

Bearing Witness to Trauma: Representations of the Rwandan Genocide

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DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis will examine representations of the Rwandan genocide and its aftermath in selected literary and filmic narratives. It aims in particular to explore the different ways in which narrative devices are used to convey trauma to the reader or viewer, thus enabling them to bear witness to it. These include language, discourse, image, structure and perspectives, on the one hand, and the framing of the genocide on screen, on the other hand. The thesis argues that these narrative devices are used to provide partial insight into the trauma of the genocide and/or to produce empathy or distance between readers and viewers and the victims, perpetrators and survivors of the genocide. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which the selected novels and films advance the human dimension of the genocide. This will shift both victims and perpetrators out of the domain of statistics and evoke emotional engagement from readers and viewers. The thesis argues for the importance of narrative in bearing witness to trauma, particularly due to its unique ability to forge an emotional connection between reader or viewer and character. The primary texts analysed in the thesis are the novels *Inyenzi: A Story of Love and Genocide* by South African author Andrew Brown and *Murambi, The Book of Bones* by Senegalese author Boubacar Boris Diop, along with the films *Shooting Dogs*, directed by British Michael Caton-Jones, and *Hotel Rwanda*, directed by American Terry George. In addition to considering the use of narrative devices to produce empathy and engagement among readers and viewers, the thesis explores also the implications of the various outsider perspectives of the writers and film-makers, and the effect that this has on their narratives, not least given the role played by the world community in failing to avert the genocide .

OPSOMMING

Hierdie tesis ondersoek die voorstellings van Rwanda volksmoorde en die nagevolge in geselekteerde narratiewe tekste en rolprente. Die tesis poog om op verskillende maniere ondersoek in stel na die narratiewe middels om die trauma oor te dra na die leser en kyker. Dit sluit taal, diskoers, beelde, struktuur en perspektiewe aan die eenkant, en verfilming op die skerm aan die anderkant. Die tesis argumenteer dat narratiewe middels verskaf gedeeltelike insig van die trauma van die volksmoorde en/of genereer empatie of afstand tussen leser en kyker en die slagoffers, skuldiges en die oorlewendes van die volksmoorde. Aandag sal veral gegee word op welke wyse die geselekteerde romans en rolprente die menslike dimensie van volksmoord bevorder. Beide die slagoffers en skuldiges word uit die ondersoekterrein van statistieke geskuif en daar gaan gefokus word op die uitlok van emosionele betokkendheid van lesers en kykers. Die tesis argumenteer vir die belangrikheid van die narratief om as getuie op te tree van trauma – veral as gevolg die unieke vermoë om tussen die leser of die kyker en die karakter emosionele bande te smee. Die primêre tekste wat in hierdie tesis geanaliseer word, is die romans, *Inyenzi: A Story of Love and Genocide* deur Suid-Afrikaner Andrew Brown, *Murambi*, *The Book of Bones* deur Senegalese skrywer Boubacar Boris Diop, en die rolprente *Shooting Dogs*, onder leiding van die Brit, Michael Caton-Jones en *Hotel Rwanda*, onder leiding van die Ierse, Terry George. Afgesien van die gebruik van narratiewe middels om empatie en betrokkenheid van lesers en kykers te genereer, ondersoek die tesis ook die implikasies van die onderskeie buitestaander perspektiewe van die skrywers en rolprentmakers en die effek op hulle narratiewe – veral die rol wat hulle speel in die wêreldgemeenskap om volksmoorde te voorkom.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In April 1994, Rwanda became the site of what is now considered to be one of the most efficient and appalling cases of mass murder in modern history. The genocide taking place during those 100 days,¹ claimed the lives of approximately 800,000 Rwandans, the victims comprised of Tutsis and moderate Hutus. Instead of intervening, the world remained silent during these massacres and failed to act on behalf of those Rwandans who were being murdered.

The texts chosen for this study were primarily selected due to their varying techniques in attempting to represent the trauma of the genocide, as well as the different perspectives of each writer or filmmaker, how they relate to Rwanda, and the ways in which the texts stage this relation. The four focal texts include Andrew Brown's *Inyenzi: A Story of Love and Genocide* and Boubacar Boris Diop's *Murambi, The Book of Bones*. Both works are completely fictional and deal with individuals who were affected by or involved in the genocide in various ways. The films *Shooting Dogs*, directed by Michael Caton-Jones, and *Hotel Rwanda*, directed by Terry George, are based on actual events, but both have exercised artistic licence by making fictional changes to characters and plot, as well as employing creative filmic techniques, that can enable one to analyse them as fictional narratives.

Although the cause of the genocide is under some dispute, Mahmood Mamdani states that "the origin of the violence is connected to how Hutu and Tutsi were constructed as political identities by the colonial state, Hutu as indigenous and Tutsi as alien" (34).² This myth of indigeneity helped the Hutu Power party to

¹ Although the "killings began before April 6 1994" (Harrow 224), this thesis will focus on the much popularized, though contested, timeframe of the genocide as those 100 days following the death of President Habyarimana.

² For a more comprehensive analysis of the possible causes of the genocide, see Mahmood Mamdani's *When Victims Become Killers* and Linda Melvern's *Conspiracy to Murder*. Philip Gourevitch's *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families* also provides

substantiate their case for rule over the country and renounce the right of Tutsis to reside in the country or live in peace, as they were cast as foreigners. Since the revolution of 1959, where Hutus overturned Tutsi rule,³ regular outbreaks of violence occurred against the Tutsis. The polarization of ethnic and political identity, produced under colonial rule and supported by years of propaganda against the Tutsis in the post-colony, resulted in the Hutu majority's aversion to power sharing, as stipulated by the Arusha Accords of 1993. This is considered by most to be the catalyst for the ensuing slaughter of the Tutsi minority.

The complicated nature of genocide, however, does not allow for such a simplified causal relationship. The nuanced intersections between the colonial politicization of ethnic identities, the ethnicised mapping of the violence that occurred during the genocide, as well as the various contestations over political and economic power across the history of Rwanda, all played a part in fuelling the Hutu-Tutsi conflict. The controversy of what instigated the killings is one that cannot be fully explored in this thesis, but the inability to accurately pinpoint the causes, as well as the originary point, of the Rwandan genocide seems to further signal the enigmatic nature of genocide itself.

Genocide is defined by academics as a “form of one-sided mass killing” (Chalk and Jonassohn qtd. in Makino 58) in “execution of a coordinated plan which aims at the partial or total destruction of national, ethnic, racial or religious groups or of groups defined according to whatever arbitrary criteria” (Courois qtd. in Makino 59). Following the Holocaust, genocide became regarded as a gross human rights violation, resulting in the formation of the 1948 Geneva Convention Against Genocide. The League of Nations, a predecessor to the United Nations, signed this Convention, obliging member states to act when presented with a recognised case of genocide.

a useful account of the genocide and its aftermath, including stories, historical analysis, journalistic observances and personal insights.

³ Colonial powers left Tutsi in power when departing.

However, this became a semantic concern, rather than an ethical one, when, despite early warnings of the killings in Rwanda, the world failed to 'recognise' what was occurring as genocide. The U.N. claimed that only "acts of genocide" were occurring, thereby absolving the world community, represented by the signatories, from their obligation to intervene. Furthermore, Western news reports described the killing as "tribal bloodletting that foreigners were powerless to prevent", arguing that "the world had little choice but to stand aside and 'hope for the best'" (Melvern 231). Despite the fact that in the Western media "[t]here were no headlines about genocide", there were countless "graphic reports about corpses piling up on the streets and news stories about the scale of the killing, but there was little explanation in the commentary" (Melvern 231). This served to propagate the Western myth that these killings were merely the "product of tribal factions" (Karnik 614). The idea of tribal conflict in an atavistic Africa is a common Western preconception, thereby aiding in their refusal to accept responsibility to intervene on behalf of some Rwandans. According to U.N. Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire, "the international community, through an inept U.N. mandate and what can only be described as indifference, self-interest and racism, aided and abetted these crimes against humanity" (5). The U.N. power base's (lack of) response to the Rwandan genocide contributed directly to the continuation of the killings.

In the wake of the genocide, many members of the world community experience guilt. For some, the production and consumption of fictional representations of the genocide becomes a means of "working through" this guilt. The question arises why Rwandans themselves are not necessarily producing and consuming these texts. According to Patrick Mazimhaka, "those of us who live in Rwanda cannot take the necessary distance from a genocide that happened only ten years ago to be able to speak to it in any coherent or rational manner" ("The Rwanda Forum"). This could possibly account for the relative lack of literary representation of the genocide by Rwandans themselves. The act of 'speaking genocide' has thus fallen into the hands of 'outsiders'.

These outsiders have varying degrees of connection to Rwanda. The outsider status of the writers and filmmakers shapes the ways in which they represent the trauma and the kinds of memory they attempt to produce about it, as they find themselves having to grapple with questions of responsibility, complicity, inaction and guilt. As a result of the Western perception of an atavistic Africa, African outsiders are positioned differently to Western outsiders vis-à-vis the genocide. Yet they, too, need to negotiate questions of absence and inaction. As a white South African who opposed the apartheid system, Andrew Brown, author of *Inyenzi: A Story of Love and Genocide*, was more directly connected to the 1994 Democratic Elections that were taking place in his own country at the same time as the genocide. His personal experience as a young man travelling in Burundi in the 1980's and witnessing the "underlying tension" amongst the Hutu and Tutsi, inspired him to write the novel (qtd. in Samuel 173). Boubacar Boris Diop, author of *Murambi, The Book of Bones*, wrote his novel after visiting Rwanda and the sites of the genocide as part of a writing project for African writers called "Rwanda: Writing so as not to forget". His own encounters with the aftermath of the genocide lead to the novel, which can then be seen as a means to bear witness to the trauma and suffering of individuals in the genocide. The filmmakers of *Shooting Dogs* and *Hotel Rwanda* are respectively British and Irish and, as a result, their films foreground the outsider position of the Westerner to a larger degree.

The guilt of being complicit in the continuation of the genocide in a sense drives artistic representations of the trauma, and the narrative accounts discussed in this thesis are often veiled in this language of guilt. In effect, the writers are writing the trauma of the genocide through a lens of the guilt of a world community who watches from the outside and who has to come to terms with not acting, and with the impact that this failure may have on both Rwandans and their own humanity. Seeing as silence is equated with complicity in the genocide, many outsiders have now felt the need to speak out. The importance

of uncovering the silence, of writing about the genocide, is that, according to Simon Norfolk, “forgetting is the final instrument of genocide” (qtd. in Feinstein 32). It is thus imperative to ensure that the process continues that provides for a “memory of genocide that will speak to future generations” (“Keeping memory alive” 149).

This dedication to remembering and constructing a memory of the genocide is illustrated in the 1998 project “Rwanda: Writing so as not to forget”. Noke Jedanoon, a Chadian writer, asked African writers to endeavour to write about Rwanda so as to “use [their] art, to use literature to render what we would see, hear and understand of post-genocide Rwanda” (Tadjo, “The Rwanda Forum”). Véronique Tadjo, from Côte d'Ivoire, stated that the feeling was that “we can’t continue to write as if nothing had happened” (“The Rwanda Forum”), emphasising the significant impact that the genocide should have on future narratives. The results of this project include Tadjo’s memoir *The Shadow of Imana* (2005) and Boubacar Boris Diop’s novel *Murambi, The Book of Bones* (2006).

Both works, in the spirit of the project, bring to the fore the role of representation in bearing witness to the trauma. Representation plays an important part in bearing witness to the genocide as it not only legitimates the trauma by recording it, but effectively “translat[es the] tragic experience – the 1994 genocide of the Tutsis – into lasting symbols and representations” (“Keeping memory alive” 151). These symbols and representations provide readers and viewers with some form of access into the experience of the genocide, and in this way aid in bearing witness to it.

Tadjo points to the role that narratives can play in increasing understanding of the genocide when she states that “what we were interested in as writers was to – in a way – resurrect the dead, render the full human dimension of what had happened in Rwanda so people could understand it at an ordinary level” (“The

Rwanda Forum”). The rendering of the human dimension of the genocide could create an emotional and empathetic bond between the reader and the characters (and the dead they represent), creating a space where the reader can glimpse the trauma of the genocide through the experiences of the other and mourn its losses.

This thesis will explore in particular the ways in which the narrative features and devices aid in creating this level of understanding. These features include language, discourse, image, structure and perspectives, on the one hand, and the framing of the genocide on screen, on the other hand. Such features and devices are recognized by the *Journal of Genocide Research* as “integral parts of the quest to probe the world of genocide” (Huttenbach, “From” 9). The “use of artistic images”, in particular, contribute to helping the reader or viewer attempt to “‘imagine’ aspects of genocide that may not be so easily conveyed by the historical narrative, or even interviews with survivors and perpetrators” (Feinstein 33). Literary and filmic representations thus have the potential to provide a form of insight into the genocide that other accounts cannot.

In order to facilitate the engagement with the narrative representations of the Rwandan genocide, this exploration draws from, amongst others, theories of narrative, trauma, genocide, healing and bearing witness. Both Holocaust studies and engagements with the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) narratives provide a valuable foundation for attempts to narrate and bear witness to what happened in Rwanda.

Literature can bear witness to trauma through an attempt to translate pain into language by using figurative poetics and shifts in discourse. Elaine Scarry outlines and problematises the linguistic translation of pain in her text *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, stating that translating pain into language is problematic due to the destruction of language that comes about as a result of pain (4). To explore how trauma is conveyed, it is important to

examine the way in which language is used in an attempt to translate trauma, as well as the importance and effectiveness of symbolism and metaphor. Furthermore, as in Brown's *Inyenzi*, shifts between different orders of representation or discourse, for instance between legalistic and narrative prose, affect the reader's emotional involvement in the narrative, making it shift from one of engagement to distance, and vice versa. Emotional engagement could assist identification with the characters depicted in the narrative, which could result in a more empathetic response to the represented world by focusing on the human dimension of the genocide. Emotional distance, on the other hand, could serve to remind the reader of their absence.

Narrative structure can also aid in conveying the trauma of the genocide. Elaine Scarry claims that pain "destroys" language (4); similarly, the experience of trauma fragments the self and the society. Fragmented narratives mirror this social and psychic fragmentation. In *Murambi, The Book of Bones*, Diop attempts to convey the characteristics of trauma as fragmented, nonlinear, dreamlike, disjointed and fluid by breaking up the narrative form. The fragmented structure of the novel creates space for a range of perspectives and voices by including the narratives of many individuals involved in the genocide. At the same time, however, Diop structures his narrative in a more or less coherent way with a discernible start, middle and end, in order to both illustrate the processes of destruction and to narrate the trauma in a manner that can be understood by others. This adoption of the conventional narrative structure could imply some kind of closure for the reader, but the overarching fragmentation of the narrative, and of time, problematises closure by highlighting that trauma itself never ends.

According to Mohamed Adhikari, "in the case of the Rwandan genocide one is faced not merely with the task of explaining how and why the genocide occurred but, crucially, also with accounting for large-scale popular participation in the killing" (282). It is thus crucial to any attempt to come to terms with the genocide

that the “popularity’ of the genocide” be addressed (Mamdani 8). Fiction “can turn official reportage inside out to expose the motivating ideological fantasies articulated both within Rwanda and from without” (Kroll 657). Narrative perspective and characterisation can provide insight into the motives that underpinned this large-scale participation. Diop offers such insight into the narrative by writing the chapters from the perspectives of different characters. By providing individualized representations and offering access to the interiority of a range of characters, these narratives also break down the stereotypical understandings of victim and perpetrator.

The audio-visual medium of film also employs a variety of devices in order to convey trauma. In screening the genocide, the filmic lens provides access to the genocide that may offer a false sense of authenticity through the immediacy of the visual image. The varying approaches of the films *Shooting Dogs* and *Hotel Rwanda* emphasise different means of representation through their respective focus on violence and silence. By either providing or restricting the viewers’ access to violent images, the films approach the representation of trauma in contrasting ways. Ultimately, the limits of representing trauma are explored in each through the handling of lens, perspective and image.

Narratives, whether written or audio-visual, provide the reader or viewer with the human dimension of the genocide by means of their focus on individuals. Through the treatment of narrative and filmic devices, the individuals involved in the genocide are resurrected from the dead and provided a space where their individual stories can be told. The level of empathy that is evoked in the reader through these narrative features and devices may aid in creating fragments of understanding the genocide.

CHAPTER 2

LANGUAGE, DISCOURSE AND IMAGE: *INYENZI*

Inyenzi: A Story of Love and Genocide by Andrew Brown explores the way – and extent to which – language can be used to translate trauma. It does so through the use of alternating chapters of narrative and legalistic or journalistic prose, and by making evocative use of imagery. It reveals to the reader the efficacy of the image, as well as its duplicity in that it is used in both the act of killing and that of re-presentation of the genocide, and it marks the unavoidable limits of the word and of discourse in speaking trauma.

Inyenzi: A Story of Love and Genocide provides the fictional account of Melchior, tracing his life as a Hutu priest, who is sent to work at a church in rural Bukumara after finishing his studies in Butare. Whilst he is there, Tutsis, who are fleeing the deadly *interahamwe*,⁴ seek refuge in his church compound. One of these Tutsis is Selena, the woman Melchior fell in love with when he was studying, yet their love is forbidden not only by the church, but also by her position as a Tutsi, an *inyenzi*.⁵ Melchior's presence at the compound, and the fact that the head of the communal police is his childhood friend, Victor Muyigenzi, grants those under his care a certain level of protection. But when Melchior is forced to leave the compound, in order to seek assurance from Colonel Batho (one of the more prominent *genocidaires* in the text) that those in his compound will be spared, the *interahamwe* proceed to slaughter them mercilessly in his absence. In the final scene of the novel, Melchior is executed by Victor for not killing Selena, allowing her to escape into the mountains. The story of Melchior takes place in chapters that alternate with sections consisting of documents that relate to the final massacre at the compound and the trial of the focal *genocidaires* of the text.

⁴ Literally meaning “those who work together” or “those who fight together”, the *interahamwe* are the Hutu militia responsible for most of the killing during the 1994 genocide.

⁵ Literally means “cockroach”.

Parallel to the narrative of Melchior, is the documentation on and legal proceedings of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, where Victor Muyigenzi is being tried for crimes against humanity for his involvement in the genocide, specifically the massacre at the church compound. Various documents – such as court transcripts, newspaper reports, press releases and witness statements – outlining his trial are alternated and interweaved with the story of Melchior. The novel thus unfolds in two separate, yet inextricably intertwined, semantic modes: the narrative space of the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 and the legal space of the judicial enquiry in Arusha, Tanzania in 1997. Brown states that the use of this “structure of the book is driven by the horror (for me as author) of its telling” (qtd. in Samuel 178). The use of alternating chapters that deal with two different spaces and take place in separate time periods is therefore a way for the author to facilitate the telling of the story: the shifting of discourse might be a way for him to distance himself from the trauma in the text.

Through narrative and the treatment of language, discourse and image, writers of trauma are also trying to make sense of the incomprehensible; they are trying to facilitate some sort of engagement with the genocide in an attempt to gain at least a limited comprehension of the horror. One of the most troubling aspects of the Rwandan genocide is the mass participation of individuals in the killings. According to Brown, the effort to understand their mass participation informs and shapes his narrative. Brown states that “[t]he stories from the Rwandan genocide include the most confusing and tragic: school teachers and nurses turning into killers, and then returning to their caring jobs once the carnage was over, priests and nuns turning victims over to the *interahamwe*, family members destroying one another” (qtd. in Samuel 174). Speaking of *Inyenzi*, he concludes: “[a]s with any writing, to some extent it was a selfish attempt to try and make sense of the incomprehensible for myself” (qtd. in Samuel 175).

Andrew Brown is South African and his outsider status shapes the ways in which he represents the trauma of the genocide, as well as the kinds of memory that he

attempts to produce in its wake. He decided to write *Inyenzi* because he felt that “[t]hat story – despite its enormity – was simply not told in our (or any one else’s) media” (qtd. in Samuel 174).

World silence surrounding the genocide played a large role in allowing the horror to continue, and it is this silence that needs to be uncovered through fictional representations of the genocide. These narratives will allow those individual stories to come to light in a world that originally turned its back on Rwanda and the massacre that occurred there. This guilt at being absent, and the disastrous consequences of that absence, manifests in the artistic representations of the genocide through the very need to tell these stories and make the trauma known. Brown in part addresses the issue of world guilt through the religious framing of the novel.

By using a clergyman as the main protagonist in the novel, Brown is able to frame the narrative with questions of cosmological responsibility. The text is veiled in a language of guilt, but the call here is to a higher power.⁶ As a man of the church, Melchior indirectly questions the presence of God in the murderous proceedings: “[d]o you think God is *minwa*?” he asks Selena; “[t]hat we have been forsaken?” (124). Melchior had been taught at seminary school that “the random happenings that befall humankind are predetermined by a single entity” and this leads him to question the role or absence of God in the genocide (11).

The inclusion of Victor’s tribunal in the narrative also reflects an appeal to a higher power – the power of the international court⁷ – and thus foregrounds world response to and responsibility for the genocide. The inclusion of this court also reflects on the ineffectual involvement of the global community: only *after* the

⁶ Véronique Tadjo’s memoir, *The Shadow of Imana*, through its very title, also points towards the role of the cosmos in the genocide. *Imana* refers to the Rwandan God, and the “shadow” of *Imana* implies that God had turned his back on Rwanda.

⁷ In November 1994, the UN Security Council set up the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha, Tanzania, to prosecute high level members of the government and armed forces suspected of involvement in the genocide.

killings do they step in and come to the aid of the Rwandans. Through the proceedings of the court, the text is directly addressing questions of responsibility, complicity and guilt. Questions regarding the role that the world, and ultimately the cosmos, played in allowing the genocide to take place and to continue, along with their role in the wake of the genocide, are raised through the call to this higher global court representing a world that *now* wants to help. By including this in the novel, and by foregrounding it through narrative structure and characterisation, Brown explores the ethical implications of world silence, and does so by laying bare issues pertaining to world culpability and the possible guilt associated with not intervening.

The expression of pain, or the translation of trauma into language in order to communicate it to others, plays an essential role in bearing witness. In that trauma, suffering and pain resist language, they are to a certain degree incomprehensible to those who have not experienced them directly. When Melchior is trying to extract a traumatic story from a woman who arrives at the compound, she is described as “incoherent” (102), becoming “increasingly tearful and agitated as she tried to explain her story” (103). The young girl with her “did not say anything” (106) and even “started to shake uncontrollably” (103). Their inability to adequately convey their traumatic experience to Melchior is directly related to the difficulty of translating pain into language. According to Elaine Scarry in *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, pain not only resists but actively destroys language and brings about an “immediate reversion...to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned” (4). Therefore, “to be present when a person moves” from the pre-language of cries and groans caused by pain “into speech is almost to have been permitted to be present at the birth of language of language” (6), and to witness the emergence of a new idiom.

The difficulty of expressing in language the physical pain and emotional suffering of the Rwandan genocide is in part due to the “unshareability” of pain through its

“resistance to language” (Scarry 4). Scarry states that “physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it” (4). This is because “physical pain – unlike any other state of consciousness – has no referential content. It is not *of* or *for* anything. It is precisely because it takes no object that it, more than any other phenomenon, resists objectification in language” (5). This results in an inability to fully express pain, or to share pain completely and thus in any representation of trauma, the extent of the trauma can never entirely be conveyed.

The limits of the word, and ultimately of language itself, to translate pain is present in the various instances of code-switching throughout the novel. There is a movement between languages in the text, namely English and Kinyarwanda. In doing this, the author is questioning what can be spoken in what language, and what can not. This code-switching between languages thus acknowledges the limits of language itself and shows an attempt to find some means of representing trauma through constantly switching from language to another.

Despite the inability of language to fully express pain, in narratives writers make use of figurative language to convey aspects of trauma. Narrative prose makes use of images, symbols and metaphors as vehicles of expression. The use of figurative poetics marks the limits of language and its ability to express pain fully, as it involves an internalisation of the image. The efficacy and importance of figurative poetics lies in its ability to allow for subjective, indirect confrontation with the trauma, as the reader is forced to imagine aspects of the genocide through individual interpretation of the image.

Furthermore, a shift between different orders of representation or discourses in a text affects the reader’s involvement in the narrative. The readers’ emotional engagement with or distance from the trauma is influenced by the type of language and discourse used in the narrative. Because neither the narrative nor the legalistic prose adequately provide language that can express trauma,

Inyenzi constantly shifts from one discourse to another, as if trying to find an appropriate means of communication, yet failing to do so. Whilst speaking about the shifts in discourse that characterise the final scene where Melchior is killed, Brown himself acknowledges that “[d]eath at the hands of another cannot realistically be described” and “[f]or that reason, Selena does not see it, Victor does not confess to its details and the Court is unable to describe it” (qtd. in Samuel 178). In doing this, the writer conveys the difficulty of representing trauma through language alone and describes the multiple layers of distance that he places between the reader and the trauma of Melchior’s death. Whilst journalistic prose evokes distance between reader and text through the objective style in which it is written, the subjective nature of narrative prose forges a closer emotional bond between character and reader. This emotional bond could help the reader in trying to make sense of the genocide and the incomprehensible nature of the killings.

In the novel, Brown uses Kinyarwandan terms in the predominantly English text in three different ways that can be divided into what seems to be separate, yet inextricably intertwined, groups. At the beginning of the novel, Brown provides a Glossary and Abbreviations of Kinyarwandan words with brief definitions along with general abbreviations that the reader will encounter.⁸ The inclusion of such a Glossary should already alert the reader to the fact that non-English words will appear in the text. The types of words included in this Glossary possibly foreshadow the context(s) in which these terms will be used. The first group that these words can be divided into provide authentic local terms for the social structures within Rwanda. In the Glossary, Brown explains that *nyambakumi* is the “head of an elected cell of people” and that a *mwami* is a “traditional chief” (x). This provides the reader with a sense of intimate knowledge of Rwanda, allowing the outsider to enter Rwanda by localising the narrative.

⁸ The source for these definitions is not specified individually, but at the end of the novel, an Acknowledgements page consisting of several references, including Philip Gourevitch’s *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families*.

The second group is comprised of words that existed previously in Kinyarwanda, but have been imbued with new and specific meanings within the context of the genocide. These terms played an important role in the genocide and although their strict denotation remains faithful to their original use within Rwanda society, the appropriation of the word in the genocide changes the way in which the word is interpreted and how it functions in terms of the speech act theories of language. Literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin uses terms like “saturated” (74) and “charged” (75) to describe language, emphasising that each word is populated with various meanings, and that interpretation depends on the speaker’s appropriation of the word. Bakhtin states that language is “populated – overpopulated – with the intentions of others” (77). Words can thus be imbued with different meanings by different speakers, illustrated with these words that were re-populated during the genocide that carry with them very specific implications. The use of a word is thus closely tied to the context in which it is uttered. By using these re-populated words, Brown is making the reader aware of how the established language in Rwanda was used to serve the agenda of the perpetrators. For example, *icyitso* traditionally means “accomplice”, but in the genocide it referred to supporters of the RPF. *Interahamwe* literally translates as “those who work together”. Within the context of the genocide, “work” was used as a euphemism for killing Tutsis and as a result of this *interahamwe* came to mean “those who fight together”. Similarly *Amasusu* denotes bullets, but was the name given to a “radical group of soldiers and police fomenting anti-Tutsi propaganda” (ix). The most prominent word in this group is *inyenzi*, cockroach: a “pejorative term used by extremist Hutus referring to Tutsis during the genocide in 1994” (ix).

The third group consists of words whose meaning exist solely because of the genocide: words created within the space of genocide. In this group, the power of the word is laid bare as it prompts action. By creating a word, the action that it connotes becomes a reality. The need to create words also indicates that the act of genocide was not a norm of society: what was occurring in Rwandan was new

there, as there were no established words to describe them. This in itself challenges the Western belief that the “Rwandans were simply killing each other as they were wont to do, for primordial tribal reasons, since time immemorial” (Gourevitch 154). These words include *Inkotanyi*, which refers to Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) soldiers, as well as *amarondo*, *Interahamwe* patrols that were organised during the genocide.

When encountering a Kinyarwanda word, the non-Rwanda reader is immediately forced to disengage with the text briefly in order to either look up the definition of the word in the glossary, or determine the meaning through its placement in the context of the narrative. This shift from the familiar to the unfamiliar in terms of language creates an unstable space between reader and text. The glossary explanation of the Kinyarwanda term does not in itself provide the reader with access to the trauma of the genocide, but the shift between languages and the accompanying space that this code-switching creates might begin to do so. Due to this space between languages, the reader is forced to play an active role in the interpretation of the phrase as a whole and see what lies behind the words, what is missing; in effect what cannot be expressed in any language.

Figurative language achieves an analogous effect. Just as the reader is forced to read in-between the different words, to explore and interpret the space that is created when one language shifts into another, figurative language opens a space for interpretation between the image and its referent. The use of figurative language and the code-switching between languages therefore have a similar effect on the reader: they provide an imaginative space where the reader is encouraged to interpret the narrative subjectively and engage with the represented world.

While helping to bridge the gap between the reader and the genocide, language and figurative imagery can equally be a means of distancing. At the same time,

this distancing effect of prose reflects to some extent the ways in which language was used by the perpetrators themselves in the genocide. Perpetrators made use of figurative language in order to distance themselves from their victims. For instance, the perpetrators of the genocide used the term *inyenzi*, with which Brown titles the novel, to refer to the Tutsis in order to de-humanise them and mark them as subjects deserving of death. This method of dehumanisation and humiliation is not limited to the Rwandan genocide, but was present in the Holocaust as well, where victims were referred to as pigs and vermin. Labelling victims as such effectively separates the self from the other, and “once the ‘other’ is sufficiently stigmatized and dehumanised, it becomes easy and even necessary for ‘us’ to massacre ‘them’ without any sense of guilt or remorse” (Odora 4-5). Reducing their victims to animals and pests, to beings that do not feel, think or act like ‘we’ do, perpetrators not only justified their behaviour, but also satisfied their conscience. The reference to Tutsis as *inyenzi* not only marks them as vermin, pests and invaders to be systematically killed, but even identifies them as symptoms of an unhygienic disorder; their killing is thus naturalised as an act of cleaning out the (national) house. In labelling the Tutsis as cockroaches, the perpetrators are thus going further than merely distancing themselves from their victims: they are naturalising their own murderous behaviour as well.

Within the novel, the different levels or stages of dehumanisation undergone by the victims is outlined by Melchior after he comes upon the mangled body of Joseph Gatagero, a suspected member of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). In his attempt to understand “the apparent ease with which a young man had been reduced to a crushed outline of thickened blood and flesh” (97), he comments: “[n]o doubt it had made it easier, in principle, first to label their victim *icyitso* – an RPF supporter – not to call out his name, but to call him an *Inkotanyi* soldier, to accuse him of being a hater of Rwanda, part of the *inyangarwhanda*, and to denigrate him until he was no longer a person worthy of life but merely a

nuisance, a parasite, *inyenzi*. Once he had been stripped of his human form, then perhaps the act became possible” (98-99).

By using the term *inyenzi* as the title, the novel is foregrounding the role played by word and image in the genocide. By exposing the dehumanising use and nature of the word within the context of the genocide, the title creates distance between the word and the image. This term was used to dehumanise the Tutsis and thus played an important part in the act of killing. The title makes the reader aware of the power of this word and therefore exposes the dehumanising characteristics of the perpetrators, ironically shifting the power of the word from the perpetrators to the victims: the victims were referred to as ‘cockroaches’, but by dehumanising them, the perpetrators also dehumanise themselves.

After being exposed to the term in the title, the reader is introduced to the notion of *inyenzi* and what it means within the context of the narrative in the prologue. An anonymous man is seated on a bed in a hotel in Kenya. Later it becomes evident that this man is Victor Muyigenzi, when we are informed by a fictionalised newspaper article that Victor was “arrested in a hotel in Nairobi” (20).

As Victor is watching the news on the television, “an intruder appear[s] from beneath the bed” (3). This “intruder” is described as having “one long antenna” and “light and dark-brown-patterns jigsawed across its smooth, hard shell” (3). It moves with a “rapid burst of legs, scuttling” across the floor before “it stop[s] and test[s] the air, waving its thin feelers; paper wings rustling beneath its carapace” (3). By describing the cockroach initially as an intruder, the figurative reference to Tutsis is clear. Victor explains later in the plot, but earlier in the story, to Melchior that the Tutsis are an “outside threat” (202), an “external force” (203). This is directly connected Hutu Power’s propagation of the idea that Tutsis were foreigners from Ethiopia and were therefore not indigenous to Rwanda. This fuelled the justification for their annihilation.

The fate of the insect depicted in the prologue is outlined when a “shot rang like the crack of a leather whip” (4). This foreshadows the murder of Melchior that takes place in the final scene of the novel. His death at the hands of Victor is described as a “single crack [that] echo[es] across the valley” (206). In this way, a direct connection is made between the senseless and merciless killing of the cockroach, of Melchior and by extension, through the use of the image of the cockroach, the victims of the genocide.

Similarly, the use of the word *gukora*, literally meaning “to work”, gains double meaning within the context of the genocide. While it denotes harvesting or working in the fields, during the genocide it was used as a metaphor for killing Tutsis. In *A Time for Machetes: The Killers Speak*, Jean Hatzfeld interviewed ten Rwandan men who were tried and convicted for crimes of genocide. These killers spoke candidly about their actions, thoughts and lives before and during the genocide. This helped to shed some light on aspects of the genocide, such as the way in which language was used to justify or obscure the reality of their actions. The chapter entitled “How it was organised” is littered with the replacement of the word ‘kill’ with ‘work’. The perpetrators that were interviewed for this book keep talking about how they “had to work fast” and “got no time off” (Élie qtd. in Hatzfeld 12). One killer, Ignace, states that “[w]e had work to do” and that “[w]e were doing a job to order” (qtd. in Hatzfeld 13). By using ‘work’ as a euphemism for killing Tutsis, the perpetrators are naturalising their actions by comparing it to the necessary function of harvesting fields, in addition to dehumanising their victims.

Within the novel, the characters themselves not only use the term, but are very aware of the way in which it has been appropriated by the perpetrators. This duplicity in the language is commented on by the character Michel, a friend of Melchior’s, when he says that “they [the perpetrators] use words differently...they talk about ‘work’, but they mean something else” (101). Melchior himself challenges the use of the word in his final scene when he confronts one of the

militia men, Zephir, by saying “[this] isn’t *work*...You cannot hide from what you’ve done by calling it work”. He then refuses to allow them to call it by any other name and states that “[this] is not *gukora*; this is murder” (199). This not only becomes a question of denotation versus connotation, as the perpetrators sought to actually change the denotation of the term. In this regard, Melchior (and Brown) can be seen as attempting to re-present it as connotation and thus drive a wedge between denotation and connotation, exposing the re-population of the word.

The majority of this ‘work’ was done with machetes. The use of the machete as murderous weapon creates a direct connection to the way in which ‘work’ is used to describe their actions. Machetes are commonly used in agriculture and in the domestic sphere in Rwanda. A machete that is utilised to harvest is a tool, but when used to kill a person it becomes a weapon. In the case of the genocide, the perpetrators used machetes to kill people, wielding them as weapons, but claimed that they were ‘working’, thus “translating” the murderous machete back into a tool. Appropriating the word “work”, the perpetrators distance themselves from the killing by associating their use of the machete with harvesting. This act of translation taking place through figurative language changes how they view the surface they are penetrating: instead of seeing their victims as human and their actions as killing, they are reducing them to objects by viewing the surface that is being penetrated as non-sentient (Scarry 173) and thus rendering their actions morally acceptable. According to Scarry, the use of the word “work” then indicates the moral and mental distance that the perpetrators are able to open up between themselves and their victims (174). When describing how a woman’s hair is desecrated by an attacker, Brown states that it was “as if he were cutting through a tied sheaf of wheat” (110). This reference immediately evokes an image of work, one that is intimately connected to the violence being inflicted. By engaging with these idioms in the novel, Brown not only makes the reader aware of how they were appropriated by the perpetrators during the genocide, but in doing so he highlights the powerful implications of language.

The power of language is not only visible in its ability to obscure the reality of a situation in order to influence action, but also in how it can be used in the attempt to convey trauma to others. In this regard, figurative language plays a significant role. While “[a]ll language is metaphorical – [in that] written or spoken units symbolize their referents” (Payne 56), figurative poetics achieve a degree of symbolization above that of what can be called ‘ordinary’ language. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela states that “[o]rdinary language proves insufficient to talk about extreme trauma” (67). Figurative language, such as metaphors, symbols and imagery, can be used effectively in expressing pain as the interpretation is subjective and the confrontation with trauma is largely indirect. The reader is actively involved in interpreting the figurative language and this results in the process being largely subjective, as each reader comes to the text with varying degrees of knowledge, different life experiences and individual approaches.

Even though figurative language articulates with the trauma, there always remains a distance between the two and because the trauma cannot be expressed directly, the pain is experienced as a mental event, an interpretation. It is an indirect confrontation with trauma as language, and in this case specifically figurative poetics, ultimately refers to something outside of itself, identified as the referent. In the case of these narratives, the referent would be the trauma and pain of the genocide. This referent, however, tends to resist objectification into language (Scarry 5), and therefore cannot be accessed directly. Figurative language, by not referring to the pain directly but approaching it through metaphor, symbol and image, is then able to allow the reader to gain access to the trauma in an indirect manner. In effect, metaphor and symbolism allow for an externalizing of the pain through an internalization of the image and thus can be seen as an attempt to bridge the gap between the self and the other.

In the genocide, language was used to create distance between the self and other through the process of dehumanisation. Figurative language attempts to

bridge the gap between the self and the other by providing a situation where the reader can access the characters trauma in an indirect way. This connection that is forged between character and reader is thus based on the attempt to share pain. In the genocide, the victims were distanced from the perpetrators through language and the dehumanising use of terms such as *inyenzi* and “work”. In narratives, the victims are rehumanised through the effort to convey their trauma, and by employing language in order to do this, the use of language in narrative directly contrasts with how language was used during the genocide.

The difficulty in expressing trauma in language is explored in the text in various ways, from the writer himself to the way in which characters (try to) describe what they are seeing. The reader is told what transpired at the compound in Melchior’s absence in a witness account that is transcribed from a court proceeding. This account forms part of the legal proceedings of the criminal tribunal for Victor Muyigenzi. After the witness account, we are returned to the narrative as Melchior arrives back in the village, where he witnesses an “absence of sound, an absence of life” (193). He states that “a stillness spread tightly over the village, a stillness rather than a quiet, the absence of sound rather than the presence of peace” (193). His emphasis on silence and the absence that this implies could resonate with the reader in terms of the implications of their own silence and absence during the genocide. The use of dramatic irony is effective in presenting the reader with the inevitable brutality of the scene that Melchior is about to enter. The “indescribable mayhem of the hell that had become his church could not be grasped” (194), with the idea of cosmological responsibility coming into play due to the reference that this horror happened within the spiritual space of the church.

The narrative only provides fragments of what Melchior sees, and then masks these further through the use of figurative language. He says that the “compound could have been strewn with flowers instead of the hacked bodies of the refugees” emphasising the unreality of the scene in front of him as after all of

the horror that he has witnessed, “nothing made an impression any more” (194). “[H]is eyes wandered like scavenging crows across the fields of war, picking out forms here and there, a hand, a distorted face, the fabric of a stained dress” (194); unable to piece together the totality of the destruction, Melchior can only take in fragments at a time. By referring to his eyes as “scavenging crows”, he is comparing himself to a creature that searches through waste for anything useful. This image can refer to how he is searching for signs of life so that he might come to their aid, or to the idea that he is consuming the spectacle before him in the wake of what occurred. In either case, he is using the metaphor of the crow to describe how he is witnessing the aftermath of the massacre. Melchior is therefore experiencing an inability to describe what he is seeing, and is resorting to figurative language as vehicles of expression.

Interwoven with the story of Melchior are various legal documents relating to the trial of Victor Muyigenzi. The shifts from narrative to legalistic prose occur at pinnacle moments in the text: the death of Michel, the owner of the local eating house; the murder of Joseph, accused of being a member of the RPF; the carnage at the compound; and finally Melchior’s death. These changes affect the readers’ emotional involvement in the text, as the various fictional devices of narrative prose, such as characterisation, setting, tone and perspective, create a feeling of intimacy with and connection to the characters. This connection is broken when the text changes into the crisp, cold, clean and unambiguous language of the legal and journalistic documentation, and the reader experiences a feeling of emotional detachment. This emotional disconnection that occurs as a result of the shift from narrative to legal prose can result in the reader feeling a sense of loss. It creates distance from the pain experienced by the characters, but in doing so it enhances that pain as the reader is forced to imagine that which eludes symbolization in either prose. Brown suggests that he does not think “that it makes the tragedy less powerful – if anything, relying on one’s imagination may increase the power of the story told” (qtd. in Samuel 178).

In the most extreme instance of trauma represented in the novel, namely the brutal slaying of the Tutsis in the church compound, the technique of shifting between different orders of representation distances the reader from the situation. The story of what happened at the compound is told by a surviving witness at Victor's trial, and therefore does not take place within the narrative mode. The transcript is placed at the point in the narrative where Melchior is about to embark on the "impending journey back to the village" (186). The text then presents us with a draft of a newspaper article concerning Victor's trial, where an anonymous witness recounts how the *interahamwe* "launched the attack on the compound" (187). Multiple levels of mediation thus mark the distance between the reader and the scene of slaughter.

Throughout the witness's account, the room sits motionless and the "chamber is quite still, glimpsing the horror that the witness is describing" (188). Her testimony is delivered in a "measured manner" with a "logical sequence" and is described as an "unemotive narrative" (188), emphasising the formality of the legal space in which her story unfolds and the way it ultimately shapes her representation of the event. This also reflects the need to re-construct experienced trauma into a narrative form with a coherent structure so that it can be understood by others.⁹ Within the legal space, the survivor is removed from the scene of the trauma and is granted a legitimising arena where she can control the story, the narrative, from the distance of the courtroom, but where she is also controlled by its narrative conventions. Her story is not only legitimised by the space in which she tells it, but by the power afforded to the previously disempowered victim within the arena of court proceedings. The audience and its reasons for being there, to listen to her story and take what she says into account when passing judgement on the accused, grant her this power and as a result of this her story becomes legitimised. The witness is described twice as "master of the story" (190, 192) and also "as strong as iron" while she "stands

⁹ Chapter Three discusses narrative structure in more detail in relation to the fragmentation that occurs as a result of trauma.

upright and looks straight at the judges” (192). Her confidence in re-telling her narrative illustrates her mastering not only of the story, but of her own memory as well. This passage also evokes the difficulty of conveying trauma in that the audience, and effectively the reader as well, can only manage to glimpse, but not fully comprehend, the horror that she endured.

Andrew Brown acknowledges the difficulty of attempting to convey the trauma of the genocide when he states that “[d]eath at the hands of another cannot realistically be described” and that “[Melchior’s] murder was simply not a scene that I could write in normal prose” (qtd. in Samuel 178). He therefore adopted a unique approach within the context of the novel in an attempt to write the scene of Melchior’s death. Through not only changing the discourse from narrative to legalistic prose, but by a seeming convergence of the two, a similar distancing, as witnessed in the above account, takes place in the representation of when Melchior is murdered by Victor. The shift therefore takes place *within* the narrative prose, and is achieved when Selena, in the Epilogue, recalls the moments of Melchior’s death years before. Selena herself was not there to witness it, to see the actual killing take place, but instead hears the “sharp crack, a single crack echoing across the valley” (206), signalling the inevitable death of Melchior and once again reiterating notions of distance through the evocation of echoes. In this narrative, the reader is told that she “told the court about that sound” (206).

Selena relates that “she had tried to describe it to them” and that “it was stated in neat black print, recorded for all of time” (206), indicating the importance of the legal discourse in terms of its legitimacy to record what occurred. The emphasis on her story being recorded in “neat black print”, also points to the legitimacy of the narrative itself: not only is her story in the court documents, but here in the narrative as well, in “neat black print” (206). The court’s verdict is then recalled, in crisp, formal language: “It is clear from this evidence that...the priest of

Bukumara known as Melchior, was executed by or directly on the orders of the accused” (206).

The imaginative legal space where the facts of Melchior’s death are provided is situated within the narrative prose, indicating some form of intermarriage between the previously separate discourses of narrative and legalistic prose. The imaginative space within this narrative prose shifts from the valley to the courtroom, without the shift to a noticeable legal discourse. This already indicates some sort of convergence of the legal and the narrative spaces within the novel, as the spaces are located within each other and are not separated through a change in discourse. These two spaces are thus being intertwined and this achieves a false sense of resolution for the reader in that the ‘problem’ of representing trauma in language that causes the writer to shift from one discourse to another, in search of prose that can convey trauma, and thus the ‘problem’ of employing two equally inadequate separate spaces, has been solved through a disintegration of the discourse. Despite the apparent convergence, this does not indicate a sense of resolution within the text and concerning the genocide, but rather suggests a resolution of discourse that is now able to provide a literary space from which to speak trauma. The union of the two previously separate spaces thus forms a hybridised third space from which to speak trauma: a new literary space that might enable a representation of trauma that otherwise eludes language and discourse.

François Lyotard, a French philosopher and literary theorist, provides a possible explanation for what this space could be: that of the ‘differend’. This is the “unstable state and instant of language wherein something which must be able to be put into phrases cannot yet be” (13). In the case of genocide, the trauma and pain of the atrocity becomes this ‘differend’ – that which cannot yet be put into language. In order to bear witness to the genocide, it must be translated in a way that makes its shareable, or at least partly so. Lyotard states that “[t]his is when the human beings who thought they could use language as an instrument

of communication learn through the feeling of pain which accompanies silences..., that they are summoned by language...to recognize that what remains to be phrased exceeds what they can presently phrase, and that they must be allowed to institute idioms which do not yet exist” (13). Lyotard thus suggests that ordinary language is inadequate for the expression of the differend, and that new idioms that do not yet exist need to be instituted in an attempt at expression. The constant shift between the spaces of legal and narrative discourse, as well as between the different languages in the text, creates unease in the reader as their position regarding the text is never fixed for an extended period. This means that the reader is placed in an unsteady and somewhat uncomfortable space, a third space from which new idioms might emerge from which to speak trauma.

In conclusion, *Inyenzi's* treatment of the narrative features of language, discourse and image reveal an attempt to represent the trauma of the Rwandan genocide. This effort to represent that trauma is developed further in “Chapter Three: Narrative Structure and Perspective” by exploring the problematique involved in structuring a novel and adopting innovative technical approaches in terms of perspective. In *Inyenzi*, the narrative evokes a third space which can possibly convey the trauma of the genocide through shifting between the languages of English and Kinyarwanda, as well as between the different orders of representation, namely the narrative and legal prose. Through the exploration of the duplicitous use of language by the perpetrators, the text exposes the dehumanisation not only of the victims, but of the perpetrators themselves as well. The subjective nature of the image allows the reader to gain access to the genocide on an emotional level. In this way the human dimension of the genocide is induced. The narrative's use of language, discourse and image enable the reader to forge an emotional connection to the characters and the genocide, thereby refusing to allow the reader to detach from the reality of the genocide. In addition to this, the text itself is framed within questions of cosmological and world responsibility for the genocide, highlighting the role of the

world community. By raising questions of complicity and responsibility and by forcing the reader to see the human faces behind the genocide, the text encourages the reader to confront the implications of their failure to respond on an emotional level.

CHAPTER 3
NARRATIVE STRUCTURE AND PERSPECTIVE:
MURAMBI, THE BOOK OF BONES

The structure and narrative perspectives used in *Murambi, The Book of Bones* by Boubacar Boris Diop illustrate that the endeavour to express physical and emotional pain is not limited to language, discourse and image, as discussed in Chapter Two, but extends to the manner in which narrative is arranged and from which or whose perspective it is told. The fragmented structure of *Murambi* mirrors the destructive nature of trauma, while the multiple narratives and perspectives employed in the different sections help to render the human dimension of the genocide.

Murambi is divided into four separate sections, with the second and fourth parts dealing with the narrative of Cornelius: a Rwandan history teacher who was not in the country when the massacre of 1994 occurred. Cornelius has returned to Rwanda in the wake of the genocide in order to try and comprehend not only the death of his family, but also his father's role in the massacre that took place at Murambi Technical College. He is attempting to write a play about the genocide and makes contact with remaining friends and family to try and piece together the story of what happened.

The use of an exiled character provides access for both reader and writer to the scene of the genocide and its aftermath: the outsider position of the character mirrors the relationship that both the writer and many readers have with Rwanda. In Cornelius's sections, the third person narration forces the reader to remain on the outside by separating the reader from the character through the use of "he". Because of the similarity in this position as outsiders between character and reader, Cornelius can be regarded as a representation of the world community, to a certain extent. The distance created by the third person perspective in his narrative, along with the shared position of being outsiders between Cornelius

and the majority of the global community, allow for Cornelius to become a sort of embodiment of that community. He comes to partly represent the outsider, entering Rwanda and attempting to piece together the story of what happened whilst having to confront their own complicit role in allowing these events to continue. However, the idea of Cornelius as a representative of the world community ends with these similarities. He is not simply an outsider, but an exile who was raised in Rwanda. This creates a situation within the narrative that attempts to explain the driving force behind Cornelius' need to return to Rwanda. It is thus through Cornelius that the reader can gain access to the scene of the genocide in a way that, as outsiders with no likely connection to Rwanda, is not available to them.

While Cornelius's exiled status might create a bridge enabling readers to enter Rwanda, his search to piece together the fragments of the genocide could parallel the readers' own attempt to try and reconstruct the horror of the genocide. Through the character of Cornelius, the reader first experiences post-genocide Rwanda, and it is alongside him that we try to "fathom intuitively the secret relationship between the trees standing still on the side of the road and the barbarous scenes that had stupefied the entire world during the genocide" (37). The reader, like Cornelius, is entering the scene of the aftermath from the outside and, like Cornelius, "we are also 'reconstructors' of the genocide, returning to Murambi, seeking an explanation" (Kroll 658). Cornelius's "work of piecing together the story amid an emerging consciousness of terror and complicity" is similar to our own process of attempting to come to terms with the genocide (Kroll 658). This parallel search establishes identification between the reader and Cornelius. In a sense, readers are performatively holding the narrative together as they are forced to play an active role in piecing together the fragments presented in and by the text, and in this way reconstruct what occurred in Rwanda. The readers, also absent during genocide, like Cornelius, are encouraged to struggle to come to terms with that absence through the figure

of Cornelius. The novel also helps the reader to realise the dire consequences of their absence during the genocide.

As a Senegalese writer, Diop is African, but not Rwandan, and this shapes the way in which he approaches the genocide. This degree of connection to Rwanda differs from both Brown (Chapter Two) and the filmmakers (Chapter Four). Although none of the authors and filmmakers (except the scriptwriter of *Shooting Dogs*) were present in Rwanda during the genocide, the varying perspectives of Africans and Westerners are represented in the different texts.

Fragmentation occurs on different levels within the text. The text itself is separated into four different parts, and the first and third sections are further divided up into smaller narratives from various individuals. Alternating with Cornelius's story in the second and fourth part are eleven first person narratives presented by eight other characters. These individual characters do not appear to be linked to each other in any specific way and the reader is only provided with limited information regarding each character. Their stories are thus fragmentary.

According to trauma theorists, such as Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela and Chris van der Merwe, the experience of trauma splits and fragments the self and therefore the 'structure' of trauma, as such, is disjointed, non-linear, dreamlike (or, rather, nightmarish) and fragmented. The fragmented structure of *Murambi* mirrors the destructive nature of trauma, while at the same time providing the story of individual characters and their experiences through implementing various narrative perspectives. The fragmentation of the psyche as a result of trauma comes forth in the disjointed structure of the novel: notions of time and place are constantly distorted through the shifting temporalities of the separate chapters and sections. Furthermore, the physical fragmentation that occurred during the genocide is presented within the narratives through the observations of the various narrators, who describe the mutilation and dismemberment of bodies.

The mirroring of the nature of trauma, along with the provision of the multiple perspectives, contributes towards producing an empathetic response in the reader. In other words, it forges in the reader an emotional connection to the individuals that were involved in various ways in the genocide. The proliferation of individual narratives reinforces the notion of the collective as the reader is provided with a kaleidoscope of various experiences, rather than being made to focus on only one individual. Through the use of these different perspectives, the individual human faces of those affected by the genocide are resurrected from the dead, and the horror of what occurred can be glimpsed on a personal level. The reader thus gets to see the human face of the genocide, rather than just the statistics, while simultaneously being shown its broad effects, the many people involved and the extent of the violence on an individual and collective scale. As Sembene Ousmane states, “the power of [Diop’s] words carves into our consciousness the names and faces of the victims of this bloody Rwandan tragedy” (qtd. in *Murambi* np).

Murambi presents the tension between the individual and society by providing multiple individual narratives, running alongside and in-between the interspersed story of Cornelius. These fragments provide a synecdoche of a multitude of perspectives, ranging from victims and survivors to perpetrators and participants of the genocide. As Annie Gagiano says in an online review of the novel: these “voices range across a spectrum of roles, reaching from those who planned and perpetrated the atrocities to their impending victims and those who survived the onslaught”. Although presented in a fragmented manner, these stories do seem to come across in some order within the two sections in which they appear and within the novel as a whole. Within the sections themselves, the stories are related in what seems to be a chronological order, with each story taking place within the same apparent time frame. Each alternate section of the novel that provides these individual narratives deals with a specific time in Rwanda in relation to the genocide: the before and during.

“Fear and Anger”, the first section of *Murambi*, opens with the narrative of Michel Serumundo, a Tutsi video-shop owner. Whilst leaving his shop in Kigali, he comments on the increasing presence of soldiers in the market. His experience in being asked for his identity card and going through an armed roadblock indicates to the reader that this passage takes place before the massacre started.

Diop uses first person narration here in order to provide Michel’s perception of events, and through this perspective the reader is provided with clues that allow them to predict what is about to occur. Foreshadowing of the imminent massacre occurs throughout this chapter as after Michel learns of the “plane [that] fell on the lawn in [the president’s] garden” (6), he witnesses “groups of young people bustl[ing] about, blocking the big avenues” with make-shift barricades of “tree trunks, tires, rocks, and burnt-out cars” (8). These barricades will soon be used to stop and kill any passing “*inyenzi*” during the genocide. The use of foreshadowing places the reader in a situation of dramatic irony: historical knowledge of the genocide informs the reader of what is to come and the horror of this knowledge is dramatised through the apparent ignorance of the narrator. The use of the first person perspective enhances this dramatic irony as the reader is privy to the private thoughts of the character, and thus fully aware of his failure at this point to interpret these signs as predictions of the genocide.

Forming part of the irony, the allusion to the massacres that will follow creates tension within the reader: it produces a false sense of hope that, because it has not yet occurred (in the narrative), then perhaps it can be averted. This tension is enhanced by the rationalisations of the characters. Whilst talking to his wife, Michel reassures her that “the entire world is watching them” and thus “they won’t be able to do anything” (9). This heightens the reader’s vain hope of intervening, which is crushed when one learns that “[t]he World Cup was about to begin in the United States” and “[t]he planet was interested in nothing else” (9). The global disregard of the events in Rwanda is thus dramatically highlighted, and the

reader is forced to re-evaluate their role in allowing the genocide to continue by being complicit through world silence. Michel even states that watching similar scenes on television did not move him to the point of intervention as “it always happened so far away, in countries on the other side of the world” (10). Now that “the country on the other side of the world is [his]”, he realises that the reason why those scenes are placed on television is so that “myself and thousands of other people on earth [would hear them], and so we would try to do everything we could so that their suffering might end” (10). This reads as a direct indictment of the reader and their (lack of) response to the signs of the impending genocide.

Despite his earlier inability to interpret signs of the impending genocide, Michel does show an awareness that some form of violence is about to take place. The tension rises as Michel relates that “whoever knew Rwanda knew terrible things were going to happen” (8), and that he “didn’t dare to hope that [the murderers] would be satisfied with just a little blood” (11). The anticipation of the extent of the violence and bloodshed to follow further reiterates the reader’s position of simultaneous power and powerlessness: the reader *had* the power to prevent the genocide, as a member of the global community that was focused on the World Cup, but *is now* powerlessness as a result of the failure to intervene.

The use of the first person perspective in these narratives limits the readers’ scope to the thoughts and perceptions of one character while allowing the reader to see the world through that character’s eyes. This aids in identification with the characters: the authorial appropriation of the “I” shifts the readers’ response from sympathy to one of empathy, as it places one in the position of the character. In *Country of my Skull* by Antjie Krog, the experience of a translator during the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission is related to the reader: “I have no distance when I say ‘I’” (129). Within *Murambi*, similarly, the distance between character and reader is diminished through the use of the “I”: the reader, reading, is made to utter “I” and thus to position themselves in the scene of the genocide.

This type of identification with the victim is, however, problematic as it could lead to what Dominick LaCapra calls “unchecked identification” (28), which “implies a confusion of self and other” (28) and could result in “vicarious victimhood” (47). LaCapra states that “[h]istorical trauma is specific, and not everyone is subject to it or entitled to the subject position associated with it” (78). He claims that “[i]t is dubious to identify with the victim to the point of making oneself a surrogate victim who has a right to the victim’s voice or subject position” (78).

Murambi addresses this concern by including perpetrators in the individual narratives, thus ‘forcing’ the reader to identify with them as well. The next narrative that follows Michel’s takes the reader to the other side of the barricades as it shifts from the mindset of the potential victim to that of the potential perpetrator, Faustin Gasana, as he prepares himself for his part in the genocide. In this chapter, the reader is introduced to a young man who appears to participate in the *Interahamwe* preparations in order to appease his father as he has the “awful impression that [his father] has doubts about [his] commitment” (15). Through the first person narration, the reader learns that Faustin is “going to do [his] work properly” (19). This chapter is the first glimpse that the reader is offered of a perpetrator and of their personal views regarding the genocide and their role in it. It also serves to offer possible explanations for the behaviour of the perpetrators by presenting their innermost thoughts and opinions through the use of the first person perspective.

The notion of indoctrination is raised in Faustin’s conversation with his father, when his father proceeds to tell the story of Paul Kagame and how, through the undisciplined behaviour of the 1961 militia, “those imbeciles...let the kid who is now the head of the guerrilla force escape” (16).¹⁰ Faustin comments that he

¹⁰ As a child, Paul Kagame survived the 1959 massacre in Rwanda, apparently through the greed and drunken disorderliness of the perpetrators. Kagame went on to become the leader of the Rwandan Patriot Front (RPF), who opposed the genocide of the Tutsis. He later became president of post-genocide Rwanda.

“know[s] this story well” (16), implying that his father has told him the details of the consequences of such ‘failure’ many times before. The fact that the trajectory of these stories is so recognizable to Faustin, that he is able to “[pre-empt] the next question” (18), suggests a familiarity that occurs as a result of constant repetition. Within the society of the novel, it is shown that stories play an important social role in passing certain codes of behaviour and thinking to the younger generations. The first person narration is therefore used to illustrate Faustin’s need to please his father, as well as his private views of the Tutsis. These private thoughts are communicated to the reader through this narrative perspective, and suggest that indoctrination of the youth could provide some insight into the continuation of the animosity felt towards the Tutsi.

Faustin’s father’s reference to how Hitler “failed” in “eliminating all the white *Inyenzi*” (18) provides one possible explanation for the indiscriminate and merciless killing of babies, the old, and the sick along with the others: the annihilation of an entire ethnic group. This serves to question the Western myths that the killings were merely tribal conflict in an atavistic Africa by explicitly comparing it to the Holocaust. By evoking Hitler, this story tends to appeal to the world not to treat Africa as an exception to the genocide laws produced after the Holocaust.

By coming to occupy the virtual position of this perpetrator, the reader is encouraged to evaluate their own complicity and role in the genocide. Though the reader is able to somewhat distance themselves from the perpetrator because his motivation and actions do not coincide with the readers’, the intimate nature of the readerly appropriation of the “I” does not allow the reader to dissociate themselves *completely* from Faustin. The reader is therefore left in a space somewhere in-between identification with and dissociation from the perpetrator, forcing them to evaluate and reflect on the part that their silence played in the massacre.

Being placed in the position of the perpetrator through the use of the first person perspective thus places the reader in an uncomfortable situation where they are encouraged to appropriate the voice of a perpetrator. The reader is thus never allowed to fully identify with the victim through the use of the first person perspective, as in the next short narrative they are compelled to do the same with a perpetrator. Any form of unchecked and full identification with the victims in these first person narratives is further offset by their brevity, as well as the constant shift between different types of characters. The reader is thus forced to identify with the different sides of the genocide.

By forcing the reader to identify with a variety of characters, the text breaks down the stereotypes of victim and perpetrator as this binary division is problematised through the humanising and re-humanising qualities of the multiple first person narrative perspectives. *Murambi* therefore aids in “situat[ing] us in a way that calls into question the ‘safe’ binary perspectives of subject-object, innocence-guilt, victim-perpetrator that are created in the telling of the historical record” (Kroll 657).

While Michel and Faustin seem to conform to the binary poles of (potential) victim and (potential) perpetrator, there are other characters that appear to inhabit a grey area. This in-between position does not conform to either binary form of perpetrator or victim, but instead seems to carry characteristics of either or both. By including these characters, Diop is breaking down the binaries of perpetrator and victim, making the reader aware of the problematic nature of dividing the Rwandan society up into such ‘easy’ categories.

One of these characters is Jessica Kamanzi, who leads a “double life” (25): she is an undercover RPF agent working in Kigali and pretending to be Hutu. She believes that she works for the liberation of Rwanda, and this higher calling means that she has to make some difficult decisions in order to maintain her cover in Kigali. At the end of the third chapter, which presents part of her story,

Jessica is forced to abandon a woman who has been “wounded” by the militiamen at a checkpoint. The woman, “the right part of her jaw and chest covered with blood”, beseeches Jessica to convince the *Interahamwe* that she is not a Tutsi (32). In order not to appear suspicious, Jessica tells the woman “dryly” to leave her alone and the militiamen “brutally [push] the woman back toward the throat slitters” (32). Even though in the larger design Jessica is working against the genocide, her (in)action in response to the appeal of this unknown woman makes Jessica complicit in her violent death. By including this character, Diop is showing how even those fighting against the genocide have, to some extent, blood on their hands. The fate of this individual is superseded by the goal towards a collective victory, but the inclusion of the individual perspective makes the reader aware of the consequences of such decisions. By remaining silent and not speaking out on behalf of the victimised woman, Jessica can to a certain extent reflect the silence and ultimate complicity of the world community in the genocide.

Similar to Jessica, Cornelius also has, to some extent, blood on his hands. If regarded as a representative of world guilt, Cornelius’ situation is compounded by his father’s active role in the murders that occurred at Murambi Technical College. A powerful Hutu man who appeared to be campaigning against the genocide, Dr Joseph Karekezi, “organized the massacre of several thousand people”, including his own wife and children, who had entrusted their lives to him when he promised them shelter at the College (76). Cornelius therefore discovers that he himself was by association “both guilty and a victim” and that “the only story he had to tell was his own” (78). His position as being both guilty and victim is similar to the ambiguity of Jessica, and in this way can also be seen as a means by which to break down the stereotypical binaries of innocent and guilty.

Seeing as neither Jessica nor Cornelius easily fall into one of the binaries of victim or perpetrator, the idea of there only being polar opposites of victims or

perpetrators in genocide is dispelled. The easy explanation provided by such boundaries tends to dehumanise the individual as it expects them to conform to one homogenous identity. By providing the narratives of these characters alongside others who could more easily be classified as either perpetrator or victim, Diop is attempting to break down these stereotypical classifications.

Although the readerly appropriation of the “I” in these narratives creates an emotional connection between the reader and the character in question, the constant shifting from one character to the next does not allow the reader to *fully* identify with any single character. The use of the first person perspective enhances a level of empathy for those characters, and by extension the individuals involved in the genocide itself (as victims, perpetrators or bystanders), but the rapid changes of narrator also facilitate a form of distance. By constantly shifting the reader from the voice of one character to another, the novel does not permit the reader to fully identify with only one side of the genocide. The combination of empathy and distance achieved through the narrative structure is, according to Richard Kearney, “necessary for a journey beyond the closed ego towards other possibilities of being” (12). In other words, this conflation of empathy and distance allows the reader not to place themselves in the shoes of the character, as is implied by a traditional definition of empathy, but rather to *imagine* themselves into the position of the character from a respectful distance. The diverse nature of these first person narratives encourages the reader to adopt “*heteropathic identification*, in which emotional response comes with respect for the other and the realization that the experience of the other is not one’s own” (Silverman qtd. in LaCapra 40).

LaCapra states that “[b]eing responsive to the traumatic experience of others, notably of victims, implies not the appropriation of their experience but what I would call empathic unsettlement” (41). By including the perpetrators’ perspective in addition to those of the victims’, creates an unsettled response in the reader. The reader is uncomfortable in being forced to adopt these various

perspectives. The unsettlement also occurs as a result of inhabiting the position of the other: the unfamiliar experience of the other is appropriated by the reader and is made even more acute by the traumatic nature of the narrative. This empathic unsettlement is regarded as the desired type of affective involvement as “it involves virtual not vicarious experience – that is to say, experience in which one puts oneself in the other’s position without taking the place of – or speaking for – the other or becoming a surrogate victim who appropriates the victim’s voice or suffering” (135). The shifting between different characters suggests that Diop is “try[ing] not simply to replicate those subject positions or experiences but rather to investigate them and their more complex, hybridized forms with varying modes of empathy and critical distance” (LaCapra 198). It is this combination of empathy and critical distance that engages the reader in such a way that they are encouraged to experience empathic unsettlement.

In adopting this technique, Diop is thus going further than merely relating a story of the genocide to the reader and is in fact exploring the nature of trauma and representation. Through this desired affective reaction to the text and the situation presented within the narrative, the trauma of the genocide is communicated to the reader on a level that goes beyond the provision of facts and statistics. The emotions and personal experiences of individuals come forth and through this connection with the reader, an unsettled empathetic response is produced.

The constant shift between different characters, and the effect that this has on the reader, results in a “deep sense of the fluid arbitrariness of identity” (Kroll 660). This “in turn suggests a transcendence of ethnic and political markers in favour of shared, human affiliations” (660). The shared humanity of the individuals is brought out through the inclusion of so many stories that range across such a variety of positions. By grouping these accounts together in a section, with one story following on from the other without pause, the reader first notices similarities between them before becoming aware of the differences.

This is further emphasized by the text's reluctance to immediately assign ethnic markers to the characters. As in *Inyenzi*, the reader is not initially told whether a character is Hutu or Tutsi: the reader is expected to make this assumption based on the actions or thoughts of the character. Unfortunately this makes the reader rely on stereotypical depictions of what they assume to be Hutu or Tutsi behaviour, but this is contradicted by the characters themselves when some of them do not act according to those stereotypes. By not revealing ethnic markers more explicitly, Diop highlights the arbitrariness of using them to define an individual and is refusing the discourse of genocide. Diop is making the reader aware of their humanity and their individuality, so that they become more than merely Hutu, Tutsi, victim or perpetrator.

The third person perspective from which Cornelius's story is narrated contrasts with the first person narratives that comprise the first and third part of the novel. Whereas in the first person narratives, the reader is made to utter, and to a certain extent become, the "I", the use of "he" in the narration of Cornelius's story creates distance between reader and character. The fact that the reader is not encouraged to become Cornelius through the distancing effect of "he", implies that this position can be inhabited by others as well. According to Catherine Kroll it is "in this crafted distance of a 'he', [that]...a space [is] made for a 'we'" (658). The reader is not able to enter into the head of this character and therefore his reactions and personal experiences are to a certain degree kept from the reader. The individual reader is encouraged to transfer their own emotional reactions to the narrative and the genocide onto the character, resulting in the inclusion of multiple interpretations of his experience.

The distance created through the use of the third person narrative perspective in Cornelius' narratives creates unease in the reader though when compared to the identification that occurs with use of the first person narration in the other sections of the novel. Whereas it is relatively easy to associate with a character when made to utter "I", the third person perspective does not afford this ease. It

asks the reader to work for it. The reader is thus distanced through narrative perspective from the character that most resembles themselves and forced to connect intimately with those who experienced the genocide.

Jessica is one of the few first person perspective characters with a direct connection to Cornelius. She and Cornelius were childhood friends and meet up after many years in the second and fourth sections of the novel. Jessica's story always precedes the third person sections that focus on Cornelius and creates a bridge into his story (and the aftermath). This, along with her personal relationship to him, bridges the gap between the first and third person narratives of the text and forms a connection between her narrative and his.

This does not mean, however, that the other characters are completely separate from one another. Despite the fact that the other characters have never met each other, "Diop's placement of the stories next to one another creates a meta-narrative that seems to insist upon inescapable affiliations" (Kroll 658). These links occur not only as a result of their shared connection to the genocide and how their lives will inevitably intersect, but in how Diop "shows how their subjectivities are informed by the presence of those around them" (659) through the first person narrative perspective. The subjectivity of each character is influenced by the thoughts and actions of the other, in terms of how they are perceived by others as well as how they perceive themselves. The undeniable influence of society, family and politics on identity formation is subtly explored in the individual stories, showing on an individual level how their subjectivities are informed by others.

The two sections that alternate with the first person narratives consist of the story of Cornelius. He attempts to bear witness to the genocide (and its aftermath) by writing about it in the form of a play. Within Cornelius's narrative there are many witnesses to the genocide who tell their story, but Cornelius and his role as a history teacher who is contemplating writing a play about the genocide are vital in

respect to trying to piece together these different stories and attempting to make sense of the events. As a teacher of history, Cornelius fails to understand the causes and motivation behind such abhorrent behaviour and tries to piece together the fragments in order to be able to try and come to terms with what happened. His desire to cast it as a play raises issues concerning art and literature and their ability to bear witness to genocide. In contrast to other forms of art and literature, a play has the performative aspect. This could highlight the efficacy of the image as portrayed in the living moment on stage, but also provides a space where the voices of individuals can literally be heard. Cornelius also realises the importance of the witness and of chronicling the events that took place so that at some point “in Africa and elsewhere, people will say calmly, ‘Let’s talk about the hundred days in Rwanda again, there is no unimportant genocide, Rwanda, *neither*, is not just a minor detail of contemporary history” (177). Cornelius acknowledges the importance of telling the story of the Rwandan genocide so that it may become a part of history.

In the conclusion to the novel, Cornelius recognises that “[t]he fourth genocide of the century remained an enigma” (178), but that despite this “[h]e would tirelessly recount the horror...because he saw in the genocide of Rwandan Tutsis a great lesson...[that] every chronicler could at least learn – something essential to his art – to call a monster by its name” (179). The importance of bearing witness to monstrosity is exemplified in this statement, and the unique role that literature can play in recounting that horror is raised by the characters themselves. The ongoing debate concerning the right to fictionalise atrocity comes forth when Cornelius admits that he “was slightly ashamed of having entertained the idea of a play”, yet he “wasn’t giving up his enthusiasm for words” as “[h]e did not intend to resign himself to the definitive victory of the murderers through silence” (179).

In order to bear witness to the trauma of the Rwandan genocide, and in this way “call a monster by its name”, Cornelius decides that he will use “machete words, club words, words studded with nails, naked words and...words covered with

blood and shit” (179). These words denote and connote violence, vulnerability and destruction, and show Cornelius’s drive to expose the violent and sordid nature of the genocide. By including these words, the reader is faced with the realisation that writers of genocide might be attempting to do the same thing in their narratives.

By adopting the voices of the different characters, Diop’s descriptions of events coincide with the perspective of the individual witnessing it. When faced with a perpetrator’s thoughts of the genocide, phrases such as “eliminated” (84), “duty” (100) and “cadavers” (86) are used, portraying the way the perpetrators use language to distance themselves from the reality of the situation. Instead of “rape”, they “had a good time with the women” (84); by replacing terms that have ‘negative’ connotations with euphemisms, they seem to be able to regard their behaviour as acceptable. The crisp, clean language that characterises their style therefore reflects their attitude towards what they were doing: it was work.

On the other hand, when the narrative is told from a victim’s perspective, the approach is one of brutal honesty that does not shy away from using “machete” words. These stories include militia men who would “pour acid in [a] vagina or stick in pieces of broken bottle or pieces of metal” (93), and other “tortures” (110). The individuals are “slaughtered” and “cut up” (110), or “suffocated by masses of excrement before dying” (111). The violence inherent in the victim’s employment of “machete” words, in comparison to the apparent innocuousness of the perpetrators descriptions, shows a range of perspectives that all refer to the same situation. Diop therefore does and does not use “machete” words in the text: the variety of the style he uses allows the reader to realistically appropriate the voice of the relevant individual.

Through the continual shifting of subject positions with their relevant styles, and the empathic unsettlement that this creates in the reader, the text resists any form of closure and this reflects on the devastating effects of trauma on the

individual. By extension, the reader is thus encouraged to relate these experiences to those of the bona fide participants in the genocide. The alternation in the text between the first and third person narrative perspectives may create a sense of discomfort in the reader. Being forced to continually shift between being made to utter “I” and then being distanced from another character through the use of “he”, leaves the reader in a recurrent state of fluctuation. This shifting between identification and distance constantly keeps the reader in an uncertain emotional state, and as a result of this the reader is not afforded the luxury of narrative closure that can come with an established position. The instability created by these frequent changes does not allow the reader to reach closure in terms of the narrative or the trauma itself.

The nature of trauma is also reflected in the novel’s distinctive treatment of time. The placement of the four different sections in the novel appear at first to be random, but upon closer examination some sort of order emerges. Whereas “Part one: Fear and Anger” chronicles the rising tension in Rwanda before the genocide took place, the third part, aptly titled “Genocide”, provides fragments of experiences taking place during the massacre. In terms of a timeline of the genocide, the story of Cornelius takes place after the 1994 massacres, in post-genocide Rwanda. There is thus a three-part time frame of the action in the novel: before, during and after the genocide. The fragmentation of this seemingly chronological timeline occurs when the story of Cornelius, itself fragmented into two parts, is provided in between the individual narratives of the before and during. Structured simultaneously in a linear and non-linear way that displaces the reader from one point in time to another, the novel moves between the three time frames without forewarning or introduction, other than the titles of the sections.

According to Sean Field, “[t]rauma involves a dislocation from time” (2). As a result of this, “traumatic experiences not only rupture self boundaries but often collapse the survivor’s distinction between past experience of trauma...and the

present telling of their stories” (2). This collapsing of experienced time results in what Lawrence Langer identifies as “durational time”: as a result of trauma, the victim experiences those memories as a time that “has always been there” (15). The past becomes an “always-present past” that is constantly “re-experienced” by the person telling their story (15). In *Murambi*, what Langer calls durational time is conveyed through the constant intrusion of the past on the present: Cornelius’s story is in a sense interrupted by the sections that deal with the before and during the genocide. The past, that is represented by the sections dealing with the before and during, is thus constantly intruding on and being intruded by the present. As result, a linear sense of time does not exist within the narrative, and the text therefore exhibits the characteristics of trauma, in which the past is always in attendance in the present. This also conveys the idea that trauma is something that in a sense never releases its grip on the subject: it is constantly being *re*-experienced through the temporal shifts taking place within the narrative.

Displaying the characteristics of trauma, *Murambi* appears itself to be traumatized. The different levels of fragmentation that occur, the use of a non-linear structure, along with the continual shifting between various characters, perspectives and points in time, mirror the effects and destructive nature of trauma itself. The text can in this way be regarded as being a traumatised witness to the genocide that is trying to convey not only the facts of the genocide, but the psychological effects of it as well.

The text therefore not only bears witness to genocide, but to the effects of trauma on the individual by exhibiting the characteristics of being traumatised. This conveys the trauma of the genocide on an affective level, helping to encourage the reader to see the human dimension of the genocide. By also encouraging the reader to identify with and see the perspectives of various individual characters, the text allows for the individuals of the genocide in Rwanda to become humanised in the eye of the reader. Diop presents the

reader with not only the fragmentation of the genocide, but the stories of various individuals contributing towards and affected by the genocide and its aftermath. The rapid shifts between characters and narrative perspective allow for a conflicting affective response in the reader that is comprised of both empathy and distance. The combination of these two seemingly contradictory reactions results in what LaCapra identifies as the desired affective response, namely empathic unsettlement. The narrative structure and perspective employed in the novel allows the reader not only to glimpse the horror of the genocide, but also mirrors the effects of the trauma on the individual and in this way bears witness to the trauma of the genocide.

While textual narratives employ varied techniques of language, discourse, structure and perspective in order to bear witness to the genocide and the effects of trauma, filmic narratives use visual, verbal and audiovisual languages to capture the genocide experience. In this way films can yield useful perspectives from which to view and understand what it was like to have been caught up in the genocide. "Chapter Four: Screening Genocide" explores the notion of iterativity, using other technical methods in their attempt to represent the same theme.

CHAPTER 4

SCREENING GENOCIDE: *SHOOTING DOGS* AND *HOTEL RWANDA*

The representation of trauma in film provides the most commercial consumption of the Rwandan genocide, but the false sense of authenticity that accompanies the screen is problematic. The screen is often perceived as a window, a transparent and objective frame through which to view what is being presented. The filmic techniques employed need to be taken into account as films ultimately produce images that still require active engagement on the part of the viewers, similar to the active engagement required from readers as discussed in Chapter Two and Chapter Three. These filmic techniques need to be addressed in a manner reminiscent of the narrative techniques employed by writers and explored in the previous two chapters, and not merely accepted at face value due to the immediacy of the screen. The two films in question, *Shooting Dogs* and *Hotel Rwanda*, adopt completely different approaches in how they try to convey the horror of the massacres that occurred. By making use of contrasting film techniques that respectively focus on violence and silence, each film emphasizes various theories of remembering and representation.

With visual mediums gaining popularity in society, films could play a central role in conveying the story of the Rwandan genocide to the public. Debjani Ganguly praises the qualities of “the visual medium, and especially the feature film with its heightened cinematic effects” when she explains that it “engages all the senses with an immediacy that words on a page cannot approximate” (62). She believes that it is because of this immediacy that “apprehension of reality is more immediately confronting than that of a novel” (62). This quality of being so “immediately confronting” allows for film to provide a more explicit form of representation of the Rwandan genocide.

The popularity of film allows for a widespread reception of the texts, which is important when one bears in mind the notion of bearing witness to trauma

through narrative. The images are thus produced for mass consumption, and often the screen confounds fact with fiction with its immediacy. As a result of this, the genocide could be misrepresented and misinterpreted, which could result undermining the very real trauma related to the genocide and the individuals affected by it.

The visual aspect of film results in the viewer becoming a type of voyeur of the genocide: they are able to see the scene of the genocide in front of them, without having to work for it as they do with a written text. This enables the viewer to distance themselves from the text, whilst at the same time making available to them scenes that in written narratives only take place within the subjective mind. When reading a narrative, the images are conveyed subjectively as readers are encouraged to use their individual imagination to attempt to visualise the trauma, and an internalization of the image thus takes place. In films, the visualisation of the trauma is achieved on a communal level as the images are externalised. This can make the viewer slightly more passive in terms of interpreting the narrative, as the images, although encoded, are immediately accessible to them to a certain degree. This difference could lead to a contradictory response in the viewer: the distance created through the voyeurism results in the viewer needing to actively engage with the images in order to interpret them, whilst the externalisation of the image results in a directed response as those images are packaged for consumption.

Shooting Dogs, directed by British Michael Caton-Jones, focuses on the massacre that occurred at the Ecole Technique Officielle, a school in Kigali. Even though the characters in the film are fictional, the events depicted are not. The two focalising figures, the European priest and the European teacher in charge of the school, use the premises to provide refuge for the increasing number of Tutsis and moderate Hutus fleeing the deadly militia, the *interahamwe*. The elder priest, Father Christopher (John Hurt), has been in charge of the school for many years and, when the U.N. troops are withdrawn, he decides to stay with those in

his charge and give his life for them. The younger, more idealistic, teacher, Joe Connor (Hugh Dancy), is faced with the heartbreaking realization that when he leaves the school with the other European evacuees, he will be abandoning those he promised to protect and resigning them to certain death.

Bearing in mind the difficulties of expressing or representing the trauma, Caton-Jones recognizes the limitations of representation and states that he “was simply trying to get their stories on screen as best as I could” (van Hoeij). This implies that Caton-Jones is not telling or appropriating their stories, but simply positing the screen as a transparent window through which the audience can view them. This idealistic notion provides a false sense of authenticity, as it refuses to acknowledge the role played by filmic techniques and narrative devices in shaping and interpreting those stories. By its very nature as a constructed narrative, film encodes the images presented on screen and in so doing cannot claim to be completely objective or authentic.

Shooting Dogs was filmed entirely in Rwanda, using the actual locations depicted in the story. Speaking on the importance of shooting on location, Caton-Jones stated that “it was...part of the approach [he] wanted to take of trying to keep it as close to the reality as [he] found it” (qtd. in van Hoeij). Real survivors of the 1994 genocide were used in both the cast and crew, in an attempt to add a further sense of authenticity to the production. According to a genocide survivor who “willingly took part as an extra”, “[i]t was important for survivors to feel part of the film, whether as extras or as part of the crew” (Uwazaninka-Smith). Many concerns were raised by human rights groups regarding the psychological trauma that could result from individuals having to re-enact, and re-live, the trauma of what occurred at the school, but Florence Kyarera, vice-mayor of Kichukiro, said that “[t]he trauma that Rwandans feel comes from what happened in 1994, not from a film” (qtd. in Milmo). Caton-Jones also acknowledges that “[o]n the whole, 95% of the people welcomed us making it” and even mentions

that “the film has been adopted by Rwandans as part of their commemoration process” (qtd. in van Hoeij).

Part of this commemoration process included the premiere of *Shooting Dogs*, which took place in Kigali. The film was screened within the Amahoro stadium: the actual stadium where the Rwandans seeking refuge at the school fled to after they were abandoned by the United Nations peace officers. It was attended by many survivors of the genocide, including those who survived the slaughter depicted in the film. Although quite controversial, as the fear that those individuals watching the film might re-experience the trauma of the genocide, the screening was apparently received well by the audience. Joseph Nyamiroko, who “witnessed soldiers hacking his wife and son to death with machetes” as they fled to the stadium, said that for him, “it [was] a very painful thing” to watch the film, but that he is “glad that others will now see what happened” as “[i]t is important that others must see” (qtd. in Milmo).

This screening was a silent one. The efficacy of the image in its ability to convey the horror of the genocide is highlighted through the fact that the film was screened without any sound. Instead of the conventional applause at the end of the film, “[a]ll that broke the silence...was the muted sobbing of people revisiting private nightmares” (Milmo). The authenticity that is implied through the silent screening, as well as the usage of survivors and the actual locations, is problematic as it is ultimately an aesthetic choice with various polit-ethical implications. The unstated claim to ‘retrieve’ historical ‘truth’ reflects the tendency of film to posit itself as an unbiased, realistic portrayal of the trauma. This is problematic as despite this apparent transparency, the film medium employs a range of narrative techniques that ultimately result in an aestheticisation of the trauma that should not be viewed as ‘reality’. As stated in Ganguly, it is the “filmmaker’s prerogative to selectively edit and frame reality” (49).

The violence of the Rwandan genocide is depicted in visceral detail in *Shooting Dogs*. The linear diary format of the film allows the viewer to experience the increasingly chaotic situation in Rwanda during the first five days of the genocide. As the violence escalates, the director does not shy away from shots that depict the massacre or that focus on piles of lifeless bodies. These visually disturbing images serve as a sort of shock tactic: to shock the viewer into (future) action by presenting them with the brutality and apparent reality of the genocide. They are presented either from a personal perspective (from the point of view of one of the characters) or through a faux journalistic lens. Interestingly, the personal perspective appears to be more objective than the journalistic at certain points.

The fleeting inclusion of the journalistic lens ironically contradicts the objectivity of the personal gaze. The only scene where the camera repeatedly focuses on and provides close-ups of the massacres occurs when, whilst driving back to the school, Joe stops the truck in order to allow the BBC journalists travelling with him to film the presence of bodies at the side of the road. At this point the lens of the feature film converges with that of the journalists, and the camera movements become those of the cameraman in the scene as he hastily films the bodies covered in blood. Repeated fragmented close-ups of the dead children are provided for brief instances as the scene is documented by both journalist and director. This appears to be one of the few instances where (the effects of) violence is dramatised, and it occurs at a moment in the film when Joe's idealism has been shattered by what he has witnessed. The journalistic treatment of the lens, and its convergence with the lens of the feature film could therefore be reflective of his emotional state: the fragmented, disjointed editing of this sequence mirrors the trauma that he is witnessing and experiencing.

While journalism is ideally meant to portray its subject in an objective manner, it often fails to do this as journalistic media frequently sensationalises its subject since it produces news for consumption. This contrasts with the way in which the personal perspective of the film portrays the violence of the genocide. Whilst

shocking the viewer with their violence, the treatment of images through the use of the personal perspective does not lead the viewer to feel emotionally manipulated. As a result, the film shows an attempt to portray the violence in a realistic manner, without sensationalizing it, but it ultimately does not always manage to sustain this. It also emphasises the matter-of-fact nature of the horror that those characters are witnessing, as the personal perspective appears not to dramatise the images, but presents them as they are being seen by those characters.

The perspectives of the two white characters provide most of the access to the genocide. By using this narrow perspective, the film is attempting to offer an acceptable means of access to the viewer: the outsider position of the two white characters most likely reflects the outsider position of the majority of the audience and, more pertinently, that of the film-makers.

In light of world ignorance concerning the Rwandan genocide, Caton-Jones included and foregrounded these characters in order to provide Westerners with individuals that they could identify with, or at least “empathise with” (qtd. in van Hoeij). This empathy is problematic though, as it is directed at the European characters, and not the Rwandans themselves. The unease that this creates in the viewer could result in a response of empathic unsettlement, as explored in Chapter Three, but by not focusing this response on the Rwandans, the film fails to evoke empathic unsettlement for those individuals most affected by the genocide. Caton-Jones, who regards himself “to be quite well-read“, admits that he was ignorant of what occurred in Rwanda and then “assumed there must be quite a few people who do not know anything about this” (qtd. in van Hoeij). This can account for his drive to “get what happened there accurately reflected on screen” (qtd. in van Hoeij).

Seeing as the film is a tool to educate and inform the world community, the use of two characters that represent that global community becomes an effective

means of providing access into the scene of the genocide. In a certain sense, “[w]e are offered a safety barrier between us and the horror of the genocide by seeing events unfold through the eyes of two outsiders” (Boddy-Evans). The ‘safety-barrier’ of screening the film through outsiders, however, is not necessarily a positive aspect of the film as it detracts from the reality of the genocide and conveys a sense that the audience needs to be shielded from the violence of the genocide. This could result in a trivialisation of the trauma of the genocide, as the Rwandans were not provided with the choice of being kept ‘safe’ from the violence of the genocide.

By using the two European characters as the focalising figures, the audience is provided with a predominantly Western perspective of the genocide, despite Father Christopher’s close affiliations with the Rwandans as a result of his 30 years in Africa. His reaction to the events that he witnesses serves to draw attention to the horror, as his experience in Africa provides some form of credibility. Consequentially, the viewer is forced to realize that the killings that they are being presented with are not the result of a coup, nor can they be reduced to tribal conflict: they are the effects of a well-planned genocide.

Whilst Father Christopher is based on the Bosnian priest, Vjeko Curic, who provided shelter for the producer of *Shooting Dogs*, David Belton, and his BBC crew while they were working in Rwanda during the genocide (Milmo), the English teacher Joe Connor is a purely fictional character. According to Caton-Jones, he included Joe because he “wanted to put someone there who was asking the questions all of us are asking” (qtd. in van Hoeij). In a certain sense, Joe then becomes a substitute for the viewer who was not present in Rwanda: he becomes a means for the viewer to be virtually present at the scene of the genocide in the position of the witness. It is thus through Joe that the viewer is vicariously able to experience the genocide.

The film's focus on the two British characters has been largely criticised as making the film too Eurocentric. An online film critic believes that it "failed to look at the black experience of a genocide which primarily affected black Africans", and that this ultimately detracts from an "otherwise great script, which engages and entertains its audiences" (Blagrove). The films' focus on the British characters even extends to the final massacre at the school. By ultimately sacrificing his life, Father Christopher claims that he is aligning himself with the victimized Rwandans, and in this way attempts to set himself apart from the other 'foreigners'. In contrast to them, he aims to highlight the situation of those Rwandans in the school ground by staying with them and resigning himself to their fate.

To the viewer, however, he becomes more of a Christ-like figure and in this way sets himself apart from the Rwandans further, as they do not have the luxury of the choice that he does. In the scene where Father Christopher tells Joe that he has decided to stay with the Rwandans instead of being evacuated with the U.N., the filmic techniques used enhance the image of Father Christopher as a Christ-like figure. Their conversation is filmed using alternating over-the-shoulder shots, but those of Father Christopher are from a slightly elevated angle in comparison to the shots of Joe. The difference in angle is slight, but the effect is that Father Christopher comes across as a more humble, fragile character. He is also filmed while being surrounded by the refugees, making him appear to be 'one of them', or at least on their side, whereas Joe is framed by the U.N. truck that is about to take him, and the protective U.N. troops, away from the school. Despite the subtlety of the techniques used in order to align Father Christopher with the Rwandans, he still stands out from the crowd: in addition to being the only European amongst them, he appears to be calm, with a serene half-smile on his face, clutching his crucifix to his chest, in contrast to the chaos around him. This ultimately raises him above the Rwandans he desires to align himself with, and sets himself up as a figure prepared to die with them. The comparison to Christ could mean that he is portrayed as dying for their sins and possibly their

salvation, only serving to elevate his status as individual and in so doing reducing them to be viewed as 'the masses'. In a certain sense, this reduces the trauma of the Rwandans, as they are presented en masse visually for consumption, in contrast to the individuality of the two European characters.

Initially the bloodshed and horror is not witnessed directly by either Joe or the viewer, but the anticipation and inevitability of the conflict is dramatized through the use of foreshadowing and misdirection. This is illustrated when, after the president's plane is shot down, Joe tries to find Marie (Clare-Hope Ashitey), a scholar at the school that he appears to have a close bond with. It is whilst driving through the now eerily deserted city centre that the viewer experiences tension and expects the worst. This image of the city contrasts strongly with the earlier depictions of Kigali as bustling, noisy and crowded. The vast difference between the two scenes, upon realization that they take place only a few days apart, makes the viewer wary of what Joe will find at Marie's house. In a tense scene, Joe apprehensively enters a house in disarray and searches for Marie and her father. Upon hearing unfamiliar noises emanating from the courtyard, Joe nervously investigates. His trepidation is evident in his body language, and in the tremor in his voice as he calls out to who/whatever is making the noise. Tension rises as he rounds the corner, but is immediately dissipated when he does not find what he expects: instead of discovering the bodies of Marie and her father, he comes across a chained dog.

The image and presence of the dog in this scene introduces the thematic or possibly symbolic function of dogs in the film. The title, *Shooting Dogs*, refers to the U.N. soldiers shooting the dogs feeding on the flesh of the many corpses in the road. In a highly emotional scene, Father Christopher is informed by the U.N. Captain that the dogs need to be shot as they are posing a hygiene problem. Father Christopher challenges the captain, asking him whether or not the dogs were shooting at them first, thereby commenting on the U.N. peacekeeping mandate that the soldiers were forced to adhere to: they were not to intervene

and were only allowed to shoot if they were being fired upon. The action of shooting the dogs therefore becomes symbolic not only of the madness of the entire situation, but of the failure of the U.N. and the global community to intervene, despite the ability to do so. Through showing that the situation with the dogs is one that they are allowed and able to control, the message is effectively conveyed that the dogs are regarded more highly than the Rwandans. By preventing the dogs from causing damage to the corpses instead of aiding the Rwandans by intervening on their behalf, the U.N. soldiers are ultimately exhibiting that they regard this “hygiene problem” as more important.

Coming across the dog in this scene relieves the tension somewhat, but this sense of relief does not linger long: upon returning to the compound, Joe is stopped at a roadblock. There he witnesses a group of Tutsis being threatened by the militia, their screams and cries being the only sounds heard. Upon leaving, with the camera following his truck as it drives down the road, sounds of gunshot are heard and the cries cease. The focus on the truck as it exits the scene where the massacre is taking place transports the viewer away with Joe and therefore continues to provide his perspective and experience – allowing the viewer to effectively walk away from the scene.

This first encounter with the violence of the genocide and the purpose of the roadblocks (that have been in use since the beginning of the film) is thus not directly witnessed by Joe or the viewer. It is implicitly enacted beyond the scope of the camera, making it even more horrific to the viewer as they are forced to imagine it. Yet as the violence in the represented world escalates, so does the inclusion of violent images on screen. As the film progresses the viewer is confronted not only with numerous images of dead bodies strewn along the roads, but they also witness the act of murder itself. While being stopped at another roadblock after fetching the BBC journalists, Joe watches a Tutsi man being dragged into the bushes and brutally killed by the roadblock militia. Joe’s inability to look away from the slaughter forces the viewer to confront it as well

and his horror at what he sees evokes the viewers' own. The killing is filmed using the perspective of Joe himself, and is thus seen from the distance of his car on the road. This further aligns the viewer with Joe and his role as focaliser, in this instance, serves to enhance the idea that the viewers are virtually experiencing the genocide as if they were present at the scene taking place in Joe's particular situation.

Through the process of screening, the film employs various techniques in order to further distance the viewer from the violence on screen, whilst still allowing them to view it. In *Shooting Dogs* as Joe and the U.N. soldiers look on, a Tutsi woman, who is fleeing from the compound, is hunted down and murdered by the surrounding *interahamwe*. The scene is provided once again from the perspective of a Western character, Joe, and the camera vacillates between what he sees before him and his reaction to the events. In both instances, the mesh of the fence that separates the witness from the victim is clearly visible. The separation of the characters into those being pursued and those looking on creates the impression of a stage with an audience viewing what is being enacted before them. This distancing of the viewer from what is occurring on the screen tends to detract from the reality of the violence. The viewers' position as audience of both the film and the genocide is reiterated through the way in which the violence is screened through the fence.

Despite the film's tendency to present the violence of the genocide visually and aurally, the inevitable massacre of the 2,500 Tutsi's seeking refuge at the school is omitted. In keeping to the European outsider point of view used throughout the film, the narrative follows Father Christopher out of the compound as he attempts to rescue a few of the children after the U.N. troops are withdrawn. The film shows how the large group of militia threateningly stationed outside the compound, move towards it with their weapons raised high. The next image provided of the school consists of a pan across the multitude of corpses that lie strewn on the school grounds.

Preceding the image of the compound is an insert that consists of U.S. State Department spokesperson Christine Shelley discussing the avoidance of the use of the word “genocide” and claiming that they can only recognise that “acts of genocide” have taken place. By inserting this semantic quibbling, which effectively relieves the U.S. of any legal obligation to intervene in Rwanda, before showing the viewer the thousands dead in the compound, the director explicitly links the two scenes in a causal relationship. The film is thus implying that the refusal of the world to intervene directly resulted in the death of these individuals and in this way condemns the global community for its refusal to act on behalf of the victimised Rwandans. Where previously the viewer shared the gaze and experience of the two European characters, following them as they left the compound, this return to the scene of the massacre implies that walking away literally does not mean that one is able to walk away figuratively. The audience is taken back to the school in order to witness what occurred there – despite the absence of any Europeans to provide access to it. The film also serves to magnify the horrific nature of the acts that occurred at the school by focusing on the contrast between the word-play of the Security Council and the reality of the situation in Rwanda, emphasising the film’s efforts to produce ‘reality-effects’.

Shooting Dogs aims to represent the trauma of the genocide in as realistic a manner as possible. The film’s treatment of violence thus subscribes to the desire to represent or narrate the trauma of the genocide as accurately as possible. In this way it emphasises the function that violent and explicit images can play in shocking the viewer in order to force them to remember the genocide. Richard Kearney adds that “part of this illustration is the narrative use of images to *strike* us – in the sense of striking home the horror of evil or the charisma of good” (62), similar to the use of “machete words” mentioned by Cornelius in *Murambi*. Genocide survivor Beata Uwazaninka-Smith states that what

happened in Rwanda is hard to describe to others, but she feels that “this film gives pictures to what [she is] trying to say”.

The critically acclaimed, Oscar winning film *Hotel Rwanda*, is written and directed by Irish Terry George. The film is also based on a true story and, with the help of Tom Zoellner, Rusesabagina wrote his own memoirs of his experience, *An Ordinary Man*, after the film was released. It follows the life of Mille Collines hotel manager Paul Rusesabagina¹¹ (Don Cheadle) as he attempts to shelter Tutsi families that are fleeing the *interahamwe*. Starting before the genocide commenced, the film illustrates the tension in Kigali and the increasing violence that occurred after the president’s plane was shot down. Even before the killings start (or are shown in the film), many neighbours seek refuge in Paul’s house. After moving these neighbours to the potential safety of the Hotel, many others who are being targeted by the militia arrive at the hotel, hoping that it will protect them. Paul tries to protect those in his hotel, using his many connections with powerful men in order to keep sheltering and possibly evacuate the many individuals he has been able to take in. Included amongst those in the hotel are his wife, Tatiana (Sophie Okonedo), and their small children.

Unlike *Shooting Dogs*, much of *Hotel Rwanda* was filmed in South Africa, and the secondary cast and extras were also predominantly South African. This could have been done in order to minimize further psychological damage to the remaining Rwandans, following the criticism of *Shooting Dogs*.¹² While Rusesabagina and his wife Tatiana accompanied director Terry George to Rwanda for research in order to facilitate as accurate a rendering of Rwanda as possible, according to Adhikari, for some viewers, “[t]he distinctly South African flavour of the film detracts from its authenticity” (298). However, the majority of the Western audience will not immediately be familiar with or recognise the

¹¹ In future, Paul will used when referring to the character in *Hotel Rwanda*, and Rusesabagina when referring to the actual person.

¹² Although *Shooting Dogs* was only released in 2005, a year after *Hotel Rwanda*, both were filmed during approximately the same time. In an interview with Boyd van Hoeijj, *Shooting Dogs* director Michael Caton-Jones states that he was aware that *Hotel Rwanda* was also being filmed.

landscape as South African. This implies a representation of a generic “Africa” for the Western gaze that does not aim to adequately portray the uniqueness of the situation and the country.

In contrast to the visually violent approach of *Shooting Dogs*, *Hotel Rwanda* presents the genocide in a style marked by silence and absence. The absence of violent images and the reluctance to ‘speak’ those scenes through filmic devices forces the viewer to imagine the horrors that are occurring, as they might do when reading a novel. The genocide is viewed purely from the perspective of the main character, Paul, and takes place predominantly within the space of the Hotel Mille Collines, in Kigali. On his limited ventures beyond the gates of the hotel where the massacres are occurring, Paul is faced with violence that is generally presented in an obscure manner and therefore not directly accessible to the viewer, in contrast to *Shooting Dogs*.

Commenting on the proliferation of violence and disturbing images in representations of atrocity, Claude Lanzmann states that “images kill imagination” (qtd. in Kearney 52). Bearing in mind the notion put forth by Feinstein that, in contributing to our understanding, narratives play an important role in the ‘imagine’ aspect of the genocide (33), the absence of violent images could be understood as forcing the viewer to imagine what it was like without showing them directly. This absence of the violence of the massacre, and of the mutilated bodies it produced, does not imply that they are not present. “[P]iles of bodies alone do not convey a sense of genocide”, only the “most vivid representation of its aftermath” (Feinstein 36; 32).

Director Terry George stated that he “set out to create a political entertainment story rather than a pornographic depiction of the terror and violence” (qtd. in Adhikari 291). This statement is controversial in terms of the disrespect entailed in casting the genocide as “entertainment” and suggests the commercial motive behind the film. By describing the use of violent images as “pornographic”,

George is trying to justify his filmic treatment of the genocidal violence, but is doing so by likening it to plot-less explicit images that are produced purely for mass consumption. This could be regarded as trivializing the violence, but also as another form of 'protecting' the European/Western viewer from the violence: just like they were protected during the genocide by being whisked away by the United Nations.

Despite the criticism of the film, the refusal to screen violent genocidal images can be cast as an aspect to be appreciated. In refusing to show violent images, *Hotel Rwanda* adopts a mode of representation that can be regarded as a "silent aesthetic": one that forces the viewer to consider the notion of absence and issues connected with loss (Feinstein 32). This approach seems to emphasise the difficulty and ultimate inability to represent the trauma of the genocide and appears to strive to respect the dignity of the victims of the genocide by refusing to make the viewer privy to those intimate images. In a sense, the film is adopting the "aesthetic stance of protecting the massacred from the gaze of the living" (Ganguly 62). The notion of protecting the dead is ironic when it is taken into consideration that the world community failed to protect them when they were living. Bearing in mind that the director of the film is an Irishman who is a member of that community, this aesthetic stance seems to reflect the guilt of failing to intervene. The question also arises of who, exactly, is being protected: is it the corpses that are being protected or is this technique shielding the viewer from witnessing the horrific aftermath of a massacre that they could have helped to avert? Refusing to exploit images of the dead might protect their dignity, but it also allows the viewer to walk away from the scene 'protected' from the consequences of their inaction.

The narrative perspective of Paul is used throughout the film, and as focaliser the viewer can only see what he sees. Paul is not physically distant from the violence as he is situated in the centre of the conflict, but his experience of the genocide is portrayed to be aesthetically distant. Paul's own witnessing of the

genocide is filtered through different frames such as a television screen, various windows, his garden gate and the lobby of the Hotel (Ganguly 61-2). These devices serve to distance the viewer from the genocide by limiting Paul's, and thus also the viewers', encounters with the physical violence that occurred. This distances the viewer from the violence and by continually making the viewer aware of the framing of the genocide through these layers, the viewers' position as outsider is constantly reinforced. The hotel setting can itself be seen as a distancing device; as the stage for the majority of the action of the film, it restricts the access of the viewer to its confines. Ganguly believes that director Terry George "uses [the hotel] aesthetically as a framing device to spare the [viewer] graphic details of the massacres" (61).

In one of the most visually disturbing scenes of the film, the presentation of the (effects of the) violence is masked. Paul is returning from a supplier in town and, while driving back to the hotel, believes that the driver has veered off the road as their path is excessively rough. Because their way is shrouded in an early morning mist, neither Paul nor the driver can see exactly where they are going, so they stop the car and Paul exits to investigate the problem. Upon stepping out of the car, he trips and falls on top of a mutilated body. The viewer is then shown exactly what Paul is faced with as he lies on the ground: an up-close shot of the bloodied face of a child, the expression frozen in fear. In horror, Paul looks around him and finds himself surrounded by other bodies. His vision of the bodies is limited, though, as the mist enshrouding them makes it almost impossible to put together any details of the sight before him. As he moves along the road to see what lies ahead, the mist dissipates slightly revealing the aftermath of a gruesome massacre: the road is strewn with corpses. The camera also represents the violence by focusing in on Paul's reaction to the events: his absolute horror at what he witnesses is evident in his visceral reaction. Although this scene is particularly disturbing to both Paul and the viewer, the filmic and aesthetic techniques employed do not enable either to view the scene in explicit detail. The bare minimum is provided in terms of the image,

and the viewer is forced to complete the picture imaginatively themselves. The mist serves to obscure the image in such a way that the violence is not completely present, but not absent either.

The use of Paul as both main character and focaliser would appear to make the film more authentic in terms of providing the so-called 'black' experience of the genocide. In reality, however, Paul's experience of the genocide is one not shared by the majority of the Rwandan victims and, as an exception, it tends to misdirect attention away from those Rwandans. The film has been criticised for this approach, as it tends to focus on the heroism of Paul and his ultimate success in saving the lives of many of those within his hotel, and not on the actual horror of the genocide and the magnitude of the loss. This could be ascribed to the box-office strategy "of trying to communicate an optimistic message about the ultimate triumph of human benevolence, and partly a product of the decision to focus on a case that is unrepresentative of the Rwandan catastrophe" (Adhikari 290). This is further emphasised through the film's reluctance to display violent images of the genocide, leaving critics to argue that it "understate[s] the horrors of the Rwandan genocide" (Adhikari 290). Adhikari states that, as the "first feature-length offering with mass appeal to deal with the genocide in Rwanda...it would not be unfair to regard the film as having a duty to inform, perhaps even to educate, viewers to a greater extent than it does" (281). Through its "simplistic approach to the genocide", *Hotel Rwanda*, argues Adhikari, "is more likely to perpetuate rather than dispel stereotypes of Africa as a place of senseless violence and tribal animosities" (281). By not providing enough information on the history of the country, the film does little to provide a contextual explanation behind the possible causes of the genocide. The distinction between Hutu and Tutsi is briefly discussed, but the commentary leaves the audience feeling that these identities are arbitrary. As a result, the viewer fails to be aware of the complex formation of these identities as political, social and ethnic. This, in addition to the exclusion of further historical

contextualisation, makes the genocide appear to be another incident in a series of senseless violence.

Paul's desire to create and maintain connections with both local and international men of power is stressed from the opening of the film and continually throughout. His purchase of expensive, authentic Cuban cigars and high quality single malt Scotch to present as gifts to his influential guests and acquaintances mark his intention of 'storing' up favours with those he believes will have the power to help him. During one of the first instances of violence in the film, Paul explains to his wife that he refuses to use his contacts in the army to help his neighbour who has been dragged off by the *interahamwe*. He claims that he works hard to store up favours, so that "if there is a time when [they] need help, there are powerful people that [he] can call upon". The implication is made that he is partaking in a quid pro quo situation, and that his actions will benefit them in the future.

Despite his long term efforts to ensure the safety of his family through the contacts he has made, Paul is left to fend for himself by those who have the power to help him. The failure of the powerful to intervene when it is requested and needed is clearly outlined. It is further emphasized when upon confirmation that no intervention force will be sent to their aid, Paul encourages those within the hotel to contact as many outsiders as they can, in order to explain the situation in Rwanda and appeal for assistance. The approach that they adopt, however, is not one of self-pity but rather one of passive resistance. Therefore despite the problems its "hero"-focus, the film does help to dispel another image of Africa as a continent of victims. Paul states that after explaining what will happen to them, they must say goodbye to their influential contacts. That goodbye must be said as if they are "reaching through the phone and holding their hand. Let them know that if they let go of that hand, you will die". He concludes by saying that they must "shame them into sending help". In a similar way, the characters of the film are reaching through the screen and evoking shame and guilt in the viewer. In this way, the individuals within the hotel act as

representatives of the voice of Rwanda, crying out to the global community to intervene on their behalf and put a stop to the genocidal murders occurring within their country.

The white characters in the film also call attention to the failure of the world community to act on behalf of the victimized Rwandans. After watching footage of the killings filmed by two Western journalists, Paul explains that he is glad that the world will see it, as “it is the only way [they] have a chance that people might intervene”. Jack (Joaquin Phoenix) asks whether it is still appropriate to show the footage if no-one intervenes. The idea that the Rwandans will effectively be abandoned by the outside world is brought to light by the outsider himself, and is met with shock by Paul as he wonders how anyone can *not* intervene after witnessing such atrocities. This conversation also suggests the lack of efficacy of the “shock tactic” used in *Shooting Dogs* and thus the need to try out other representational strategies.

In a conversation with Paul, U.N. Colonel Oliver (Nick Nolte) almost apologises to him when he admits that the “West, the Superpowers” think that they, the Africans, are “worthless” and that “they are not going to stop the slaughter”. The Colonel’s disgust at this admission is clear in his depleted physical countenance and his constantly averted eyes that refuse to meet Paul’s gaze. The failure of the world community to intervene is thus one of the most prominent themes in the film. Adhikari argues that “playing on Western guilt about Rwanda is part of the film’s commercial agenda” and is “one that is relatively well accomplished” (294). This collusion between the commercial motive of the film and the production of a sense of complicity complicates the advancement of the notion of complicity. By directly linking it to the financial, critical and popular success of the film, the film manipulates the complex question of Western complicity in the genocide and the guilt that this evokes in the viewer. The inclusion of the European characters, their behaviour and their conversation topics with one another, tends to elicit guilt in the Western viewer as the failure of the world

community is constantly highlighted. The film shows the inability of the U.N. to protect the Rwandans at the hotel and points out the overall futility of the news coverage of the massacres to motivate global intervention, making the viewer aware not only of the situation, but of the conscious ineptitude of the Western presence during the genocide. The ultimate evacuation of the Westerners and the dire consequences of that action is conveyed in a highly dramatic and emotional manner, and in this way the film succeeds in eliciting guilt in the Western viewer. This guilt, however, is problematic as it is closely tied in to the commercial motive and ultimate success of the film. In this way, it can be seen to manipulate the emotions of viewers in order to not only make them aware of their failure to intervene, but to profit financially and critically from the evocation and implications of that guilt.

In *Hotel Rwanda*, the footage of attacks occurring only a “mile down the road” filmed by Jack is viewed in the hotel room by both journalists, as well as Paul himself. The contextualization of the footage as a segment in a news broadcast has the effect of turning the genocide into a product for mass consumption. The characters in the room, and the viewers of the film, are provided with a spectacle of the genocide with the added irony of both mediums being film. The audience is once again placed in a position in relation to the genocide that is similar to that of the characters in the film: one of being witness to images presented on a screen. This self-reflexive technique may be viewed as commenting on the notion of reducing the genocide to a spectacle, but in so doing is achieving exactly that.

Both films tend to foreground outsiders and their experience of the genocide, which could possibly reduce the trauma of the victimised Rwandans by forcing them into the background. The horrific situation of the persecuted Rwandans is heralded by the main characters as extra-ordinary and scenes of their ordeal are either lavishly put on display, or distanced from the viewer through filmic devices.

Despite the vastly different techniques employed by the films *Shooting Dogs* and *Hotel Rwanda*, they both exhibit an attempt to (re)present the genocide through the medium of film. Using techniques that respectively incorporate violence and silence, both films end up reducing the genocide to spectacle, despite their attempts at authenticity. To a certain degree, all images or films do this. This, however, does not necessarily detract from the quality of the films as the inability to express trauma is experienced in all art forms and the difficulty in attempting to overcome that is a process that must be undergone in order to attempt any form of representation. What both films in their different ways attempt to accomplish is allowing the viewer access to the scene of the genocide. The shock tactic of including violent and disturbing images or the silent aesthetic that evokes absence or loss both play important roles in conveying a sense of the trauma to the viewer. Concerning the filmic techniques used in representing atrocity, Kearney comments that “if the testimony of the horror is too immediate, we are blinded by the experience. But if it is too distant, we are untouched by it” (60), but that it is most important that viewers “experience the horror of that suffering *as if* they were actually there” (62). The films of the genocide attempt to do this through limiting the viewers’ access to the trauma to the perspective and experiences of certain characters.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The Rwandan genocide was one of the most efficient and disturbing genocides of the 20th century, with ordinary people taking up arms and joining the organized death squads to kill neighbours and friends. The incomprehensibility of the actions of the perpetrators, as well as the vast number of lives lost in such a short time period, are aspects that (amongst many others) contribute towards making the genocide an enigma. In order for the world community to gain some insight, albeit fragmentary, into the genocide, the trauma experienced by individuals in Rwanda needs to be conveyed. This insight is necessary not only to come to terms with 'absence' or 'silence', but in being able to recognise genocide in the future and re-forming a "never again" resolve. The world community also needs to recognise in particular that conflict in Africa is *not* atavistic; it involves individuals with whom audiences can identify and empathise with.

Through the employment of various narrative features and devices, literary and filmic narratives can provide access to that trauma and thereby bear witness to the trauma of the genocide. By emphasizing the human dimension of the genocide, many narratives forge an emotional connection between reader and character. By "trying to put names on gross numbers, or at least those who survived", those involved in the genocide are humanised rather than being reduced to mere statistics; individualisation can help to "replace the humanity of those who lost their lives in genocide" (Feinstein 39). The restoration of the humanity of the victims is vital as it helps to make the world recognise the individuality of those African victims by encouraging readers and viewers to identify with them on an affective level.

The human dimension of the genocide can be brought forth in the narrative form through its focus on individual characters and the perspectives employed.

Kearney states that “storytelling may be said to *humanize* time by transforming it from an impersonal passing of fragmented moments into a pattern” (4). By providing the individual stories and perspectives of the characters of Melchior and Selena (*Inyenzi*), Cornelius and the other “I” narratives (*Murambi*), Father Christopher and Joe (*Shooting Dogs*), and Paul (*Hotel Rwanda*), an emotional connection is forged between the reader and character, refusing to allow those narratives to remain impersonal. This distinctive characteristic of narrative allows the reader to “transcend their limited personal experience” (Friedberg and Rockett qtd. in Zillman 189) and enter the scene of the genocide through this “*quasi*-experience of loss” (Kearney 26). Through these various examples of individualisation, the narratives serve to “singularize suffering against the anonymity of evil” (Kearney 62). The focus on the singular and their experience of the genocide personalises trauma and loss, elevating the individual above the masses and replaces the anonymous with an identifiable face. This is vital in forging an emotional connection, without which it would be impossible to empathise with current and future victims of genocide.

Through the provision of a multitude of different characters that played varying roles in the genocide, the texts and films tend to problematise the binaries of victim and perpetrator. Through the use of Hutu men who criticise and actively oppose the genocide in *Inyenzi* and *Hotel Rwanda*, as well as some of the individual stories in *Murambi*, the narratives complicate the binary through which the genocide is conventionally understood in order to elicit new insights. The narratives also appear to explore the notion of the ‘insider-outsider’ as well by introducing the reader or viewer to characters that inhabit the dual position of being both insider and outsider. In *Murambi*, Cornelius is a Rwandan in exile and in *Hotel Rwanda* Paul is an upper class Hutu man with powerful social connections: as Rwandans, they are regarded as insiders, but their absence during the genocide and their exceptional status respectively, makes them outsiders as well, to a certain degree. By complicating the insider/outsider relationship, the narratives problematise stereotyping those individuals as

belonging to only one category. Stereotyping individuals leads to othering them, making it easier for readers and viewers to dismiss their representation as identifiably fictional. By problematizing the simplicity of such types, the narratives emphasise the humanity of the characters: no one individual can purely belong to a single category, as identity is far more complex than that. The effort to represent those characters as multifaceted individuals compels the reader or viewer to humanise those involved in the genocide and acknowledge the complexity of human behaviour, especially in circumstances of genocide. Hopefully this might aid in future efforts to understand similar situations and approach them with the empathy and motivation necessary to intervene.

The act of bearing witness to the trauma is one that takes place not only through writing about the genocide, but through the reader's engagement with the text. In an analysis of Antjie Krog's work, *Country of my Skull* (which deals extensively with trauma and representation), Meira Cook claims that it has become "increasingly important to evaluate how writing has figured as testimony and how reading, in turn, becomes an act of bearing witness" (74). The various emotional states evoked by the different texts facilitate an engagement with the narrative and the represented world on an emotional level.

The neutrality of the position of the outsider is also questioned, most prominently, through the two European characters in *Shooting Dogs* and the U.N. captain in *Hotel Rwanda*, bringing to light the role, or lack there-of, that non-Rwandans played in the genocide. Each narrative also explores the notion of world guilt concerning the failure of the world community to intervene on behalf of those Rwandans in the genocide whose lives were in danger. In all of the narratives, the characters themselves comment on the ineffectiveness of the global community to step in and aid the Rwandans, and many raise issues of cosmological responsibility by questioning their respective religious beliefs. The recurrent motif of the religious figure across the texts illustrates the pervading question of cosmological responsibility in the genocide. The priest figure

appears as a significant image and character in both *Inyenzi* and *Shooting Dogs*. These figures are seen to constantly question the ability and role of a higher being in protecting the Rwandans from being massacred. They thus play a formidable role in the development of the narratives and their tendency to raise the issue of God's (lack of) involvement in the genocide.

Through the inclusion of these direct and indirect admonishments, the narratives encourage the reader to review the role that the world (and the cosmos), played in allowing the genocide to occur and continue. This by extension could make them possibly explore their own complicity. In doing so, it suggests that the narrative form "help[s] audiences to confront personal guilt indirectly, so that they might expiate real or imagined sins through the controlled trauma of the film [or literary] experience" (qtd. in Zillman 184). The closure that such expiation might result in is problematic and many of the texts discussed refuse to provide such closure. By bringing to light the psychological effects of trauma and the far-reaching consequences of genocide on an individual and collective scale, the texts do provide a space where the reader is forced to confront their guilt indirectly. This does not mean, however, that the narratives allow for an easy catharsis for the world community: it questions the role they played (and will play in future humanitarian crises) and problematises the very idea of expiation, because they show that trauma itself never reaches closure.

Expiation also implies that the reader can put those real or imagined sins behind them and move on, having fulfilled their penance through this indirect confrontation with their guilt. The narrative form does not allow for such disengagement with the trauma, as it constantly reinforces emotional involvement with the characters, the situation and the represented world. It is this individual involvement and the emotive response elicited by the narrative devices employed that renders the trauma inescapable and devastating. By foregrounding this personal involvement, the narratives do not allow the reader or viewer to simply walk away from the story unaffected: through emphasising the

human dimension of the genocide, the texts and films encourage emotional involvement, which could hopefully persuade the world community to become more actively involved in similar situations.

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