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### **Bodies in Shame: Writing Trauma and Affective Unsettlement in Post-Genocide Rwanda Fiction**

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**BODIES IN SHAME: WRITING TRAUMA AND AFFECTIVE  
UNSETTLEMENT IN POST-GENOCIDE RWANDA FICTION**

**by**

**COLE CARVOUR**

**B.A., COMPARATIVE LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS,  
EARLHAM COLLEGE, 2014**

**THESIS**

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

**Master of Arts  
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The University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

**July 2020**

## **DEDICATIONS**

This thesis is dedicated to the victims and survivors of violence, both fictional and real, who have entrusted me with their stories, taught me to listen, and greatly transformed and enriched my life.

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Thank you all for believing in me and in this thesis.

**Bodies in Shame: Writing Trauma and Affective Unsettlement in Post-Genocide  
Rwanda fiction**

By  
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**ABSTRACT**

This thesis analyzes Boubacar Boris Diop's *Murambi, le livre des ossements* and Véronique Tadjo's *L'Ombre d'Imana: voyages jusqu'au bout du Rwanda*. I argue that both authors write trauma by employing both a dominant realist style and the trauma aesthetic with attention to the embodied experiences of genocide victims and survivors in both styles. In doing so, each author contributes to impeding indifference surrounding the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Furthermore, I assert that one effect of writing trauma is that of affective unsettlement or affective travel, or the registering of psychic and physical shame and other related affective responses in the reader, which is posited as a more responsive form of reading and witnessing.

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**INTRODUCTION : ‘Écrire par devoir de mémoire’: Embodied Memory,  
Affective Witnessing**

During the early months of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, the world largely turned its gaze and attention elsewhere. Susan Moeller states, for example, that a total of just thirty-two minutes of airtime was devoted to the events in Rwanda across major U.S. nightly news programs during the month of April 1994 (283). International viewers were captivated, instead, by the FIFA World Cup being held in the U.S. and by post-apartheid general elections in South Africa (*Rwanda Genocide Stories* 3, Moeller 282). When media coverage of the events later expanded, those images of the genocide which circulated throughout various news outlets also failed to generate large-scale indignation or to facilitate identification with the Rwandan plight within the international community (Moeller 283). Refraining from the term genocide, commentators and viewers frequently made use of more available frameworks for understanding the massacres (*Rwanda Genocide Stories* 7). Namely, the genocide was depicted as merely another incident of unceasing inter-ethnic or tribal violence, further crystalizing the recurrent spectacle of “une Afrique perçue comme le lieu naturel de tous les désastres” (“Écrire dans l’odeur” 73). This indifference, however, was not limited to media coverage and viewers in the Global North. Despite also underscoring the role of dominant French-language media, Senegalese author Boubacar Boris Diop asserts that, concerning the genocide, “dans le meilleur des cas, les intellectuels et les artistes africains ont détourné le regard et murmuré leur honte et leur écoëurement” (74). In Africa as in other parts of the world, Diop writes, “le plus souvent, ils ont fait preuve d’une indifférence quasi totale” (74). Later recognizing their own failure to acknowledge the genocide, some African artists and intellectuals, including Diop, express shame and guilt at their previous inability to bear witness to



Rwandan victims and survivors (74). As Chadian author Nocky Djedanoum states, “When I went to Rwanda, I realized to the full how much I had failed as a human being. It was necessary to show to Rwandans our solidarity as Africans and in our own way, through literature, fight against forgetting” (“Genocide: The Changing” 382). The desire to combat this indifference and to challenge Western media distortions of the events in Rwanda became major factors leading to the creation of the commemorative literary project ‘Rwanda: Écrire par devoir de mémoire’ (*Rwanda Genocide Stories* 8). The primary subject of the present thesis concerns two literary responses which emerged from this project, each attempting to effectively detail the traumatic experiences of Rwandan genocide victims and survivors and to impede indifference.

The ‘Rwanda: Écrire par devoir de mémoire’ literary mission was conceived during the 1996, Lille-based festival of African literature and culture, Fest’Africa, organized by Nocky Djedanoum and Ivorian journalist Maimouna Coulibaly (“Global African” 152). The project involved sending ten African authors of various nationalities to Rwanda for a two-month residency in 1998. Touring Rwanda’s genocide memorial sites and holding difficult conversations with survivors and perpetrators alike, these authors were tasked with writing about the 1994 genocide from multiple African, non-western points of view (153). Upon its conclusion, the project bore ten texts, including both Boubacar Boris Diop’s *Murambi, le livre des ossements* and Ivorian author Véronique Tadjo’s *L’Ombre d’Imana: voyages jusqu’au bout du Rwanda*.<sup>1</sup> Diop and Tadjo’s texts serve as the principal objects of

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<sup>1</sup> The remaining texts include Tierno Monénembo’s (Guinea) *L’Ainé des orphelins* (2000); Monique Iboudou’s (Burkina Faso) *Murekatete* (2000); Abdourahman Waberi’s (Djibouti) *Moisson de crânes* (2000); Jean-Marie Rurangwa’s (Rwanda) *Rwanda: le génocide des Tutsi expliqué à un étranger* (2000); Nocky Djedanoum’s (Chad) *Nyamirambo!* (2000); Vénuste Kayimahe’s (Rwanda) *France-*

investigation in this thesis and are distinctive among early responses to the genocide in several ways which I outline below.

First, as Nicki Hitchcott has noted extensively, the positionality of these two authors and their ‘Écrire par devoir de mémoire’ colleagues separates their texts from more widely read narratives produced by what she calls Western ‘outsider’ authors and journalists (*Rwanda Genocide Stories* 15).<sup>2</sup> While conscious that these ten authors were “either not from Rwanda or living in exile in 1994,” Hitchcott reminds us that authors like Diop and Tadjó are “insiders in relation to the history and culture of the African continent” (12-16). In this sense, Diop and Tadjó’s texts partially redress the initial silence of the African intellectual community surrounding the massacres while also contesting Western journalistic representations of the genocide. Such distinctions also elicit tough questions, which inform the chapters of this thesis, about how authors who themselves are not survivors write about the experiences of others during the genocide. By examining both Diop’s novel and Tadjó’s travel narrative in this thesis, I intend to privilege the voices of two black African writers, rather than Western outsiders, in their approaches to recounting the Rwandan genocide.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, selecting these two texts, I prioritize the work of authors writing in direct and extended contact with survivors or who, as Diop describes, write “dans l’odeur de la mort” rather than from afar (“Écrire dans l’odeur” 75). In doing so, this thesis

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*Rwanda: les coulisses du génocide. Témoignage d’un rescapé* (2001); Koulsy Lamko’s (Chad) *La Phalène des collines* (2002); and Meja Mwangi’s (Kenya) *The Big Chiefs* (2007).

<sup>2</sup> Hitchcott cites Jean Hatzfield and his trilogy *Dans le nu de la vie* (2000), *Une Saison de machettes* (2003), and *La Stratégie des antilopes* (2005) in French and Phillip Gourevitch and his *We Wish to Inform you that Tomorrow We Will be Killed with Our Families* (1998) in English as examples of the most widely circulated accounts of the genocide. Notably, both outsider authors traveled to Rwanda through their affiliations with prominent Western media outlets (*Rwanda Genocide Stories* 12-13).

<sup>3</sup> In *Rwanda Genocide Stories*, Hitchcott also contends that the attention “Écrire par devoir de mémoire” texts receive overshadows texts written by Rwandan authors (9). I agree with this statement but also maintain that the historical and literary significance of the “Écrire par devoir de mémoire” texts remains largely underexplored.

demonstrates that Diop and Tadjó often productively “position themselves and their texts as witnesses, but always in the knowledge that they are not themselves survivors” (*Rwanda Genocide Stories* 26). Both texts, in other words, amplify survivor experiences of genocide while interrogating the role of witnessing and readerly identification with survivors. This placing of limitations on identification is crucial in the context of the next manner in which I distinguish Diop and Tadjó’s texts from other responses to the genocide.

Setting their texts apart from the significant amount of non-fictional scholarship produced about Rwanda since 1994, both authors also make the choice to fictionalize the Rwandan genocide as a corrective to indifference and to the failure to see human subjects among the horrific images of spectacular violence in Rwanda. Citing the work of Susan Sontag in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Véronique Tadjó explains her choice to employ fiction in response to the Rwandan genocide since, “exposure to shocking images had not bred political action in the world, but rather indifference” (“Genocide: The Changing” 382). For Tadjó, fiction differs from photographic or journalistic accounts in terms of its effect on readers. Fictional accounts of the genocide, she argues, “give back to History its human dimension so that the reader can identify with the characters” (382). Diop confirms a comparable view in a 2010 interview with Tadjó when he states that, “literature certainly cannot do everything, but we cannot ignore it... It has managed to make the deaths in Rwanda more real” (“Interview with Boubacar” 429). Whereas media coverage failed Rwandans in terms of an international response, Diop and Tadjó assert that literature establishes a relationship between narrator and reader in which the possibility of, at least partial, identification and empathy is opened.

Researchers of genocide fiction who analyze Diop's *Murambi* and Tadjó's *L'Ombre d'Imana* frequently echo this position. Catherine Kroll maintains that these authors employ "strategies of fiction to write the Rwandan genocide indelibly into our consciousness in a manner that putatively non-fiction reportage and government documents cannot" (Kroll 657). Similarly, Josias Semujanga reflects that "la fiction, en exprimant la relation d'ambivalence faite de fascination et de répulsion des sentiments humains devant l'horreur, touche plus facilement la majorité du lectorat" ("Le génocide des Tutsi" 112). What these authors suggest is a crucial distinction about fiction's capacity to stage the complexity of traumatic experiences of genocide and to elicit empathic responses in readers, rather than indifference. As such, "literature then becomes a space where it is possible to explore new frontiers, [and] where taking risks" occurs such that the reader is no longer in the comfortable position of the uninvolved observer ("Genocide: The Changing" 382). Still, not all genocide fiction is equally successful. Hitchcott credits the success of texts like *Murambi* and *L'Ombre d'Imana* to their balanced emphasis on both characterization and context and to the fact that, mostly, "fiction from Rwanda does not embrace the trauma aesthetic" (22). By 'the trauma aesthetic,' Hitchcott is referring to what critics identify as an emphasis on formal experimentation, interruptions, and temporal disorder, aporia, or the un-representability of trauma (21). These observations lead Hitchcott to read Rwanda genocide stories primarily as "commemorative fictional responses" rather than trauma texts (24). In this thesis, I take a different approach. First, I highlight that, despite the predominant usage of realism, a certain variant of the trauma aesthetic remains central to Diop and Tadjó's fictional portrayals of traumatic experiences of genocide. Second, I show that Diop and Tadjó encourage empathic responses in readers of their texts while also placing limitations on those

processes in order to avoid complete readerly identification with Rwandan victims and survivors. Such unrestricted identification might amount to the consumption of trauma narrative as mere spectacle, or as a cathartic process for the reader. Instead, implicating the reader by situating them in relation to different subject positions, such as those of victims, survivors, witnesses, and perpetrators, and in relation to specific affective experiences, Diop and Tadjó's texts prompt a range of heterogeneous affective responses in their readers.<sup>4</sup> As such, both texts encourage a more critical practice of witnessing and reading than other Rwanda genocide fictions in general.

One model for approaching Diop and Tadjó's use of both realism and the trauma aesthetic as well as the production of affective responses in readers is outlined by historian and trauma analyst Dominick LaCapra in *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. In his book, LaCapra delineates two key concepts which I make use of in this thesis, though with some modification – *writing trauma* and *empathic unsettlement*. LaCapra describes *writing trauma* in opposition to writing *about* trauma, a practice of “historiography related to the project of reconstructing the past as objectively as possible” (LaCapra 186). In contrast, writing trauma entails “processes of coming to terms with traumatic ‘experiences,’ limit events, and their symptomatic effects that achieve articulation in different combinations and hybridized forms” (186). While writing trauma does not discard all appeals to objective fact, this practice prioritizes ‘giving voice’ to traumatic experiences and instating participatory relations with, usually artistic, objects of investigation (186-7). Both *Murambi* and *L’Ombre d’Imana* can be described as examples of writing trauma in that both texts make use of hybridized forms to relate traumatic experiences of genocide while

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<sup>4</sup> Throughout this thesis, I use the term victim to denote those who did not survive the genocide, survivor to refer to those who directly experienced violence and survived, and witness to refer both to first-hand and secondary observers of the genocide.

focusing not only on the aboutness or referentiality of certain events but also the experience of those events. Throughout this thesis, I will use the term writing trauma, then, to refer to the hybridized employment of realism and the trauma aesthetic in Diop's novel and Tadjó's travel narrative which aims to detail survivor experiences of genocide.

One result of writing trauma, according to LaCapra, is *empathic unsettlement* in the reader. For LaCapra empathic unsettlement involves "attending to, even trying, in limited ways, to recapture the possibly split-off, affective dimension of the experience of others" (40), and might be further defined as "a kind of virtual experience through which one puts oneself in the other's position while recognizing the difference of that position and hence not taking the other's place" (78). In other words, empathic unsettlement is distinguished from an appropriation of, or complete identification with others' experiences, suggesting a more critical and responsive form of reading and witnessing. Moreover, empathic unsettlement is posited as a readerly response which is in opposition to reader indifference typified by the passive consumer of news media images after repeated exposure to tragic spectacle or "the reader of a non-fiction book [who] wants to inform himself on a part of his world without leaving it" ("Genocide: The Changing" 382-383). As such, this process involves the production of, at least tentative, empathic and affective connections between characters and readers.

In this sense, writing trauma and empathic unsettlement are useful terms in relation to my arguments about Diop and Tadjó's texts, outlined above. In fact, one South African scholar, Karin Samuel, refers to LaCapra's work in her own article on Diop's *Murambi*. Samuel states that "the rendering of the human dimension of the genocide could create an emotional and empathic bond between the reader and the

characters (and the dead they represent), ... provid[ing] readers with some form of access into the experience of genocide” (366). Furthermore, focusing on the alternating narrative voices and changing subject positions in *Murambi*, Samuel argues that Diop’s text produces “an unsettled empathic response” in the reader” (372). Still, while LaCapra’s concepts and Samuel’s reading of Diop’s novel are compelling, both scholars also exhibit a common tendency within theories of trauma and narrative to disregard the role of the body in relation to traumatic memory and to make reference to the affective experience of the reader as an exclusively psychical process. My own argument will depart from and expand upon LaCapra and Samuel’s usage of the concepts of writing trauma and empathic unsettlement by highlighting how Diop and Tadjó *write trauma* with attentiveness to survivors’ *embodied* memories in their use of both the realist style and the trauma aesthetic and, thus, how their texts produce what I call *affective unsettlement* as a process entailing both psychic and corporeal responses in the reader.

Critics such as Roberta Culbertson remind us of the critical role of the body in relation to the traumatic experiences of survivors and the difficulty of recounting those experiences. For Culbertson, when the body is faced with violation, violation “from which there is no escape or recourse because one’s body and one’s repertoire of responses are quite simply overpowered,” the body must also confront its own possible dissolution, a sense of “one’s clear permeability, one’s flowing into the world, and one’s being entered by it” (170). These experiences of violation, such as the violation of sexual abuse, genocide, and extreme states of negative affects, persist for the survivor and are not easily or straightforwardly articulated in narrative form. In fact, according to Culbertson, much of traumatic experience “is not even remembered but felt as a presence... locked within [the] skin, played out within it in actions other

than words, in patterns of consciousness below the everyday and the constructions of language” (170). Resistant to narration as events in time, Culbertson argues that these traumatic experiences more frequently find expression only by appealing to metaphor or to the language of transcendence (176). Similarly, in his own discussion of the articulation of traumatic experience in writing, LaCapra points to a strong tendency in modern writing to express trauma through an aesthetics of negative transcendence, abjection, or of the sublime (LaCapra 23, 191). Culbertson and LaCapra’s observations shed light on the key role of a certain variant of the trauma aesthetic, despite the more dominant usage of realism, in both Diop and Tadjó’s texts. Overall, neither Diop nor Tadjó primarily resort to formal disruption or to the impossibility of representing genocide in order to depict the 1994 massacres in Rwanda, because, as Hitchcott claims, “a pressing need to remain faithful to the facts of history overrides any concern with configuring aporia” in their texts (*Rwanda Genocide Stories* 23). However, as Culbertson cautions, it is possible to “lose... certain dimensions of the truth in the telling of it” (Culbertson 191). In order to write Rwandan genocide survivors’ traumatic experiences of violation and extreme negative affects such as shame, depicted through individual characters, and to resist discarding the embodied memories of those survivors, both Diop and Tadjó employ, varyingly, the language of transcendence, or the trauma aesthetic, in certain passages in addition to realism. In this thesis, I demonstrate that this hybridized employment of realism and of the trauma aesthetic with an attentiveness to survivors’ embodied memories in writing trauma is significant in several ways. First, this strategy allows Diop and Tadjó to address both the historical contextualization of the genocide as an event and the structural trauma which individual victims and survivors face in confronting violation. Second, this attention to the bodies of their characters provides indications about the



various affective states of those characters within the narratives. Lastly, this attentiveness to survivors' embodied memories also amplifies the capacity for these texts to produce affective unsettlement in the reader, or the registering of psychic and physical shame and other related affective responses in the reader as a more responsive form of reading and witnessing.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I examine how Boubacar Boris Diop writes trauma in *Murambi, le livres des ossements* by making use of both a realist style and the language of transcendence at different moments in the novel in order to communicate important historical context about the events of the genocide while also focusing on the affective aspect of specific experiences within genocide. Furthermore, I describe the manner in which writing trauma produces affective unsettlement in the reader, whose identification with and affective responses toward different characters is both encouraged and foreclosed at different instances within the novel.

The second chapter of this thesis demonstrates that Véronique Tadjo, similarly, writes trauma through the hybridized use of realism and the trauma aesthetic to convey the historical uniqueness of the 1994 Rwandan genocide and to detail, at least partially, the affective experiences of genocide victims and survivors, remaining attentive to those experiences as embodied in both styles. I equally investigate how Tadjo's travel narrative encourages *affective travel*, an allusion to affective unsettlement, in readers at various points throughout the text in order to combat both readerly indifference and the comfortable consumption of trauma narrative.

Behind the central concern of this thesis with writing trauma and affective unsettlement lie questions of how to write about the events of genocide and the traumatic instances of violation and shame experienced by genocide victims and

survivors, how to impede indifference, and how to respond to such experiences as a reader or witness. Each chapter also attempts to re-center the role of the body in writing trauma and in addressing, even limitedly, the experiences of others. Finally, this thesis considers how the establishing of such tentative bonds between reader witnesses and characters might constitute a more critical form of reading and witnessing as a potential path forward after genocide.

**CHAPTER 1: ‘Arrêter de verser le sang’: Writing Trauma and Affective Unsettlement in *Murambi***

Both literary critics and Boubacar Boris Diop himself identify a significant shift in his writing between his fourth novel, *Le Cavalier et son ombre* translated in English as *The Knight and his Shadow*, and his fifth novel, *Murambi, le livre des ossements*. The contrasts between the two novels are based upon, first, the prioritizing of playfulness and allegory in the prior compared with the more restrained style of the latter and, second, Diop’s treatment of the Rwandan genocide in each novel (Qader vii). *The Knight* concerns the story of, and is narrated by, two former lovers, Lat-Sukabé and Khadija. As the novel leaps between narrators, spaces, and temporalities, the Rwandan genocide is referenced explicitly in two instances. In the first instance, Lat-Sukabé eavesdrops on the conversation of two neighboring characters in a café. As the couple discusses Rwanda disinterestedly, arguing over the name of the assassinated Rwandan president, Lat-Sukabé remarks that, “it [the genocide] was called a ‘drama,’ a ‘tragedy,’ or ‘genocide’ – and [that] this uncertainty showed that no one could give a damn, above all the Africans themselves” (*The Knight* 40-41). In a later instance, Khadija thinks of “the great tragedies of the black race,” and sheds tears while imagining “the camp at Uvira...the roads leading to Bukavu... [and] the crowds of people in despair at Mugunga” (175). These two moments in *The Knight* highlight how the novel both disregards the singularity of the Rwandan genocide, as Rwanda is only evoked metonymically to engender meditation on violence in Africa in general, and avoids any real attempt to convey the experience of genocide to the reader or to distinguish between victims and perpetrators.<sup>5</sup> In fact, Diop explicitly

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<sup>5</sup> In the second instance, Khadija’s blanket sympathy toward those living in the refugee camps at Uvira and Mugunga not only uses Rwanda as a metonymy for violence in Africa, but also obfuscates the

contends in a postscript to *Murambi* that *The Knight* reflects his “propension à voir dans les tragédies africaines non pas des événements singuliers mais des séquences successives et répétées à l’infini d’un cataclysme généralisé et continu” prior to visiting Rwanda (*Murambi* 202). In *Murambi*, by contrast, Diop asserts that he places “beaucoup plus d’importance aux faits rapportés par [ses] interlocuteurs [au Rwanda] qu’aux tours de passe-passe souvent associés à une écriture expérimentale qui était... [son] marque de fabrique” (204). If, in other words, the literary artifice of *The Knight* renders the Rwandan genocide abstruse, then the shift in Diop’s writing in *Murambi* contextualizes the genocide historically and brings genocide victim and survivor experiences to the forefront of the narrative. Furthermore, *Murambi* demonstrates the urgent need to combat shameful, global and African indifference to the events of 1994. After joining the ‘Rwanda: Écrire par devoir de mémoire’ project, Diop reflects, “Je venais, à ma grande honte, d’apprendre ce dont je n’aurais jamais dû douter, à savoir qu’au Rwanda aussi, il y avait eu bel et bien des victimes et des bourreaux” (204). In this sense, the experience of shame is central to *Murambi*. On one level, Diop links his own and other African artists’ shame to the decision to write about the Rwandan genocide and to a necessary shift in his own style of writing. On another level, shame is integral to the manner in which Diop both *writes trauma* and produces *affective unsettlement* in the readers of his novel. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, I argue in this chapter that Diop writes trauma by interweaving the dominant realist style of the novel with the trauma aesthetic, remaining attentive to the body’s recall of genocide experiences in both styles and communicating embodied experiences of particularly traumatic violation and shame

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significant presence of genocide perpetrators in those camps following France’s *Opération Turquoise* (Qader xv, *Murambi* 204).

through a language of transcendence. I also assert that one effect of writing trauma in *Murambi* is that of affective unsettlement, or the registering of psychic and physical shame and other related affective responses in the reader as a more critical form of reading and witnessing.

Though the narrative displays fewer experimental stylistics than some of Diop's earlier texts, *Murambi* retains a complex temporal and narrative structure. In total, the novel contains eleven fictionalized testimonies narrated by eight distinct characters in two sections. The first section is set immediately prior to the genocide, and the second takes place during the April through July 1994 period in which the majority of the massacres occurred. While each testimony contains a significant number of dates, sites, and allusions to non-fictional figures which contextualize the narrative, the titles of these two sections, "La peur et la colère" and "Génocide," also signal that the affective experiences of these fictionalized witnesses are important to understanding what happened during the genocide. These two sections are then staggered with two additional sections, written in the third person, which summarize the story of Cornelius Uvimana. Cornelius' story details his return to Rwanda twenty-five years after his exile to Djibouti and four years after the genocide, creating a temporal gap between the first-person testimonies and the third person narrative sections of the novel (Nissim 208). When considered as a whole, this complex structure suggests "une stratégie de déprise, de non-maitrise" which affirms the complexity of attempting to recount a genocide (Kavwahirehi 126). For some scholars, such as Karin Samuels, the text's shifting voices "provide a synecdoche of a multitude of perspectives, ranging from victims and survivors to perpetrators and participants of the genocide" (Samuel 368). According to Samuels, this series of subject positions coupled with the system of narrative distances and proximities in the

novel produces empathic unsettlement in the reader (375).<sup>6</sup> My own argument about how Diop writes the traumatic experiences of genocide and produces *affective* unsettlement in *Murambi*'s readers relies more specifically on close readings of passages within both the novel's testimonies and its sections written in the third person rather than on "the manner in which narrative is arranged and from which or whose perspective it is told" (375). Still, such observations demonstrate how the novel's structure amplifies and contributes to communicating the experience of genocide and to the production of an unsettled response in the reader.

The first testimony in the novel is that of Michel Serumundo, owner of a Kigali video-rental store and father. The initial lines of Michel's narrative display neither extreme emotions nor historical markers. Rather, Michel's testimony begins in the language of everyday routine. "Hier, je suis resté à la vidéothèque un peu plus tard que d'habitude" (*Murambi* 9). Because his testimony takes place prior to the start of the massacres, the reader, who is already aware of the events that will soon take place, is caught off guard by this casual tone. It is only once Michel attempts to return home that conflict enters the narrative. Arriving at the bus station, Michel encounters a presidential guard that demands to see his identification card and immediately observes that Michel is Tutsi. As Michel begrudgingly confirms this fact, he attempts to maintain his composure. At this moment, though, a second guard aggressively stops Michel, commanding, "Arrange d'abord ta braguette" (10). The guard's abrupt remark is not meant to aid Michel but to embarrass and expose him. At the same time, the guard's second person command is an address to the reader, who now contemplates this feeling of exposure as well. The comment sends Michel cycling

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<sup>6</sup> Samuels asserts that the uttering of the 'I' in testimonial sections encourages readerly identification with characters while the 'he' of the third person sections distances the reader, truncating such identification (375).

through several reactions. First, “souriant bêtement,” then displaying “l’air malin,” Michel only succeeds in stemming this affective outpour upon responding to the guard “sur un ton *sec*,” which is meant to disguise his discomposure (10). Michel then zips-up his fly, marking his return to physical and affective equilibrium. Though this incident is included as part of Michel’s fictionalized memory in the moments leading up to the genocide, this passage in the novel, decidedly, does not describe an acutely traumatic or shameful, embodied memory for Michel. As such, the passage continues in the style of realism. However, as with those passages that do shift into the trauma aesthetic, attention to the remembered movements and limits of the body reveals important information about the affective dimension of the experience of genocide – or in this case the moments prior to genocide – to the reader. Embarrassment, though closely related to shame, is usually considered less destructive, more fleeting, and concerned with something or someone which is “socially out of place” (Nussbaum 204).<sup>7</sup> In this sense, the guard’s command highlights not only that Michel’s zipper is improperly open or positioned, but also that Michel himself, as a Tutsi, is *out of place* in the public space of the bus station. Encountering this passage, the reader momentarily positions themselves in Michel’s place under the guard’s scrutiny and senses the perhaps-familiar embarrassment of an open fly or button. The reader must also register, however, the more unsettling but less familiar possibility, a possibility which is augmented by the reader’s knowledge of the impending genocide, that Michel is marked by the guard as *being* out of place or as existing where he should not. The fact that the guard deliberately inflicts embarrassment on Michel steers the scene affectively from embarrassment toward humiliation and shame, as the act is

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<sup>7</sup> For more on the proximity between embarrassment and shame, see Nussbaum 203-206.

meant to deprive Michel of self-respect (206). The passage, at once, encourages and forecloses the reader's affective identification with Michel. While Diop does not, at this stage in Michel's testimony, appeal to the trauma aesthetic to recount this experience, the narrative still prioritizes the affective dimension of the interaction and produces an unsettled response in the reader.

As Michel's testimony continues, Michel boards the bus, where he discovers that President Habyarimana's plane has been shot down. The murder of the President is of particular significance in the narrative because this event "is widely acknowledged as the opening even in the story of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda," but also because this event's occurrence "is perhaps the only point on which there is no disagreement or ambiguity" (*Rwanda Genocide Stories* 1).<sup>8</sup> Claire Dehon, in her review of *Murambi*, also observes that such historical details effectively emphasize the Rwandan genocide's singularity compared with more abstract texts which rely, instead, on the theme of un-representability (Dehon 389-390). This moment, then, provides the reader with some historical context as Michel's testimony and the novel progress. When Michel finally arrives to his home, he finds that "les volets des voisins [sont] hermétiquement clos" (*Murambi* 17). In contrast with the disorder which has already begun to manifest itself in the streets since the plane crash, Michel's Hutu neighbors, whose son is an Interahamwe rebel, have not spoken to Michel's wife, Stephanie, all evening (15). Furthermore, as the neighbors enclose themselves in their home, they listen to "cette radio des Mille Collines qui lance depuis plusieurs mois des appels au meurtre totalement insensés" (17). Observing these actions, Michel "n'os[e] pas espérer qu'ils [les Interahamwe et les voisins] se

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<sup>8</sup> As Hitchcott notes in *Rwanda Genocide Stories*, other aspects of the genocide, including the responsible party for the President's murder, are debated in fictional and non-fictional narratives alike (1).



contenteraient d'un peu de sang" (17). While Stephanie insists that the extremists cannot enact violence under the observation of the international community, Michel challenges her assertion because "la coupe du monde de football allait bientôt débiter aux États-Unis ... [et] rien d'autre n'intéressait la planète" (16). Like earlier in Michel's testimony, Diop's writing in this passage retains a realist style, as the most traumatic experiences of the genocide have not yet entered the narrative. At this stage, the narrative mainly supplies historical contextualization to the reader for the moments leading up to the massacres. Still, the passage also contains indications as to the affective states of the characters in Michel's testimony. From the embarrassing and unsettling episode at the bus station, the reader's attention is now directed at the Serumundo family's neighbors, who turn their own gaze away from the Serumundos, away from the impending violence outside, and toward the extremist discourse on the radio. The neighbor's actions are then mirrored by the international community, whose lack of response is a turning away from the events of the 1994 genocide.

The desire to turn away or to conceal oneself is a characteristic reaction to shame, as shame, like humiliation or embarrassment, implies a scene of exposure similar to, though more severe than, Michel's exposure to the guard at the bus station. Described as a primary negative affect, shame can be defined as "an intense and painful sensation that is bound up with how the self feels about itself, a self-feeling that is felt by and on the body" (Ahmed 103). In shame, the negative or bad feeling is attributed to the self and not to an object or to others, as the self is exposed to itself. This feeling produces a double desire to turn away from the version of the self which is projected by the external event that triggers the reaction and, at the same time, to turn into oneself for concealment (104). In its most extreme form, shame constitutes a threat to the subject's very capacity to recognize itself and "involves the

intensification not only of the bodily surface, but also of the subject's relation to itself, or its sense of self as self" (104). In such extreme instances, in other words, shame is experienced as a discontinuity of the self or as the failure to inhabit a subject position at all. At this point in the novel, as noted above, Diop has not yet introduced such extreme experiences into the narrative. However, various shame scholars suggest that reactions to more ordinary instances of shame can be recognized in bodily movements which inhibit the acts of seeing and being seen, such as the hiding of the face, or in attempts to find cover within extensions of the body, such as buildings (Tomkins 352, Ahmed 104).<sup>9</sup> In this sense, as Michel's neighbors and the international community turn away from the Tutsi community and from the onset of violence during the genocide, their shameful affective state is also conveyed, because "shame takes place in the mind, but it is communicated in and by the body" (Bewes 24). Moreover, as the reader observes the shameful reactions of these onlookers of the genocide, their own role as a secondary witness to the events of the narrative is underlined. Unlike the Serumundo family's neighbors or the international community, the reader must witness the moments leading up to the genocide in full knowledge of the massacres which follow. As readers of *Murambi* continue through Michel's testimony, they partially place themselves in the position of the other, but identification with and affective responses toward Michel and other characters are intermittently encouraged and foreclosed. The reader is exposed to, first, Michel's humiliation in front of the guard, second, the shame of those who indifferently turn away from the genocide, and finally, a feeling of powerlessness as the testimony ends without closure regarding the fate of Michel or of his family. The reader as secondary witness is powerless to

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<sup>9</sup> In particular, Ahmed mentions that the word shame "comes from the Indo-European verb for 'to cover', which associates shame with other words such as 'hide', 'custody', 'hut' and 'house'" (Ahmed 104).

change the events of Michel's story and "this impotence reinforces... our failure as an international community to act in 1994" (Hitchcott 107). In this way, Michel's testimony encourages an affectively unsettled response in the reader as a more critical form of reading and witnessing in which the reader is neither wholly disinterested nor able to fully identify with the novel's characters. The testimony of Michel Serumundo, whose name suggests phonetically a truth serum for the world (Dauge-Roth 153), not only communicates the historical context of the genocide but also the affective experiences of the hours just before the start of the massacres.

The novel's subsequent testimony is juxtaposed with Michel's, as the narrator, Faustin Gasana, is a genocide organizer making final preparations for the imminent attacks. Faustin's account concentrates primarily around a conversation with his father, a former Hutu extremist rebel. On arriving to his family home, Faustin encounters his mother leaving his father's room carrying "un petit plateau [avec] des bouts de coton flottant au-dessus d'un mélange de pus, de sang et d'alcool de Dakin" (*Murambi* 19). The image of the plate and its contents disgusts the reader but also signals Faustin's father's poor health. This observation about the father's diseased body quickly engenders unease in the reader regarding the still unseen character in the next room. This unease intensifies when Faustin's mother relays that her husband "[l'] a chassée de sa chambre" (19). Faustin "baisse les yeux [car] le vieux a toujours été très dur avec elle" (19). The turning away of Faustin's gaze communicates the shame he feels about his father's treatment of his mother and the novel's continued preoccupation with shame. As Faustin enters his father's room, he is immediately affected by "un liquide jaunâtre [qui] suinte du bandage blanc [et qui] pue en peu" (20). Ignoring his initial repulsion, Faustin engages in conversation with his father, who begins to recount his own participation in anti-Tutsi violence during the 1959

Rwandan Revolution, detailing previous Tutsi massacres at Gitarama and Ntambwe (22). The father's lengthy diatribe against Rwandan Tutsis is not an example of superfluous descriptions of violence in Diop's text. Rather, Diop uses the father's accounts to provide the reader with historical context for the 1994 genocide. The father's stories not only distinguish the genocide from other instances of violence in Africa in general, but also specifically invalidate the idea, an idea the father himself endorses, of an age-old, Hutu-Tutsi conflict without beginning or end. As his father recounts these episodes of violence, Faustin "reçoi[t] en pleine figure sa mauvaise haleine [et il] recule un peu" (21). The more Faustin listens to his father speak, even as his father warns him, "Ne commencez pas avoir honte de ce qui vous attend," the more he is disgusted by his father's breath (21). By the time he enters his father's room, Faustin is consumed by thought and by "l'haleine fétide du père [,] le père qui n'en finit pas de mourir" (25). The primary role of this passage and of Faustin's testimony is to contextualize the 1994 genocide for the reader within a series of historical events over the last half-century and to expose the type of extremist discourse which ignited the massacres. As such, Diop's writing in this section of the novel retains a realist style. However, like within Michel's testimony, Diop's attention to the body as he writes trauma in this passage also provides the reader with indications about the affective states of the characters.

The sustained focus on Faustin's anxiety and disgust in the face of the puss-laden plate, bodily fluids, and his father's putrid breath exposes Faustin's own attempts to distance himself from experiences of shame and guilt. The odor here is not simply, as Liana Nissim describes it in her article on *Murambi*, an "allégorie de la haine" (Nissim 211). Instead, like the desire to turn away from the exposure of the self to the self in shame, disgust involves an attempt to distance the self from the

object of disgust. However, according to some scholars of affect, it is not, in fact, the object that *is* disgusting. So, for Faustin, it is precisely not the bodily fluids or his father's breath that are disgusting. Rather, disgust is "an inherently self-deceptive emotion, whose function, for better or worse, is above all to conceal from us, on a daily basis, facts about ourselves that are difficult to face" (Nussbaum 206). Faustin's disgust, that is, indicates an attempt to distance himself from a difficult confrontation with some aspect of himself. Most often, disgust is directed at "reminders of our mortality and embodiment as sources of contamination for the self [and] thus functions to distance us from something that we actually are" (206). Bodily fluids, for instance, though part of everyday experience, often produce disgust because they reveal a profound human anxiety about the boundaries of the body (Turner 2). In *Pouvoirs de l'horreur*, Julia Kristeva similarly demonstrates that every imagined mastery of the body depends entirely on incorporation and abjection (Grosz 192-193). This prerequisite to life produces disgust as a reaction to such a provocation of the self's imagined autonomy. Specifically, bodily waste and fluids "attest to the permeability of the body, its necessary dependence on an outside, [and] its liability to collapse into this outside (193). The final extension of this logic is death, where "ce n'est plus moi qui expulse, 'je' est expulsé" (Kristeva 11). That is to say, the cadaver is the symbol of the body which has emptied itself of the self. Proximity or exposure to such examples of contamination, embodiment, and death trigger the attempt to distance the self from the object of disgust. As in shame, there is a double movement in disgust – "disgust brings the body perilously close to an object only then to pull away from the object in the registering of the proximity as an offence" (Ahmed 85). Although the object of disgust, unlike shame, is exterior to the self, both affective experiences threaten the body's subject object boundary. Both emotions involve an

exposure followed by a turning away of the body. As Catherine Kroll states in her reading of *Murambi*, there is a strong connection “between the gross hyper-realities” in the novel “and the uncanny sense that the person’s very physical existence is displaced” (Kroll 660). On one level, then, Faustin’s disgust arises in response to his father’s deteriorating body and impending mortality. As the organized massacres loom closer, Faustin must face his own possible mortality. On another level, though, Faustin’s disgust is also an attempt to distance himself from his father and from his own shame and guilt, even as he is preparing to participate in the genocide. The father’s rotting body signals the father’s sordid past but also warns Faustin about the shameful person that he himself has become. Additionally, “whereas shame focuses on ... some aspect of the very being of the person who feels it, guilt focuses on an action (or a wish to act)” (Nussbaum 207). As Faustin attempts to dissociate his actions from his father’s actions, he is also seeking to separate himself from any feeling of guilt.

In fact, as in Faustin’s testimony, Diop’s attentiveness to the body, even in the realist style, frequently reveals similar attempts by characters to conceal their own affective states of shame and guilt through displays of disgust toward the bodies and bodily fluids of others. In Colonel Étienne Perrin’s testimony, the colonel meets with Dr. Karakezi, the father of the main protagonist Cornelius, during Operation Turquoise. On the one hand, Perrin attempts to deny France’s guilt in the Rwandan genocide by separating himself from bodily fluids, declaring that “Pas un Français n’a versé de sang rwandais” (*Murambi* 134). On the other hand, during this conversation, Perrin recalls another dialogue in a café in Paris. His interlocutor states that “C’est leur histoire et ils doivent se débrouiller avec cette gigantesque tache de sang” (133). In response, Perrin “gliss[e] un doigt le long de [s]on bras gauche” and he admits that

“nous [les Français] avons du sang jusque-là dans cette affaire” (133). Thus, Perrin’s later disgust in front Dr. Karakezi is merely an attempt to disguise the truth about his own actions and the actions of France. Through the colonel’s French Body, covered in blood, Diop establishes the guilt of the French state and confirms that “the genocide of the Tutsis is an integral part of French history” (Dauge-Roth 164). In return, Dr. Karakezi tries to mask his own shame and guilt by separating himself from the bodily fluids of others, ordering the colonel, “Regardez mes mains” (134). “Je n’ai jamais versé une goutte de sang, moi non plus,” he states (134). Neither the doctor himself nor the colonel believes Dr. Karakezi because of his prominent role as a genocide organizer at Murambi. The doctor’s disgust in the face of Perrin’s accusation and the effort to dissociate his own body from the blood of others is a self-deceptive effort to conceal his guilt. Even as Diop retains the realist style because these sections of the novel do not directly describe the genocide’s most traumatic experiences of violation and shame in detail, Diop writes trauma through the narrative’s attention to the body of these characters which uncovers their affective states. These passages additionally produce affective unsettlement in the reader, who is also faced with disgusting bodily fluids and corpses in the testimonies of Faustin, Colonel Étienne Perrin, and Dr. Karakezi. While the reader likely does not identify with these characters or their actions, the feeling of disgust when confronted by such reminders of embodiment and mortality ensures that, as a secondary witness, the reader does not meet these passages with indifference but with unease. Readers of *Murambi* are placed in proximity with not only various subject positions which include perpetrators but also objects which trigger disgust as an approximation of the closely related affective states of shame or even guilt. Diop’s writing in these passages both contextualizes the genocide

historically and focuses on genocide experiences, producing an unsettled affect in the reader as a more responsive form of reading and witnessing.

This strategy of writing trauma with attentiveness to the body and of the subsequent unsettled response which is produced in the reader continues through the testimonies and sections of the novel associated with the next character to appear in the novel, Jessica Kamanzi. Jessica is the only character to narrate multiple accounts among the eleven testimonies. Jessica is also the only character to participate in the novel both as a first-person witness and directly in the action of the novel's two sections written in the third person. In this sense, Jessica's voice links the different sections of the novel that are otherwise fragmented and disparate. In addition, Jessica's voice always precedes the two sections that chronicle the life of Cornelius. These structural elements demonstrate Jessica's centrality relative to the other characters of the novel. One reason for this accent on Jessica is her singularity in the novel as a representative of the Front Patriotique Rwandais (FPR), the opposing force during the genocide. As a character, Jessica responds to the question which "chaque jeune Rwandais doit, à un moment ou à un autre de sa vie, répondre [:] faut-il attendre les tueurs les bras croisés ou tenter de faire quelque chose pour que [le] pays redevienne normal?" (36). Her incognito participation in the FPR is integral to the novel, as her narrative not only further contextualizes the genocide historically for the reader but also underlines the instability of subject positions such as victim, survivor, witness, and that of someone who also encounters the affective states of guilt and shame. Diop writes trauma with respect to Jessica, then, through an equally complex attentiveness to her body which provides indications about her affective state at different moments in the novel.



In her first testimony, Jessica returns from Nyamata to Kigali, where she finds the city at once abandoned and animated by the movement of Interahamwe rebels that continue their butchery. Along the way, she is confronted by “des centaines de cadavres à quelques mètres d’une barrière” (38). On the side of the road, she sees rebels that “égorgent leurs victimes ou les découpent à la machette” (38). These exposed bodies announce for Jessica and for the reader, another difficult scene of exposure. Faced with such visions, she must hold herself together. Approaching a barrier, a guard demands Jessica for her papers, and “il ne [la] quitte pas des yeux” throughout the interaction (38). Jessica knows, as she is using false documents, that she must “garder [s]on sang-froid” (38). She cannot turn away from the guard despite the sense of shame that surfaces, coupled with fear, as she disguises herself as a Hutu woman. Her determination is tested further when another woman approaches her, “sa mâchoire droite et sa poitrine ... couvertes de sang” (38). Again, Jessica must conceal her affective state, because she knows that she cannot help this woman and hope to save her own life. In order to escape, Jessica “[s’] écarte très vite d’elle et di[t] *sèchement* de [la] laisser tranquille” (38). The guard commends Jessica’s reaction, commenting, “Tu es *dure*, toi aussi, ma sœur” (38). In this moment, Jessica “n’est pas seulement un témoin oculaire [; elle] a vécu les atrocités dans sa chair” (Wattara 110-111). On one level, Jessica’s desire to turn away from the guard’s gaze and from the woman at the checkpoint is about survival. On another level, though, her failure to aid the other woman produces a bad feeling, or a sense of shame about her own being and a sense of guilt about her actions. Though her motivations for these choices are legitimate, she cannot fully escape shame. Jessica too is forced to distance herself from the affective states of shame and guilt by displaying disgust toward the woman and her bodily fluids, dryly rejecting the woman and maintaining the hard boundaries

of her body that the guard observes. For the reader, this passage also produces a complex, unsettled affective response. While the reader likely partially identifies with Jessica's choice under such difficult circumstances, the reader is also, once again, exposed to difficult reminders of embodiment and death, such that it is difficult to read and witness these passages with indifference. Identification with Jessica is both encouraged and foreclosed in the narrative, leaving the reader without surety about Jessica as a character.

The reader is faced with a similar scene in the novel's second section, as Jessica accompanies Cornelius to the church at Nyamata, where a commemorative site shelters the corpses of genocide victims. This is not Jessica's first visit to the site. Among the cadavers, Cornelius spots "un corps bien conservé, presque intact" of a young woman who has been penetrated by a stake (*Murambi* 80). When Cornelius asks the guide for information about the young woman, the guide replies that "Elle s'appelait Theresa" (80). Cornelius attempts to discuss the woman with Jessica, but "celle-ci, impassible, f[ait] semblant de n'avoir rien remarqué" (80). The omniscient narrator then describes that Jessica "enten[d] encore la voix de Theresa devant cette même église" (80). The reader is reminded that Jessica, in her first testimony, hid information from her friend Theresa about the attacks occurring on churches in order to avoid revealing her own participation in the FPR (80). "L'affreux dialogue avec son amie se poursuiv[it] à quatre années de distance" (81). Once again, while the context of the genocide provides Jessica with some degree of legitimacy with respect to her actions, her avoidance of proximity with Theresa's corpse and of the conversation with Cornelius demonstrates her attempt to conceal the guilt she feels about the death of her friend. Furthermore, though the narrative does not go into detail about Theresa's experience of violation and shame, and thus retains a realist style

rather than resorting to the trauma aesthetic, this scene does make obvious the traumatic effects of embodied memory as Jessica's conversation with Theresa breaches into the present. In this instance, Diop writes trauma by focusing on the experience of Jessica as genocide survivor whose embodied memories of the massacres are not contained to the past but are ongoing. The reader confronts not only the difficult image of Theresa's corpse but also the feeling of Jessica's inability to prevent her body's recall from resurging. The scene produces an affectively unsettled coupling of empathy for Jessica and unease in proximity to death, aiming to displace the reader from the comfortable position of an uninvolved reader or witness.

Like with Jessica's testimonies, the sections of the novel that focus on the main protagonist Cornelius highlight the difficulty in maintaining defined boundaries between subject positions like victim, survivor, witness, and experiences of shame and guilt during genocide. Cornelius is the son of a Tutsi mother and a Hutu father, victim and inheritor of familial guilt, native Rwandan and historian arriving as an outsider from abroad. Diop writes trauma in these sections of the text by interweaving the dominant realist style of the novel with the trauma aesthetic, remaining attentive to the embodied experience of genocide in both styles and communicating the body's response to particularly traumatic shame through the language of transcendence and excess. Specifically, this language of excess appears in the narrative in relation to Cornelius only after an especially traumatic and shameful aspect of his past is revealed to him. Cornelius' first reactions to the genocide upon returning to Rwanda mirror the affective responses of other characters in the novel. During his visits to the commemorative sites at Ntarama and Nyamata, for instance, Cornelius sees for the first time, the bodies of victims, but "au fil des minutes, l'odeur [devient] franchement insupportable," and he is "littéralement projeté à l'extérieur par l'odeur épouvantable"

(81). Confronted by the cadavers of genocide victims, Cornelius is unable to continue his tour and turns away. At this stage in Cornelius' narrative, his affective response is more in line with that of disgust than with shame. While the proximity to these corpses and their odor brings Cornelius dangerously close to death and reminds him of the death of his mother and siblings, the negative or bad feeling is attributed to the bodies and their smell as external objects rather than to himself. Turning away may also indicate the less extreme shame that Cornelius feels at having been physically absent from Rwanda during the genocide. This response, however, changes when Jessica, shortly after this visit, reveals that Cornelius' father, Dr. Karakezi, organized the massacre at Murambi and is responsible for the death of his other family members and thousands of other Rwandan Tutsis (84). This information produces an especially traumatic confrontation with shame for Cornelius about himself, and Diop's narrative begins to shift away from the realist style toward the language of transcendence and excess.

Upon arriving at the Murambi commemorative site, Cornelius finds himself again facing the cadavers of genocide victims and this "odeur désagréable" (152). The bodies at Murambi are even more difficult to contemplate than those at Nyamata, because they are "presque tous intacts" (152). In addition, if these bodies are distinctive for Cornelius, it is also because it was his own father that organized this massacre. While Cornelius tries to continue the tour, "la salive s'amass[e] sans cesse dans sa gorge et il la raval[e] pour dissimuler son dégoût" as he attempts maintain control over his body (152). This accumulation of bodily fluids against Cornelius' bodily boundaries signals his overwhelming effort to remain among the cadavers and to hide that effort from those around him. Unlike at Nyamata and Ntarama, Cornelius is not only exposed to the corpses of genocide victims but also to himself, because "en

ce lieu converg[e], dans la douleur et dans la honte, sa propre vie et l'histoire tragique de son pays" (154). Cornelius must accept his past, both as a victim and as the son of a perpetrator. He must reconcile this inherited guilt and shame in order to escape the self-destructive effects of shame and in order to rejoin two opposing images of himself. Once he returns from the memorial site, Cornelius begins to speak with his uncle, Siméon, because he is still haunted by the intact cadavers, unable to prevent the image from breaching into his mind (161). At one moment in the conversation, Siméon recounts that, at Murambi, "au-dessus de chaque charnier, nous avons vu se former de petites mares de sang [et] les chiens venaient s'y désaltérer" (161). This image overwhelms Cornelius, and as he attempts to grasp this experience of genocide the narrative shifts further into the language of excess. Cornelius reacts in violent shakes as he imagines "une meute de chiens s'abreuvant... du sang, [et] le reflet de la lune dans le lac de sang" (161). He is obsessed by the image, lost in the world of symbols, and the faces of his deceased siblings and mother pass through his mind (163). Though Siméon insists that the image is not a symbol, it is through this language of excess and metaphor that Cornelius is able to begin to come to terms with this traumatic experience and that Diop's text is able to communicate Cornelius' traumatic experience of shame to the reader. While the dominant realist style of the novel contextualizes the genocide historically, the language of transcendence is used to describe Cornelius' confrontation with the structural trauma of shame from which there is nowhere to turn. That is, the text resorts to this language in order to communicate Cornelius' struggle to recognize himself as himself in the face of the discontinuity between his understanding of himself before and after learning that his father was a genocide organizer while he was absent from Rwanda. The destruction of the self, or the inability to recognize the self, which is at the root of the experience of

shame makes the leap to narrative particularly difficult as, “the question is not only ‘what is there to say?’ but ‘who is there to talk?’” (Culbertson 191). By appealing to the language of transcendence, Cornelius is able to, at least partially, reconnect these two images of himself. The image also produces affective unsettlement in the reader who is faced with this overwhelming quantity of blood, evoking the reader’s disgust in approximation of Cornelius’ shame. Just as Cornelius is disturbed by the image of the pools of blood, this image lingers in the mind of the reader as the novel progresses. As a secondary witness, the reader is directed to imagine Cornelius’ experience at least partially.

If Diop’s text begins to shift away from realism and toward a language of transcendence in order to communicate Cornelius’ difficult confrontation with his father’s actions, then this style achieves its most clear appearance in relation to the character of Gérard Nayinzira. Gerard appears for the first time early in the novel during Cornelius’ first visit to the Café des Grands Lacs in Kigali. Just when Cornelius observes that Kigali “refus[e] d’exhiber ses blessures,” the passage of soldiers in front of the café triggers an unexpected reaction in one of the bar’s customers (*Murambi* 55). This customer is Gérard, who shouts suddenly, “Mes amis, hurlez votre douleur ! Oh ! J’aimerais tant entendre votre douleur ! Moi, j’ai bu du sang” (57). The explosive quality and chronologic arrival of this shout indicates that the outburst is related to an embodied traumatic memory from the genocide that Gérard is unable to withhold. Shouting suggests an affective force which pushes Gérard outside of himself. At this point in the novel, it is unclear whether Gérard is speaking metaphorically or literally, but the contents of his declaration imply an experience of severe violation and shame. The call to the other customers to share their own stories denotes Gérard’s profound need to work through his own past.

Although Cornelius is disgusted by this incident, his friend Roger is unphased. Roger clarifies for Cornelius that “on essaie d’oublier, mais parfois ça remonte avec force” (59). This passage foreshadows what is later confirmed in the novel, that Gérard survived an experience of particularly traumatic violation and shame during the genocide. In fact, Gérard’s lack of control over his body becomes even more pertinent when Gérard discloses that it was not the soldiers but Cornelius’ presence which prompted the outburst. Gérard specifies, “Tu t’es mis à parler... [et] tout ton corps s’en allait de toi, alors que nous, depuis le temps, on a appris à le rentrer, notre corps” (160). This statement especially suggests that Gérard has survived a particularly traumatic experience of shame in which his very ability to recognize himself as himself and to inhabit any subject position at all was threatened. As this conversation with Cornelius ends, Gérard repeats unconsciously, “J’ai bu du sang,” turning his head and crying softly (160). Diop’s text communicates this experience of violation during genocide through the language of transcendence and metaphor. Though the realist style is dominant in the novel, Gérard describes this desubjectivising experience of shame through the need to learn how to reenter his own body both physically and psychologically. Gérard sees in Cornelius the son of Dr. Karakezi who organized the massacre at Murambi, but he also sees an individual with an intact sense of self, capable of recognizing himself as himself. The repetition of this phrase also reiterates that this experience of traumatic shame is contained within the past but is experienced as ongoing in the present. His shameful, traumatic memories reappear, and Gérard relives these moments against his will.

Gérard’s testimony reaches its apogee when he finally decides to intentionally recount his story to Cornelius in its entirety. During the massacre at Murambi, Gérard was forced to hide beneath the corpses of other victims:

J'étais obligé d'avaler et de recracher leur sang, il m'entraînait dans tout le corps... J'ai mille fois été tenté de me laisser mourir. Quelque chose m'appelait, quelque chose d'une force terrible : c'était le néant. Une sorte de vertige. J'avais l'impression qu'il y aurait comme du bonheur à basculer dans le vide. Mais j'ai continué à barboter dans leur sang... de l'urine et des excréments répandus par terre. (185)

This passage about one of the most traumatic experiences of violation and shame is constructed almost entirely from images bodily fluids and the language of transcendence and excess. Gérard is not simply covered in bodily fluids; he is saturated and incapable of maintaining any semblance of a boundary between himself and the world. He nearly becomes one of the corpses that surround him. This is not, however, a purely material experience. In the passage, Gérard describes himself as being outside of his own body, and he is tempted to let himself disappear. In relation to other genocide survivors in the novel, Gérard comes in the closest proximity to death. What this passage illustrates is how the desubjectivising experience of traumatic violation and shame sometimes involves a complete overpowering of the body's repertoire of safeguards such that this violation is experienced as both the body and the self, emptied of the self. Furthermore, even if Gérard himself is tempted by the "bonheur à basculer dans le vide," Gérard is not undergoing a contemplative experience of beauty (185). The rupture of meaning which appears within this loss of distinction between subject and object is, rather, abject and removed from any form of pleasure. No elation can follow this approaching of death. As such experiences are not easily articulated in narrative form, both Gérard and Diop's appeal to a language of metaphor or transcendence. Gérard confirms, "le sang, les poètes ont fini par le rendre presque beau... Tu parles. Cela ne dit rien" (185). The effects of contact with



traumatic violation and shame threaten Gérard's bodily integrity even once he escapes the massacre. He admits, "je fais bouger mes mains et mes pieds parce que cela me paraît bizarre qu'ils sont encore à leur place et tout mon corps me semble une hallucination" (187). Gérard is irrevocably marked by this incapacity, at least at times, to recognize himself and to live within his own body. On another level, as the reader encounters Gérard's testimony, the reader experiences an unsettled affective response upon witnessing the possible consequences of traumatic experiences of shame and through exposure to the disgusting bodily fluids in Gérard's story. "As adults, mercifully in control of our bodily functions and boundaries, we forget the power of disgust, and of shame," but Gérard's testimony stridently reminds the reader of "the seemingly real possibility of simply, leaking out of [oneself]" (Culbertson 188). Gérard's narrative also demands that the reader, through Cornelius, takes this information seriously, because he implores, "Est-ce que *tu* me crois, Cornelius ?" (*Murambi* 186). Gérard "invokes the dialectics of witnessing and testimony... [to] address the reader... [who] should not leave the book with a 'mind at peace'" (Jean-Charles 166). As Diop writes trauma in Gérard's testimony, the reader is urged against indifference. Without appropriating Gérard's experience as their own, readers are invited to remain responsive in the face of the traumatic experiences of others as a more critical form of reading and witnessing.

Siméon contends in the novel that "il y a un moment où il faut arrêter de verser le sang dans un pays" (*Murambi* 174). While this is surely the case, even Diop, who provides in *Murambi* "un des rares endroits" where "les victimes, les bourreaux, et les troupes étrangères de l'opération Turquoise" as well as the reader find themselves together, does not provide simple answers (187). Writing trauma by interweaving the dominant realist style of the novel with the trauma aesthetic, Diop remains attentive to

the body's recall of genocide experiences in both styles and communicates embodied experiences of particularly traumatic violation and shame through a language of transcendence. However, Diop's text also suggest that these self-destructive effects of shame on the body necessitate a path forward, a working through, and even responsiveness on the part of readers and witnesses. In the novel, Siméon insists that "tout le sang versé" in genocide and this loss of self "doit obliger chacun à se ressaisir" (182). The path forward after shame does not involve a future without the capacity to recognize oneself nor a return to previous boundaries but the establishing of new boundaries and also a collective response toward that effort. A relatively isolated moment in the novel characterizes this response more clearly.

Toward the end of the genocide, a strikingly beautiful but unknown woman approaches Jessica, calling out to her by name without, however, giving her own name (97). Initially, Jessica is afraid, as she believes that the woman wants to reveal her as an FPR spy, but Jessica eventually listens to the woman. The woman has come to see Jessica because she knows that she is "trop belle pour survivre," and Jessica also recognizes that the soldiers "allaient la violer mille fois avant de la tuer" (98). Still refusing to share her name, the woman relays how a priest raped her in exchange for not giving her away to the rebels. The woman justifies herself, "Tu sais ce que cela veut dire, Jessica ?" (99). "Oui, j'avais vu cela" Jessica reflects, "Vingt ou trente types... et parmi les violeurs il y a presque toujours, exprès, des malades du sida" (100). The woman adds, "Quand ils ont fini, ils te versent de l'acide dans le vagin ou t'enfonce dedans des tessons de bouteille ou des morceaux de fer" (100). The woman's comment "glac[e] le sang [de Jessica]" and "cela [la fait] honte d'entendre de chose pareilles" (100). On the one hand, this exchange reiterates Diop's indication of the affective states of characters through an attentiveness to the body. The

interaction evokes, at once, the shame of rape victims as well as the shame of the listener or reader (Jean-Charles 163). On the other hand, the woman's final response to shame is instructive. First, she refuses to place herself within another scene of exposure, as she has not shared her name with Jessica. She controls the narration of her own story. Next, the woman leaves Jessica's home remarking that she "ser[a] le soleil [et que] de là-haut" she will look at the Rwandans of tomorrow, demanding, "N'avez-vous pas honte, enfants du Rwanda ?," warning, "Soyez sages et unis" (*Murambi* 102). Like in Gérard's testimony, the reader is tempted to find a certain beauty in the words of the young woman. This temptation is an error. There can be no sense of elation that follows the approach to death when the woman's decision is so constrained by the realities of the genocide. However, what this passage demonstrates is not the sacralization of a negative transcendence,<sup>10</sup> a celebration of excess, but the recovery of boundaries after shame through a strategy of non-mastery. Unlike in disgust, which involves self-deception and the attempt to conceal facts about ourselves which are difficult to face, or the turning away from the self in shame, the woman resolutely moves forward, working through the discontinuity between her past and her future, even if this future is difficult. Cornelius arrives at a similar conclusion toward the end of the novel when he has begun working through his own experience of traumatic shame. In the face of this shame, Cornelius does not renounce the impulse toward attempting to communicate the experiences of Rwandan genocide survivors, despite his father's actions and the difficulty of articulating such experiences in narrative. Rather, like Diop, Cornelius chooses to employ "des mots-machettes, des mots-gourdins, des mots hérissés de clous, des mots nues et... des

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<sup>10</sup> See LaCapra 190.

mots couverts de sang et de merde” (190). This continued urge toward working through and toward, at least partially, attempting to respond to and empathize with the experiences of others is, perhaps, *Murambi, le livre des ossements*’ most urgent appeal.

## **CHAPTER 2 : *Voyages 'sous la peau'*: Writing Trauma and Affective Travel in *L'Ombre d'Imana***

Like many of the participants of the 'Rwanda: Écrire par devoir de mémoire' project, Véronique Tadjó cites the need to redress the initial global and African indifference toward the 1994 Rwandan genocide as the main impetus for joining the project in 1998 and for writing *L'Ombre d'Imana: voyages jusqu'au bout du Rwanda*. In other words, "comblér le vide pesant et embarrassant laissé par les intellectuels africains devant cette tragédie qui se déroulait sur leur propre continent devenait une urgence," for Tadjó and the other participants (Touré-Cissé 67). Moreover, Tadjó describes this urgency as not only collective, but also personal, explaining on the first page of her text, "Je ne pouvais plus garder le Rwanda enfoui en moi. Il fallait crever l'abcès, dénuder la plaie et la panser" (*L'Ombre* 11). Tadjó specifies, however, that rectifying this sense of shame regarding her own inaction, the lack of African voices on the subject of the genocide, and general global indifference, required an alternative approach to recounting the genocide. Specifically, Tadjó argues that if, on the one hand, the genocide had not received enough attention from African artists and intellectuals, then, on the other hand, large-scale Western media attention around these events also produced a need "to find a medium that would break this information overload, breaking indifference and making people rethink what had happened there" ("Interview with Boubacar 429). Repeated exposure to the horrific images of the genocide along with the magnitude of the killings had rendered victims and survivors of the massacres as well as their individual experiences of those events, invisible ("Lifting the Cloak" 4). Thus, in writing her travel narrative, Tadjó aims not only to contextualize the genocide as an event, but also to detail the experiences of genocide victims and survivors, using "the medium of literature to pay homage to the

dead while attempting to ‘lift the cloak’ of their invisibility” (4). According to one scholar, Tadjó achieves these objectives by employing three distinct styles of testimony in her text: direct testimony, indirection testimony, and testimony *in absentia* (Mizouni 69). Following this observation, however, I argue in this chapter that Véronique Tadjó additionally *writes trauma* through the hybridized employment of both a dominant realist style and the trauma aesthetic, remaining attentive to survivors’ embodied experiences of genocide in both styles. Furthermore, I also assert that this strategy in Tadjó’s text encourages *affective travel*<sup>11</sup> in the reader, not only the registering of psychic and physical shame and other related affective responses in the reader, but also a potentially more critical form of reading and witnessing.

Though my own argument about how Tadjó details the traumatic experiences of genocide and fosters affective travel in *L’Ombre*’s readers relies more heavily on close readings of specific passages, the text’s formal attributes also amplify and contribute to each of these objectives. In her book *Conflict Bodies*, Régine Michelle Jean-Charles emphasizes the significance of Tadjó’s text’s status as a travel narrative, especially since *L’Ombre*’s title evokes that of another prominent but controversial francophone travel narrative, Louis-Ferdinand Celine’s *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (Jean-Charles 168). Tadjó’s choice to write a travel narrative and to allude to Celine’s text highlights, on the one hand, her acknowledgment of her position as an outsider to the Rwandan genocide, and, on the other hand, a determined effort to create a different kind of travel narrative (68). If “the first goal of the travel narrative [is to] educate, provide information, and transmit knowledge to the reader,” then Tadjó

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<sup>11</sup> I employ the term ‘affective travel’ in this chapter in relation to what I have been calling ‘affective unsettlement’ elsewhere in this thesis with a nod to Tadjó’s text in the form of a travel narrative. The term is, however, mostly unrelated to the phrase found in Pramod Nayar’s article, “Affective Travel: Terror and the Human Rights Narrative in Véronique Tadjó’s *The Shadow of Imana*,” though it bears some resemblance to a term she borrows, ‘affective literacy’ (46).

embarks on this process from a more critical stance (*Narrating Itsembabwoko* 120). The plural ‘*voyages*’ in her own title refers both to her multiple trips to Rwanda and the sustained investment required of an author writing about genocide due to the difficulty of, and potential danger in, describing the experiences of others. In addition, “as a black African woman traveling in Africa, she represents a category that tends to be ignored in discussion on writing about travel” (“Travels in Inhumanity” 154). Tadjó’s critical stance is further reflected in the overall, complex structure of the text. Tadjó’s travel narrative contains six chapters. Each of these chapters is divided into shorter sections within the chapter, and many of those shorter sections additionally contain sub-sections set apart in italics (Griffin 114). While some literary critics argue that this multitude of sections obfuscates the various narrators within the text, one scholar, Sophie Mizouni, argues that these various sections can be divided into three categories of testimony: direct testimony, indirect testimony, and testimony *in absentia* (Mizouni 69). The first category encompasses those autobiographical sections of the text relating to Tadjó’s observations as a witness to the repercussions of the genocide, four years after its occurrence (70). Indirect testimony refers to those sections of the narrative in which Tadjó acts as a secondary witness to survivors who narrate their own embodied memories of the genocide within Tadjó’s text (72). Lastly, testimony *in absentia* specifically pertains to those fictional portions of the travel narrative which recount the experiences of the dead, the victims of Rwanda’s genocide (75). These three forms of testimony provide the organizing structure for this chapter, which examines how Tadjó writes trauma using both realism and the trauma aesthetic with attention to the embodied experience of genocide in both styles in order to detail genocide victims and survivors’ experiences of the events of 1994 in each of these three forms of testimony present in the text. The chapter also highlights

how, coupled with the manner in which Tadjó writes trauma, “faced with such a range of narratives, the reader in turns becomes a surrogate tourist of the genocide,” encouraging affective travel as a more critical stance toward reading and witnessing (“Travels in Inhumanity” 160).

The first chapter of Tadjó’s travel narrative, “LE PREMIER VOYAGE”, the first section of the text corresponding to direct testimony, begins with a description of Tadjó’s physical journey by plane to Rwanda. Once again, Tadjó reminds the reader of the purpose of this voyage, and perhaps the reason for the reader’s presence, insisting, “Je partais avec une hypothèse: ce qui s’était passé nous concernait tous. Ce n’était pas uniquement l’affaire d’un peuple perdu dans le cœur noir de l’Afrique” (*L’Ombre* 11). Thus, from the travel narrative’s beginning, the reader is asked to inhabit a critical stance which, despite allowing for an understanding that both Tadjó and the reader will enter this journey as outsiders, demands responsiveness toward the experiences of others. Because Tadjó’s direct testimony does not involve her own experiences of violation or extreme negative affects like shame, these sections of the narrative mostly retain the dominant realist style. Still, the narrative shifts toward the trauma aesthetic and the language of transcendence or metaphor in order to communicate Tadjó’s affective state periodically to the reader as she encounters difficult emotions in her travels. Upon arriving in Kigali, Tadjó notes, for example, that “de loin, la ville semble avoir tout oublié, tout digéré, tout ingurgité” (17). This comment emphasizes the discontinuity that Tadjó experiences between her knowledge of the traumatic events which have taken place in Kigali and the image of the city which she witnesses on arriving. While the city, like a well-maintained body and mind, appears to be functioning properly and in control of itself, the evocation of the processes of digestion and ingurgitation also communicate a sense of precarity and



unease to the reader. On one level, the reader is to understand that this properly digesting city conceals past transgressions and the traumatic experiences of violation and shame of its inhabitants. On another level, the reader affectively travels with Tadjó through Kigali but cautiously, always with the knowledge that such processes may break down at any moment. As Tadjó begins to recount not only the events of the genocide but also the experience of those events, it becomes clear that she will need to travel “sous la peau des gens [pour] voir ce qu’il y a à l’intérieur” (19).

Leaving Kigali, Tadjó describes her first sight of the genocide memorial at Nyamata, and the narrative returns sharply not only to a realist style but also to a journalistic or even forensic style description of her observations, though still with great attention to the body: “ÉGLISE DE NYAMATA / Site de genocide. / + ou – 35000 morts. / La femme ligotée. / Mukandori. Vingt-cinq ans. Exhumée en 1997. / Lieu d’habitation : Nyamata centre. / Mariée. / Enfant ?” (19). In this way, just as the travel narrative encourages reader empathy in certain passages, such identification is also foreclosed in other instances. “Readers are now invited to visualize the body for themselves and to imagine the horror of the death it signifies,” but no immediate access is provided to Mukandori’s, the bound woman’s, experience of that violation (“Travels in Inhumanity”). Despite this distancing through realist language, however, the reader’s proximity to Mukandori’s corpse produces a profound anxiety about the reader’s own mortality which unsettles the reader. The affective state of disgust, though not an immediate relative of shame, bears some relationship to shame because both experiences involve a double movement in which the self is placed dangerously close to a negative or bad object only to recoil because that proximity is felt as an invasion (Ahmed 85-86). Whereas disgust is directed at an object, shame is generally directed at one’s very being, but both affective experiences involve a threat to the

body's subject object boundary. Thus, the threat to the reader's own subject object boundary which is posed by the image of Mukandori's corpse fills the reader with disgust in some extremely partial approximation of the bound woman's traumatic experience of violation. Only once Tadjó has exposed the reader to this sight does her direct testimony provide a short, deferred glimpse at Mukandori's humanity through the question mark which concludes the report, "Enfant?," forcing the reader to consider the fact that this corpse was once a living person with relationships and associations to other living people (*L'Ombre* 20). Even then, the text follows this lone marker of Mukandori's humanity with an intensely minimalist though graphic account of her rape and subsequent death, notably in the past tense: "On lui a ligoté les poignets, on les a attachées à ses chevilles... Elle a été violée. Un pic fut enfoncé dans son vagin. Elle est morte d'un coup de machette à la nuque. On peut voir l'entaille que l'impact a laissé" (20). The text provides no access to Mukandori's thoughts or experience of the event, but the absence of "the knowing perspective of the victim" also evokes "the many ways in which the body can reflect trauma even when the victim resists or suppresses awareness" (Jean-Charles 170). In other words, the passage highlights that the experience of genocide is always a highly embodied one. Tadjó's attentiveness to the body in this passage, even as the narrative clings to realism, is an attempt to write trauma such that the horror of genocide is still imparted on the reader. At the same time, though Tadjó relays the facts of Mukandori's rape she refuses to reenact the woman's experience in the present tense, both in recognition of the fact that this story is not hers to tell and to avoid rendering the woman's experience as a spectacle for the reader. The text's nearly clinical use of realism in the passage aims at separating the reader from the event, but "the attempt to create distance is undercut by the reality [that] no technique can distance the terror of

genocide” (170). Finally, in emphasizing not only Mukandori’s death, but also her rape, Tadjó’s narrative contextualizes the violence of genocide on a spectrum which already includes sexual and gendered violence. If the reader of Tadjó’s direct testimony in *L’Ombre* is tasked with affective travel, this travel is of the unsettling variety, dislodging the reader witness from any position of comfort along the way. In other words, “this is not a text that one can read passively... the reader is confronted with an obligation to respond to the text and the events described therein” (Griffin 120).

Following Tadjó’s description of la femme ligotée, her direct testimony relates her observations during the remainder of her tour at Nyamata and at Ntarama. In line with the principal purpose of a travel narrative, the text also attempts to educate the reader, furnishing various historical details about the genocide, including the fact that many of the weapons used by perpetrators during the massacres arrived from France and China, and that the perpetrators of the genocide consistently deceived Rwanda’s Tutsi population by directing them to seek shelter in churches (*L’Ombre* 20-21). Though these details may initially seem relatively insignificant, these facts contribute to the narrative by communicating the singularity of the 1994 genocide while also amplifying the reader’s sense of traveling with Tadjó through the various sites. As Tadjó depicts these scenes in which “les os des squelettes-carcasses se désintègrent sous nos yeux,” the reader is also reminded of their position in this section of the text as a reader witness not of the genocide but of the repercussions of those events (21). Tadjó “ne témoigne pas des massacres, mais de ce qui reste” (Mizouni 70). Similar to at the start of Tadjó’s direct testimony, however, the closing passages of the section regarding her first trip to Rwanda begin to shift away from the realist style and into the language of transcendence and metaphor, providing indications as to Tadjó’s

affective experience as a witness of post-genocide Rwanda. Though Tadjó does not suffer from experiences of violation or extreme instances of shame during her travels, the narrative clearly communicates her embodied memory of that which she observes. Her exposure to the piled skeletons and mummified corpses of the memorial sites leaves a lingering “puanteur [qui] infecte les narines et s’installe dans les poumons, contamine les chairs, [et] infiltre le cerveau” (*L’Ombre* 21). The experience is both psychological and physical. Moreover, these memories of her travels in Rwanda are not contained to the past but are felt in the present as an enduring embodied affective experience. Equally, Tadjó concludes this section of the narrative by cautioning the reader, “Le Rwanda est en moi, en toi, en nous. Le Rwanda est sous notre peau, dans notre sang, dans nos tripes” (48). These claims are not an attempt to describe the type of out of body experience of genocide victims and survivors which might correspond to the traumatic effects of violation and shame in which the boundary between the self and the world is so thoroughly blurred that the self feels itself to be emptying outward. Rather, these two passages seem to assert that the horror of the genocide is so overwhelming that, even when witnessing from a distance, one cannot remain unmoved, untouched, and wholly the same as before. Tadjó’s direct testimony requires the reader to affectively travel by participating in a “witnessing of a very material kind,” which may even entail this sort of risk as a more critical form of reading and witnessing (Nayar 44).

Tadjó’s direct testimony continues in the final chapter of her travel narrative entitled, “LE DEUXIÈME VOYAGE,” which takes place an additional two years later in 2000. Like the early pages of the chapter describing her first trip, this chapter begins with a flight. The reader’s sense of joining Tadjó on this trip is amplified as she depicts the familiar situation of striking up a conversation with the stranger in the

next seat. Though this section is still primarily composed of her observations during this second trip to Rwanda, the first-person narrating “Je” appears much less frequently than during the account of her first voyage. Instead, a series of short sections within the chapter, mostly narrated in the third person and in the present tense, continue to provide the reader with information about post-genocide Rwanda. According to scholars such as Sophia Mizouni, this variance between Tadjó’s narration of the first and second voyages corresponds to a shift in her attention from her own reactions during the first trip to human nature more generally during the second (71). In particular, this second voyage devotes much more attention to the stories and experiences of perpetrators than does any other section of Tadjó’s travel narrative. The reader accompanies Tadjó through Rwanda’s large men’s and women’s prisons and to observe several genocide perpetrator justice processes. Throughout these sections, though the narrative occasionally furnishes reminders of the perpetrators’ humanity, the text retains a realist style which provides the reader with enough distance to avoid exceedingly blurring the lines between survivors and perpetrators. Even so, the narrative’s attention to the bodies of the perpetrators she meets during this second voyage communicates information about the affective states of those perpetrators, as is demonstrated in one section entitled, “Le Pasteur.”

In order to flee the genocide, two parents entrusted the safety of their four children to a local pastor. Instead of protecting the children, however, the pastor is accused of assisting extremist Hutu perpetrators and even participating in the killing of one of the children. By including this story in her travel narrative, Tadjó continues the objective of writing the trauma of the genocide, providing historical context, because many pastors and religious leaders were accused of participating in the massacres during the events of 1994. As the narrative continues, the pastor pleads

guilty. He recounts killing one of the children and that “lorsqu’il a vu le sang gicler, il s’est enfui” (*L’Ombre* 107). Though he protected his own life, the destructive forces of guilt and shame become clearer when the trial reaches sentencing. Upon being asked what he thinks his punishment should be, the pastor replies simply, “Que je disparaisse” (108). This reply does not contain the graphic descriptions of the affective experience of shame as the pouring outside of oneself that are seen in other sections of the novel. However, shame scholars such as Vincent de Gaulejac argue that because “la honte surgit dans ce moment où le sujet est renvoyé à lui-même comme être ridicule, inutile, mauvais ou abject,” the self’s bad feeling of itself causes a desire to conceal oneself from oneself (de Gaulejac 161). As the body twists and turns in an attempt to hide, this embodied experience of shame may even persist so far as “[l’] envie de disparaître” (163). The pastor’s desired punishment, then, reveals his profound sense of shame. The reader must also confront the pastor’s actions, the splattering blood within the passage, and this pastor’s desire to disappear, because, as Tadjo’s text asserts, to witness the effects of genocide is to listen not only to victims and survivors of the massacres, but also to sit in discomfort with the human actors who perpetrated these crimes. As the reader affectively travels through the narrative, remaining indifferent is not an option.

Outside of those sections of the text narrated autobiographically by Tadjo, or at least by a narrator who very closely resembles Tadjo, various sections of the travel narrative shift into another, indirect style of testimony, compiled by Tadjo from the memories of genocide victims and survivors (Mizouni 72). Throughout these indirect testimonies, Tadjo writes trauma by employing both a realist style and the trauma aesthetic at different points in order to detail not only the events of the genocide but also the affective experience of those events. One example of this strategy occurs

within the chapter “CEUX QUI N’ÉTAIENT PAS LÀ,” through the section entitled, “Karl.” Karl’s indirect testimony begins by revealing that he had returned to Europe for a short visit when the genocide began in April of 1994. As extremist rebels launched the massacres in Rwanda, Karl had no news from his partner Annonciata or of their children. Instead, his only knowledge came from Western news stations, through which he “voyait les images diffusées par la télévision: des cadavres partout,” fearing that during one of these reports “il allait reconnaître ses enfants, leur mère, parmi... les corps inertes, tombés ici et là” (*L’Ombre* 82). Through Tadjó’s consistent use of deferred contextualization, the reader is forced to imagine the fear and guilt that Karl experiences as he witnesses these images of corpses on the television screen because the reader, like Karl, has no information about the whereabouts of Annonciata or the couple’s children (Daugue-Roth 123). These graphic television reports additionally represent the sort of regular display of violent spectacle which Tadjó argues had produced indifference rather than empathy for most spectators abroad with no connection to Rwanda. Karl is described as living through this period of uncertainty “comme un zombie... [et] rien ne parvenait à le libérer de cet écrasant sentiment de culpabilité pour n’avoir pu protéger sa famille” (*L’Ombre* 83). If, on the one hand, the narrative directly states that Karl experiences deep guilt about his inability to aid his family, certain details within the passage also aid the reader in understanding Karl’s experience further. In guilt, it is primarily the status of one’s actions which are under question (Ahmed 114). In other words, guilt arises when one feels that one has *done* something wrong. Certainly, Karl likely feels a sense of guilt at having left Rwanda at the wrong moment. Furthermore, as he reflects in the narrative, Karl also feels guilt for having not married Annonciata, which may have enabled him to bring Annonciata and the children to Europe (*L’Ombre* 82). The

passage clarifies that this guilt is felt as an inescapable weight. On another level, though, the passage reveals that Karl is experiencing shame in that, living as a zombie of his former self, this experience transforms Karl into a version of himself that he barely recognizes.

Finally, news of Karl's family arrives, and he returns to Rwanda to reunite with them. As the reader follows Karl's indirect testimony, the reader affectively travels to Rwanda in the days immediately following the massacres. Though Karl finds his family, "le pays était en ruine, l'horreur encore palpable [et] une odeur de pourriture flottait dans Kigali" (84). Additionally, it is at this point in the narrative that the focus begins to shift from Karl to his wife Annonciata and her experience as a direct survivor of traumatic violation and shame during the genocide. Tadjó's texts shifts into the trauma aesthetic, relating Annonciata's experience through a language of negative transcendence in which she experiences herself as being outside herself, in order to communicate some level of Annonciata's affective state following the massacres to the reader. Specifically, even after reuniting with Karl, the narrative denotes that she "n'était plus que l'ombre d'elle-même" (84). When Karl approaches his wife and tries to comfort her, "il la sentait se raider, cherchant à fuir tout contact... Elle s'était retirée du monde" (85). Months later, a doctor's visit confirms that she has contracted AIDS, and Annonciata discloses to Karl that "miliciens l'avaient violée à plusieurs reprises sur le bord de la route. Elle avait marchandé la vie de ses enfants" (85). Once again, Tadjó contextualizes the violence of genocide with gendered and sexual violence. Furthermore, Annonciata's delayed disclosure of her experience of rape connects the intense shame of the experience of genocide to the shame of survivors of sexual assault. Annonciata's name, in referencing Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she would conceive, now perversely announces a



transcendent experience of another kind – that of the out of body experience of violation and Annonciata’s contraction of the HIV virus. The passage describes Annonciata as, at once, a shadow of herself, a being without physical substance or easily discerned boundaries from the world, and unable to stand the touch of others, as if she holds tightly to the boundaries of her body in fear that she will be projected outside of those boundaries once again. These indications convey the effects of Annonciata’s traumatic experience of violation and shame which has rendered even her capacity to recognize herself difficult. Annonciata’s shame is not felt as a distant memory but as an embodied, threatening experience that continues into the present. As the reader is confronted with this limit event, by writing trauma through the hybridized employment of both realism and the trauma aesthetic with attention to the embodied experience of violation and shame in genocide, Tadjo’s travel narrative “prétendre combler l’abime qui sépare victime et observateur” (Perraudin 148). Like elsewhere at other instances in the narrative, the reader experiences unsettlement and is encouraged to affectively travel to Rwanda with Tadjo so that Karl and now Annonciata, like other survivors of the genocide, might be heard.

*L’Ombre d’Imana*’s indirect testimony continues in another instance in the section entitled, “LA JEUNE ZAIROISE QUI RESSEMBLAIT À UNE TUTSIE.” While the majority of this section of the travel narrative provides a realist depiction of the young woman’s experience of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, certain moments in her indirect testimony also shift toward the trauma aesthetic, denoting her experiences of traumatic violation and shame. As the young Zairian woman begins her account, the words come spilling out, and “en fait, elle est perdue dans une autre univers tandis qu’elle revit les terribles événements” (*L’Ombre* 99). Thus, even as the narrative commences, the reader is to understand that the retelling of such events is no ordinary

task. Even without yet knowing the content of the young woman's testimony, this beginning to her narrative underscores the ongoing effects of trauma which are not restricted to the past. On the night of the start of the genocide, the young woman, whose name is never revealed, finds herself without her husband. She has only the company of her houseboy and her infant child. As extremist militants occupy the neighborhood and begin their killing spree, the young woman's houseboy warns her that her appearance resembles too closely that of the stereotypical Tutsi woman (100). She is, thus, forced to flee her home with her baby in search of somewhere to hide, weaving through the corpses of her neighbors along the way. Though she finds brief refuge within the home of a neighboring Hutu woman, Interahamwe forces eventually raid the home, discovering the young woman and her baby beneath a bed. The young woman then relates that one man placed his pistol against her head, and she confirms, "ils ont tué mon enfant devant moi et puis ils l'ont jeté dehors dans la cour, je suis tombée" (101). The young woman's memory ends there, only to start up again hours later, "c'était la nuit, j'avais mal dans le sexe et ma robe était déchirée, j'ai pleuré" (101). Through this young woman's indirect testimony, the text not only conveys the traumatic murder of the woman's child, but also resumes the association between the trauma of genocide and the trauma of sexual violence. In doing so, the text communicates one woman's experience, but especially because this woman is never provided a name, the text also contextualizes the Rwandan genocide historically by demonstrating that sexual violence was systematically exercised against the victims of the massacres. Additionally, the text emphasizes the young woman's complete loss of consciousness during violation. Rather than obtaining an account of the Zairian woman's rape from her own knowing perspective, the reader must reconstruct the event through the evidence supplied by the woman's body. Both the woman's

physical pains and her lack of memory of the event convey a great deal. While a cursory review of the account might lead the reader to believe that the young woman's unconscious state is caused by some blunt physical force, the narrative tells otherwise. It is, initially, the horrific sight of the murder of her child which causes the woman to lose consciousness. Compounding that vision is her rape at the hands of the rebels. This passage reminds the reader that after traumatic experiences of violation and shame, "such memories – of abject fear, pain, anguish – are left apart from the story of the self because if included in it they would destroy it, being so counter to the self's conception of itself as a whole as to be inimical and threatening to it" (Culbertson 174). In this sense, the text underlines an important feature of traumatic memory. For many, such memories are so harmful to the self that they are locked away from the self. The body refuses these memories because the presence of those memories is sufficiently damaging as to potentially thwart any attempt to occupy a subject position at all. These memories of traumatic violation and shame are, however, memories; they are not forgotten or events that never occurred. In order to gain some access to the young woman's affective experience of that day's events, "the reader is also thus compelled to respond to the text as... an act of bearing witness," to her reality through the trauma aesthetic and through attention to the embodied experience of genocide (Griffin 121).

Even as the Zairian woman relates this seemingly unrelatable experience, she describes the events which follow. Having survived this violent encounter, the young woman is discovered by a group of soldiers from the Front Patriotique Rwandais (FPR) and joins a caravan of refugees. "Sur la route il y avait des cadavres partout," and the young woman's will to live is so absent that she searches for a means to kill herself within the destruction that lines the road (*L'Ombre* 103). An FPR soldier

prevents the woman from committing suicide, but that night, lying along the side of the road surrounded by corpses, one of the deceased begins to speak to her. The corpse relays to the young woman its final wishes regarding its previous property and which family members should receive which items. The young woman reacts in disbelief, “Tu n’as même pas de bras ou de pieds ou de bouche et tu parles comme ça?” (104). The corpse responds, “Tu te moques de moi? Tu as eu de la chance tu n’es pas morte,” and the young woman returns to a normative conscious state (104). Here, it is necessary to reemphasize that this young woman’s indirect testimony is contained within a section of the travel narrative devoted to the memories which Tadjó compiled during her trip to Rwanda. While the line between fiction and non-fiction in a text like *L’Ombre* is always somewhat uncertain, the placement of the young woman’s story suggests that the events of her account resemble, in some way, the memory with which Tadjó was entrusted. Yet to write the trauma of this woman’s experience of genocide, the text resorts to the language of a transcendent encounter. In other words, this passage in the young woman’s indirect testimony alludes to an affective experience of shame which has led her so close to death that realism simply ceases to suffice. This is not to suggest, however, that the experience is unreal. Rather, such non-ordinary events are disfigured “when such gross tools as language are brought to bear on the experience [such that] the result appears to be metaphor, but it is not” (Culbertson 176). Exposed to this description which is, on the face of it, beyond belief, the reader of Tadjó’s travel narrative and this young woman’s indirect testimony is urged to remain responsive to this survivor’s story. From the critical stance of an affective traveler, “the reader must listen for the reality beyond the historically verifiable facts” as a form of reading and witnessing which involves

attempting to recollect, at least partially, the affective experiences of others (Griffin 121).

The third and final form of testimony in *L'Ombre d'Imana* is that of testimony *in absentia*, or what Sophia Mizouni calls “la parole des morts” (Mizouni 75). This third form of testimony not only assures that the reader does not overlook those instances within the indirect testimonies in which survivors remember and even speak with the dead, but also accentuates the fact that, as Tadjó asserts, “les survivants sont une minorité” (*L'Ombre* 110). Within this third form of testimony, Tadjó equally employs both realism and the trauma aesthetic with attentiveness to the embodied experience of genocide within both styles in order to write trauma on behalf of the majority of the genocide’s victims. Among these testimonies *in absentia*, the chapter of the travel narrative entitled, “ANASASE ET ANASTASIE,” about two siblings of the same names, stands out for its continued preoccupation with experiences of particularly traumatic violation and shame. Focusing initially on Anastase, the narrative depicts him staring into the sky at the break of dawn, helplessly disoriented and repeating a strange question which develops in detail as the narrative continues: “Où était partie Anastasie ? Qu’allait-il faire maintenant ? Qu’allait-il faire de la mort d’Anastasie ?” (72-73). Though Anastase references a now departed sense of hope that his sister’s injuries, even those from before the genocide, had begun to heal, the narrative provides no indication as to the source of these injuries. What is clear in the testimony is that Anastase feels the loss of his sister profoundly, and that “il se sentait anéanti par l’abîme de sa disparition” (71). Consistent with Tadjó’s use of deferred contextualization throughout the text, however, it is only later that it becomes clear that Anastase’s sense of devastation is related to more than his sister’s death – at least her most recent death.

Mirroring her brother's position facing the rising sun, Anastasie's narrative begins with the statement, "Anastasie se réveillait brusquement à l'heure où l'aube pointait et se sentait envahie par la mémoire de son viol" (73). The short statement both signals the text's maintained commitment to addressing the intersection of sexual violence and the violence of genocide and reiterates Tadjó's practice of going "beyond voice by focusing closely on the emotional aftermath of sexual violence" as an embodied experience (Jean-Charles 171). Additionally, the uncertainty at this stage in the narrative about when this rape occurred links Anastasie's story to sexual assaults both within and outside of genocide. The text establishes, that is, that the violence of genocide exists within a continuum of violence which is already present in life outside of genocide. As with other descriptions of violation and shame in the text, the narrative provides indications about Anastasie's affective experience during and after the rape through close attention to the body and the use of the trauma aesthetic. The text describes Anastasie as a prisoner of her flesh, unable to speak about her assault from the moment she awakes until the moment she goes to sleep. The relentlessly ongoing experience of this trauma makes it impossible for Anastasie to enjoy anything but sleep, where she finds refuge in returning to her favorite places. Despite the years which have passed since the event, "elle portait la blessure dans sa chair, dans ses cheveux, dans son sourire" (*L'Ombre* 74). "Elle ne reconnaissait plus l'intérieur de son corps, se sentait étrangère" within her own body (73). The narrative suggests, in other words, that Anastasie's rape entailed an experience of shame so severe that the very possibility of recognizing herself as herself has become untenable. Put another way, "the experience of trauma [and shame], which is often described as a form of 'dying' by trauma survivors, takes on various guises [including] the disintegration of the self" (de Beer and Snyman 122). To complexify

matters further, the narrative reveals that Anastase, her brother, is the perpetrator of her rape. Immediately, the strangeness of her brother's language in the previous section of the chapter is contextualized. His devastation relates not only to Anastasie's death but also to his own guilt. Additionally, armed with this knowledge, the reader must also consider whether this testimony *in absentia* contains a level of allegory in which this account of incestual rape and violence is equated with the 1994 Rwandan genocide, one family cleaved apart by violence, one nation divided. Still, if Anastasie's rape is instrumentalized in this way, employing this instance of rape as an allegory is not Tadjou's primary aim, which is further confirmed by the presence of the other representations of traumatic sexual violation and shame within the text.

As Anastasie's narrative closes, the event of her rape itself is finally depicted. Anastasie's affective experience of that violation is communicated to the reader both directly, in a realist style, and then through the language of a transcendent experience. On the one hand, the narrative straightforwardly specifies, "Elle avait honte" (76). Next, the text details further, "Elle n'existait plus... Son esprit se détacha de son corps, flotta dans la chambre et se cogna au plafond. Ce fut sa première mort" (76). Each of these descriptions within Anastasia's testimony *in absentia*, while articulated in two different styles, contributes to the reader's understanding of what happened to her. In particular, the latter description provides some limited comprehension not only of shame's presence but also of the experience of that affective state. For example, even though the narrative ends with a clarification that Anastasie does not die in the conventional sense until years later during the genocide, the reader is to understand this earlier experience of violation and shame as one which involves an intolerable proximity to death. Tadjou writes the trauma of Anastasie's experience of sexual assault through this hybridized employment of both realism and the trauma aesthetic

in order to detail her affective state of shame but also in order to counteract indifference in the reader. The text's exposure of the reader to this experience of traumatic violation and shame in which Anastasie's very subject object boundary is threatened unsettles and produces disgust in the reader. Bearing witness to Anastasie's account cannot occur from a position of comfort in which her story is consumed as spectacle. First, the reader witness "must hear narratives that are outside the frameworks of conventional time and perception and accept them as part of the reality" of the victim or survivor's experience (Griffin 119). Moreover, the narrative encourages the reader to affectively travel with Tadjó, even if doing so will involve "strong emotive and somatic responses to [the] text" (Nayar 46). Entailing this element of risk, affective travel is posited in the narrative as a more responsive form of reading and witnessing.

Twelve years after her first visit to Rwanda, Véronique Tadjó reflects on "the changing landscape of memory in Kigali" in an article by the same name. In this article, Tadjó maintains that writing "implies a refusal to accept the world as it is while at the same time asking people to listen and (re)enter it from a new angle" ("the changing landscape 383). This proposal is, in fact, an accurate description of the writing in Tadjó's *L'Ombre d'Imana: voyages jusqu'au bout du Rwanda*. Accepting neither the absence of African voices concerning the 1994 Rwandan genocide nor global indifference toward the victims and survivors of those events, Tadjó's travel narrative recounts the genocide from an African point of view while using the medium of literature to impede indifference. Specifically, Tadjó writes trauma by employing both a dominant realist style and the trauma aesthetic in the narrative with attention to the embodied experience of genocide in both styles. In this way, the text additionally asks the reader to listen carefully to the accounts of genocide victims and



survivors and to (re)enter the world through affective travel, a form of reading and witnessing which registers physical shame, disgust, and other related affective responses in the reader. While necessarily involving some discomfort for the reader, Tadjó's "text suggests that the ability to move from a position of merely surviving to fully living is influenced by factors such as the opportunity to verbalize the experience, the social support structure, and society's (in)capacity to listen in an appropriate way" (de Beer and Snyman 127). Tadjó's travel narrative not only opens a space in which victims and survivors narrate their stories but also positions the reader to listen and witness responsively. This critical reading and witnessing comes with risk, because as Tadjó notes in the closing passage of her travel narrative, "on n'exorcise pas le Rwanda" (*L'Ombre* 133). Nevertheless, affectively traveling, as a reader of *L'Ombre d'Imana* and other, similar narratives, is posited as a small step forward along a collective path toward living.

## CONCLUSION

In a 1994 piece, *Untitled (Newsweek)*, Chilean artist Alfredo Jaar aligns seventeen covers of the weekly U.S. magazine *Newsweek* (Jaar). Published between April 11 and August 1, 1994, the covers are accompanied by descriptions of major events occurring in Rwanda each week until a story on the genocide appears in the final issue. The juxtaposition of those descriptions alongside *Newsweek*'s prioritizing of events such as the suicide of musician Kurt Cobain or the O.J. Simpson murder trial, highlights the magazine's seventeen-week silence on the genocide and serves as a condemnation of general global indifference regarding Rwanda. If, however, the Rwandan genocide initially received little attention from Western news networks, African authors such as Véronique Tadjo and Boubacar Boris Diop assert that later treatment of the genocide by worldwide media channels also distorted the events of the genocide. "There was an information overload about the genocide and the information was coming from outside" of Rwanda and outside of the African continent ("Interview with Boubacar" 429). Moreover, these reports did not diminish indifference but intensified it because, "after repeated exposure, tragedy also becomes less real" ("Genocide: The Changing" 382). It is, then, with an aim to both include African voices in the telling of the 1994 Rwandan genocide and to combat indifference that Boubacar Boris Diop and Véronique Tadjo write their texts.

In this thesis, I have argued that both Diop and Tadjo write the trauma of genocide victims and survivors by employing both a dominant realist style and the trauma aesthetic in their texts. In each of these styles, the authors remain attentive to victims and survivors' embodied memories of genocide in order to detail not only the historical facts of those events but also the affective dimension of those experiences.

Thus, this thesis has demonstrated that, despite arguments to the contrary, the trauma aesthetic continues to occupy a central role within both of these post-genocide Rwanda fictions. Additionally, this hybridized use of realism and the trauma aesthetic produces an unsettled affective experience for the reader of both texts, including affective unsettlement in Diop's novel and affective travel in Tadjó's travel narrative. Because "the question of responsibility is at the root of all fictional responses to the genocide," these authors posit the unsettling of the reader as a more critical form of reading and witnessing (*Rwanda Genocide Stories* 191). This process of unsettlement prevents closure in discourse in order to preclude the possibility of a comfortable reader who merely consumes the traumatic narratives of genocide victims and survivors. Readers of both *Murambi, le livre des ossements* and *L'Ombre d'Imana: voyages jusqu'au bout du Rwanda* should not leave those texts unscathed. Instead, through difficult and unsettled reading and witnessing, readers learn to listen responsively and responsibly such that, in a small way, a path forward from genocide is produced.

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