

Reifying, Reinscribing, and Resisting Manicheanisms in Representations of the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda¹

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Abstract | The genocide which unfolded in Rwanda in 1994 remains one of the most harrowing examples of annihilatory violence in recent memory. It is framed infamously as an expression of violence which in 100 days saw the murder of approximately one million people, the displacement of millions more, and psychological, social, and economic devastation that remains immeasurable. This paper seeks to explore how the literary makes legible the ways in which Manicheanism, which in many ways was foundational to the genocide in Rwanda, is translated into the categories of “perpetrator” and “victim,” and how this contributes to the perpetuation of the single story of the genocide. This paper reads three texts (Uwem Akpan’s short story “My Parents’ Bedroom,” Alan Whelan, Eoghan Rice, and Elena Hermosa’s documentary *Let the Devil Sleep: 20 Years after Genocide in Rwanda*, and Hugo Blick’s Netflix series *Black Earth Rising*) which literarily trope the Rwandan Genocide and abide by a logic of Manicheanism according to which the world can be split between good and evil, and its inhabitants organized accordingly. The selected texts gesture toward the unboundedness of trauma but abide by the logic of Manicheanism that textured the colonial legacy in Rwanda, which was in many ways foundational to the genocide. They are distinct in form but individually stage and make available for critique expressions of Manicheanism, before, during, and well after the massacres of 1994. This paper offers a critique of these texts’ literarily troping of the Rwandan Genocide and argues, in abiding by the unboundedness of trauma as it is staged in these texts, that genocide be read as, what Barthes calls, a *text*. Thus, the paper, in turning to the literary as itself a mode of reading but also a mode of writing grand narratives, attempts to think what is at stake in representations that reify and reinscribe, but also invite resistance to representations that do not abide by plurality.

Keywords | Rwandan Genocide, Colonialism, Tutsi, Hutu, Twa, Victims, Perpetrators, Manicheanism, Mahmood Mamdani, Roland Barthes, “My Parents’ Bedroom,” Uwem Akpan, *Say You’re One of Them*, *Let the Devil Sleep: Rwanda 20 Years after Genocide*, *Black Earth Rising*

¹This paper reflects a larger research project, which draws from and also elaborates on research developed as part of my doctoral dissertation titled *The post-genocidal condition: Ghosts of genocide, genocidal violence, and representation* (2018), and is in conversation with my other published works.

Introduction

The Rwandan genocide,² as it is popularly referred to, was intimate, as Mahmood Mamdani notes, perpetrated not only before the very eyes of the Rwandan people, as President Kagame posits in *Organic Law No. 40*,³ but by perpetrators who were not only often friends or neighbours to their victims, but also their family. Mamdani, in *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism and Genocide in Rwanda* (2016),⁴ provides a reading of the question of the Rwandan experience of genocide that charts the ways in which the bloodiness of 1994 is entangled in the charge of Hutu and Tutsi as political identities, and the ways in which colonialism has come to shape these. Mamdani argues instead that Hutu and Tutsi are political rather than cultural identities, and that as such “their history is likely to be coterminous with that of the institutions of power, particularly the state of Rwanda” (73–74) and that if we are to understand Hutu and Tutsi as historical identities, then “we must be open to the possibility that the definition of Hutu and Tutsi may have changed over time, and that there may therefore not be any single answer to the question asked so often: Who is a Hutu and who a Tutsi?” (73). Colonialism, as Mamdani explains, racialized these political and historical identities, and in so doing hierarchically ordered Rwandan society through privileging the Tutsi, who were considered Hamites and thus “actually Caucasians under a black skin” and oppressing and subjugating the Hutu (82). It is in this way that Belgian colonial rule and discourse produced the identities Tutsi and Hutu as Manichean counterparts.

Mamdani argues that the genocide which unfolded in Rwanda must thus be thought “within the logic of colonialism” (4), within the tension of settler and native genocide. Positing that “the genocidal impulse to eliminate an enemy may indeed be as old as organized power” (9), he warns that it is important to keep in mind two important issues. The first is that, since the genocide of the Nama and Herero at the start of the 20th century, the technology of genocide has come to differ significantly. For example, in the context of the genocide of the Nama and Herero, guns were used in conjunction with a

²Gregory H. Stanton, the president of Genocide Watch, notes that “in 1994, 500,000 to one million Rwandan Tutsis along with thousands of moderate Hutus were murdered in the clearest case of genocide since the Holocaust” (Stanton). The genocidal massacres which took place in Rwanda are marked as having begun after the assassination of the Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana and Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira, in a plane crash on the 6th of April 1994. The massacres, officially recognized taking place between April and July in 1994, are considered as the genocide of the Tutsi, perpetrated by Hutu extremists.

³See also, *Rwanda: Organic Law No. 08/1996 of 1996 on the Organization of Prosecutions for Offenses constituting the Crime of Genocide or Crimes Against Humanity committed since 1 October 1990*, 1 September 1996, www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b4f64.html.

⁴Hereafter referred to as *When Victims Become Killers*.

scorched earth policy in which the harsh environment of the Namibian desert was used to enact mass killing. In the context of the genocide of Europe's Jews, Gypsies, Poles, and other groups targeted by the Nazis, they were murdered en-masse through the industrialized chemical weapons, guns, and the like. Whereas in the context of the genocide which targeted Rwanda's Tusti ethnic group, the weapon technology ranged from machine guns and grenades to machetes and clubs. The second issue pertains to how what Mamdani refers to as the "genocidal impulse" "is organized and its target defined" (9), the latter of which, he explains, was textured by colonialism. As such, he argues that the example of genocide in Rwanda must be thought through within the logic of colonialism. Said differently, we should not consider the violence of the genocide which unfolded in 1994 spontaneous, but rather a consequence of the ways in which colonialism has ordered Rwandan society as it did many other African civilizations, subjugating one group while privileging another. He argues further that the horror of which gave rise to two types of genocidal impulse: "settler's genocide" and "native's genocide" (9–14).⁵

In *Discourse on Colonialism*, Aimé Césaire (2000)⁶ posits that colonialism is "thing-ification," the process which, through relations of domination and submission, turns "the colonizing man into a class-room monitor, an army sergeant, a prison guard, a slave driver, and the indigenous man into an instrument of production" (6). From this follows that the colonizing man is figured as the operative(s) of the various Repressive State Apparatuses as identified by Althusser,⁷ and is thus staged as the proxy of the state or rather the Nation; whilst the 'indigenous man' or colonized person is reduced to being thought of as the labour power that produces the commodities of the state—an object of the state and its proxy. The policeman, prison guard, teacher, and other wardens of the Repressive apparatuses unconsciously facilitate the process of interpellation, which, in the context of colonization, transforms the indigenous individual into a colonized subject who, in turning when hailed, affirms themselves, within the discourse of colonialism, as inferior or rather barbarous. It is through the Ideological Apparatuses of the state that the

⁵"Settler's genocide" refers to the attempted annihilation of the native by the settler, which is intertwined with the expansionist violence of colonialism, and which increases in force when Western settlement expands (10). As a point of illustration, he draws on "the German annihilation of over 80 per cent of the Herero population in the colony of German Southwest Africa in a single year, 1904," as what he refers to as the prototype of settler violence in African colonies (10). Mamdani explains that General Lothar von Trotha designed the destruction of the Herero as a purge, "after which 'something new' would 'emerge'"; planning first to have the army kill as many as possible, then cutting off any escape routes of those who fled with the exception of crossing the desert to Botswana, all the while separated from their cattle and water (11–12). Those who survived were put in concentration camps, where they were exposed to the elements and disease, the men of the group were slave labour and the women were turned into sex slaves (Mamdani 12).

Mamdani explains that in so far as native's genocide is concerned, if "its outcome would be death, of settlers by natives, it would need to be understood as a derivative outcome, a result of a prior logic, the genocidal logic of colonial pacification and occupation infecting anticolonial resistance" (13). It is this which underscores the logic of genocide as textured by the dialectic of the settler and the native which colonialism inscribed as political world order, as its great crime was not that it expropriated the native ("the name it gave to the indigenous population"), but that greater than this it politicized indigeneity (Mamdani 14).

⁶First published in 1972.

⁷See, Louis Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an investigation)."

individual is taught that they are barbarous, that they are interpellated into the ideology of colonialism, are disciplined into being “good” subjects; and colonization is registered as “a campaign to civilize barbarism, from which there may emerge at any moment the negation of civilization, pure and simple” (Césaire 4). As such, the enterprise of colonization was justified as a mission of civilization, though between the two, as Césaire notes, there is an “infinite distance” (2). He explains that colonization “works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism” (1). Césaire writes,

[C]olonization [...] dehumanizes even the most civilized man; that colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it; that the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as an animal, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform himself into an animal. It is this result, this boomerang effect of colonization that I wanted to point out. (5)

What Césaire describes above may be understood as the ricochet of colonialism’s barbarity and, conceptually, as a deferred return of the (modern) subject to what Eurocentrism marks as the barbarity of the natural world. This is to say that the very civilising gesture that Europe took as its mark of its own civilization—colonialism—is in fact a barbarism. In this sense the figure of the colonizer and the figure of the genocidaire are not dissimilar as both presume the Other (enemy) group to be sub-human, treating them as such through brutal acts, which in turn render the perpetrating of him/her/them as an “odious scourge.”⁸ Moreover, both attempt to bring into the fold this Other people through a process of assimilation, but if this process proves unsuccessful, they are willing to and in fact have turned to campaigns of physical extermination of the group. It is after all Nazism which is the “supreme barbarism, the crowning barbarism of all the daily barbarisms,” as Césaire puts it (3). Europe, as he explains further, tolerated this barbarism, indeed was accomplice to it, “before they were its victims [...] because, until then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples; that they have cultivated that Nazism, that they are responsible for it” (Césaire 3). In this sense it is the ‘civilized world’ and the civilizing mission that produce the condition of barbarity and configure its Other as always already genocidal.

Indeed, the term genocide has over the course of the last sixty years become synonymous with mass killing as an attempt to exterminate a particular group of people. However, as Raphael Lemkin who coined the term “genocide” explains in *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (1944), it is a term that names a “coordinated plan,” the purpose of which “would be [the] disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals

⁸The description of a perpetrator of or participant in genocide as an odious scourge is the language of the Preamble in the *Rome Statute*. See, UN General Assembly. *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (last amended 2010)*, 17 July 1998, ISBN No. 92-9227-227-6, www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3a84.html.

belonging to such groups” (79). For Lemkin, genocide has two phases, the first of which is “the destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group” (81). This refers to the destruction of a group’s cultures, traditions, and the suppression of a group’s collective modes of expressing its identity. This is familiar in the African context as the project of civilization purported by European expansionist colonialism. The second phase Lemkin describes is “the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor” (79). This may be understood simply as the project of colonialist assimilation, through which members of a nation or culture are folded into the nation, cultures, and traditions of the oppressing or settler nation at the cost of negating the culture and traditions of the oppressed group.

This bloodless expression of genocide, as Fanon posits, is also named colonialism (315); an understanding of genocide which demands that it be read as text, and not work, in the literary sense. In this reading of genocide as work, as conceptualized by Roland Barthes in “From Work to Text,” we must accept that its manifest bloodiness is only “a fragment of the substance” (57). Said differently, attempts to physically annihilate a people are a culmination of attempts to destroy what Lemkin refers to as the “national pattern” of a people: their histories, culture(s), language(s), traditions, and other hallmarks of their civilization. Thus, although genocide is recognizable by its physical expression, or its bloodiness, it begins more subtly and moves more slowly than the infamous tagline “approximately one million in 100 days” might suggest. In this way genocide is more than a work in the literary sense: physical, observable, and a faithful confession revealing something of its author. It is these things in its final incarnation, but ultimately, genocide operates like a text: finding expression pluralistically—hate speech, discriminatory laws, and social practices—it is produced, and ultimately only legible, through reading the problem.

The text, as Barthes explains, is demonstrated rather than seen, and held in language rather than in hand and existing only when caught up in a discourse (57). Moreover, it is “experienced only in an activity, in a production” (58); which is to say that the text is produced through reading, the joint venture of the scripter and the reader. As such, genocide as text is, conceptually, the product of the genocidaire who scripts/imagines/plans it and its discourse, which in turn produces the Other of the civilized subject, as always already genocidal and as such, barbarous. Furthermore, the text is plural, which refers not only to it having several meanings, as Barthes explains, but to “fulfilling the very plurality of meaning: an irreducible [...] plurality” (59); and this plurality depends on what Barthes calls the “stereographic plurality of the signifiers that weave it,” for as he notes, “etymologically, the text is a fabric” (60). Using the example of an “idle subject” strolling along a hillside, Barthes explains that all of the components of the experience of the activity “issue from known codes, but their combinative operation is unique, it grounds the stroll in a difference which cannot be repeated except as difference” and that the text, similarly, is “entirely woven of quotations, references, echoes: cultural languages (what language is not cultural?), antecedent or contemporary, which traverse it through and through, in a vast stereophony” (60). It is this intertextuality in which the text is understood. This intertextuality of the text, which renders the text itself “an intertext of another text” and as such undoes the filial bind between the author and the text, can have no origin (60).

Thus, with the metaphor of the text, we can grasp genocide as having no origin, no point of inception from which it can be traced and through which its development can be observed. Furthermore, the text “cannot stop,” as Barthes puts it, in the sense that it is not bound, its movement is that of traversal. Thus, to think genocide through the metaphor of the text is to understand that genocide permeates the limits imposed on it through the discourse of international law, and reaches beyond the end of its bloodiness. It is in this sense that colonialism, as Fanon put it, was a bloodless genocide (314). Moreover, “to assign an Author to a text is,” as Barthes argues, “to impose a brake on it, to furnish it with a final signified, to close writing” (53). Certainly, one would want to halt the onslaught of genocide, there is no question about that; but what is at stake in the misunderstanding of genocide as work and as such imposing on it an author is precisely that it is too easily presumed that if the perpetrators of the crime of genocide are dealt with, the problem of genocide has been dealt with and this, I worry, is not the case.

Barthes explains that “once the Author is found, the text is ‘explained’ and the critic has won” (53), but the text must be “disentangled” and though its structure may be followed, it has no end. This impossible end of genocide as text, given its irreducible plurality, refers to its intertextual reach, the innumerable chains within the network that cannot be traced to an origin but speaks also to its latent violence often continuing without the imposition of a break. In other words, if we agree that genocide is trauma, in the sense that it is a violence that sears, it cannot be bound temporally and often is not limited to the spatiality implicit in the name: “Rwandan Genocide.” For example, as *Black Earth Rising* shows, the genocidal violence was not contained within the borders of Rwanda. However, the bloodiness of genocide, its manifest violence, must be brought to an end that is necessarily discernible and demarcated, although this, as I have argued before, is not the limit of genocide and as such is not where thinking through the problem of genocide should rest. As John Mowitt argues, its theorization, like that of the text, is incomplete, or “unfinished” (1; 18). Thus, what follows, turns to the literary to gesture toward thinking the genocidal violence of 1994 in Rwanda as pluralistic in that it was not a singular historical event, and that in many literary representations of the genocide in Rwanda, there is a tendency to reify who can be marked as victim or perpetrator. In this way the literary reads the problem but also partakes in it.

Reification

Without his ID, you’d never know that Tonton Andre is Papa’s brother. He is a cross between Papa and Maman – as tall as Maman but not quite as dark as Papa.
– Monique, “My Parent’s Bedroom”

Uwem Akpan’s “My Parent’s Bedroom” (2009), the last in the collection of short stories titled *Say You’re One of Them*, is set in Rwanda during the first days of the genocide. Narrated by Monique, a young girl of both Tutsi and Hutu parentage, the text illustrates the layered intimacy of the genocide and staged the often flat, stereotyped, raced, and reified categories Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa. The narrative opens on a “Saturday evening, and the sun has fallen behind the hills” and Monique explains that silence outside her family’s bungalow is only interrupted when “the evening wind carries a shout to [them]” (265). Over nineteen pages the reader learns of the many intimacies that textured the violence of the genocide, told by a nine-year-old girl. Monique, or Shenge as she is referred to,

explains in the crisp authenticity of the confusion of the raiding of her home by family, friend, and neighbour, of the man in the “yellow trousers” who attempts to rape her, and the murder of her mother which simultaneously turns her father into a “wizard.”

Through her parentage, Monique represents the seamless suturing of Hutu and Tutsi and as such may be read as the weaving together of the different racial and ethnic categories that had divided Rwandans during the genocidal violence of 1994. In the short story, Monique explains the archetypal features of each ethnic group of the population, beginning with her mother. She explains that Maman is “a very beautiful Tutsi woman,” who has “high cheekbones, a narrow nose, sweet mouth, big eyes and a lean frame” (Akpan 266). Elaborating the portraiture of her mother, Monique explains that Maman’s complexion is “so light that you can see the blue veins on the back of her hands, as you can on the hands of Le Père Mertens, our parish priest, who is from Belgium” (266). What is significant about the details of Maman’s appearance is that they are precisely the features Belgian colonialists listed as the markers of the Tutsi race and anthropological “proof” of the Hamitic Hypothesis,⁹ which contended that the Tutsi were foreign settlers in Rwanda originating from Ethiopia. It is in the context of colonialism, and Belgian colonial occupation, that the Tutsi, “a group with a privileged relationship to power before colonialism, got constructed as a privileged alien settler presence, first by the great nativist revolution of 1959, and then by Hutu Power propaganda after 1990” (Mamdani 14). Mamdani argues that the genocide of 1994 in Rwanda needs to be understood, thus, as a native’s genocide; a genocide perpetrated by those who saw themselves as sons and daughters “of the soil” seeking to clear “the soil of a threatening alien presence” (14). The young protagonist also explains that she looks like her mother and will grow up to be “as tall as she is”; and it is for this reason that her father and his friends refer to her as “Shenge”: “my little one” in Kinyarwanda. What is at stake, however, in the possessive pronoun “my” is precisely the tension held between an ethnicity inherited (Rwanda was a patrilineal society) and reified, racialized stereotypes which make the individual susceptible to the misreading. Said differently, Monique does not look like her father, who looks “like most Hutus.” She describes him in similar detail to her mother, though his features are undeniably in contrast to that of Maman. Papa, Monique explains, is “very black [having] a round face, a wide nose and brown eyes. His lips are full as a banana. He is a jolly, jolly man who can make you laugh until you cry” (266). As with Maman, Papa is assigned the features assigned to the Hutu ethnic group and reified as such by the

⁹Edith Saunders explains the Hamitic Hypothesis and discusses extensively its impact. In “The Hamitic hypothesis: its origin and functions in time perspective” (1969), she explains:

The Hamitic hypothesis states that everything of value ever found in Africa was brought there by the Hamites, allegedly a branch of the Caucasian race. This hypothesis was preceded by an earlier theory, in the 16th century, that the Hamites were black savages, ‘natural slaves’ - and Negroes. This view, which persisted throughout the 18th century, served as a rationale for slavery, using Biblical interpretations in support of its tenets. The image of the Negro deteriorated in direct proportion to the growth of the importance of slavery, and it became imperative for the white man to exclude the Negro from the brotherhood of races. Napoleon’s expedition to Egypt in 1798 became the historical catalyst that provided the Western world with the impetus to turn the Hamite into a Caucasian. The Hamitic concept has as its function the portrayal of the Negro as an inherently inferior being and to rationalize his exploitation. (Saunders 521)

discourse on colonialism.¹⁰ There are several dualisms in this juxtaposition of mother and father, which make plural the Manicheanism within Rwandan society.

“The colonial world is a Manichean world,” writes Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*, first published in 1963 (41). He continues: “To begin with, the affirmation of the principle ‘It’s them or us’ does not constitute a paradox, since colonialism, as we have seen, is in fact the organization of a Manichean world, a world divided up into compartments” (84).¹¹ This dividing up into parts, and in abiding by the logic of colonialism and thus eurocentrism, juxtaposes native and settler, Black and White, colonized and colonizer, bad, dangerous people and good messianic people. In the juxtaposition established by the discourse of colonialism, Africans are othered by being positioned as bad, dangerous, and needing to be civilized, whilst European colonialists are framed as “good,” safe, and civilized. Interestingly enough, after independence from Belgian colonial rule in Rwanda, the logic of this Manicheanism remains intact but becomes inflected by the Hamitic hypothesis and as such the Tutsi become framed as the settler/foreign/colonizing group and the Hutus are framed as the indigenous group, and the Manicheanism inverts whereby the “settler” Tutsi group is framed as dangerous and bad, and the “indigenous” Hutu group is framed as “good” and needing to protect itself.¹² This Manicheanism found its bloody expression through the genocidal violence of 1994 in Rwanda. In each of the texts this article focuses on, there is a pattern in the texturing

¹⁰The racialized reification of the Twa is also staged by the short story, through the figure of Helene, Monique’s friend and peer. As with her parents, Monique focuses her description of Helene around her physical appearance, explaining that “she is petite and hairy, with a flat forehead like a monkey’s” (Akpan 281). “Most Twa are like that” and “they are few” in Rwanda explains the protagonist; and so as with Papa and Maman, Helene is framed as a proxy for her ethnic group. The unsettling and problematic descriptions echo the fictions of colonial discourse and the racial “science” that together shared a symbiotic mutualism not only in their language but also in their ordering which mirrors Belgian colonialism’s hierarchical ordering of the three groups.

¹¹Although, in this paper, I deploy specifically the Fanonian concept of Manicheanism in the context of colonialism, and specifically European colonialism in Africa, and although it is beyond the scope of this paper to offer an adequate tracing of the genealogy of the term Manicheanism, it must be noted that Manicheanism has a long history, formulated at inception as a religion. Founded by the prophet Mani, Manicheanism espoused a dualism describing the fraught tension between a world of light and goodness, presided over by the Father of Greatness; and a world of darkness and evil, presided over by the King of Darkness (Sundermann). As Peter M. Venter explains,

Basically, it is a dualistic system ‘grounded on the distinction between “the two principles” (Light and Darkness) and “the three times”’ (Klimkeit 1993:5–6). The myth includes details of the way in which Light fought against Darkness, how this resulted in the creation of the world and the imprisonment of light particles within the dark elements (cf. Pettipiece 2005:248), and narrates what had gone wrong and shows the way in which the problems facing humankind could be solved (cf. Baker-Brian 2011:96). The two principles of Light and Darkness existed independently from the beginning of time (cf. Heuser & Klimkeit 1998:7). The central focus of Manichaeism religious ideology falls on the problem of evil and redemption of that which is by nature good and pure from the power of evil. (6)

It is this dualism, and the desire of darkness to occupy and assimilate the realm of light—ultimately destroying it—that remains central to the translation of this principle in the religion of Manicheanism, into the psychosocial critique of colonialism developed by Fanon.

¹²For a more detailed discussion on this, see Mahmood Mamdani’s *When Victims become Killers*, in which he explains the two kinds of expressions of what he calls the “genocidal impulse”: the genocide of the native by the settler, and the genocide of the settler by the native (9–14).

of the figure of the perpetrator or genocidaire, and *the/ir* victim.¹³ In “My Parents’ Bedroom,” as is the case in *Let the Devil Sleep* and various other texts such as *Shooting Dogs* and *Sometimes in April*, the person or character marked as a victim of the genocide is a female and a Tutsi. The person or character marked as a perpetrator or genocidaire is by contrast male and Hutu; and these two individuals, indeed these two figures as they are produced in these texts, are bound to each other as counterparts.

Despite the crisp framing of Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa in “My Parents’ Bedroom” as “categorically different” people, it also challenges the assumed discreteness of each of these ethnic groups, especially as founded on racialized difference. There are three characters belonging to the same (Hutu) family through which it does this: Monique, Tonton Andre, and Tonton Nzeyimana—the Wizard. Each of these characters take out of focus the crisp image of each ethnic group purported by what was referred to as “nose politics”—the belief that one could assume a person’s ethnic designation based on their physical appearance. Tonton Andre, for example, needed to provide police his ID to prove himself a Hutu (Akpan 268), until during the genocide when proving oneself a “true Hutu” required the sacrifice of wives, children, friends, and neighbours (285). Understanding the increasing stakes of this illegibility for Monique, Maman instructs her daughter to declare herself “one of them,” regardless of who asks, which suggests that, within the context of the genocide, it is better to be one of the perpetrators than it is to be one of the victims. However, in the moments during and following the sexual assault she is subjected to, the language to name the trauma is not available to the young protagonist. The scene is written as follows:

Before I can say anything, he wriggles out of his yellow trousers and reaches for me. But I avoid his hands and slip under the bed with Jean. He pulls me out by my ankles. Pressing me down on the floor, the naked man grabs my two wrists with his left hand. He pushes up my nightie with the right and tears my underpants. I shout at the top of my voice. I call out to Tonton André, who is pacing in the corridor. He doesn’t come. I keep screaming. I’m twisting and holding my knees together. Then I snap at the naked man with my teeth. He hits my face, this way and that, until my saliva is salted with blood. I spit in his face. Twice. He bangs my head on the floor, pinning down my neck, punching my left thigh.

“Oya! No! Shenge is one of us!” the Wizard tells him, rushing into the room.

“Ah ... leave this little thing ... to me,” the naked man says slowly. His short pee is pouring on my thighs and my nightie, warm and thick like baby food. I can’t breathe, because he has collapsed on me with his whole weight, like a dead man. (Akpan 271; emphasis in original)

There are several things to reckon with in this moment. The first is perhaps that of the double intimacy of the violence. On the one hand, it is intimate in the sense of its physical expression, as sexual assault, and sexual assault that takes place in the space that the protagonist most associates with sanctuary—her parents’ bedroom. On the other hand, it

¹³In this gesture I mean to play with the tension between the word “the” which distances the perpetrator and the victim, and the word “their” as a word indicative of possessiveness and as such gesturing toward a perpetrator’s taking responsibility for the impact they have had on a person’s life.

marks the intimacy of the genocide itself as framed by Mahmood Mamdani in *When Victims Become Killers* in which the persons involved in the violence, whether as active participants or bystanders, are often known to the victims. In this instance, Monique's uncle, Tonton Andre, is just beyond her parents' bedroom's door, pacing in the corridor, and yet he does nothing to intervene. The second is that Shenge, as it is explained in the short story, means "my little one" in Kinyarwanda (Akpan 266). Thus, Tonton Nzeyimana (the Wizard)'s claim that "Shenge is one of us," a Hutu, is somewhat tautological: my little one is one of us. It is thus through the individual's claim to possession (my) that Shenge is affirmed as a member of the group (us). Thirdly, and for the purposes of this paper perhaps most importantly, Monique is so young—just shy of being ten years old—and so innocent, that she does not yet know the words "sexual assault" and instead describes what is happening to her and the man's sexual climax using words that are devoid of the charge of the event: "[h]is short pee [...] thick like baby food" (Akpan 271). The language used to describe the secreted semen demonstrates the protagonist struggling to articulate what she is experiencing, grasping at words like puzzle pieces to try and fit together to depict accurately an event she does not understand. Monique seems to understand how to care for a baby, as the text makes clear at various points, but does not know how babies are made. She knows what urine is and knows what its consistency should be, and knowing that "this is not that" tries to mark where the secretion is coming from, the man's genitals, but also that what precisely the secretion is she does not know. This is an example of how the text stages trauma as that which often resists language and resists being bound by words and the politics of naming. Importantly, it is worth holding onto Monique being a child for whom undoubtedly this encounter is a memory for the future, and as such the moment also marks the impact of the violence of the genocide as transgenerational, by virtue of a child living as both survivor and witness.

Reinscription

In this village there are only two types of people: The people whose families were killed [...] and the people who killed them.

– Juvenal Mudenge, *Let the Devils Sleep: 20 Years after Genocide in Rwanda*

As a literary text which "obviously" avails itself to staging the turn toward a project of national reconciliation in the years following the Rwandan genocide and framing this project as successful, *Let the Devil Sleep: Rwanda 20 Years after Genocide* (2014),¹⁴ its textures repeat the same dichotomized and Manichean framing of victims and perpetrators of the genocide that Akpan's text does, 20 years "after" the event of the genocidal violence. It too textures these categories of victim and perpetrator as Hutu and Tutsi, male and female, but diverges in its framing of the persons marked by these categorizations as neighbours.

Set and shot on location in Gikongoro and Kigali, Rwanda, the narrative is framed through the voiceover of an unidentified narrator, who is aided by two pairs of victims and survivors. The mise-en-scene of the opening moments of *Let the Devil Sleep* is unlike that of filmic texts such as Michael Caton-Jones's *Shooting Dogs* (2005), Raoul Peck's

¹⁴To view the film, use the link: <https://youtu.be/Wl50BeeNLAQ>.

Sometimes in April (2005), Laura Waters Hinson's *As We Forgive* (2008), and even Blick's *Black Earth Rising* (2018). It does not open with a map of Africa and zoom in to the country that is the location of the narrative. Rather a black screen is broken by white type font and the first cut is not to a map, but to a cornfield set against the backdrop of a setting or rising sun, shot from low angle. A voice explains that "in this village [Cyanika] there are only two types of people. Those whose families were killed, and those who killed them" (00:21–00:34).

Told to the viewer in Kinyarwanda, this is not the voice of the film's narrator, but rather, as the viewer will discover, of Juvenal Moudenge—one of the individuals who took part in a massacre in Cyanika. Moudenge represents one of the "types of people" that he refers to and one half of two "reconciled" pairs presented in the film. He is a Hutu male who had participated in the genocide of 1994, and is as such the very same "type of person" as Jean-Baptiste Gatera. Juvenal Moudenge is described as someone who "took part in the Cyanika massacre" (00:59), while Jean-Baptiste is described in the documentary as someone who "hunted Frida [a survivor of the genocide] and her family" (01:27). Frida Kamuzima, who was "hunted" by Gatera, along with her family, is staged as Gatera's Tutsi and female counterpart, while Maria Mukagasana, whose husband and children were murdered in the massacre in Cyanika, is staged as the survivor, female counterpart of Moudenge. Thus, each reconciled pair is constituted by a Hutu male, who admits to having participated in the massacres of 1994, and a Tutsi female who had been directly affected by the acts of her male counterpart. Juvenal is correct in his diction in the sense that Hutu and Tutsi are being type-cast, male and perpetrator, and female and victim, respectively. As the film begins narrating the manifest violence of genocide as it unfolded in Rwanda, these pairs are at first pictured individually, but are then very quickly presented alongside each other. Sitting, standing, at times looking at each other, at others holding hands, these partners in what the narrator describes as "unlikely friendship" are marked as illustrative of a reconciled Rwanda, embodying the mantra of the Kagame regime: "We are all Rwandans."¹⁵ There is not the sense that, as the narrator puts it, these are "unlikely friendships" but friendships, nonetheless. Rather, there is something like the irony held in Nyamata, in Rwanda—an uncanny good-neighbourliness, which will be discussed in the conclusion of this paper.

Moudenge, a perpetrator of the genocide, identified as Hutu, reflects on the intimacy of the genocide and explains that he/they "knew most of the people that were killed that day, if not all of them, because we were neighbours" (03:52–03:58); whilst Marie Mukagasana, reflecting on Rwanda's then present, explains: "We created an association of survivors and perpetrators. And they showed to us that they wanted to change. Life continues. We are living together. But it won't stop us remembering our loved ones who died brutally" (12:50–13:15). What this living together in past and "present" gestures toward is the inadequacy of thinking genocide as a bound, discrete event and only phenomenon, in that it highlights how people lived together, died together, and must now live together again.

¹⁵Consider for example the gestures in the discourse of "RPF top priority is the interests of all Rwandans," on paulkagame.com, accessible via this link: www.paulkagame.com/rpf-chose-dignity-of-all-rwandans-over-dependency/.

Resistance

[W]hen we were finally allowed to return to the camp, it was completely empty – and I mean completely. Not a single vestige to indicate that less than a week before, some 50,000 people had been living there.

Women, children, babies. Many too ill to move.

It was as if they never existed. And I never saw any of them again, ever.

Except for one. Someone my colleague Ed Holt took with him on his last airlift out.

A little girl

A Hutu child.

– Eunice Clayton, *Black Earth Rising*

On 10 July 2017, I entered a church in Nyamata, marked as a site of genocide, where the guide informed us that 5,000 people are said to have been murdered. Staked piles of their tattered and blood-stained clothes punctuate its floor and remaining benches as testimony. Offering its witnessing, the gate which had been defeated by the Interahamwe¹⁶ still bears the marks of its struggle, and the walls, ceiling, and altar of the church are still pockmarked with bullet holes. Outside the church is the grave of Tonia Locatelli, an Italian woman who was killed during the genocide, and who is memorialized as part of the Nyamata Genocide Memorial, as someone who tried to alert the international community about the killings and called for intervention. A few meters from Locatelli's grave are the mass graves which are now the final resting place of the people who died at Nyamata. White tiles cover their interior and exterior, and trap doors made of glass open onto a steep stairwell, one story deep, which leads down into tombs filled to the brim with coffins, into which sets and fragments of the skeletal remains of people have been placed. Some of these coffins contain the remains from as many as seven individuals. Another contains within it a glass pyramid of sorts, deprived of its capstone, which is divided into three strata. Within the highest of these are what appear to be numerous femurs, fibulas, tibias—presumable amongst other bones of the extremities. In the middle layer are the skulls of some of the victims, placed neatly alongside each other, never quite touching, none quite whole. At the very bottom of the structure is a long coffin, covered with a white cloth which, like the white façade of the mass grave itself, is decorated with a cross. In it is the remains of a young Tutsi woman; the guide pointed

¹⁶The Interahamwe began as the youth wing of the National Revolutionary Movement for Development (French: Mouvement révolutionnaire national pour le développement, MRND), the ruling party in 1994 (Des Forges, "Those Who Stand Together or Those Who Attack Together" 8). However, the Interahamwe would later develop into a militia group which was essential to the execution of the genocidal agenda of Hutu Power extremists in 1994. As Filip Reyntjens explains, "the notion of 'Interahamwe' changed dramatically during the genocide. Before, they were the youth wing of the former single party MRND" ("Rwanda's Untold Story"). Reyntjens continues, explaining that:

A limited number of them (certainly much less than the 30,000 put forward in the letter) received a paramilitary training. When the genocide started, these distinctions were no longer made, as all those manning barriers and hunting down and killing Tutsi, including those from other political parties, were referred to as "Interahamwe." In other words, it would be impossible to say how many of them were killers because it is unclear which entity we are talking about. What we do know is that about 70 percent of all Hutu males who were adult at the time of the genocide were convicted by Rwandan courts.

See also, Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*.

out to me that they knew she was Tutsi because of how tall she was. She had been the victim of rape and sodomy with various objects, so extreme that it was determined to be the cause of her death.

The Nyamata Genocide Memorial, adorned with a grey and purple ribbon on the front of the church, is enclosed by a metal mesh fence. One of the four sides of this boundary is shared with a primary school. The score for my visit to Nyamata was the sound of children laughing whilst some played in the school yard and others began their journey home. There stemmed from this all too stark a juxtaposition within me, a disturbingly uncanny sense of a politics of “good neighbourliness”—the synonym Hendrik Verwoerd used for, indeed preferred over, Apartheid.¹⁷ In a speech to the international community, Verwoerd explained that “[a]ccepting that there are differences between people, and that while these differences exist, and you have to acknowledge them, at the same time you can live together, aide one another, but that can best be done when you act as good neighbours always do.”¹⁸ This sentiment was expressed through the legislation of the time. Such legislation included the Population Registration Act (1950) which required that South Africans be classified according to a racial designation, much like the classification of Rwandans according to ethnic designation implemented during Belgian colonial Rule (1933), and the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949), which like the Hutu Ten Commandments published in Kigali in 1990, prohibited marriages between people who did not belong to the same racial or, in the case of Rwanda, ethnic group. Nyamata embodies a living together of life and death, and the past and future, entangled with the genocide of 1994.

The force of the experience, and in the experience of the memory of this experience, is that it demands a confrontation with the politics of living together, as a question of method. It dares us to ask about the truth of reconciliation and what it means to live with genocide and its residues: genocide reincarnate. The charge of filling a site of mass slaughter with the sounds of children laughing and playing is its holding of the tension and irony of Rwanda’s attempt to live with death. This sense is something staged in various literary texts attempting to represent life in Rwanda before and after the genocide of 1994 which, to the point of establishing tropes of representation, follows a simple formula traced alongside the fault lines of ethnicity and gender: perpetrators of the genocide are Hutu and male, whilst the surviving victims of the genocide are Tutsi and female.¹⁹ The tendencies to texture the categories of perpetrator and victim with ethnicity and gender, however unintentional, translate the language of raced difference and in doing so reproduce the conditions that culminated in the genocide of 1994 in Rwanda. This staging is, however, not merely problematic but is in fact reading the problem of the residue of genocide in Rwanda.

¹⁷See, www.news24.com/News24/Good-neighbourliness-20140211 and <http://fabryhistory.com/2015/05/11/apartheid-a-policy-of-good-neighborliness/>.

¹⁸A recording of his speech is available here: <https://youtu.be/vPCln9czoys>.

¹⁹Two of the texts discussed in this paper do precisely this: Akpan’s “My Parents’ Bedroom” and Whelan, et al.’s *Let the Devil Sleep: 20 Years after Genocide in Rwanda*. Other films which follow the same “formula” include *Shooting Dogs* (aka *Beyond the Gates*), *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), *Sometimes in April* (2005), *Ghosts of Rwanda* (2004), and even more contemporary texts such as Netflix’s *Trees of Peace* (2021) among others.

Apartheid, the National Party's policy of governance for South Africa from 1948–1994 when it held power, was (falsely) advertised as a policy of separate but equal development of the races.²⁰ In reality, however, the National Party's policy of Apartheid hierarchically ordered racial groups and endeavoured to resolve the 'poor white problem' and ensure the privileged supremacy of the white minority through the subjugation of the Black majority.²¹ After decades of this crime against humanity, South Africa held its first democratic election in 1994, which was followed by the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 1995, which, like the Gacaca courts, was a body of transitional justice. The Gacaca predates western colonial settlement in Rwanda, at which point it operated as an informal mechanism for attending to offenses and administering justice in communities, a sentiment that remained intact when after the genocide of 1994 the Gacaca Courts were established in Rwanda. The Rwandan judiciary was decimated during the genocide of 1994, and as such, the Gacaca courts were established as a local solution to the problem of thousands of perpetrators and the question of national reconciliation. While the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) oversaw the prosecution of category 1 offenders (architects of the genocide), the Gacaca courts oversaw the prosecution of categories 2–4 offenses and were tasked with facilitating reconciliation, nationally but also within communities, of victims and perpetrators.²² Both the Gacaca Courts and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in their individually limited scope, gesture toward and abide by the concept of *Ubuntu*.²³ I

²⁰See, Muller, Hilgard. "Separate Development in South Africa." *African Affairs*, vol. 62, no. 246, 1963, pp. 53–65.

²¹There is a vast field of scholarship on the question of Apartheid and indeed the postapartheid. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss at length this field, the work of Premesh Lalu, Maurits Van Bever-Donker, Harold Wolpe, John Pepper, Nicky Rousseau, and Ciraj Rassool critically engage with the question of Apartheid and the postapartheid, as lived experience, concept, and theoretical problem. Literary scholarship has also focused in particular ways. Scholars who have approached the question of Apartheid through the literary include Zuretha Roos, Alan Paton, Zakes Mda, Zoe Wicomb, Sindiwa Magona, Andre P. Brink, and Antjie Krog amongst many others.

²²See, Ingelaere, Bert. "Traditional Justice and Reconciliation after Violent Conflict: Learning from African Experiences." *Traditional Justice and Reconciliation after Violent Conflict: Learning from African Experiences*, edited by Luc Huyse and Mark Salter, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2008, pp. 25–59; Clark, Phil. *The Gacaca Courts, Post-Genocide Justice and Reconciliation in Rwanda: Justice without Lawyers*. Cambridge UP, 2010.

²³*Ubuntu* is an established concept in Africa and African Philosophy, that has also found expression in jurisprudence such as the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). In the discursive framing of the TRC, the then Archbishop Desmond Tutu described *Ubuntu* as the principle that stipulates that "a person is a person through others" (Tutu 31). In *No Future Without Forgiveness*, Tutu explains that "'My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours.' We belong in a bundle of life. We say, 'A person is a person through other persons.' It is not, 'I think therefore I am.' It says rather: 'I am human because I belong. I participate, I share'" (Tutu 31). In other words, *Ubuntu* is the idea that the individual and the community are intrinsically linked, and as such, concern for the wellbeing of the community should be the concern of the individual. In the context of the TRC, this informed the ways in which the "revealing" of the "truth" was framed as facilitating reconciliation between victims and perpetrators as individuals but also communities as national reconciliation. Other noteworthy scholars concerned with this question include Gobodo-Madikizela, Mahmood Mamdani, and Thaddeus Metz. This conceptualization is specifically informed by the South African context, as is appropriate for the purposes of this paper. However, its conceptualization is textured somewhat differently in other spaces and contexts across the continent, though the essence of the idea remains the same. The term is also one that has been the subject of critique and contest. Such scholarship includes the work of Precious Simba, Bernard Matolino, and Wenceslaus Kwindigwi.

invoke South Africa here not to suggest that the crimes of Apartheid and Genocide are comparable, nor do I wish to suggest that Apartheid was a genocide. Rather I want to point to the potential of their ideological reach and how these bodies of transitional justice simultaneously were constituted by the violence they sought to address and constitute the frame through which that violence is addressed and a future beyond it is imagined.

Hugo Blick's Netflix limited series *Black Earth Rising*²⁴ complicates and attempts to resist the grand narrative of the Rwandan genocide, which for decades has been unchallenged in its explanation of the genocide as a singular event perpetrated by Hutu extremists against the country's Tutsis. The plot of the series centres around Kate Ashby, adoptive daughter of Eve Ashby—an International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor—who was born Hutu, raised Tutsi, and a victim of genocidal violence regardless of her ethnicity. Through the focalized narrative of the protagonist's process of encountering the truth of her past, *Black Earth Rising* stages some of the juridical, historical, and political tension produced by the Manicheanism of Europe—as a marker of the West—and Africa—as a marker of the Rest. Unlike the previous two texts considered, the Netflix series does not locate itself only in Rwanda, though it is the knot to which the internationally diffused pursuit and evasion of justice is bound.

What sets the narrative aside from conventional narratives concerning the Rwandan genocide is not only its focus on the globality of the genocide, especially, as a question for justice, but also its focus on the atrocities committed by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)²⁵ in the years immediately after the genocide of 1994. A pivotal example of this is the massacre of approximately 50,000 Hutu refugees in a camp in what was then called Zaire. In pursuit of the extradition and prosecution of genocidaire, Patrice Ganimana, assistant Secretary at the Bureau of African Affairs within the US State Department, Eunice Clayton explains:

The genocide of '94, it has no comparison. 800,000 Tutsis, at least murdered within 100 days.
The most intensive ethnic slaughter in modern history. The RPF ended that genocide, no doubt.
And no doubt either, they did not cause it.
[...]

²⁴Some clips from the series are available at BBC Two: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0bk8t10.

²⁵The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) is currently the ruling party in Rwanda, led by President Paul Kagame. The inception of the RPF traces back to 1987, when the Rwandese Alliance for National Unity (established in 1979, in Uganda after the dismantlement of the Amin regime) rebranded. The RPF is credited with having stopped the genocidal massacres of 1994 and has held power in Rwanda since then. The years following the immediate aftermath of the genocide have seen a developing critique of the regime and the techniques deployed in and after 1994 genocide, supported by witness testimony amongst other forms of evidence.

See, Waldorf, Lars. "The Apotheosis of a Warlord: Paul Kagame." *Warlord Democrats in Africa: Ex-Military Leaders and Electoral Politics*, edited by Anders Themnér, Bloomsbury Academic/Nordic Africa Institute, 2017, pp. 68–94. iles.webb.uu.se/uploader/1576/Warlord-Democrats-in-Africa.pdf#page=79; Caplan, Gerald. "Rethinking the Rwandan Narrative for the 25th Anniversary." *Genocide Studies International*, vol. 12 no. 2, 2018, pp. 152–190; Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*; Reyntjens, "The Rwandan Patriotic Front's information and communication strategy."

By '97, the RPF sent its own military leaders into the ranks of this new Tutsi army to help coordinate the dismantling of these final camps. And it's true, in the camps I attended, Ganimana and his people were there. But I contend they were using these refugees as human shields.

Of an estimated 50,000 people, 9,000 were children, many more were women, and almost all were catastrophically ill. They couldn't have gone anywhere if they'd wanted.

Then one day in April, all Western aid workers were ordered to leave. We were taken to a cordon about a mile away, out of sight of the camps. A few workers, including a colleague of mine, Edward Holt, remained until the very last. So I cannot say I saw it. I cannot say I saw anything. What I can say is that four days later, when we were finally allowed to return to the camp, it was completely empty – and I mean completely.

Not a single vestige to indicate that less than a week before, some 50,000 people had been living there. (Blick, Episode 7 00:26:51–00:30:41)²⁶

However, as Michael Ennis, Eve's long-time friend and Kate's mentor, explains to Kate, upon finally revealing that her life as a Rwandan Tutsi and genocide survivor was in part fictional, that there was evidence of her history as a Hutu survivor of an RPF led massacre. Eve, he continues:

[...] wanted to take the recordings to the ICTR and use it to prosecute the new government – for you, for your family, for Ed, for justice. Except everyone knew it wouldn't be allowed. It couldn't be. Not by the US, the UK, the UN. Not even by me.

What was happening out there, to you, your family, how many others [...]

[...] as terrible as it was, on the scale of things, it couldn't match what had already happened.

There's no possible equivalence.

And that's what we were there to prosecute. The genocide of almost a million people. (Blick, Episode 7 00:32:41–00:33:28)

There is in this difficult staging, the complexity and nuance of the genocide, which seared the social fabric of the region for years, but also an uncomfortable unsettling of the idea that the genocide was contained within the borders of Rwanda and, more so, that the RPF acted to stop the genocide without succumbing to the temptation of retaliatory violence. This is, however, swiftly denied and negated, and the singular, grand narrative of the genocide in Rwanda is preserved. Said differently, there is, although veiled, again a turn toward Manicheanism, which in this instance produces the Tutsi as perpetually victim, hero, good African and the Hutu as perpetually perpetrator, villain, and bad African. Kate, enabled by her belief of her status as victim of the Rwandan genocide—that she is a Tutsi—brings the Manicheanisms of the Rwandan genocide, the dichotomy between good and evil, victim and perpetrator, Tutsi and Hutu into stark relief. “It really is that simple” for Kate Ashby, before she learns the story of her survival. This echoes the

²⁶For transcripts of each episode, see, sublikescript.com/series/Black_Earth_Rising-7660730. For additional material on *Black Earth Rising*, see, studioaka.co.uk/black-earth-rising/, www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-45447840, and www.mirror.co.uk/tv/black-earth-rising-rwandan-genocide-13225571.

Afropessimist archetypes described by Martha Evans and Ian Glenn in “‘TIA—This is Africa’: Afropessimism in Twenty-First-Century Narrative Film” (2010). According to Evans and Glenn, Afropessimism refers to the “consistently negative view that Africa is incapable of progressing, economically, socially, or politically” (14–15). In their discussion of various afropessimist tropes, they explain also that there is a traceable constellation of various stereotypes often deployed in films about Africa, intended for global audiences. These include corrupt officials, the “white-do-gooder” (32). Extending this line of thinking, Diana Adesola Mafe argues that these stereotypes have the potential to, and often do, become archetypes. In “(Mis)Imagining Africa in the New Millennium: *The Constant Gardener* and *Blood Diamond*” (2011), Mafe argues that there are “trenchant archetypes in fiction and non-fiction films” which include “the White Queen, the White Hunter, the Good African, the Dangerous African and so on” (69). In a global moment, following the pandemic, which certainly negatively impacted cinema, and saw a pull toward streaming services, *Black Earth Rising*, despite its challenging if the grand narrative of the Rwandan genocide, demonstrates the translation of cinematic tropes of Africa. In so doing, it reflects the inherent contradiction of the Manicheanism it stages.

The accepted grand narrative of the genocide in Rwanda as it is represented in various popular literary texts often flattens the textures and nuances that reflect the complicated nature of humans and the collectively shared historical trauma of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Instead, this popularly staged and accepted narrative offers a simple delineation: 1) the perpetrators of violence were exclusively Hutus and the victims of this violence were Tutsi and 2) the RPF heroically ended the genocide (though no atrocities were committed by any members of this group). *Black Earth Rising*, however, explicitly deals with the allegations of crimes against humanity and acts of genocide reportedly committed by the RPF while fighting against the genocidal violence incited by Hutu Power extremists within the borders of Rwanda, but also, importantly, it represents the testimony that the RPF was committing genocidal motivated atrocities in refugee camps outside of Rwanda and well after the infamous “100 days of genocide.” In so doing, Blick’s limited Netflix series does resist the single story of the Rwandan genocide. However, it also adheres to the politics of the Manicheanism that textures the distinction between Hutu and Tutsis. The Tutsi General Simon Nyamoya, for example, is indicted on counts of War Crimes, as opposed to Genocide, for the atrocities he coordinated in Congo despite the targets of these atrocities often being Hutu. What is at stake in a critique of these tendencies and tropes is a potential reckoning with something like a politics of good neighbourliness that was palpable when I visited Rwanda in 2018.

This good neighbourliness is echoed in *Let the Devil Sleep*, whilst *Black Earth Rising* stages what is at stake when “victim” and “perpetrator” morph from category to quality and ultimately identity—which is precisely the Manicheanism which renders impossible a living together. There is a living with history, a living with genocide that cannot be left veiled and unattended by national reconciliation; and these literary texts, in precisely their staging and re-presenting of the reification and reinscribing of the Manicheanism between Hutu and Tutsi surrounding the genocidal massacres of 1994, are calling for attention to it, while the narrative of *Black Earth Rising* seems to call for resistance to it.

Conclusion

In offering a reading of three literary-cultural texts, both fictional and non-fictional, this paper has attempted to argue that the patterns of representation of the Rwandan Genocide trope the categories of victim and perpetrator. As the paper has explained, there is something like an emerging tradition in representations of the Rwandan genocide which often reify and reinscribe the colonial Manicheanisms which saturated Rwandan society and underscored the genocide of 1994. Texts such as Uwem Akpan's "My Parents' Bedroom" stage and in so doing make available for critique the reified difference between the Hutu and Tutsi people established through colonial discourse. Through its narration by Monique, whose father is Hutu and mother is Tutsi, the short story offers a crisp snapshot of the assumed features of individuals belonging to either the then Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa ethnic groups, or their thing-ification. However, it also troubles and muddies these supposedly obvious distinctions through characters, such as Monique herself, who highlight the fictional quality of these beliefs, or her uncle, Tonton Andre, whose character is used to show that often the ethnic identity of a person could not be read on the body. However, the text does also rely on the single-story of the Rwandan genocide, producing the perpetrators of the genocide as exclusively Hutu and its victims as exclusively non-Hutu. It is, like JP Stassen's graphic novel *Deogratias: A Tale of Rwanda*, an example of a text that acknowledges the Twa as a group of people who, although not directly targeted in the genocide, were not left unscathed by it. The text is, however, set in the first days of the unfolding of the genocide of 1994, and beyond Monique and her brother Jean's survival does not gesture to the trauma of the genocide which continues to sear more than 20 years later.

However, as its title suggests, the short documentary *Let the Devil Sleep: 20 Years after Genocide in Rwanda* focuses on life after the genocide and the success of the national project of reconciliation, which it marks as being facilitated by the Tricador Foundation. The narrative of this text focuses on two couplets of individuals, reinscribing the categories Hutu and Tutsi—now disavowed by the Kagame regime—as perpetrator and victim, respectively. Moreover, like Akpan's short story, it also genders these categories, texturing the victims of the genocide as female and the perpetrators thereof as male. The dualisms are also charged with the Manicheanism that polarized Rwandan society prior to, during, and as the documentary shows, 20 years after the genocide. In its reinscribing of the designations—Hutu and Tutsi as perpetrator and victim—it also reinscribes the qualities of evil and goodness, disdain and desirability, of the Manicheanism of colonialism—itsself a bloodless genocide through the annihilation of the culture of African civilizations.

Through its distinctly divergent narrative focus on the genocidal atrocities committed by the RPF in the wake of the genocide, *Black Earth Rising* resists the tendency to assume that the bloodiness of the Rwandan genocide is a) contained within the 100 days of massacre in 1994 and b) so simple a single story as "evil" Hutus killing "good" Tutsis. Instead, it attends to the question of retaliatory violence and in so doing calls into question the similarly flat narrative of reconciliation in Rwanda as, although difficult, ultimately successful in facilitating the living together of perpetrator and victim. This is due in large part in its unsettling of the marking of Hutu and Tutsi as victim and perpetrator, respectively. Through the complicated colliding of Kate Ashby's past and present, *Black Earth Rising* reveals the flawed heroism of the RPF and the danger of

producing the categories of victim and perpetrators as well as the question of identity as impenetrable. However, although it does complicate the binary between victim and perpetrator, it also abides by the binary of Hutu and Tutsi. In so doing, even in its resistance to reification and reinscribing of the Manicheanism of other representations of the Rwandan genocide, it abides by a politics of dichotomy.

Thus, what this paper attempts to demonstrate is the ways in which these texts, in highlighting the inherent contradiction of assuming that trauma such as genocidal violence, which is to say violence that sears, can be temporally and spatially bound. Moreover, this paper attempts to show that the literary texts read here stage the problem of assuming that victims and perpetrators are always absolutely discrete figures, as their operation as legal categories insists. Said differently, what this paper tries to demonstrate is the limit of understanding the work, in the Barthesian sense, as a metaphor for genocide: observable, “held in the hand,” or merely physical, neatly bound and its origins as a knowable problem. Rather, what these texts gesture toward, in their fraught staging of racial stereotypes, the intimacy of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, and reconciliation as ongoing process, is the unboundedness of trauma. Moreover, the most recently released of the texts, *Black Earth Rising*, also speaks directly to the geographic unboundedness of the genocidal violence that unsettles the established grand narrative of the genocide in three ways: 1) that the violence entangled with the politics of the genocide unfolded within the borders of the Rwandan state, 2) that it lasted only 100 days, and 3) that it was only Hutus, whether Hutu Power extremists or coerced participants who committed atrocities. In these ways, these texts invite and facilitate an understanding of genocide which is pluralistic in its expression, not only physical but psychological, economic, as well as social. In *Let the Devil Sleep*, for example, the process of reconciliation between perpetrators and victims is shown to be ongoing, as is the struggle with poverty in the community shown on screen. “My Parents’ Bedroom” illustrates the various intimacies of the genocide: that the violence was public rather than clandestine, and that perpetrators and victims had for years prior cultivated relationships as family members, friend, and neighbours. Moreover, its ending, like *Black Earth Rising*, calls attention to the question of retaliatory violence and in so doing unsettles the assumptions, regarding perpetrators of atrocities, maintained by the grand narrative of the genocide in Rwanda. Thus, these texts simultaneously stage and question the single story of the grand narrative of the Rwanda genocide, and gesture toward the innate plurality of lived experience. These texts invite us to consider what might be at stake in attending to the distinction between life after genocide and life beyond genocide, as well as the difference between living alongside each other/good neighbourliness and living together/*ubuntu*.



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