessary for both women and men to be involved in the decision-making on paths to rehabilitation in the country. Second, there is a dominant narrative used by the GOR as well as local women’s rights organizations that support a concept of inherent virtuosity in women’s decision-making due to their marginality in certain spheres. Women’s narratives are being coopted to undermine the attention needing to be paid to other forms of discrimination such as by region, age, or ethnicity. “His Voice” also problematizes gendered representation of women as the gatekeepers to peace and reconciliation. This disrupts the narrative of feminized immunity to violence and apathy. Here we find a male testifier initiating the reconciliation efforts of the country.

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79 See “Section 15” for a description of an all female ward in a Kigali prison that describes the participation of women in perpetuating the genocide such as murder, rape, and theft that reveals, similarly to men guilty participation. Véronique Tadjo, *The Shadow of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda* (Johannesburg: Heinemann, 2002), 100-102.
Where’s My Post? Rwandan Women Staking Land and Job Claims through Survivor Testimony in Rwanda’s Reconstruction

Genealogy does not resemble the evolution of a species and does not map the identity of a people. On the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion, it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations—or conversely, the complete reversals—the errors, false approvals, and the faulty calculations that give birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us, it is to discover that truth or being do not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but exteriority.  

The genealogy of women’s participation in the Rwandan genocide can expand our understanding of the use of traumatic testimony and representation to dispel origins in history. These traumatic representations create alternative understandings of the modes in which individual/collective subjects’ relationships with history provide or exclude their recognition through time and space. Michel Foucault’s interrogation of the “cruelty of history” is done with as genealogical study in the terms described in the captured quote above. Genealogy is not an examination of a linear progression of people in a historical uniformity. Rather, genealogy is the questioning of the evolutionary schema that informs historical narratives in ways that that unmask deviations or struggles between forces for its maintenance. Genealogy exposes descent that may not dismantle the universals of history but do provide new understandings of what allows resistance to occur.

The disruption of origins in history by Rwandan women is not only in response to the historical privilege given to men regarding exclusive rights such as land ownership and employment outside of household jurisdiction but also to a series of other dominant

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81 Ibid. 142.
forces that have continually pushed women into the most insecure positions in society. What is called for, in this regard, is an analysis of how desires are manifested in the testimonial acts accentuated by both exterior factors such as land insecurity, poverty, statewide memorialization of genocide and gender norms, and interior factors such as the personal/collective violence experienced and lasting psychological trauma. These are not mutually exclusive, the subjects act upon both exterior and interior factors on some level.

Genealogical inquiry of Rwandan women’s experiences is also valuable to interrogate the concept of the “post-genocide” era. This inquiry is not only to question the progression past the event that is mediated by representations that construct memory and history but also to discuss the “promise of domination” that Foucault marks as a legacy of repeated conflicts. As stated above genealogical inquiry finds deviations in normative representations. It fragments but does not necessarily undo the powers that attempt to protect systems of subjugation. The ‘end’ of the genocide in 1994 was marked by the RPF’s takeover of the capital, Kigali and other Hutu dominant regions in Rwanda from the PARMEHUTU regime. The efforts of the RPF were perceived by the media as acts of liberation for the country and the symbolic return of those previously exiled due to ethnic divisionism. The RPF’s return and subsequent rule over Rwanda did not mark a deconstruction of the systems at work instead this reconstruction of Rwanda brought old forms of domination under a new cloak of liberalism and reconciliation. Foucault argues, “War does not exhaust itself of its own contradictions nor does it end violence or submit to civilians.”

Under a government that is now outspoken about gender inclusive

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institutions, how are women using their historical disadvantages expressed in their traumatic representations to disrupt the “history of reason” in “post-genocide” discourse?

Nearly two million Rwandans fled to neighboring countries in 1994 as the RPF seized territory in the state. After the event, the flow of both refugees and exiles back into the country created great land scarcity. Over 1,000,000 new caseload refugees returned from Tanzania (480,000) and the DRC (720,000) between late 1996 and 1997. The majority of exiles had spent many years away or had never been to Rwanda. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees and other NGOs settled the displaced in imidugudu (villages) on rural property. 83 The aim was to rebuild communal living among available properties. The 1994 genocide and war brought nearly the total destruction of agricultural and administrative infrastructure. Disagreements emerged immediately after the large repatriation between returnees, the Diaspora, and those who remained in the country. Jennie Burnet critiques the inheritance law that was amended in Rwanda’s civil code in 1999. She states, “In the prior system, all property was held as community property within marriage. In this system both spouses were meant to take decisions about resources in the interest of the family. But in many cases, the husband alone managed the financial resources and property of the family.” 84 Women and children’s rights organizations brought many of the disputes over land rights to the Rwandan Transitional National Assembly due not only to their lack of inheritance rights but the undeniable ratio of more than double women to men. Burnet argues that gendered disparities have positioned women in the most vulnerable situations in past land rights and contemporary

84 Ibid.
reforms. Women dealt with the agricultural and childbearing aspects of the division of household labor for the family. Both women and girls were unable to inherit the property of deceased husbands and fathers and were left at the mercy of the son(s) and/or husbands’ family’s will. The inheritance law allowed widows and both genders of descendants their father’s property. The sons are assumed to take of the mother and minors. The inheritance law has provided some small sense of security for women and girls but has primarily shown continued exclusion of women and children’s rights to land. This ideal circumstance for a women who is married would be to have the marriage legally recognized by the state because it grants the women the most benefit in the event of her husbands death. Many rural families and communities are against this law stating that it favors urban life. Only about 60% of the marriages in Rwanda are legal, this is marriage only between one man and one woman; legal recognition is not accorded to polygamous marriages (which would be more common in rural regions). 85 There are three processes involved in consecrating a marriage: customary marriage ceremonies, civil marriage ceremonies, and religious marriage ceremonies. Civil marriage is the process that is legally protected by the GOR. Landholdings are already scarce and the further divisions of the plots would only make cultivation more difficult. Another important point is that the 1976 Land Rights amendment deemed all land property of the state and this has not changed though marriage rights and descent are still the main forms

of inheritance. Many of these changing laws are not well expressed across the country. All Rwandans are essentially vulnerable to changes in land rights or distribution by the state.\textsuperscript{86} Even within this ambiguous system women are contesting their marginal access. There is an example where a woman named Nyirakigwene was able to inherit her husband’s land and cattle while he was dying. This was only after her husband spoke on her behalf saying his wife had the capacity to be a man.\textsuperscript{87} There is still a patriarchal system at work that struggles to maintain old systems of property rights and gendered divisions of labor between men and women in the society.

Veronique Tadjo provides a representation not only of a female-led household but also the many other issues involved with navigating reconstruction and the traumatic atmosphere that remains for many who survive the event. Tadjo describes her interview with Nelly a tall, lean woman with an abrasive demeanor. She shows Tadjo her home that dually functioned as a café. The genocide left her head of the household, a less common situation before the genocide for women. The first thing that Tadjo noticed about Nelly was her cream covered sore on her face. These open wounds were literally a result of the genocide, and of HIV/AIDS. Other effects included Nelly’s new roles as head of the household, storeowner, and the struggles with of her own traumas that were a result of the extreme event. She introduced Tadjo to her family that included her young son, adult daughter, and her daughter’s baby. Tadjo recounted a scene with Nelly and the baby, “Nelly laughs uproariously and goes to the baby, whom her daughter is now smearing with Vaseline. She slaps his bottom a few times saying: ‘I don’t want this one. He was


\textsuperscript{87} Ibid. 11.
born of war. What are we going to do with him?". The interaction between Nelly and her grandson is representative of the transmission of trauma generationally. This aspect of the manifestation of trauma is something that that country shares. This encounter among family depicts a disruption of the concept of “post-genocide;” trauma from the event can be inherited through physical interaction between witnesses of the event and family members who were not present.

The concept of post-genocide has a variety of uses within traumatic representations. In this project the concern is in the production of representations of “post-genocide” that depict the extremity of the event in a manner that oversimplifies the complexities of the legacy of bearing witness. The narratives provided by Diop and Tadjo present a mobile and dynamic understanding of what is involved in navigating both the genocide and the lasting effects in the assumed positions that women fill in contrast or in addition to the many other roles they play now. Another important aspect in understanding the mediation of the concept of “post-genocide” is that it is presumably a better place for Rwandans, a space of moving away from the traumatic event. A non-place in that it is neither, future, past, or present in representations of trauma. This indeterminate non-place is a part of what makes these spatial/temporal moments in women’s experiences both highly agential for individuals and highly regulated in navigating their positions in society.

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**Representation, Subordination, and Legal Deviance in Reconstruction**

Rwanda’s national history presents two main points: one that Tutsis only held dominance due to colonial support and secondly that Tutsis are liberators in the ending of the genocide in 1994. These two normative points have led to a representation of the Hutu as guilty and blame worthy genocidal actors who murdered and/or expelled their Tutsi kin, and opportunists who seek superiority and additional land and resource security. Disdain for the West and the international communities aids the narrative of victimization, a narrative predominantly reserved for the Tutsis. President Kagame uses this rhetoric to support what Helen Hintjens calls ‘victim diasporic nationalism.’ She cites Cohen and states:

> Social grouping with some identifiable common origins has been victimized continuously over a long period of time. Members of this group have been forced into a diaspora, into exile, and have the right to return-in this case to Rwanda- to reclaim their “promised land” denied them by a history of persecution (Cohen, 1997, van der Meeren, 1996).

This view situates the Tutsis as the ‘official’ victims, deserving of land rights and property. The government distributes land to diasporic (majority Tutsi) returnees from all over the world. This community has an assumed common experience that gives them entitlement to Rwanda’s resources. Many returnees (predominantly Tutsi) are educated and able to monopolize on their knowledge attained abroad. They are able to purchase rural properties on the market from the poor Hutu and

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Tutsi forced who are forced to sell their land in desperation. In “Land Scarcity, Distribution, and Conflict in Rwanda” Abong, Bigagaza, & Mukarubuga posit ethnicity as ‘a cover to control land’ and that the ethnic struggle is actually a struggle over scarcity of land where the majority of the rural poor have been both Hutu and Tutsi, remaining outside of official politics and formal economy in the state. Decision-making has only been in the hands of minority Tutsi and Hutu as regimes have changed. Citizenship is viewed as right for the select few; as stated before the majority of the Hutu and Tutsi are impoverished agriculturalists in a state where agriculture accounts for 90 percent of rural employment. Full citizenship is given to individuals with formal education, those that support the RPF’s agenda, and are more likely Tutsi. Though Tutsi refugees are given privilege to acquire property upon return, the maintenance of the property requires the finances to produce not only enough for subsistence farming but for agricultural surplus, so insecurities persist.

Land is the most important resource and due to structural adjustment programs of the 1980s and 1990s (during democratization) Rwandans were forced to over work the land to meet economic demands. As refugees returned in the 1990s before the genocide further pressure on land security and access to resources fuelled the circulating propaganda and hostility in the state. Hutu who survived the genocide became internally displaced people (IDP) and/or were subject to being deemed suspected genocidaires. This rhetoric of guilty and

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innocent in Rwanda for the government requires objective identification. This method of classification under a hyper aggressive regime silences diversity in social and political agency. Helen Hintjens presents three individuals’ stories that show the inaccuracies of the RPFs stringent identities for genocide survivors. She presents the story of Noelle Angelicas:

Noelle’s father was a prominent official under the former Habyarimana regime and this automatically made Noelle a suspected *genocidaire* in present-day rural Rwanda. She is the only known survivor of a family of 10 and the offspring of mixed Hutu-Tutsi marriage…Noelle survived for years hidden in the house of a priest in Kivu. After being raped by a RPA soldier in 2001, she gave birth to her son the following year. (Hintjens, 27).

The polarization of different groups remains a mode of retention of power by regimes. If these stories were to surface alongside the discourse that the RPF creates on Rwandan survivors and citizenship, the Tutsi-isation ‘consolidating the hold of the RPF on the system’ of the privileges extended from the international community and state could cease.92 The varied experiences of survivors have the power to oppose the categorical boxes set, this could provide consumers with an alternative understanding of the events taking place. Extending survivor status to individuals of multi-layered identity jeopardizes the current structure of resource distribution whether it is coming from the state or international community in funding, technology, housing, or other resources that would give security to the masses (rural poor).

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The instrumentalism of personal and collective identifications under law has become a strategy used by the GOR to skew ethnic representations for Kagame’s regime. Legality is used to create a monopoly of narrative use of political correctness. The nation is Rwandan; Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa have been banned from public discourse as a sign of divisionism and backwardness in society under the Constitution and Organic Law of 2003. This nationalistic approach, though sounding progressive and inclusive of Rwandan experiences to move past the genocide, overdetermines the citizenship status and rights given to Rwandans. President Kagame and the RPF were able to forge strong international relations by exploiting the experiences of survivors of the genocide to receive necessary aid. The dismissive attitude from the international community to monitor Kagame’s authoritarian leadership as well as the activities of the RPF has been another factor in Kagame’s means for exploitation. Though there is an abundance of evidence on RPF members committing atrocities during their border crossing from Ugandan to Rwanda to take-over in the 1990s, neither Kagame nor any RPF soldiers have been penalized. The Rwandan authorities denied the International Criminal Tribunal of Rwanda (ICTR) the right to prosecute RPF or Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) members of crimes; this prohibition prosecution further perpetuates the idea that the Tutsi are the victims. ICTR is only meant to prosecute grievance having to do with the genocide of 1994. The massacre of an average of 2,000-4,000 majority Hutu refugees in the Kibeho Camp in 1996 was witnessed in plain sight of UN troops, with no armed jurisdiction to protect the

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internally displaced. The GOR and narratives of victimhood of the Tutsi excuse these mass murders and the ‘government knows best’ explanation is the defense for the events. Other narratives include the ‘threatening’ or ‘lurking’ presence of Hutu (guilty) who chose to flee reentering the state. It is with these traumatic representations that the GOR is attempting to produce a national identity. The status of Rwandans is dependent upon their negotiation of their relationship to genocide of 1994. The discussion of the formation of ‘one’ Rwandan identity will be linked to the legal discourse surrounding individual and collective Rwandan experiences below.

The GOR is in a constant struggle with testimonies of trauma, a “crisis of truths” that mediate how Rwandans express themselves in both a material and representational existence. The domination of the GOR relies on legal codes for the regulation of testifiers because they can challenge historical and legal claims to truth. The atmosphere in Rwanda is hostile but the state also attempts to maintain the appearance of liberal inclusion of ‘everyday Rwandans’ in the democratic processes. Terms like divisionism, revisionism, and genocide mentality arise as modes of surveillance of civil society in the state as individuals and organizations deemed deviant in relation to the government’s priorities are subject to any number of legal or illegal repercussions. These terms are not well defined in law; the loose definitions give power to the regime. Danielle Beswick refers to Eltringham and van Hoyweghens “genocide framework” and states:

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94 Ibid. 26.
The 1994 genocide is singled out as an event producing only politically correct categories for identification and guidelines for behaviors’. They raise the concern that divergence from the official narrative, for instance in calling for nuance and elaboration on dichotomies such as victim/killer, can lead to charges of ‘revisionism’ (ibid.: 222; also Hintjens, 2008; Beswick, 238).  

If debates are stifled by the fear of being criminalized as a genocide ideologist how can truthful conversations of marginalized enter the discourse that takes place? It forecloses on the production of traumatic representations coming directly from testifiers. Mediators, who are secondary to the genocide, have more freedom to discuss the event. This is an exclusionary tactic to diminish the desire for primary witnesses to discuss their grievances and also, for those who do speak, to limit expression with coded terminology (decoding is equated with guilt). This is a deliberate tactic to suppress the agency in Rwandans expression of unique experiences. Intimidation, imprisonment, death, exile, and shaming by accusation are forms actively employed to eliminate opposition in the country. The irony of this logic is that the mentalities that are deemed illegal are still the ideological basis for forces at work by the GOR such as marginalizing Hutu forms victimhood and rural access to resources. These contradictions in historicization do not go unnoticed.

In *The Shadow of Imana* Joséphine is a smart, dedicated mother of two. During the genocide her husband was on business and never returned. She is the head of her household, like many women. Joséphine was fortunate enough to stay hidden with her children during the genocide. Militiamen came twice but never followed up. The next

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time soldiers came they were the RPF. She managed to reconnect with her sister who lost her family during the genocide. She describes her children, Philomène and Grantien, as a symbol of the power struggle over history in the country. Her daughter Philomène is vengeful and unapologetic. She sees no reason for reconciliation even when she is wrong. Grantien is the opposite. He is always ready to reconcile and be at peace.

Joséphine is determined to remedy their contrasting behaviors with education. She states, “Everyone knows how hard hearted Philomène is. I keep telling her how important it is to be able to say you’re sorry. If she can’t do it herself, who will do it for her?”

She is determined to teach her children that empathy and common sense are the only ways to avoid what has happened with leaders in the past. Her energy goes into educating her children on the value of humanity and distrust in the government.

Her testimony is meant to empower the future but not with traditional reliance upon the government for resolutions to the issues her family faces. She is aware of the cooption of her experiences by larger powers and sees the greatest power of her testimony being instilled in her children. Wendy S. Hesford states, “The “realness” of survivor speech is undermined by the categorization of “survivor speech” as mad, as evidence of women’s or children’s hysterical or mendacious tendencies, or even as testimony to women’s essential nature as helpless victims in need of patriarchal protection.”

If the majority of “survivor speech” in Rwanda is ‘women’s speech’ we can see a process of categorizing women’s traumatic experiences as immoral or divisive if they do not adopt the political correctness (reason) put forth by the GOR. Joséphine

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refutes this representation of “survivor speech” as mad but is still vulnerable to its use. She expresses bitterness at the role government has played in exploiting Rwandans and distrusts any change without liberation of freedom of thought and action. Helen Hintjens sees Rwanda as a state wherein civil society is strictly controlled and she points out:

Opposition politicians in Rwanda have been subjected to house arrest and show trials. The main opposition party, Le Mouvement Democratique Republicaine (MDR), remains banned, removing the need for overt fraud at election times...Embassies have been requested to provide lists of names of Rwandan asylum seekers, which it claims are criminals on the run (Cruvelier, 2004: 1995, Hintjens, 19).  

The employment of these tactics fuels the sense of there being a constant ‘watcher’ among the people. Combined with the narrow expression of experience permitted Rwandans these violent and potentially deadly forms of civil control create a population of people who are severely distrustful not only of government but of each other. Association with opposition is enough for criminalization. Political parties that exist today in Rwanda are only tolerated if they agree not to question the definition of political life drawn up by the RPF.”

Visible contestation in any space of the country is a threat to the RPF and sign of fragility in state control.

In “Managing Dissent in a Post-genocide Environment: The Challenge of Political Space in Rwanda” by Danielle Beswick, the ability of actors other than government to critically engage in debate on government policy and practice is

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severely constrained. However, even with Rwanda’s constrained media, social, legal, ethnic, and racial discourse the country’s political space is never completely closed. She states, “Political space arguably has no independent or absolute existence. Changes in the ‘amount’ of space available for particular actors are detected by observing the actions of those engaging in political debate.” The majority of opposition is exposed and removed from country such that the only opposition seems to come from the outside. This point highlights further the importance of traumatic representation and ethical engagement in understanding the production of experiences on the genocide. While acknowledging that political space is highly mediated and regulated, the consumer must also be aware of enabling contradictions if he/she is to recognize the presence of agential space. Mediation of the event by secondary witnesses has a freedom not granted to testifiers in the same way, mediators can be critical but it is always a distanced criticism.

**Lending Voices: Government of Rwanda and International Intervention in Human Rights Mediation**

“The gacaca are threatening to the universalizing, homogenizing human rights imaginary, which lashes out to squash cultural difference and legal pluralism by criticizing the gacaca for failures to approximate canonized doctrine.”

This “jurispathic gesture” is what Ariel Meyerstein argues places non-profit organizations such as Amnesty International (AI) and Human Rights Watch (HRW) in a

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102 Ibid. 228.

broader framework of the Western will to dominate and retain power through the categorized knowledge. The “jurispathic gesture” imposes Western forms of justice and law on other systems of review. In “Between Law and Culture” Meyerstein recounts the clash between NGOs and the GOR in the meaning of human rights and justice. She presents criticism presented by both the GOR and NGOs of one another. NGOs that take a more collaborative approach to processes of justice like the Penal Reform International that works with many different local actors are used to mediate between the two approaches. The competing visions of human rights on a single episode or “vertical slice” can also be viewed as a clash between mediators attempting to impose their own structure of justice and human rights as though it is universal. AI and HRW use a mainstream human rights due process of legalistic approaches and the GOR uses the gacaca, a localized, communal system of due process. Both forms of due process are flawed.

Meyerstein uses the Penal Reform International’s criticism of AI and AI’s and HRW’s critiques of the gacaca court system to provide a comparison of some of the reductive inadequacies of both ‘sides’ of the debate over human rights. This comparison includes her critique of the inadequacies of the gacaca to expose the unrealistic goals of gacaca system by NGOs that prefer western frameworks of understanding human rights.

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105 The gacaca courts are a state-administered of ten thousand community based judicial forums that were established by the GOR to process the large amount of suspected genocidaires through retributive and restorative justice. The contemporary form of gacaca incorporates both western and traditional forms of legal due process, the traditional forum is not well known or documented within the state which has raised concern. Ibid. 468-496.
106 Ibid. 467.
She also exposes the exploitative measures involved in the process of *gacaca* by the GOR and local powers. Further, Rwandans may not perceive the injustices that AI or the GOR present as most pressing or problematic in due process. Meyerstein’s critiques are useful in understanding the relationship between how traumatic events are mediated and recounted in western/local frameworks and how to consumers who consider themselves ethically responsible in terms of these normative definitions. And how justice and human rights are normatively defined in their societies. This can mean expectations in representations that resemble interwoven testimonies of communal and individual testifiers such as *gacaca* or the more Western approach, which relies on a more legalist due process to protect human rights. In the previous section the discussion of legal terms produced by the GOR showed that these terms and their deployment dictate the extent to which testifiers are able to express their experiences (and negotiation). It establishes norm truths and expectations especially by those not directly affected by the event. The same processes involved in recognizing experiences can be seen in the mediator’s expression. Consumers and mediators’ engagements also run the risk of replicating paternalistic ‘humanitarian’ efforts by groups ill informed of the social realities in Rwanda. It can become a naturalization of a process of erasure of extremity in testimonial accounts.

One of Meyerstein’s main points in the section “Pushing Human Rights” argues that the corpus of international human rights treaties throughout the world, which are presented as fact of being by legalist actors, ignores the empirical realities of countries that sign those conventions. She states, “Countries sign countless international conventions without abiding by their commitments because the international legal system
has devised few effective ways of compelling them to do otherwise. Noncompliance rather than an aberration is in fact the norm.” Human rights and justice, though heavily mediated by many different parties, are held accountable to few regulations even if they are ‘legally’ bound to a system. The prison industrial complex in the U.S. and the U.S. international interventions in the Iraq are examples of contradictions in the systems of social and political justice thus claims to abide by. The same is true in Rwanda, ambiguity in execution of justice and human rights laws is a part of what enables the retention of power for those groups who are able to control due process.

Beswick states “The US is currently Rwanda’s largest bilateral donor but tends to concentrate on project support, whereas others, including the United Kingdom, World Bank, and African Development Bank, have moved in recent years towards budget support as a preferred aid modality.”107 The U.S. still donates large amounts of money to autonomous organizations. Autonomy is a questionable description of the ways most organizations function in the state due to the authoritative presence of Kagame’s regime. Governments and organizations must be willing to find beneficial grounds for discussion of their role in the perpetuation of the oppressive structures at work. There needs to be a negotiation of understandings of human rights by both the donor and domestic parties that can aid in lasting security for Rwandans. The activities of NGOs and the relationship with patronage, ethnic favoritism, violence, gender discrimination, and many other social realities work within a global framework. Recognition of pathways that allow for mutual and integrated development for citizens and the state are necessary to create solidarity in

the country. This would first require an acknowledgement of the multitude of Rwandan experiences that are all informed by the traumatic representations of the 1994 genocide.

Experiences of victimhood, perpetration of genocidal acts, exile, and other identifications are assigned value in relation to investment of donors and the missions of NGOs in Rwanda. Returning to the concept of “jurispathic gesture” and the element of establishing legitimacy in approaches to human rights law, once a norm process is established peace building becomes another important component to the discourse on progression and moving forward. It not only reifies the need for the mediators of the structure (removal of mediators would be the removal of reason or the cause of a possible descent back into chaos) but also normalizes official representations of Rwanda such as the country’s being “post-genocide” or gender progressive. Traumatic representations that do not follow an official framework of recognition antagonize constructed symbols or signs that mark different spaces of jurisdiction. The testimonial productions of experiences that blur or contradict these normative identifications and categorizations recurrently reveal the inadequacies of systems in place.
CONCLUSION

*Murambi* and *The Shadow of Imana* provide a space to understand the involvement of producers, mediators, and consumers who both challenge and support testimonial readings of traumatic experiences. Through self-narration of the testifiers (characters and authorial self-reflexivity) Tadjo and Diop account for the complexities of mediating the Rwandan genocide, an event they did not bear witness to, and they provide a representation that speaks to the gendered experiences throughout the extreme event. Jessica Kamanzi, Isaro, Nelly, and Josephine present original stories of the participation of women and they alert us to the spatial/temporal contradictions of official histories. With Jessica the reader is never granted empathetic assurance of her actions, her motivations and desires are overshadowed by her encounters while undercover. Her gender becomes a shield of scripts of what a woman would be doing traveling through the city such as scattered or vulnerable during event. Isaro’s testimony speaks to the relentless presence of trauma; and her melancholic objectification of her husband keeps Isaro in a traumatic outside of official history. This is also a narrative on the communal recognition of shared traumas and how collectives mediate retribution on behalf of those who are dead. Communal memorialization can also prohibit personal inclusion in society when individuals are deemed unfit for memorialization, such is the case for Isaro in her relationship with her village after the genocide. Nelly’s narrative is a disruption of the
concept of “post-genocide;” her experiences are neither remedied nor alleviated. She is ill with HIV and struggles to create a lasting presence in relation to the event by testifying. Her narrative is replete with signs of change; she is now a café owner. Josephine’s story enables an understanding of the event that shows as in the case of Rwanda, her belief that no government works in the interest of the people if it doesn’t allow them to think for themselves. Each woman combats relational ontological experiences in Rwanda. The inclusion of these speaks to a need for higher valuation of women’s testimonies and careful attention to the ways they are documented. This documentation should cover the spectrum of the participation of women in events and the effects of their actions on society. The consumer only has access to the information given. The form that the work takes to show the presence of women leaves a lasting impression on how future generations chronicle their participation.

In “Women and Land Rights in Rwanda” a genealogy of their inclusion and exclusion from land rights provides an alternative history to understand the ways women have used/transformed their gendered positions to gain rights. The inheritance law still privileges to the male descendants but in the event of the death of the father both girls and boys are entitled to an equal share of the land. Marriage must be recognized by civil law, which takes a narrow view of social interactions between men and women. Polygamous relationships are not recognized and children born out of wedlock are not included as inheritors of property. Though the occupations of women are changing and they women now hold 56 percent of the parliamentary seats in Rwanda, yet women still remain vulnerable. There is still a dominant system of heterosexual, patriarchal norms at work. It is undeniable that women are integral to the reconstruction that takes place in the
state. They are using the ambiguity of implementation of laws regarding land rights, inheritance, and property to gain access to security. If this reconstruction as Foucault calls it is a “promise of dominance” how can reconstruction instead be reframed, so systems of domination are not simply recycled? It is the need to rethink reconstruction that leads to the use of certain kinds of traumatic representations geared towards opening up new not so orthodox positionalites for Rwandan subjects in relation to citizenship, legality, and the status of human rights in Rwanda. Testimony has the potential to be expressed with particularities of the social realities not discussed in official discourse on life in Rwanda. Individual/collective Rwandans, the GOR, NGOs, and other factions deploy these narratives to establish a space of recognition.

Wendy Hesford states, “Survivors narratives do expose oppressive material conditions, violence and trauma; give voice to hereforeto silent histories; help shape public consciousness about violence against women; and thus alter history’s narrative.”¹⁰⁸

The commodification of the survivors’ testimonies is another risk in presenting their stories. Scripts are created to objectify and distribute knowledge on the traumatic event to the public, but as we have seen above, there are always testimonies that deny usually stereotypical representations though they may not escape stereotype completely. Fictive narratives are capable of presenting the testimonio genre. Murambi and The Shadow of Imana present unique characters that go beyond the individual experience to incorporate the intersecting traumas of survivors of genocide through their self-narration. This is the common achievement of the authors of “Rwanda: Writing as a Duty to Remember.”

The “Culture of Intimacy” bridges the representational and experiential materiality of individuals who exist in a globalized world. Tadjo and Diop attempt to reproduce this intimacy in representing with literary technologies of “Dismembering esthetics” though they eschew a social realism of the event, they still among mange, to establish an empathetic bond with those involved in the extreme events. The narrative production of the “Culture of Intimacy” fosters a sense of closeness between distant events. On the one hand there is the risk in this closure of distance of “the pleasure of repetitive linear narrative.” This process generates a feeling of not knowing what comes next, and combined with the disgust at depicted violence, it makes of narrative an act of sadistic storytelling. The opposite of this is the production of narratives that are empathy-unfriendly to the consumer, that give the reader an account accomplished through ‘narrative lapses.’ The reader is not able to ‘add up’ or follow a coherent storyline throughout the narrative. It may not be possible to avoid pleasure and the gaze as a consumer of traumatic narratives. On some level interest in the event implies a pleasure in the experience but this is where ethical responsibility by reader in the form of “hospitality” is useful. The consumer makes the decision to recognize the obscenity in the experience that does not fit in their cultural scene and changes perspective of the scene they exist in.

Ultimately, this thesis asks whether it is possible to produce a global framework for representing traumatic experiences? This project has aimed to respect the specificity of testifiers experiences while also recognizing that shared relational experiences are

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possible among people. These relationships should not be understood as fixed; rather, they are fluidly negotiated in connection to the extremity of the traumatic event and the demands of society. The theoretical approaches used in this project relied heavily on holocaust studies. These theoretical approaches were very useful but also signify the hegemony holocaust studies has come to occupy in academia on genocide, especially in the theoretical domain. To say that these theories are adequate to mediate the particularities of social spaces that are changing in Rwanda as they are produced and distributed throughout the world gravely reduces the impact Rwanda can offer academic scholarship.


Gourevitch, Philip. *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families: Stories from Rwanda*. New York: Macmillan, 1998.


