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Los Angeles

Memory, Violence, and Genocide

in Contemporary Francophone Literature

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in French and Francophone Studies

by

Nanar Khamo

2018

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Memory, Violence, and Genocide

in Contemporary Francophone Literature

by

Nanar Khamo

Doctor of Philosophy in French and Francophone Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2018

Professor Françoise Lionnet, Chair

My dissertation investigates questions of violence and alterity in texts by J. M. G. Le Clézio, Natacha Appanah, Ananda Devi, Khal Torabully, and Véronique Tadjo. By bringing together francophone postcolonial studies and genocide studies, I create new conversations that can foster a better look at transnational literature and history. I compare traditional historiography and contemporary fiction, and analyze literary techniques, such as voice, character, and perspective, to demonstrate how authors transcend boundaries to create collective memories of violent events. The first chapter compares and contrasts portrayals of genocide and historical violence in Le Clézio's *Révolutions.* I focus on the interweaving of past and present in the novel to argue that ultimately Le Clézio falls shorts of creating a genuinely multidirectional space, even as he does give voice to the historically marginalized. In the second chapter, I move to cases of “nongenocide” to allow for a broader discussion of violations of human rights in two

of Appanah's novels: in *Les Rochers de Poudre d'Or* I focus is on gender issues and "coolies," the indentured laborers bound for Mauritius, and in *Le dernier* frère, I discuss the little-known history of a group of Central European Jews who were kept in an old colonial "camp" in Mauritius during World War II. I analyze Appanah's treatment of such violent histories in conjunction with the concept of "nongenocide" (Meierheinrich 2011), and I conclude that Appanah creates multidirectional (Rothberg 2009) conversations about historiography and race to foreground traumas hidden from collective memory. The question of narrative point of view with regards to victimhood and representation drives my interrogation of the two texts that I study in the third chapter. Torabully's *Mes Afriques, mes ivoires* and Tadjo's *L'ombre d'Imana*, are responses to genocide in Rwanda that reveal the authors' anxieties about the civil war in Côte d'Ivoire and its risks of descending into genocide. In all the chapters of this thesis, I examine *how* authors represent different forms of historical violence so as to answer a central question: what are the literary tools these authors mobilize in order to create empathy and community among different groups as well as between author and reader(s).

The dissertation of Nanar Khamo is approved.

Benjamin L. Madley

Lia N. Brozgal

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2018

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I dedicate this thesis to my family and friends for their endless support and for grounding me throughout this thrilling adventure.

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INTRODUCTION

HISTORY, LITERATURE, MEMORY

> The significance of memory, both individual and collective, is that it mediates between past and future. As Hannah Arendt explained, memory resides between the 'no more' and the 'not yet' in the 'space' of the 'timeless present.' She writes that it's the 'function of memory to "present" (to make present) the past and deprive the past of its definitely bygone character. Memory undoes the past.' The result is that 'memory transforms the past into a future possibility,' and that's why arguments about memory are so contentious and so emotive: control over the future requires control of the past and leads to greater contestation over which version of the past should prevail.
> -Dan Stone in a podcast talk with Royal Holloway London's Trauma, Fiction, History Seminar Series, 2010[1]

It is here that historian and Holocaust studies scholar Dan Stone explains the uses and stakes of studying memory. By drawing from political philosopher Hannah Arendt's work, Stone points to the ways in which memory disrupts the linear history of the nation-state by pointing to the different "versions" of the past that could exist. This thesis interrogates how "memory undoes the past" by scrutinizing literary texts that reimagine defining moments of historical violence. The texts discussed here "mediate" and interweave past, present, and future to reflect on instances of violence. By controlling the narrative about history that occurred in their own countries, even as they engage in transnational dialogues about other spaces, these postcolonial writers use the literary form to develop alternative histories that enable them to imagine different possibilities.

History is the pattern of human migration. The contact from these migratory practices creates unequal power dynamics, as evidenced throughout the colonial period, often erupting in various forms of violence. When human contact results in conflict, the violence of this

[1] Stone, Dan. "Robert Eaglestone and Dan Stone—Trauma and History: Approaches to the Holocaust." Audio Blog Post. Trauma, Fiction, History Seminar Series. 12 October 2010. Web. 12 December 2015.

interaction produces forms of destruction, possibilities of hybridity, or both. For those who either witness or survive the violence, literature and art provide a medium to memorialize and commemorate the catastrophe. It is this process of remembering through the literary form that provides the impetus for this dissertation and the ways in which the form operates within a transnational framework.

After the linguistic turn, scholars have reassessed the relationship between literature and history through the lens of memory, interrogating the ways in which authors negotiate memory (Fogu et al 2). This thesis thinks through the literary possibilities of representing genocide and other forms of historical violence through this prism of memory. I propose to study the following texts that negotiate with representations of different instances of state violence: J. M. G. Le Clézio's *Révolutions* (2003); Natacha Appanah's *Les Rochers de Poudre-d'Or* (2003) and *Le dernier frère* (2007); Véronique Tadjo's *L'Ombre d'Imana* (1998); and Khal Torabully's *Mes Afriques, mes ivoires* (2004). My focus is on two specific elements of narrative that help me develop my analysis: genre and perspective.

Genre plays an important role in this dissertation. Le Clézio, Appanah, Tadjo, and Torabully use a transnational framework to imagine moments of historical contact in order to reconsider the past by means of hybrid generic forms. Rather than engaging with the typical genre associated with genocide, the testimony, I move beyond this framework to consider the possibilities of fictional narratives in contrast to the truth-value of testimonials. The editors of *Probing the Ethics of Holocaust Culture* explain that, "As Cathy Caruth has argued in her influential study of trauma, the question of representation is at the heart of testimony because it concerns how trauma is turned into narrative or how the wound is given voice" (Fogu et al 23). This thesis does not examine the firsthand testimonies of survivors of atrocity, but rather

analyzes the ways in which the author of fiction imagines the creation of such a narrative, leading to the question of who has the platform to do so. Le Clézio, for instance, as a descendent of colonial figures, discusses instances of violence in France, Tanzania, and Mauritius to draw attention to marginalized histories through a technique that I call “imagined testimony.” His Nobel Prize reinforces the importance of his position. Yet his preference for equivocation (Lionnet, “World Literature, Postcolonial Studies, And Coolie Odysseys” 2015) makes it difficult to point out exactly where the blame lies. He operates in ambiguity and depicts the multiple facets of historical responsibility for violent acts.

To interrogate genre and perspective in my chosen texts, I seek to complicate the perpetrator-victim-bystander framework developed by historian Raul Hilberg in *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe, 1933-1945* (1992) to discuss figures implicated in the Holocaust. A transnational framework demands that we consider the uses of the foreign bystander as a fourth category as one who seeks to analyze human rights violations in order to understand them. Historian Rebecca Jinks discusses how the reader of genocide literature already knows the “plot” of what happens (Jinks 54) as a result of the knowledge of the history of the genocide that has unfolded. She also points out that most of these texts share similar narrative structures showing how tensions between groups grow and eventually develop into an official policy of extermination. In Tadjo’s and Torabully’s books, two texts that deal with the Rwandan genocide (1994), I intend to show how each genre—one, a hybrid travel diary, and the other, a collection of poetry—do not recycle genocide tropes or narrative structures, but rather offer innovative literary structures. By drawing on their concerns about genocide unfolding in Côte d’Ivoire (2001-2002) in comparison with genocide in Rwanda, these authors disrupt the typical narrative of genocide. In other words, the future remains contingent and uncertain and the roles

of victim and perpetrator become less defined and more fluid. Creating these transnational links opens up possibilities for the future and the past. These texts point to the cyclical nature of violence, rather than as a one-time event that had no antecedent and no recurrence.

Mauritius is, in many ways, at the center of this project, as a way to open up to questions about the Indian Ocean, Africa, and, ultimately, the world. As the only country that is both part of *La Francophonie* and the Commonwealth, having been colonized by both France and Britain, Mauritius' unique form of creolization that derives directly from its violent heritage of slavery and indentured servitude offers a hybrid lens used by historians, literary critics, and writers to analyze its multiple legacies and its multiple forms of violence. Creolization, a process that produces and fosters hybridity, is generally the result of violent contact, as I discuss in chapter three. These different instances of violence in Mauritius enable me to study its literature in conjunction with literature that represents violence in other countries—France, Rwanda, and Côte d'Ivoire—in order to offer a transnational and transcultural perspective on genocide and other historical atrocities rooted in political circumstances.

How to define creolization? Anthropologist Charles Stewart declares that "the term 'creole' has itself been creolized, which is what happens to all productive words with long histories" (Stewart 5). From the Portuguese *criollo-crioulo*, "creole" has evolved to have multiple meanings in different countries throughout its history. As Stewart explains, "[...] historical contingencies have fractured and inflected the meaning of 'creole' so that it denotes different things in different places" (Stewart 8). How, then, to define such a term? Françoise Lionnet explains: "Understood as a fluid, unstable, and open-ended practice of adaptation that generates unpredictable syncretisms rather than mere homogeneity, creolization indexes both fantasies of intimacy and oppositional encounters" (Lionnet, Blackwell 2015). This process of

hybridity resulting from uneven power dynamics denotes a blending which has proven difficult to pin down. Its various synonymous terms—syncretism, hybridity, mixture, transculturation—attests to its elusive nature (Stewart 6).

The adaptable nature of creolization allows nevertheless theorists to develop it in more abstract terms. In 1989, Martinican authors Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphael Confiant and Jean Bernabé published *Eloge de la créolité* as the first attempt to use creolization as theory (Confiant et al 1989). This text nevertheless develops the concept of "créolité," in opposition to the "créolisation" further expounded upon by another Martinican writer, Edouard Glissant. Créolité implies a stagnant state, whereas creolization is a process and hence more versatile.

Creolization in the Indian Ocean takes on a unique character, given that Mauritius and Réunion did not have native populations, despite the cosmopolitan nature of the Indian Ocean prior to European intervention.[2] Although ancient and medieval encounters might have led to some island explorations, the European heritage of today's Mauritius began in the 16th century, in an age of exploration and conquest. In 1598, the Dutch arrived at an uninhabited island and named it *Mauritius* after a Dutch prince, Maurice van Nassau. Following a period of Dutch rule, the French took over the island, having already established control over the neighboring Ile Bourbon (present-day Réunion), renaming the island Ile de France. The lasting repercussions of French colonial rule resided primarily in the introduction of slavery where the French began to transport slaves from Africa. The multifaceted heritage of Mauritius informed its unique process of creolization.

[2] Françoise Vergès explains that "the cosmopolitan port cities of the Indian Ocean—Monbasa, Calicut—in which Armenians, Jews, Gujuratis, Bengalis, Hindus, Chinese, African, Malagasy, and Muslims mingled, forging a lingua franca, prefigured current cosmopolitan cities" (Vergès, "Indian-Oceanic Creolizations" 137).

The slave system introduced by the French created the environment for the first wave of creolization. Françoise Vergès emphasizes how the system sustained the process: “It described a process constantly at work whereby new slaves were integrated and creolized by slaves who had arrived earlier.” The fostering of a multicultural environment is linked to violent episodes. Vergès explains: “There is no *creolization without conflict* [...] The coexistence of conflict, tension, and cohabitation produced a unity, the creolized world, that was, in turn, tested by new contrasts. Both plurality and unity were produced by the same structures: slavery and colonialism” (Vergès, “Indian-Oceanic Creolizations”144).

Following its capture during the Napoleonic Wars, Mauritius came under British rule from 1810 to 1968, heralding a second wave of creolization with the introduction of the system of indentured servitude (1838-1917). Despite controversies regarding the comparison of the slave and indenture systems, Véronique Bragard in *Transoceanic Dialogues: Coolitude in Caribbean and Indian Ocean Literature* grounds the comparison of similarities in the attitudes of plantation owners at the beginning of indentured servitude, which eventually changed over time. Yet, even in the first instances of these dehumanizing conditions, several allowances imparted crucial differences that distinguished the slave's condition from that of the indentured servant, such as contact with the native country and possibility of staying with others (Bragard, *Transoceanic dialogues* 31).

Forged in continuous contact, either imposed or welcome, the violent undercurrents of creolization, which has often led to its inception, require further inspection. In expounding the merits of Edouard Glissant's development of creolization and his theory of Relation, Vergès explains what she perceives are the shortcomings of his theorizing:

Though I share with Glissant a good part of his analysis of creolization, I do not think

> that the process of creolization is the rule in situations of contacts between cultures (historically, it was rather the exception). Contacts between cultures do not necessarily produce creolization; they can produce apartheid, separatism, multiculturalism, and indifferent cohabitation. Creolization requires the forgetting of origins, which survive only as reconstructed and transformed. In the current era of globalization, the politics of economy of predation, trafficking in human beings, brutality, and force are organizing new territories of power and resistance. There are new global cities. Are we witnessing processes of creolization in these territories? (Vergès, "Indian-Oceanic Creolizations" 147-148).

Vergès's intervention raises the question: Can one speak of a post-genocide creolized society? Is creolization a process that could result from a destructive process of genocide, or is it rather a parallel movement—a force that fosters unity whereas the latter produces destruction? To consider these links, this thesis examines how authors negotiate between representing various forms of historical violence and the ways in which hybridity and solidarity could emerge out of the destruction.

Studying the history of colonization and genocide evokes the role of political and statist institutions. The tension between the political and the literary is central to my project. I scrutinize the positions endorsed by the Nobel Prize Committee, UNESCO, as well as the United Nations at large, so as to analyze the way that these institutions shape history in contrast to narratives of a literary nature with their complex perspectives. My thesis aims to illustrate the ways in which the literary is in conversation with these official markers of history. My goal is to suggest that cultural and other forms of genocide need to be better understood and their prevention better articulated by means of more official recognition at the international level through the United

Nations. I want thus to underscore the importance of the literary perspective to policy matters in international contexts. By bringing perspectives developed by literary writers to bear on the policy documents of the above institutions (Nobel, UN), I bring together for the first time two fields of study that have yet to be put in dialogue: postcolonial francophone literary studies and the more social-science oriented genocide studies. Before proceeding with my reasons for establishing this dialogue, it is important to discuss briefly the histories of the two fields and their ultimate uses to this project.

FRANCOPHONE POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES

Using the term "francophone" to preface "postcolonial" emphasizes the francosphere. The French language plays an important role in all of the texts considered here. It is particularly important in the Mauritian context, an island colonized by both the French and British empires but whose French heritage continues to linger particularly in literary spheres where its contemporary writers have achieved much renown. The French language is likewise integral to my third chapter on genocide in Rwanda, civil war in Côte d'Ivoire, and colonial violence in Mauritius and it is the language that provides the transnational link among these different countries.

Whereas postcolonial studies might often be considered as limited to the historical period following the end of the colonial era, I use the term in the fashion of Charles Forsdick and David Murphy to include discussions of colonial periods that have inevitably impacted the post-colonial (that is, post-independence) phase and beyond.[3] Francophone postcolonial studies has not

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[3] In the introduction "The case for Francophone Postcolonial Studies" to their edited volume *Francophone Postcolonial Studies,* Forsdick and Murphy explain how the chapters in the volume "seek to define and reassert the Francophone dimension of Postcolonial Studies, seeking to test the assumptions of Anglophone postcolonial theory against the 'realities' of the Francophone world, while also exporting its own ideas" (9). They explain that

stopped redefining itself, as indicated by the myriad of critical and contentious reactions to the *Pour une littérature monde en français* manifesto (2009), which raised questions about the state of the field and the uses of particular terminology.[4] Françoise Lionnet demonstrates the ways in which the manifesto fails to achieve its lofty goal. Drawing from Zygmunt Bauman's assessment that universality does not preclude difference, but rather invites it, Lionnet argues for a "new inclusive universality" by "'translating' between vernacular *Frenches* and French" (Lionnet, "Universalisms and francophonies" 217). This thesis takes Lionnet's position as a point of departure through the analysis of genre and perspective in the hybrid and multicultural texts of this dissertation.

As Lydie Moudilano illustrates in her article entitled "Francophonie: Trash or Recycle?" in *Transnational French Studies*, many of the problems attributed to postcolonial studies also define Francophone studies, namely an alleged lack of engagement with the current world and ability to explain contemporary global issues. By emphasizing the "francophone" preface to "postcolonial," I underscore my focus in the French-speaking sphere as I discuss questions central to postcolonial studies in general, such as colonial atrocities, identity, and alterity.

The field of francophone postcolonial studies is increasingly focused on global questions that link the little-known literature and history of the Indian Ocean to more visible fields of temporality. Recent publications in the 2000s, such as *French Global: A New Approach to Literary History* (2010), edited by literary critics Christie McDonald and Susan Suleiman, exemplify the shifting winds of the field and the ways in which the focus is centered on an

their goal is to "highlight the Francophone contribution to the emergence of this body of thought [postcolonial studies], while also suggesting the ways in which a more rigorous application of postcolonial thinking to French-language material might allow a more coherent understanding of Francophone postcoloniality to emerge" (13). See also Britton and Syrotinski (2001) and Murdoch and Donadey (2005).

4 See, for instance, Alec Hargreaves, Charles Forsdick, and David Murphy's edited volume, *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and Littérature-Monde* (2013).

interconnected, inclusive history. My work participates in this evolving conversation by bringing empirical depth to the theoretical debates about genocide and migration studies, rendered all the more pressing, given contemporary events (i.e. accusations of genocide against terrorist militant groups such as ISIS, genocide in Myanmar, as well as other areas). An inclusive turn in French and Francophone Studies since the 1980s and 1990s by literary critics such as Françoise Lionnet, Françoise Vergès and Véronique Bragard, has turned attention towards Indian Ocean writers, such as Ananda Devi and Natacha Appanah. These writers engage with questions of history and violence, turning to the fictionalization of real historical events in their texts to offer a different perspective on historical violence in its different manifestations.

THE COLONIAL TURN IN GENOCIDE STUDIES

In 1943, the Polish-Jewish jurist Raphael Lemkin coined the term "genocide," a hybrid term that borrowed from the Latin (*-cide* from occidere, meaning "to kill") and Greek (*genos,* meaning "family" or "race) based on his reaction to the Holocaust as it unfolded. In a flurry of academic study, he connected it to a process that he understood to occur throughout history: a sequence of destruction that he thus named to call attention to it with the hope of destroying destruction itself. He defines genocide as the following:

> Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan 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 belonging to such groups. (Lemkin 80).

Lemkin speaks of "coordinated plan of action," reflecting the later definition by the United Nations that genocide requires "intent," rather than motive. What is also important in Lemkin's original definition is that he points to political and cultural institutions as possible targets of genocide, two groups that are not currently protected under the United Nations's legal code for prosecution of genocide.

As in the case of postcolonial studies, the field of Holocaust studies grew out of a traumatic event. The adoption of the 1948 United Nations General Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (UNGC) created an organizational structure that defined the term.[5] In the years following the end of World War II, a number of survivors, particularly women, began documenting their experience of internment.[6] But it was only in the 1960s that sociologists in particular turned their attention to the Holocaust and begun studying it from the social science viewpoint. In the United States, Holocaust studies began in the formative year 1961 with the Eichmann trial and the publication of Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews*. As literary scholar Michael Rothberg demonstrates in *Multidirectional Memory* (2009*),* which I will discuss below, this parallel movement is not a coincidence; it is through the articulation of the Holocaust that victims of other traumas have been able to openly discuss their own problematic pasts.

5 See http://www.hrweb.org/legal/genocide.html for the full Convention

6 Elisa Von Joeden-Forgey, "Gender and Genocide," *Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies,* 63

Yet, the field of genocide studies clearly focused on the Holocaust as its central axis of research. Scholars such as sociologist Leo Kuper in the 1980s interrogated the concept of genocide itself by expanding the field to consider other genocides and other forms of violence, thus creating the field of genocide studies, or what some scholars have referred to as "comparative genocide studies." During what scholars have identified as the "first wave" of this field, sociologists and political scientists focused on macro level approaches, studying large processes of democracy, modernity and state building. This approach, nevertheless, was challenged in the decades to follow by a new interweaving of macro-micro perspectives as a result of a growing turn to the global in historiography (and, as we have seen, in literary studies, as well). Another challenge to the field has been an academic versus activist debate, in which academics have been accused of a lack of engagement.

As genocide studies emerges as a field distinct from Holocaust studies, it has thus far affirmed its singularity through its emphasis on history and history's empirical hold, disregarding discussions on the representation of genocide in literary and, to a larger extent, cultural production. In what has been identified as the second wave of genocide studies since the 1990s, historians have dominated the field, continuing to eschew literature, as their first wave counterparts, to focus on empirical data. The omission of any literary discussion in the recent publication of *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies* (2010) edited by historians A. Dirk Moses and Donald Bloxham, both identified as important figures of the second wave, attests to this discrepancy.[7] Historian Ben Kiernan's *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur* (2007) is a seminal text of this second wave. Conversely,

7 A collection of essays entitled *Evoking Genocide: Scholars and Activists* (2009), ed. Adam Jones, is a recent text that treats the link between literature and genocide. Leading scholars and activists share their experiences with various cultural representations of genocide, implicitly suggesting the cathartic, rather than analytical, possibilities of literature.

the field of Holocaust studies has not only a rich body of literature, but a number of important studies dedicated to further understanding the representation of this particular genocide.[8] Texts such as Lawrence Langer's *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* (1975) were foundational to establishing literature on the Holocaust as an area of study.

I situate my work within this second wave of genocide studies, in which scholars have identified a "colonial turn" in the interdisciplinary field. Dirk Moses' work , as well as that of historian Benjamin Madley, has been central in drawing together (post)colonial studies and genocide studies, as well as his work in interrogating the concept of genocide and bringing Lemkin back into the fore. This dissertation takes up several of Moses' arguments in *Empire, Colony, and Genocide* and places them within a specifically francophone and literary framework to consider larger questions related to French imperial practice.

One of the guiding tenets of scholars working within this second wave has been to refrain from creating a "canon" of genocides. Moses and Heerten explain the risks of canonization in their introduction to the Nigeria-Biafra war:

> In a very concrete sense, the canonization of the Holocaust and Armenian genocide came at the conceptual expense of Biafra and other so-called partial colonial and postcolonial genocides. Rather than incorporating the colonial and postcolonial into genocide studies, the Holocaust focus superseded them so that only conflagrations that somehow resembled this 'maximal standard' (Martin Shaw) could be imagined as genocide, that is, as the terrible outcome of redemptive ideologies whose victims were passive objects of revolutionary state violence" (Moses and Heerten 20-21).

[8] See, for instance, the *Oxford Handbook for Holocaust Studies*

My intent here is to follow this line of academic inquiry by deliberately training my eye on the tension between what is genocide and what is not genocide as a way of further decentering the field.

The field has been plagued by questions and contentions regarding terminology, particularly with the notion of genocide itself, as well as the interdisciplinary boundaries of the discipline. In his 2009 *Genocide: A reader,* historian Jens Meierheinrich delivers a meticulous historiography of the field of Genocide studies in which he raises two important points. Firstly, the question of canon: is there a canon of a field of accepted genocides? If so, should there be? Meierheinrich argues, in stride with many second-wave scholars of the field, that rather than focus on an established canon, scholars should study different forms of violence, even cases that are not genocide. Meierheinrich also briefly alludes to the lack of literary and cultural analysis, commenting that an inclusion of these fields could enrich, in particular, discussions of memory that inevitably arise post-genocide. This project echoes Meierheinrich's call to "*decenter* genocide studies" by focusing on noncanonical and even nongenocidal cases to better understand what genocide *is*. I argue for the need of the field of Genocide studies to develop its interdisciplinary character with the inclusion of the humanities—that is, the intentional incorporation of the analysis of literary and, in a general sense, cultural productions and representations of genocide and its aftermath. Whereas Meierhenrich acknowledges the need for humanistic scholars and social scientists to appreciate the methodological tools that each has to offer, he focuses on post-genocidal memory as an example of where the humanities in particular could prove its strength through interpretation.[9] Still, he does not specifically reference fictional texts and literary representations of genocide as forming collective memories of genocide.

9 Meierhenrich, *Genocide: a Reader*, pp. 11-12

It remains open to debate whether various forms of historical violence, such as slavery, fall under the rubric of genocide. In *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*, Adam Jones discusses slavery in a section entitled "Contested Cases of Genocide." He raises the common argument used by critics of slavery-as-genocide that the desire by slave owners to keep enslaved people alive means that it does not fit under the crime of genocide. Refuting this line of argument as "sophistry," Jones asserts that calling slavery as genocide "seems to me an appropriate response to *particular* slavery institutions that inflicted 'incalculable demographic and social losses' on West African Societies, as well as meeting every other requirement of the UN Genocide Convention's definition" (Jones 40). Jones does not include, however, any empirical data, but rather transitions into the *We Charge Genocide* petition of 1951, in which a group of African-American activists, shortly after the ratification of the 1948 UNGC, charged slavery as genocide to the General Assembly of the United Nations. In discussing slavery, Jones explicitly focuses on the Atlantic slave trade and the horrors that it generated, but does not refer to the Indian Ocean. He rather opens his section on slavery with the assertion that "slavery is pervasive in human societies throughout history" (Jones 39), without noting the longevity of the institution in the Indian Ocean. As historian Richard B Allen explains, with regards to the institution of slavery in the Indian Ocean:

> Recent arguments that Filliot underestimate the volume of the Mascarene trade and that perhaps as many as 388,000 slaves were exported to Mauritius and Réunion between 1670 and 1848 underscore the importance of this region to understanding an African diaspora that, as Joseph Harris noted 35 years ago, reached across the Indian Ocean as well as the Atlantic. (Allen 47)

I do not intend to conduct fieldwork to prove that slavery in the Indian Ocean is a solid case of genocide, however, I wish to draw attention to this historical neglect and particularly to the literary representations that aim to redress this lacuna and create memories of that past.

These literary representations, in turn, implicitly point to worries about cultural genocide. Lemkin wished for cultural genocide to be included in the UNGC, but it was not ratified by the United Nations. Moses expounds upon the history surrounding initial, statist opposition to prosecution of cultural genocide: "It is no surprise that the most steadfast opponents of the cultural genocide provision were settler colonial states that wanted to assimilate their Indigenous minorities in the name of progress and modernity" (Moses, "Genocide" 39). I continue to explore the concept of cultural genocide in the third chapter. By pointing to modernity, Moses seems to indicate the extent to which the civilizing mission justified colonization as a means of superseding so-called archaic traditions in the settled lands.

Hannah Arendt and philosopher and sociologist Max Horkheimer contribute to early links between the Holocaust and modernity (Hinton 441). Zygmunt Bauman has "made this argument more forcefully, linking Nazi atrocities to modern metanarratives (of progress, rationality, race), centralized political control, technologies of death, rational design and a project of social engineering and bureaucratic efficiency" (Hinton 441). But much work remains to be done to compare modernity with genocide, particularly in relation to conceptions of cultural genocide. Anthropologist and genocide studies scholar Alexander Hinton explains "one of the ironies" of contemporary postcolonial genocides often perpetrated upon gaining independence:

> Yet another irony is the fact that these acts are often motivated by discourses of modernity, as the newly liberated sovereigns remain subjugated by colonial regimes of truth—a paradox of 'double consciousness' that was recognized by W. E. B. DuBois and

> Franz [*sic*] Fanon. Palimpsests of the new are inscribed upon local and colonial traditions of the old. (Hinton 445)

As he points out, racial discourses in Rwanda throughout the postcolonial period, leading to the 1994 genocide, were motivated by Belgium colonial policies and practice. Hinton stresses that conceptions of modernity in Rwanda were infused with local culture, bringing together colonial ethnic narratives with local ideas of politics and culture.

Evocations of cultural genocide occurred earlier in the twentieth century. Jean-Paul Sartre too evokes cultural genocide in his article entitled "Genocide" in *New Left Review* (1968) where he enumerates the various instances of historical genocide. He uses the article as a space to condemn US intervention in Vietnam, going through the UNGC to articulate the reasons why it would constitute a case of genocide. It is the first attempt by a major French intellectual figure to work through the concept of genocide. He tries to explain the concept in his own terms, deeming that it was after 1830 that more genocides occurred outside of Europe. He explains that colonization did not lead only to the physical destruction of groups but also to the suppression of their cultural institutions:

> In point of fact colonization is not a matter of mere conquest—like the annexation in 1870 by Germany of Alsace-Lorraine; it is, of necessity, cultural genocide. Colonization cannot take place without the systematic elimination of the distinctive features of the native society, combined with the refusal to allow its members integration with the parent country, or to benefit from its advantages. (Sartre 2)

As we will see in the third chapter, I consider the worry of cultural genocide in relation to colonization in Africa, an implicit subtext to literary discussions surrounding the genocide that occurred in Rwanda. Concerns about bystanders and witnesses to the Rwandan genocide inform

representations of the atrocity. Jinks also explores the foreign figure of what she calls the "Western protagonist" in genocide literature who comments on the genocide unfolding without acknowledging the effects that the West has in having helped that genocide unfold in the first place. My intention in my third chapter then is to consider this figure of what I call the "anxious bystander" specific to Africa to raise questions about the West's role in colonization, as well as possibilities for the future in the African continent.

My thesis thus challenges the French empire's goal of the civilizing mission by showing the ways in which its driving humanism from the Enlightenment is linked to a certain genocidal mindset that has led to a process of cultural genocide. The literary texts that I study are thus attempts to reimagine the history and violence that had occurred (Le Clézio, Appanah) and to link anxieties about lingering colonial dynamics to the possible unfolding of future violence (Tadjo, Torabully).

This project is ultimately an analysis of different forms of human rights violations, even as my focus on genocide studies is deliberate. Moses summarizes the hypocrisy that is at the heart of human rights discourse:

> The liberal discourse on human rights is predicated historically on the triumph of precisely the liberal state that is the outcome of those colonizing processes. Paradoxically, then, the structure of feeling that led to the genocide keyword—Lemkin's status as member of persecuted people—was violated by the implications of the cluster of other keywords into which genocide was inserted. (Moses, "Genocide" 40)

By discussing the "cluster of keywords," Moses refers primarily to human rights discourse. This discipline of human rights, as Moses argues, is associated with the triumph of the liberal nation-state at the expense of the historically marginalized. The lack of legal prosecution in the UNGC

against cultural genocide stands as "proof" of this hypocrisy. My focus on genocide, then, is deliberate because of the inherent paradox that lies within the field of human rights. Whereas Lemkin, as Moses points out, did believe in the superiority of western civilization, his empathy for minority groups and persecuted people, as well as his belief in dismantling hierarchies, render him less morally suspect than statist powers. It is in fact his empathy for persecuted people as a result of his own family persecution that enables him to operate within this network of minor transnationalism, as I discuss below, that enabled the inception of the term "genocide."

METHODOLOGY & THEORY

In *Multidirectional Memory,* literary scholar Michael Rothberg expounds on the eponymous question of multidirectionality as a means of putting different types of memory into dialogue. His theory of multidirectional memory provides a structure that can help me interpret the different forms of violence that I study within a transnational framework. In his opening passage, Rothberg discusses an instance where literary critic Walter Benn Michaels alleges that the historical institution of slavery in North America does not receive the same treatment in the United States that the Holocaust does, particularly in comparison to the Holocaust Museum and the lack of one dedicated to the legacy of slavery.[10] This biting critique that exemplifies the phenomenon of competitive memory is what Rothberg uses as the basis to introduce his *multidirectional memory* as an alternative to competitive memory that pits different groups against one another to assert their right to publicly mourn their trauma. This concept allows for a different way of perceiving the public space: not as static, but evolving and in constant flux or, in

[10] The Smithsonian African American History Museum opened in Washington D.C. (2016) with exhibitions such as "Slavery and Freedom" dedicated to exploring the history of slavery in the United States. Another museum, The Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration, located in Montgomery, Alabama, also seeks to explore the history of enslavement.

Rothberg's own terms, as "malleable discursive space" (Rothberg 5). In light of my thesis that entails the study of slavery, indentured servitude and genocide, multidirectional memory allows me to put the traumas in dialogue without submitting to notions of competitive memory.

Yet how to address these different instances of historical violence without submitting to notions of competitive memory? In discussing philosopher and fellow historian of ideas Michel Foucault's stance on discourse, Hayden White seemingly anticipates Rothberg's idea of multidirectional memory: "Wherever Foucault looks, he finds nothing but discourse; and wherever discourse arises, he finds a struggle between those groups that claim the 'right' to discourse and those groups that are denied the right to their own discourse" (White, *Content of the Form* 114). This competitive, unequal access to discourse informs Rothberg's concept. If we rephrase Foucault's notion of discourse as the representation of the past, then it invites comparisons with Rothberg's multidirectional memory. White's contention with regard to narrative, representation, and the Holocaust has played a role in the development in the field since 1990, with his contention that modernist historiography uses literary techniques to represent the history of the Holocaust.[11]

In thinking through multidirectional memory, my intent is to draw out the literary techniques that enable the creation of this space, for example moving from the singular to the plural. The texts I analyze reimagine the past to combat the silence surrounding the historically marginalized and to create a space where these silent histories come into contact or confront each other.

[11] In his essay "Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth" in the collection *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the Final Solution* (1992), White expounds up on his theory of history as a form of narrative, which he had developed in *Metahistory* (1973), in relation to the Holocaust as a modernist event.

The French language links the four authors. Le Clézio, for instance, proclaims that French is the homeland to which he feels he belongs.[12] I will tease out the remnants of the *mission civilisatrice* with an emphasis on the role of the French language, given that language and literature are invariably linked. I consider the novel as an imported cultural product by exploring how the authors, particularly Le Clézio and Appanah, bend genre to weave together the past and present. Ultimately, this dissertation shows that discussions about genocide reveal subtexts about other instances of violence, adopting a conceptual approach similar to that of Rothberg's multidirectional memory. To speak of one genocide as unique or singular precludes a larger conversation about how the process of genocide unfolds in other countries; hence the necessity of relativizing the uniqueness of the Holocaust, for example.

The benefits of an approach that incorporates multidirectional memory are evident throughout the thesis. Rothberg's concept provides a framework to think through the ways in which writers and artists work within a productive public space, rather than against one another. As part of a move in the second wave of genocide studies to move the Holocaust from the center of the field, I argue in my third chapter that the metonymy and metaphor of "Rwanda" create another point of reference in genocide studies for African writers who wish to think through (post)colonial violence. It follows, then, that perhaps the creation of a post-Rwanda multidirectional space entails the articulation or the evocation of the concept of genocide itself, particularly in a literary text.

My methodology likewise draws from the parallel fields to genocide studies: memory studies and trauma studies. Several canonical texts from memory studies inform my analysis, such as work done by historian Pierra Nora, philosopher Paul Ricoeur, and philosopher and

[12] Le Clézio writes a paean to the French language, in which he declares "la langue française est mon seul pays, le seul lieu où j'habite." Le Clézio, J.M.G. "Eloge de la langue française." *L'express.* July 10, 1993. Web. May 8, 2018. https://www.lexpress.fr/informations/eloge-de-la-langue-francaise_605707.html

sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, all of whom are French theorists. Whereas one of the pioneering texts in trauma studies, literary scholar Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed experience* (1996), offers a fruitful framework to consider Caruth's theory of the "double wound" in conjunction with Appanah's *Le dernier frère*, the field's general focus on applying techniques of psychoanalysis on texts to question the role of the individual and the collective remains beyond the scope of this dissertation.[13] I address critiques of the lack of intersectionality (Shaw 1989) in trauma studies in my discussion of the chapters below, particularly through the work of Stef Craps.

If civilization has been implicated in genocide, then might the lateral transnational exchange permit a way to rethink civilization? Lionnet and Shih's minor transnationalism offers a productive framework for linking the texts that I study in this thesis through the emphasis on "cultural transversalism [that] includes minor cultural articulations in productive relationship with the major (in all its possible shapes, forms, and kinds), as well as minor-to-minor networks that circumvent the major altogether" (Lionnet and Shih, *Minor transnationalism* 8). They explain that:

> Unlike the postnational or nomadic identities that are relatively unmoored from the control of the state and bounded territories, minor transnationality points toward and makes visible the multiple relations between the national and the transnational. It recognizes the difficulty that minority subjects without a statist parameter of citizenship face when the nation-state remains the chief mechanism for dispersing and regulating power, status, and material resources. (8)

[13] Yoav Di-Capua in "Trauma and Other Historians: An Introduction" in *Historical Reflections* expounds upon the development of the field of trauma studies: "We offer an experimental exercise by which we appeal to the historical specific of various events and texts with trauma theory in mind. Thus, in place of a theoretical reading, we salvage historical specificity by foregrounding the relationship between experiences and event/text in specific temporal and circumstantial frameworks" (8). She clarifies the role that psychoanalysis plays in trauma theory when she asks the following questions: "The psychoanalytical model of trauma is structured on the idea of well-defined modern subject or self, but does it apply to societies at large? Do collectives exhibit the same symptoms as traumatized individuals, such as intrusion, dissociation, and repetition?" (12).

The debate on uniqueness of the Holocaust has shifted in favor of transnational links. Omar Bartov illustrates the need for this new paradigm shift when, in *Mirrors of Destruction: War, Genocide, and Modern Identity*, he refers to the Holocaust as "a crucial event for Western civilization" because it was "perpetrated by one of [Western civilization's] most important nations" (Bartov 6). Moses explains the ways in which arguments in favor of Holocaust uniqueness reveal an important concern: "The unconscious slippage between Western and universal is designed to maintain the Holocaust's central place in scholarship and memory as late modernity's event of world historical significance" (Moses, "Anxieties in Holocaust and Genocide Studies," 338). Using the framework of minor transnationalism in the context of genocide studies permits my analysis to go beyond the need to imagine the Holocaust as the universal norm to consider the ways in which genocide in Rwanda, for example, becomes another point of reference, particularly in Africa, for this process of destruction, as a way of discussing other subtexts and concerns.

GOALS

This dissertation has several overarching goals in bringing together francophone postcolonial studies and genocide studies in dialogue. First, I intend to articulate a francophone framework in genocide studies, which does not currently exist.[14] To do so, I have chosen several texts from a list that is by no means exhaustive. Several important cases for future studies on genocide in the French and francophone context, which I do not discuss in my thesis, include: the question of violence in Algeria perpetrated by the French powers; the religious wars against the Albigenses and the Huguenots; and the murder of the native peoples of the Caribbean. My intent

[14] Scholars such as Michael Rothberg do sometimes operate through a francophone perspective, but not exclusively.

is to think through French colonial practice in the *vieilles colonies* and to ask whether such violence amounted to genocide in the Indian Ocean and East Africa, and then to think through similar forms of violence in the postcolonial state in Rwanda and to articulate them in relation to genocide. Whereas there needs to be more work done on the Atlantic Slave trade and the possibility of genocide enfolding, my explicit intention is to draw attention to the Indian Ocean, which is often understudied.

Secondly, my thesis reinforces the necessity of understanding the stakes of fictional narrative in the field of genocide studies. As we shall see, literary studies functions as a way of building networks, fostering empathy, and displaying anxieties. Moses' work on anxiety in *Probing the Ethics of Holocaust Culture* provides a starting point for thinking through the pervasive anxiety in literature on genocide, an emotion to which he explicitly refers as his point of departure in the article, albeit written as an academic and not as an author of fiction. Jinks' monograph *Representing Genocide: The Holocaust as Paradigm?* (2016) explores representations of the four other major "canonical" forms of genocide in the 20th century other than the Holocaust—that is, the Armenian genocide (1915-1918); the Cambodian genocide during the rule of the Khmer Rouge (1975-1979); genocide in Rwanda (1994); and the Bosnian genocide (1992-1995) against the Bosnian Muslim population. My intention is to go beyond the boundaries of what is accepted as "genocide" to consider the ways in which colonial atrocities could be considered under the rubric of this particular crime against humanity, as revealed by important subtexts in literary works.

The third aim of this dissertation is to emphasize the uses of the concept of cultural genocide in literary production, as well as the ways that literary texts implicitly point to concerns that could be defined under the rubric of cultural genocide. The overarching direction of my

argument, articulated particularly in chapter three, is to think through the possibilities of institutional and legal change, beginning with changes in the UNGC to include cultural genocide, as Lemkin had originally envisioned.

Finally, I wish to bring to the fore some important questions related to gender and genocide. The fields of Holocaust studies and genocide studies are still dominated by male academics; this may be why questions of gender and "gendercide" remain underdeveloped.[15] Whereas questions of gender do not constitute the explicit aim of this undertaking, each chapter explores questions of gender in each text.

Given that I am discussing contested cases of genocide, aside from Rwanda, I situate this work within the tension between what is genocide and what is not genocide. Moses points out that historiography on genocide often aims to find the "bad guy," instead of recognizing that genocide is the "outcome of complex processes." (Moses, *Empire, Colony, Genocide* 7). My intent is to tease out the repercussions of processes viewed as results or consequences of colonization.

Indeed, scholars in genocide studies have not typically focused on cases of genocide unfolding within the context of French imperialism. The focus has been on genocides that have occurred as a result of policies and governance in the British and German Empires. Yet, what I seek to highlight in this dissertation is that both Holocaust studies and genocide studies tend to rely greatly on French and francophone theorists to work through the theoretical underpinnings of genocide. Scholars often evoke Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jacques

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[15] This is partly due to the nascent field. Obvious exceptions are: work done by Adam Jones (his article on gendercide) and important work done by scholars on the Rwandan genocide. Wender Lower has also done work on gender and genocide, particularly in her monograph *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* (Houghton Mifflin, 2013).

Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Jean-François Lyotard. That these intellectuals have grappled with the question of genocide in different ways and under different schools of thought—related to questions of representation, colonization, and domination—suggests the importance of further thinking through the links between the French Empire and genocide. What is it about the policies of the French Empire, as summarized by the idea of *mission civilisatrice*, that differentiates it from the other two major imperial powers, England and Germany, of the nineteenth century? It is worth nothing that scholars have established genocide occurring under both empires, but the idea of genocide remains contentious when discussing the French empire.[16] My project does not seek to offer empirical evidence to think through these differences, but focuses rather on considering the literary legacies of these debates in the Francophone context. Another aim of this dissertation, then, is to examine more closely the links between French and francophone intellectual thought and the concept of genocide.[17]

A tension remains between postcolonial intellectuals when discussing colonial violence and the Holocaust. Césaire and Fanon, for example, have been dismissive of the Holocaust at times, which they have formulated in terms of race. Fanon, for example, referred to "little family quarrels" among European families, pointing to the differences between violence occurring within the borders of Europe versus in overseas empires (Fanon 115). Césaire has also formulated his critique of the attention given to the Holocaust in terms of race. In speaking about the hostility to Hitler, Césaire declares: "[…] ce n'est pas *le crime* en soi, ce n'est pas *l'humiliation de l'homme en soi*, c'est le crime contre l'homme blanc, et d'avoir appliqué à

[16] The German Empire accused of genocide against the Herero and Nama populations in German South-West Africa in 1904. The British have been accused of genocide against Australian aboriginals, notably in Tasmania.

[17] Whereas postcolonial theory has drawn predominately from theorists in the Anglophone realm, such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha, these thinkers have in turn been disciples of French thinkers (e.g. Said of Michel Foucault, Spivak of Jacques Derrida, Bhabha of Jacques Lacan).

l'Europe des procédés colonialistes dont ne relevaient jusqu'ici que les Arabes d'Algérie, les coolies de l'Inde et les nègres d'Afrique" (Césaire, *Discours sur la colonisation* 14). According to Césaire, the demonization of Hitler is directly tied to racial politics, to what he refers to as the "pseudo-humanism" of Western intellectual thought. Rather than decrying human rights violations of deplorable events unto themselves, the West rather only recognizes them in terms of who is deemed "human." In reaction to this idea, Césaire brings together various groups of historically marginalized people. In the literary texts that I study, particularly in Appanah's *Le dernier frère*, I aim to bring together postcolonial studies with Holocaust studies by placing it within a larger framework of comparative genocide studies, in which the Holocaust is not the center of discourse on genocide, but also so that its impact and devastation are not minimized to emphasize the trauma of another group.

CHAPTER ROAD MAP

In the first chapter, I examine Le Clézio's *Révolutions*. By analyzing the stakes of Le Clézio's use of perspective and genre in his novel, I show that his novel fails to create an authentic multidirectional space, even as he does bring attention to little known histories and represents the historically marginalized through the use of the first-person perspective.

The second chapter examines the ways that Appanah creates multidirectional spaces in her two novels, *Les rochers de Poudre-d'Or* and *Le dernier frère*. The latter novel is particularly effective in taking one of the West's most defining moments and catastrophes, the Holocaust, and linking it to the minor experience and thus creating a minor multidirectional space. This novel illustrates best the type of work Rothberg and Stef Craps have done, notably in Craps' edited volume *Postcolonial Trauma Novels* (2008).

Chapter three interrogates the question of diaspora, violence, and identity in Africa around the commemoration of genocide in Rwanda and the possibility of genocide erupting again at the turn of the century as a result of civil war in Côte d'Ivoire. It is in this particular moment that I wish to examine how literary representations and responses to violence in Africa by African writers reveal anxieties about cultural genocide.

Existing literary studies on the genocide in Rwanda have failed to examine the genocide in a larger framework of literature produced in relation to genocide. My intention here is to push the analysis of Rwanda outside of its existing framework to consider it within a larger conversation about genocide and literary productions. In the field of francophone postcolonial studies, scholarship either focuses on Rwanda or the Holocaust, but it is my aim here to situate discussions about genocide within the francophone context in a larger conversation and to trace "Rwanda" as a global event and as a point of reference, much like the Holocaust, but one that permits a lateral exchange, as argued by Lionnet and Shih (2009), rather than the need to validate human rights violations in Africa through links to the Holocaust.

In discussing Anne Whitehead's essay "Journeying through Hell: Wole Soyinka, Trauma, and Postcolonial Nigeria," Craps explains that Whitehead "raises the important issue of mislaying a Western construct (trauma studies itself) onto the likely radically different experience of suffering and oppression known to African postcolonial subjects" (Craps and Buelens 5). In many ways, more than theories of trauma studies, local theories of creolization and coolitude offer ways of healing and looking forward through the creation of solidarity and empathy.

An example of this is Torabully's theory of coolitude, which I will expound upon in the third chapter, as it envisions a multidirectional space. Torabully explains how it functions:

> Coolitude also seeks to emphasize the community of visions between the slave and the indentured labourer, shared by their descendants, despite that the fact that these two groups were placed in a situation of competition and conflict. As such coolitude may be seen as an attempt to bring the past and present of these groups into contact and to go beyond past conflicts and misrepresentations. (Carter and Torabully 150)

The reference to the "past and present" and the need to "go beyond" harken back to Stone's quote at the beginning of this introduction and the uses of memory. Torabully furthermore develops the uses of literature in conjunction with coolitude. He explains:

> The function of literature should reach other horizons and go beyond the limitations of the past. It is particularly important for literature to work in a political, social and cultural framework in which all the components of Caribbean and other societies could feel part of a wider community. People need identifications, representations to mediate their relation to the past and present. (Carter and Torabully 166)

Literature permits the interpretation of the past through narrative; statist history, in contrast, offers a less nuanced version of change over time. It is on this hopeful note that I turn to my first chapter on Le Clézio's *Révolutions*, a novel that challenges notions of time and space in its representations of different forms of historical violence.

CHAPTER 1: Remembering the Historical Other in Le Clézio's *Révolutions*

INTRODUCTION

"How can a writer act, when all he knows is how to remember?" asks Franco-Mauritian writer Jean-Marie Le Clézio during his acceptance speech in Sweden for the 2010 Nobel Prize of Literature. Throughout the speech, Le Clézio draws on the paradox of the writer as a figure fixed in a forest of no escape, a metaphor for his feelings of enclosure in his own world of creation, an observer rather than an actor on the world scene. In the question above that he asks about the difference between acting and remembering, Le Clézio points to the ways in which memory functions as an important literary tool that informs his fiction, particularly his family's history. In this chapter, I explore how Le Clézio remembers his familial history and how he reformulates it in terms of global history. What are the stakes of this process of remembering, particularly in relation to identity formation? He also suggests, in his Nobel speech, that writing is a form of action. How then does such an action resonate with the readership when a writer has an international platform, as he certainly does?

With the publication of his first novel, *Le Procès-verbal* (1963), and subsequent win of the Prix Renaudot (1963), Le Clézio launched a successful and prolific literary career that has spanned several decades. His work has been recognized internationally: he won the Prix Jean Giono and the Prix Paul Morand in 1980; the prix Carltone Littérature et cinéma in 1991; the Prix International Union latine in 1992; and the Prix Prince Pierre de Monaco in 1998.[18] Beyond the literary prizes, and perhaps more significantly, Le Clézio's influence extends to educational

[18] Marina Salles, "Le Clézio dans le 'champ littéraire,'" 2.

spheres, as well. As Marina Salles notes, "Il y a longtemps que des extraits de son oeuvre sont entrés dans les manuels scolaires [qui] ont fourni des sujets d'examen."[19] It is no surprise that contemporary French readers consider Le Clézio the greatest living writer in French.[20]

Born in Nice to a Breton family who had immigrated back to France from colonial Mauritius, Le Clézio's identity is multiple. When he was 8 years old, he moved to Nigeria where his father was working as a doctor in the British army, a year of his childhood he later recounts in *L'Africain* (2004). Le Clézio also studied in England and did his military service in Thailand. He spent several living with the Embera-Wounaan tribe in Panama. Currently, he splits his time among three primary sites: New Mexico, Mauritius, and France. Le Clézio himself has remarked on his sense of displacement in the world, saying that he feels that "moi, je suis de nulle part. Ma seule solution est d'écrire des livres, qui sont ma seule patrie."[21] The role of writing is linked to his identity where he often uses history as a conduit to establish a sense of self through his interpretation of change over time. He does not see himself as anchored to any particular land; the varying subjects of his corpus illustrate his nomadic sensibility. Mauritius nevertheless remains a point of focus and a site of further inquiry for the writer, particularly given his family's history and colonial links to the country. A visit to any bookstore in Mauritius will highlight the presence of Le Clézio's novels shelved under the "Mauritiana" section, a claim to his belonging

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[19] ibid. The articles adds that Le Clézio has been known as "le chouchou des enseignants[e]s."

[20] A 1994 poll in the literary magazine *Lire* found that readers consider Le Clézio "le plus grand écrivain de langue française," http://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2008/10/09/le-nobel-de-litterature-decerne-au-francais-jean-marie-le-clezio_1105151_3260.html

[21] Jérôme Garcin, "Les Révolutions de Le Clézio," *Biblios*. 9 October 2008. https://bibliobs.nouvelobs.com/romans/20081009.BIB2166/les-revolutions-de-le-clezio.html

to the island-nation, rather than solely to France, although it was only later in life that he became a Mauritian citizen.[22]

Despite his strong association with the island, Le Clézio's relationship with Mauritius remains contradictory and ambiguous. The critical consensus surrounding Le Clézio reveals an ambivalent relationship to his oeuvre and choice of subject. Whereas some critics applaud his world mentality, others express concerns that he exoticizes his subjects throughout his oeuvre, particularly in his description of flora and fauna.[23] The representation of alterity within Le Clézio's world arises throughout the critical scholarship on his oeuvre. One of my goals here is to examine through a direct engagement with scholarly charges for and against the author how the politics of global human rights develops in Le Clézio's novel where he bends genre and perspective to represent the point of view of the historically marginalized.

Scholarship on his work applauds his openness to the world and his concern for "minor voices." Salles, for example, in analyzing Le Clézio's work on other authors, believes that Le Clézio shows "une prédilection pour les situations ou les peuples ignorés par l'histoire et la culture officielles, avec un refus des hiérarchies instituées qui le conduit à s'intéresser avec la même intensité à des auteurs consacrés et au premier roman d'un jeune Mauriciens."[24] Critics conflate his interest in depicting minor voices with the ability to do so successfully. In his introduction to *J.M. G. Le Clézio: Accéder en vrai à l'autre culturel*, Jean-Marie Kouakou states: "[…] Le Clézio, en sa vision, est parvenu à dépasser le concept du citoyen républicain, censé recouvrir à l'échelle de la nation celui de la mono ethnie, pour envisager un espace plus large de

[22] Maya Jaggi, "JMG Le Clézio: 'Being European, I'm not sure of the value of my culture, because I know what it's done.'" https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/apr/10/le-clezio-nobel-prize-profile

[23] Bruno Thibault, for instance, discusses the "métaphore exotique" in Le Clézio's corpus as the "inscription problématique de l'espace et du voyage dans l'écriture" (*J.-M.G. et la métaphore exotique*, 12)

[24] Marina Salles, "Le Clézio dans le 'champ littéraire.'"

rencontre qui serait peut-être celui du citoyen du mode" (Kouakou 11). The concept of "citizen of the world," in its contemporary iteration, dates back to the Enlightenment, as well as the origins of human rights.[25] This lofty ideal, however, is at odds with Bronwen Martin's perspective on what the Enlightenment means in Le Clézio's corpus. For her: "Le Clézio's critique of Western epistemology and Enlightenment universalism/humanism [is] associated explicitly in his texts with colonialism and the colonizing missions" (Martin 1). Similarly, Kouakou's analysis confers on Le Clézio the status of one who creates a space of encounter, but it does not assess the power deferential between individuals nor does it examine whether these encounters can result in outcomes of equality and inclusivity. Critics celebrate Le Clézio for going beyond national boundaries and identity politics, even as the underlying ideology of his approach remains ambiguous. I am interested in thinking through this ambiguity, rendered all the more pressing by his Nobel status. Critics who speak of Le Clézio's work in such general terms as Kouakou fail to further interrogate the nuances of his depictions and representations of the historically marginalized. One of my primary tasks of this chapter is to illustrate the ways in which Le Clézio fails to create a multidirectional ethos in the novel, even as he does give voice to the marginalized figure of a female slave.

Some critics often point to the ways that Le Clézio goes beyond race-based identity in his work. Bruno Thibault and Isabelle Roussel-Gillet explain in their introduction to their issue of the *Cahiers J.-M.G. Le Clézio,* entitled "Migrations et métissages," that:

> Construire son identité sur une territorialité, sur une communauté historique, sur une caractéristique tribale ou culturelle c'est courir le risque de voir se multiplier les tensions et les exclusions; c'est pourquoi l'écrivain souligne que l'identité véritable ne peut être

[25] See the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy for a history of Greek and Roman cosmopolitanism https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/cosmopolitanism/

> basée ni sur une couleur de peau ni sur un credo mais sur une langue et une mémoire, c'est-à-dire en tenant compte des aléas de l'histoire. (Thibault and Roussel-Gillet 16)

The stakes of Le Clézio's representation of history is a specific vision of identity formation. As indicated in the quote, language—and thus, literature—forms the basis for an identity according to Le Clézio. He has affirmed his relationship to the French language at several moments in his career, explaining that French is his homeland, rather than any actual site or territory.[26]

Other critics have also accused Le Clézio of an inherent Euro-centrism in his work. Literary critic Lydie Moudileno, for instance, in grappling with the question of whether Le Clézio's work could constitute "postcolonial" writing, borrows Albert Memmi's term "le colonisateur de bonne volonté" to examine more closely Le Clézio's novels *Onitsha* and *L'Africain*. She wonders how a descendent of colonizers could ever write about the colonial without being haunted by accusations of exoticism. Drawing from Memmi again, she concludes that Le Clézio could be considered a postcolonial writer if he were to accept "le malaise de cette postcolonialité sous le soupçon, mais qui, conscient de cet inconfort, déciderait de s'y installer, en faisant de cette posture paradoxale une marque de sa singularité, et la condition même de sa créativité" (Moudileno, "Trajectoires et apories du colonisateur" 79). It is important to further assess whether Le Clézio embraces this "posture paradoxale" and the ways in which he approaches it, particularly through his fiction.

In taking stock of the critical response to Le Clézio's oeuvre, one novel in particular, *Révolutions* (2003), brings to the fore these questions of identity, history, and authorship. Analyzing this novel calls for a revisioning of the way we read Le Clézio; for an examination of the critical work evaluating this particular text; as well for as a greater commentary on Le

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[26] Le Clézio, "Eloge de la langue française*." L'express*. 10 July 1993. https://www.lexpress.fr/informations/eloge-de-la-langue-francaise_605707.html

Clézio's way of looking at the world, history, and world history. This chapter therefore seeks to interrogate the links between authorship and authority, as well as the ways in which an international platform commands the fictional creation of a certain memory of historical violence, such as slavery and regional massacres, both of which could be qualified under the rubric of "genocide."

REVOLUTIONS: GENRE & PERSPECTIVE

Upon its publication, critics hailed *Révolutions* as Le Clézio's chef d'oeuvre. [27] Critics have noted the autobiographical details woven throughout the plot, reflective of the general chronology of the author's life. The novel interweaves between past and present through the dual perspectives of two men named Jean. The protagonist, Jean Marro, grows up in 1950s Nice, and embarks on travels around the world, commenting on various forms of revolution and unrest that he observes during the 1960s, told in the third person. The other Jean is his ancestor, Jean Eudes, a soldier in revolutionary France (1780s-90s) and later migrant to Mauritius in the early 19th century, who tells his story in the first-person perspective. The link between the two men is Jean Marro's aunt Catherine, who nourishes his imagination with stories about their familial past, a relationship that merits further exploration to draw out Le Clézio's commentary on reading and writing, where the oral transmission of history enables the figure of the "reader" (in this case, receiver of the stories) to become the writer. The interplay between reading and writing, as illustrated in the relationship between Jean and Catherine, shows the way that knowledge and history are created. In other words, Jean's "reading" of his ancestor's histories enables him to

[27] Jean-Claude Lebrun, "J.-M. G. Le Clézio Son chef d'oeuvre?" in *L'Humanité* March 27, 2013 asks "Comment dire en même temps la richesse, la hauteur de vue, la force de la composition ?" Other fans include: Patrick Grainville, "Une saga de nomads," *Le Figaro Littéraire*, February 6, 2013; Daniel Rondeau, "L'autre monde de Le Clézio," *L'express*, February 6, 2013.

know the world and its history, as well. The narrative structure of the novel recalls his earlier novel *Désert* (1980) through the interweaving of past and present. Unlike *Désert*, however, *Révolutions* introduces a third perspective, that of a slave named Kiambé who is torn from her native Tanzania in the early nineteenth century and taken from her family and forced into enslavement in Mauritius. She recounts the story of her life in the first-person perspective, which is one of the important links between her story and that of Jean Eudes that I will explore in this chapter.

Given Le Clézio's prolific career that has spanned the last few decades, uneven critical scholarship about this particular novel necessitates a closer look at particular themes and literary techniques that distinguish the text among his corpus. Despite the two Marro family perspectives, critics tend to focus on and favor Jean Marro and his travels to discuss Le Clézio's "quest for origins," ultimately privileging the autofictional element of the text. Often, they invoke Jean Marro in relation to his aunt Catherine, a relationship that I take into account in this chapter. The narrative of Jean Eudes is sometimes given cursory treatment, to say nothing of Kiambé's narrative, as I show below. Part of this may be due to the narrative space afforded to these characters—Jean Marro's coming-of-age narrative constitutes the bulk of the novel, whereas Kiambé's voice only emerges four-fifths of a way through the novel and takes up relatively little narrative space. Yet, as I will show, her narrative functions in conjunction with that of Jean Eudes as an effort to foster connection between the two historical tales. It is no coincidence that the last encounter with Jean Eudes' voice segues into the introduction to Kiambé's story, even as the Marro family narrative continues with the introduction of Jean Eudes's wife Marie Anne's voice, following that of Kiambé.

The polyphony of voices and perspectives raises the question of genre within the novel. The text is an example of autofiction, given how closely Jean's biography resembles that of Le Clézio.[28] Not only do the biographical details of Jean Marro and Le Clézio match up—birth in Nice, Breton family, Mauritian ties—their names, as Claude Cavallero points out, refer to one another. Cavallero writes in a footnote: "Détail onomastique à souligner: le nom du personnage, Jean Marro, suggère en raccourci le nom même de l'auteur: Jean-Mar(ie Le Clézi)o, de même que ses initiales (J. G. M. pour Jean Gildas Marro) forment l'anagramme de celle de Jean-Marie Gustave…" (Cavallero 164). Le Clézio sustains a strong semantic link with his character for the reader through the two names that resemble one another. Le Clézio himself has discussed several times the importance of his familial biography to his fiction. He states frankly that "en vérité, j'ai le sentiment de n'avoir jamais rien écrit d'autre, depuis 'Le Procès-verbal,' que des autobiographies […] C'est la raison pour laquelle j'aime utiliser la première personne du singulier" (Garcin 2008). According to the author, his oeuvre as a whole constitutes a look into his past. He then explains, nevertheless, in the same interview, that in *Révolutions*:

> Voilà un cas précis, encore trop proche, trop brûlant, qui m'obligeait à prendre de la distance, à utiliser la troisième personne. Ici, j'ai inventé Jean Marro pour ne pas avoir à écrire je. Il me ressemble beaucoup, mais ce n'est pas moi. Disons que Jean est un frère jumeau dont je ne peux pas me détacher mais dont je peux à tout moment m'éloigner. (Garcin 2008).

Le Clézio here articulates his reasons for structuring Jean's story in the third person, in contrast to other semi autobiographical stories that take place throughout his oeuvre. Even as the novel doubles as a fictional autobiography, it is also a coming-of-age novel, a bildungsroman wherein

[28] Serge Debrosky coined the term autofiction to describe his his novel *Fils* (1977).

Le Clézio treats questions of global history, particularly through the prims of *révolutions*, and human rights.

Literary critic Joseph Slaughter forges a link between the bildungsroman and the development of human rights law, explaining: “The movement of the subject from pure subjection to self-regulation describes the plot trajectory of the dominant transition narrative of modernization, which both the *Bildungsroman* and human rights law take for granted and intensify in their progressive visions of human personality development” (Slaughter 9). In speaking about the characteristics of postcolonial bildungsroman, Slaughter explains: “These contemporary examples share with their classical precursors a vision of *Bildung* as both a writing and reading practice, even as they radically displace the scene of novelistic activity from a room of one’s own to modernity’s disavowed spaces” (Slaughter 28). Although *Révolutions* does not necessarily visit “disavowed spaces,” Jean’s travels ultimately create a rhizomatic network (Deleuze and Guattari 1980) stemming from the stories recounted to him by his aunt. It is through the act of “listening,” which also functions as a way of “reading” and accessing the past, that Jean begins to know the world, later enabling him to take on the role of writer and creator himself.

One of the ways that Jean understands history and the world is through Jean-Eudes’s historical narrative as recounted by Catherine. The novel offers to the reader another historical narrative through Kiambé’s perspective. In examining the ways in which Le Clézio represents two contested cases of genocide in the novel, Le Clézio decidedly does not evoke the question of terminology. In his descriptions of Brittany, he focuses on cultural elements, such as language, rather than depicting episodes of massacre and violence. Le Clézio expresses his approach to creating a collective memory and using terminology in representing history:

> Tout effort de mémoire est salutaire. Il ne s'agit pas de recourir aux lois et aux décrets pour écrire l'histoire. Non plus que d'utiliser les grands mots, de parler de génocide. Plus simplement, il y a une responsabilité des colonisateurs vis-à-vis de ces petits pays, anciennes colonies aujourd'hui à l'abandon, qui vivent pratiquement de la charité internationale. La France doit amener à l'âge adulte des pays qu'elle s'est employée si longtemps à maintenir à l'enfance.[29]

In a response that has faint echoes of French President Nicholas Sarkozy's 2007 speech in Dakar, Le Clézio here seemingly rearticulates a neocolonial attitude.[30] According to him, it is France's responsibility to correct its historical wrongs, thus diminishing agency from any of the formerly colonized countries, these "petits pays." It is perhaps the way in which he speaks of these countries that raises a host of questions. By celebrating the importance of memory, Le Clézio nevertheless decries the importance of using terms such as "genocide" to represent the past or create collective memories. Even as he points to specific historical actors throughout *Révolutions* in several key moments, as I will further explore, he does not refer to either violence in the Vendée or the institution of slavery as genocide.

Structurally, it is difficult to situate the text in terms of genre, given its elements of autobiography, fiction, historical detail, and change in perspective. The implicit links between the historical and the biographical, the global and the local, the familial and the personal function together in a way that allows Le Clézio to propose a new way of seeing history through this

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[29] Natahalie Crom, " 'La littérature, c'est du bruit, ce ne sont pas des idées." 1 February 2007. http://www.telerama.fr/livre/16327-la_litterature_est_du_bruit_ce_ne_sont_pas_des_idees.php

[30] Thomas Hofnung. "Le jour où Sarkozy stupéfia l'Afrique." 9 octobre 2007. http://www.liberation.fr/france/2007/10/09/le-jour-ou-sarkozy-stupefia-l-afrique_12060

literary lens.[31] I argue that the novel is a postmodern bildungsroman that goes beyond the conventions of its own genre through the interweaving of past and present, pointing to how Jean's personality is not created solely through his own actions, but also through his familial past that has shaped who he is, as well as the transmission of this past through his relationship with his aunt Catherine. Incorporating an imagined testimony through Kiambé's narrative also permits Le Clézio to contrast the bildungsroman with a story of an enslaved person whose personality development was not "natural" (as articulated by Slaughter with regards to the bildungsroman) in the same way as Jean, as a result of the institution of slavery.

Le Clézio's focus on identity formation throughout his oeuvre is important in analyzing this novel. It is through the creation of the rhizome that identity is formed. In other words, it is through connection and relations between people that history is passed on and shared and identity is created. As Martin argues, "Le Clézio's concept of the self as a process of endless metamorphosis represents a fundamental dismantling of the hierarchies on which the traditional notion of the individual in the West is based, calling into question both egocentrism and anthropocentrism" (Martin 23). She points to the uses of doubles in *Le Procès-Verbal* as an early example of the ways in which Le Clézio employs this literary technique to show the mutable self. My intent is to study the techniques used by Le Clézio to depict both the self, through the figure of Jean, and the other, through the figure of Kiambé, within the genre of bildungsroman. The way that Le Clézio uses perspective is of particular importance within my analysis of genre, as well as his transitions from one voice to another.

Central to the novel is the concept of *révolutions*, as indicated in the title, to elucidate Le Clézio's vision of history and historiography. The concept of révolutions evokes a variety of

[31] On focusing on the Kiambé narrative, Christelle Sohy also mentions the hybridity of genre in the text (*Cahiers le Clézio*, 210).

meanings in relation to Le Clézio's analytical framework of representation. Literary critic Robert Miller explains it in terms of human relations: "Each departure, each displacement in the life of Jean, of his friends, and of his ancestors is an irreparable rupture and re-opening of space and time. Revolutions are the concrete and spatio-temporal representation of multiplicity, discovery, radical change and loss." [32] Miller formulates revolution as points of rupture, ones that could lead to the creation of rhizomatic networks in place in the novel. In an interview, when asked about the meaning of "revolution" in the novel, Le Clézio explains that he believes that history is cyclical, punctuated by the historical revolutions of human history.[33] Roussel-Gillet, on the other hand, explains Le Clézio's title in religious terms : "Le Clézio reprend le thème de la visitation dès le titre : *Révolutions* est une référence directe à saint Augustin pour qui les âmes accomplissent une révolution, rencontrent Dieu puis reviennent habiter d'autres corps" (Roussel-Gillet 144).

I argue in this chapter that the idea of cyclical history creates a paradox in the novel. The idea of history undergoing a series of *révolutions*, a cyclical pattern of repetition, as well as abrupt breaks, is less a cynical view of human nature than a way of reinforcing the same power structures that arose throughout the colonial period. By comparing and contrasting the three main narratives of the novel, I aim to show how Le Clézio's novel fails to create a multidirectional space as a result of the concept of revolution, despite the voice he gives to the historically marginalized. The public as a "malleable discursive space" (Rothberg 2009) cannot occur in the

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[32] Robert Miller, "Traveling in the New Francophonies: Maryse Condé's *The Story of the Cannibal Woman* and J. - M. G. Le Clézio's *Révolutions*, " 237.

[33] Guy Duplat, "Le Clézio et les révolutions intérieures." *La Libre*. 19 February 2003. http://www.lalibre.be/culture/livres-bd/le-clezio-et-les-revolutions-interieures-51b87cd8e4b0de6db9a84c2f

space of the same novel that reproduces uneven discourse, as evidenced throughout Kiambé's narrative.

The disinterest in Kiambé's narrative is apparent in several reviews, both journalistic and academic. An article in the *Nouvel Observateur* in which Jérôme Garcin interviews Le Clézio brings to head several important points that I wish to make. At the end of the article, the author offers a summary of the novel, without any mention of Kiambé. There is a reference to Aurore de Sommerville, a relatively minor character: "Il y a une petite présence dans ce grand livre. C'est Aurore, une sourde ramenée d'Indochine pour être esclavagisée à Nice par un couple de notables. Aurore, animal sauvage, est le symbole de ces 'Révolutions' dont le Clézio semble être le témoin perpétuel" (Garcin 2008). The reviewer focuses on Aurore, who does play an important role in Jean's imaginary as a figure on which he remains fixed; yet it is curious that the reviewer chooses not to mention Kiambé at all, particularly as the review calls attention to Aurore as a figure that has been "eslcavagisée." For rather than a figure of Jean's obsession, as is Aurore, Kiambé stands as her own narrative voice, emphasized through the use of the first-person perspective, to offer a testimony of slavery and maronnage in Mauritius during the nineteenth century.

The question of slavery in Mauritius remains contentious. Authors do not typically write about slavery in novels in Mauritius, as Markus Arnold has shown (Arnold 2014). Discussing the lack of Mauritian novels that address slavery, Arnold points to various instances where a new generation of authors, since the 1990s, have engaged with complex questions of identity, history, and memory in Mauritius. While at first glance these authors have not overtly discussed the question of slavery, Arnold references certain moments in novels that do allude to aspects of slavery, such as having Creole characters and the "topos of marooning [that] is transferred to a

contemporary perspective" (Arnold 2014). Whereas the UNESCO slave route project has renewed research in the slave trade, more work remains to be done with regards to the historical institution of slavery in the Indian Ocean, particularly the Mascarene Islands.[34] In representing slavery in his novel, Le Clézio chooses an overlooked subject for his fiction and gives voice to the historically marginalized.

The concept of gender was also complicated in the Indian Ocean World as compared to the Atlantic Slave Trade. Some scholars argue that there was a preference for female slaves, but as Teelock indicates, "Mauritius, like the New World slave systems, preferred male slaves to women" (Teelock, *Bitter Sugar* 28). In choosing not only to give voice to a slave, but a *female* slave, Le Clézio gives voice to doubly marginalized figure through his fiction, using the technique of imagined testimony to afford her the narrative space to recount the history of her enslavement, maronnage, and subsequent freedom. Yet, in contrast to Jean's bildungsroman, Le Clézio can only discuss Kiambé in terms of what the West did to her and its subsequent repercussions, without imagining a way forward as a result of the cyclical concept of history.

Scholars generally focus on the horrors of the Atlantic Slave Trade when discussing the history of slavery, yet the Indian Ocean Slave Trade was the longer established system that generated its own horrors, both during the French and British empires. As historian A. J. Barker states: "It is easy to overlook the fact that Mauritius, a tiny island of some 720 square miles in the western Indian Ocean was one of the largest slave colonies in the British Empire at the time of the Emancipation Act of 1833" (Barker 1). The British, in fact, further developed the production of sugar on the island far more than the French had.[35] These comparative questions

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[34] Teelock and Alpers, *History, Memory, and Identity*, 3.

[35] The French controlled Île de France from 1715 to 1810 and the British from 1810 to 1968.

are important, because it is of significance that Le Clézio chose to situate the slave narrative in the novel at the moment of British take-over of Mauritius, as I will discuss below.

In dividing this chapter into three main parts, I explore the three narratives in the novel. The first part further expounds upon the relationship between Jean and Catherine to analyze the ways in which Le Clézio successively shows the development of Jean from a reading figure to one who writes and controls memories. I move to take into account Jean Eudes' historical trajectory and the accusations levied against Revolutionary France in favor of regional identity. The links between the Marro family in 19th-century Mauritius and Kiambé's forced enslavement link the second and third sections, where an analysis of Kiambé's narrative reveals the importance of name to identity formation. Despite the connections that Le Clézio forges between the Marro family and Kiambé, the discrepancies between the two historical trajectories suggest the extent to which Le Clézio equivocates in his representation of colonial history and violence, particularly in Mauritius.

"PARLE-MOI DE ROZILIS, TANTE": RHIZOMES AND MEMORY

This section will explore the evolution of the relationship between Jean and Catherine by focalizing on the importance of the building in which Catherine lives, La Kataviva, and the objects that constitute and create the memories Jean constructs of his familial past. As we will see, La Kataviva represents the communicative space between Jean and Catherine, a space that continuously influences Jean in his later foreign travels. In tandem with the focus on La Kataviva, I will discuss the notion of memory itself and how Jean considers it from his point of view to explore how the relationship between two characters change throughout the text, where the bildungsroman ultimately presents how Jean adopts the posture of the writer, inculcated by

his aunt throughout his adolescence. The privileged position of writer, of which Le Clézio is fully aware, and as indicated by the content of his Nobel Prize speech, enables him to fully access his past, both physically and materially, in ways unavailable and inaccessible to the historically marginalized.

The defining relationship in Jean's life with his aunt Catherine permits the promulgation of the cyclical nature of history. It is in this relationship that Le Clézio's also relies heavily on his familial history as a source of inspiration. Le Clézio not only draws from his own life, but also from the journals of his ancestors. In many ways, the novel functions as a form of fictionalized testimony. Le Clézio has frankly stated in interviews that Catherine's stories are also real and that he has reproduced direct quotes from his family's archives. Le Clézio self-consciously goes beyond the colonial father figure that provokes anxiety of resemblance.[36]

As a coming-of-age novel, the novel begins with a description of Jean's adolescence in Nice with his family whose members had left Mauritius. Jean forges a close relationship with his Aunt Catherine as he pays her frequent visits in the building in which she lives alone. The equivalence of Jean's adolescence with his interest in the building denotes the importance of space in the novel. Described as a house without easily recognized origins, La Kataviva is the space where Jean develops his close relationship with his aunt Catherine. To illustrate the impact of this space on Jean's imagination, La Kataviva becomes the lens through which Jean views everything, a center locus, or, in other ways, a world. After explaining the importance of the building in Jean's early years, the narrator affirms: "Bref, La Kataviva était tout un monde" (14). La Kataviva is a world in Jean's imagination, which the narrator does not explicitly state, but

[36] In speaking about his aunt that inspired the figure of Catherine, Le Clézio explains that "incontestablement, elle a nourri ma propre imagination, elle a déclenché quelque chose de très fort en moi. Pendant mon adolescence, en revanche, mon père et ma mère n'avaient plus de rôle majeur à jouer. C'est la raison pour laquelle ils sont presque absents du roman, de ma jeunesse." *Biblios* interview

rather proclaims it in a general fashion. This seemingly suggests that the building is a world for the reader, as well, which establishes the link between Jean and the reader who is put in the same position, particularly in the beginning of the text as a fellow recipient of Catherine's stories, allowing the building to become a point of contact as the novel progresses and throughout Jean's travels around the world.

The name of the building indicates, nevertheless, the presence of a real history, suggesting that La Kataviva also functions as a representation of a certain social class, a class that furthermore forms Jean's social conscience. Jean's other aunt, Éléonore, explains to him that the name of the building comes from a little train station in Russia. La Kataviva illustrates the relationship between familial memory and real history; it's a space that functions to show the importance of politics, ultimately, in the formation of Jean's consciousness, as well as suggesting how his aunt's memory and imagination invariably assert a dominant role in forming Jean's own cognition.

To establish La Kataviva as a communicative space, Le Clézio underscores the notion of ritual that dictates the practice that occurs whenever Jean visits his aunt. He describes the specific actions of Jean: "Jean allait à La Kataviva l'après-midi en sortant de l'école. C'était devenu une habitude, plutôt une sorte de rituel" (16). This notion of ritual is tied to the reading of the text. In the same way, the practice that Catherine undergoes to recount her stories to Jean represents another type of ritual. Martin treats the notion of ritual in explaining that the goal is to show that "this departure from conventional patterns of friendship anchored in the mimetic is strengthened in the text in the foregrounding of what Glissant terms the notion of opacity [which] privileges relationships based on a mutual respect for the Otherness of the Other" (Martin 129). The mutable role of writer and reader suggests the ways in which the opacity of the

other functions to help establish the self. Even within the story of Jean's life, Le Clézio points to a cyclical nature, a ritual of sorts that guides the natural personality development of the individual.

To show how Jean attempts to recreate the world as illustrated by Catherine, Le Clézio describes a scene in which Jean tries to live like his aunt. When Jean tries to train himself to live like Catherine, he wishes to reproduce her blindness in his own life: "[Il] s'efforçait à présent de vivre comme la tante Catherine. Quand il rentrait chez ses parents, il n'allumait pas dans sa chambre, il circulait dans l'appartement sans lumière. Il essayait de mémoriser les emplacements des meubles, des portes" (33). In his attempt to live blind, Jean is obliged to memorize the world surrounding him, indicated by the enumeration of objects that constitute his bedroom. This suggests that Jean tries to take on the role of writer in his world. Jean indicates that he would like to understand the world in the same way that Catherine does so in her blindness. Jean perceives a valuable quality to blindness as a physical representation of the writer who can view his present to consider the past in a way that is more real and more alive. Jean's actions highlight the value of Catherine's communication as a ritual that establishes a relationship of reader and writer between aunt and nephew. He desires her heightened sense of history, which he absorbs with each retelling.

Catherine's oral transmissions of her memory of her past on Mauritius illustrate this value. When Jean participates in this ritual of historical transmissions, he learns quickly to find what he hopes to know:

> Ce que Catherine avait fait. Ce qu'elle avait vu, ce qu'elle avait touché de ses mains, ce qu'elle avait rêvé la nuit. Il ne cherchait pas des souvenirs, ou des idées. Ce qu'il voulait, c'étaient des sons, des odeurs, des brouhahas de voix dans la grande maisons de Rozilis,

les rires et les jeux des enfants, les bêtises qu'ils avaient faites, les punitions qu'ils avaient reçues. (Le Clézio, 105)

Jean explains that memory, for him, functions as a reproduction of past sensations, reestablishing "des sons, des odeurs, des brouhahas de voix" that made the past alive for him, as well as for Catherine. He contrasts these sensations with what he refers to in the abstract as "souvenirs" and "idées."

In several instances, Jean describes memory through its physical materiality more so than as an abstract concept. As he listens to his aunt describe her life in Mauritius, Jean thinks to himself: "La mémoire n'est pas une abstraction […] C'est une substance, une sorte de longue fibre qui s'enroule autour du réel et l'attache aux images lointaines, allonge ses vibrations, transmet son courant jusqu'aux ramifications nerveuses du corps" (112). Jean's description of memory strongly suggests its associations with the literary, particularly its relationship with the real and the images that it transmits. In another moment, Jean further reflects on the materiality of memory: "Ce sont les bruits et les odeurs qui manquent le plus à la mémoire, comme s'ils étaient les éléments les plus réels, la substance du temps perdu" (356). It is in describing what memory lacks that Jean again alludes to the ways in which memory and literature are linked in his mind. Whereas literature and memory can both conjure images, "les bruits et les odeurs" remain inaccessible, although Jean seemingly seeks their remnants in his travels.

This world nevertheless is not a static world for Jean. After having decided to no longer see his aunt for a certain period of time, Jean pays her a visit and remarks on the building's physical changes: "Pendant des mois, Jean s'était absenté, le monde avait tourné" (101). Without Jean, the world of La Kataviva continues to exist, which is evident in the changes that Jean remarks upon. These changes, these "dommages irréversibles," show the turning, the *révolution*,

of time and of the world of the building as present that functionally independently of his visits, one of the ways that a protagonist in a bildungsroman comes to understand society and the world around him.

The role of the building on Jean's imagination becomes clearer during his time abroad. Jean's impressions of La Kataviva as a symbol of his relationship with his aunt is rendered clear during his stay in Mexico: “Quand il est venu ici la première fois, après deux semaines à l'Hôtel Francis qui avaient mangé une bonne part de ses économies, Jean avait eu l'impression d'être tombé au fond d'une cuvette. Puis il s'était habitué. A tout prendre, ces maisons ressemblaient assez à La Kataviva” (417). To indicate how he settled into his life in Mexico, Jean establishes a link between La Kataviva and the houses he sees in Mexico, which indicates the extent to which La Kataviva remains a point of reference in Jean's imaginary. The resemblance between the houses and La Kataviva suggests that Jean constructs the world according to his early exposure to both his aunt's stories and to the space where the exchanges took place. La Kataviva, for Jean, becomes his own version of Rozilis, his aunt's childhood home, which furthermore underscores his close relationship with his aunt, a rapport that indicates the importance of oral transmissions of memory through familial history. This resemblance furthermore re-centers the world, in questioning the notions of center and periphery. Le Clézio redesigns the world, where La Kataviva functions to show that, as a building with multiple origins, it operates as a rhizomatic network. The possibility of further points of entry also indicates its rhizomatic nature. The source of its power exercised on Jean derives, in addition, from Catherine's presence, which underscores the importance of the rhizome. Through the imagination, which nourishes Catherine's stories, the creation of the network allows Jean to create different networks throughout his travels. This suggests that the world creation leads to a creation of other worlds, as a multiplication of

possibilities. According to this text, the world could also be transmitted from one sphere to another. What remains important, even pivotal, is the transmission of knowledge.

Jean's voyages illustrate the importance of La Kataviva in his relationship with the world as a whole. During his stay in England, for example, Jean indicates that he privileges the building of his adolescence: “Ce que Jean voulait de Londres, c'était ça même : dureté, âpreté, vérité […] On ne pouvait pas lâcher ce qui comptait le plus au monde, La Kataviva et la tante Cathy Marro, pour trouver un autre à-peu-près” (296). Jean indicates that he does not wish to replace La Kataviva, but rather to create another network. For example, when discussing another person that he meets in London, it becomes clear to what extent he favors the rhizome: “Mais Jean aimait bien ces moments-là, où il avait le sentiment de toucher aux racines de plusieurs mondes. Peut-être que c'était cela qu'il préférait chez Poubelle, elle était le point de rencontre de gens qui autrement ne se seraient pas même imaginés” (303). He speaks about another person nicknamed Poubelle, a French woman, who, to him, represents a space that allows him to “toucher aux racines de plusieurs mondes. ” The character of Poubelle suggests that Jean sees people as being worlds themselves, an idea that he internalized during his adolescence, as he digested his aunt's stories. In speaking about the role of memory in relation to world literature, the literary critic Vilashini Cooppan declares that it is a “rhizomatic assemblage” as described by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (Cooppan 195). She explains how the network functions: “Representational forms and historical events flow across this network, periodically condensing into particular nodes and acquiring historical density and affective intensity, only to shift and slide into yet another configuration or constellation” (Cooppan, 196). The multiplicity of stories in the novel illustrates the structure of this network.

The construction of a rhizomatic network creates not only a different concept of the world, but also existential problems for Jean.

> En même temps, Jean ressentait un grand vide, une fatigue. C'était comme si les liens qui reliaient ces gens n'avaient jamais vraiment existé. Un vent un peu fort, ou un coup de vide, et ils se volatiliseraient dans l'éther. Cette ville n'était qu'une carcasse dure et usée, une sorte de squelette de madrépore que les hommes utilisaient à tour de rôle, avant de s'en aller sans rien avoir changé. (316)

Jean's existential problem challenges the role of humanity in relation to the city. A certain fatalism guides his thoughts, destabilizing the world around him, signaled by a certain date regarding the existence of spaces and places among people. In speaking about the city, Jean exercises a vocabulary of physical decay, indicated by words such as “carcasse” and “squelette” to suggest that the form of the city itself is empty of content and substance. He describes the city as a representation of himself: an empty being. The notion of emptiness haunts the text at various points, an emptiness that suggests what I would call a *nausée leclézienne*, an inability to fully access the past and comprehend the present. The link to existentialist thought has been evident since Le Clézio’s first novel that takes on existential themes.

Jean's relationship with the building continues to remain important, even after he begins his world travels. After turning from London, Jean affirms that “La Kataviva est toujours la même” (355) and that “aucun autre lieu, aucune maison ne lui a fait battre le cœur comme La Kataviva” (355). The importance of space illustrates that buildings are subject to temporal changes as mutable worlds following the slow turning, or *révolution*, of time. Physical space does not remain static. Memory creates nevertheless a world that could be transmitted from one

generation to the next. The transmission of memory from Catherine to Jean allows the turning of the world at both a spiritual and metaphysical level.

Following Catherine's illness, the evolving relationship between aunt and nephew allows Jean to take on the role of writer as he becomes the one to share and recreate familial memories. In her blindness, Catherine was able to access and transmit the past; in her newly rendered muteness, she can no longer recreate her familial memories for Jean when he visits her in an institution. Following the revelation that she did not die but has been rendered mute, a new subsection of the chapter begins:

> Jean voudrait rattraper le temps perdu. Autrefois, quand il s'absentait, quand il cessait d'aller à la Kataviva, ça n'avait pas d'importance. La tante Catherine continuait sa phrase comme s'il était parti un petit quart d'heure, pour une course dans le quartier. C'est elle qui avait appris à Jean que le temps ne compte pas, que c'est une invention des horlogers, un mauvais prétexte. (362)

Jean attributes to Catherine his conception of time by pointing out that the way she recounts stories shapes his conception of time itself. His absences were of little importance; rather, it was that she continued to tell her tale because his absence "n'avait pas d'importance. "

The relationship between Jean and Catherine ends with Catherine's death, yet the question of the transmission of memory maintains a special link between the two. At the end of Catherine's life, it becomes clear that Jean takes on the role of the figure of the writer in the text. In a reversal of roles, Catherine asks Jean to tell her stories:

> Maintenant c'est à Jean de parler, la mémoire de Catherine est en lui. Tout ce qu'elle a vécu, tout ce qu'elle a connu est passé dans son coeur, il parle doucement, malgré la

chahut de la salle d'animation, malgré *Parlez-moi d'amour* et *Mexico*, de la même voix avec laquelle elle racontait. Parfois il invente, il rêve à haute voix. (359)

Jean imbibes her stories so that he can recount them, following her passing. He reproduces her cadence, "la même voix," to indicate the extent to which he is linked to her. He references both her lived experiences ("tout ce qu'elle a vécu") with a suggestion of the familial history that she shared with him ("tout ce qu'elle a connu"). In the same way that he attempts to live as if he were blind in the beginning of the novel, in this instance, he is able to speak with the same voice. Figuratively, he has moved from one who sees, such as a reader, to one with a voice, incarnated in the figure of the writer. Jean becomes the writer, a role for which he has been prepping since he tried living and moving like his blind aunt during his childhood in Nice.

The relationship between Jean and Catherine symbolizes the acts of reading and writing and thus knowing the world and its history. It shows how a certain way of knowing is passed on and how knowledge is reproduced and recycled. Most of the story is framed as Jean's living experience and the knowledge of the family's history imparted to him from Catherine. This relationship introduces the cyclical nature of history, which is emphasized through the interweaving of past and present of the stories of two men named Jean, transmitted through the literary prism of Catherine.

VIOLENCE IN BRITTANY

The alternating narratives of the Marro family allow Le Clézio to link Brittany and Mauritius as part of a more general critique about colonialism and conquest. In the novel, two historical moments of violence against the region of Brittany arise: the genocide in the Vendée (1793-17940) during the French Revolution and the 1488 battle in the French-Breton War.

To discuss the genocide in the Vendée, a region of Brittany, is to look into a controversial history with competing liberal and conservative visions of history at stake. Historian Raymond Sécher's text *Le genocide franco-français: Vendée-Vengé* remains an important point of reference to the history of the crime, as well as a charge of genocide towards the government of Revolutionary France. Following the 1789 French Revolution, the dawn of a new *droits de l'homme* and the end of the absolute monarchy, the fledgling French government under the *Terreur* launched a root-and-branch genocide from August 1793 to July 1794 against the civilian population of the Vendée region of Brittany as a result of their rebellion in March 1793.[37]

Sécher's archival work points to the use of genocidal language by officers as they directed attacks on the civilian population of the Vendée. A Convention on October 1, 1793 tells l'armée de L'Ouest, for example: "Soldats de la liberté, il faut que les brigands de la Vendée soient *exterminés*" (Sécher 296, emphasis mine). Sécher points out other terms, such as Francastel in January 1794 who calls for a strategy to "dépeupler la Vendée," as well as General Beaufor's comment to "*purger entièrement* le sol de la liberté de cette race maudite" (Sécher 296, emphasis mine). Historian Ben Kiernan argues in his article "Is 'Genocide' an Anachronistic Concept for the Study of Early Modern Mass Killing?" that a specific set of vocabulary has been used throughout the centuries that point to the process of genocide, predating the invention of Raphael Lemkin's 1943 neologism. Terms such as "extermination," "holocaust," "crimes against humanity" and "war crimes" suggest the presence of a genocidal mentality, particularly the former two that date back to antiquity. Historian Mark Levene further explains that in 1791, it was the "killing activities of the [Committee of Public Safety] –and not

[37] Jones defines root-and-branch as one in which "mass killing occurs against all sectors of the target population." He explains: "The classic example of a root-and-branch genocide is the Jewish Holocaust, in which all Jews in the Nazi-occupied territories—female and male, old and young, able and disabled—were exposed to the Nazi's exterminatory campaign" (Jones 3).

just in the Vendée—[that] gave rise to the coining of a new term, 'populicide,' an important precursor to 'genocide'" (Levene 110).

In the field of genocide studies, the genocide in the Vendée has figured prominently in some important tomes that offer comprehensive histories of genocide. Whereas neither Kiernan's *Blood and Soil* nor Donald Bloxham and Dirk Moses' *Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies* cover the Vendée, Adam Jones and Levene offer substantial analyses of the event, conferring upon it the term "genocide." Jones discusses it in *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*, now in its third edition, in the first chapter discussing the origins of genocide. Jones further discusses it at length in an article in which he compares it to Bosnian genocide in his analysis endeavoring to compare two cases of "gendercide." Levene considers the Vendée in the second volume of his series *Genocide in the Age of the Nation-State*, entitled *The Rise of the West and the Coming of Genocide*. He devotes a substantial amount of time to reconstructing the Vendée genocide to conclude that the events constitute a paradigm shift in genocide where "persistent, collective disobedience in the face of state diktat could only be answered in the most absolute and zero-sum of terms" (Levene 161).

Historiography on the Vendée challenges the dominant historical narrative of progress since the Enlightenment. Self-identified conservative historians have appropriated the use of this genocide to prove the ways in which "liberals" have committed atrocities, as well.[38] Sécher proclaims that: "*La Vendée est un lieu trahi de la mémoire de la France"* (Sécher 21, emphasis in original). Le Clézio does not broach this controversial subject in the novel in an obvious way. While he situates the beginning of Jean's narrative during the Revolution and the events of the Vendée, he does not include any graphic scenes of violence. Le Clézio chooses rather to show

[38] See, for example, the documentary *The Hidden Rebellion: The Untold Story Behind the French Revolution* (2016).

the cultural effects of the region and not the attacks made by the Revolutionary army on the Breton population and the reasons for Jean's decision to leave France.

In his journal, Jean describes the importance of Brittany not only as a region, but also as a country in itself. In 1792, Jean Eudes, as a soldier in the army, remembers his mother's advice: "Elle me disait qu'il y avait un autre pays, au sein de la nation, et que je devais porter ce pays dans mon Coeur, sans jamais le renier" (118). Even in the midst of fighting on behalf of the revolutionary forces, the advice of Jean Eudes' mother reminds him of the fraught relationship between the center and periphery within France, to say nothing of its colonies abroad. Jean's mother evokes the division between a country and a nation around this moment of the birth of the nation-state.

During the summer of 1794, Jean discusses the lack of wheat in Brittany and the overall dire situation in the region. As a result of an insurrection, the wheat road was cut off and the only wheat that arrived was from the United States, which was of questionable quality as a result of the overseas voyage. An incident with a farmer hiding sacks of wheat becomes a defining event that changes the course of the increasingly disillusioned Jean Eudes' life. He writes about the trial against the farmer and his own speech in front of the judge where he speaks on behalf of the farmer: "Puis je conclus en ces termes: Citoyen juge, si tu dois pendre ce fermier pour avoir voulu cacher quelques sacs de blé indispensables à la survie de sa famille, alors il te faudra pendre tous les Bretons, car je n'en connais aucun qui ne fera de même" (169). As a result of this incident, Jean Eudes writes that he decided to leave the army, setting the course for the rest of his life. He conflates the individual with the regional, indicating that the entire Breton population would react in the same way to the poverty and famine occurring in the land.

Following his military exploits, Jean Eudes speaks of his disappointment with the French Revolution. He underscores what he sees as a hypocrisy of the revolution: “La Révolution, qui avait oeuvré pour libérer tous les peuples de la terre, s’acharnait à présent à restreindre cette liberté, refusant à chacun le droit de pratiquer selon ses croyances et sa tradition” (177). He speaks in the language of the Revolution, particularly in expanding the ideals to include “tous les peuples de la terre.” This serves both to remind the reader of what is at stake during the French Revolution and to point to its specific noble qualities that had attracted Jean Eudes to become a soldier, despite the negative implications of such an act towards the rest of the Breton population. Jean’s use of revolutionary language becomes important later in his life when he tries to establish these values himself upon the creation of his new home in Mauritius, as I explore later on in considering Marie Anne’s perspective. He points to the hypocrisy of the revolution and refusal to respect difference, even within its own borders, adding that his mother, sister, and girlfriend cannot practice their religion anymore as a result of the “liberté” promulgated by the Revolution.

Jean Eudes’ disillusionment with the Revolutionary army stems from official policy. Jean Eudes explains that the deputy Barère declares to the Assembly that “*le federalisme et la superstition parlent le breton,*” contrasting traditional Breton language and culture against the burgeoning modernity, rationality, and reason of the Revolution (as inspired by the Enlightenment). He continues to explain that the Breton language was forbidden, citing the exact law: “La loi du 30 vendémiaire de l’an II, article 7, proclamait que *dans toutes les parties de la République, l’instruction doit être faite seulement en français*” (177, emphasis in original). Citing legal language, he reproduces the language of the time with the use of the new calendar in which vendémaiaire replaces *janvier* in the French Republican calendar. This section launches a

direct attack on the ideals of the Revolution. This interweaving of past and present allows for a contemporary account of the Revolution's failure, in the eyes of Le Clézio, to create the conditions of its purported ideals.

Revolutionary France's cultural persecution leads to Jean's decision to leave Brittany. Jean Eudes describes the moment where he realizes that he can no longer live in France: "Je compris à cet instant qu'il m'était impossible de vivre dans un pays où porter les cheveux longs selon la tradition de mes ancêtres pouvait causer mon emprisonnement ou ma mort" (181). Here he refers to the cultural elements of genocide as he points to his inability to wear his hair the same way that his ancestors would, lest the army imprison him for doing so. The new French state would begin a process of centralization that aimed to wipe out regional identities.

Yet Le Clézio evokes an even earlier date that characterized the adverse relationship between Brittany and the Paris-based central government. At the end of the novel, Jean Marro's travels to Brittany to rediscover his family origins brings up the question of July 28, 1488. Le Clézio does not name the event in question, the Bataille de Saint-Aubin-du-Cormier, a feudal war between the kingdom of France and the duke of Brittany, a significant moment considered by Breton nationalists as the defining mark of their loss of liberty. Jean mourns the loss of life, discussing the "six mille soldats de l'armée de Bretagne [qui] ont péri" (515). Jean walks in the forest, remembering the violent history of the land, blaming Brittany's conquest at this particular moment as the moment that it lost its freedom. He concludes that "c'est ce pays que les Bretons fuient au bout du monde pour tenter de survivre" (515). The assumption is that the Bretons had to leave their land and thus help colonize Mauritius to try to survive. Le Clézio does not speak of the colonial hierarchy that nevertheless placed the Marro family in a more profitable position as a result of conceptions of race at this time.

To create details from the history of the event, Jean's movement around various sites defines what has happened. Images of Jean walking around dominate in this scene. In light of Jean's creation of a rhizomatic network, a visit to the past creates a tangible link for Jean as he has taken on the role of writer. Le Clézio seems to suggest that being a writer means encompassing a physical space; physical liberty to move around corresponds with the liberty to write. In other words, to write one's own story, one requires the ability to physically access one's past, in the form of materiality and the physical remnants of memory. As evidenced by the relationship between Jean and Catherine, these physical memories could be transmitted through oral storytelling. But what does it mean if one's access to archives (familial or official) is limited or one's archives have been pilfered? Kiambé's narrative is limited in scope compared to the rest of the novel, because Kiambé cannot travel and her story remains within the confines of her trauma, on the island. Le Clézio is well aware that not everyone has access to books and the written word—it is no doubt through his travels that he has come to such a realization in the first place. Kiambé's historical counterpart, as well as her progeny—essentially, the figure of Le Clézio to the fictional Jean—remain removed and inaccessible.

The character of Jean Eudes is based on Le Clézio's ancestor François who left Lorient for Mauritius following the French Revolution. In an interview, Le Clézio explains that François:

> condamnait l'esclavage pour le principe mais aussi parce qu'il pensait que c'était une force de travail inutile, condamnée à l'échec économique. Il voulait même créer une école pour les enfants d'esclaves. Cela dit, et aussi étrange que cela puisse vous paraître, je ne condamne pas totalement la société coloniale qui avait, comme dire? le sens de la beauté et de l'élégance. (Garcin 2008)

The interviewer does not press Le Clézio to discuss this admission about colonization, but rather moves on to discuss the concept of *révolutions*. It is unclear to what extent Le Clézio valorizes colonial society and which aspects he does not explicitly condemn. He was speaking about slavery and then admitted that not all colonial society is bad; it seems a curious transition from one idea to the other. It is also something that critics do not seem to typically discuss in promoting his texts, and not something that the Nobel Prize committee has endorsed. Le Clézio has admitted to grappling with his family's past. Yet the idea of "sens de beauté" remains puzzling. His description of his ancestor's work in creating schools for children preceded his admission about colonial society. In analyzing the way in which Le Clézio presents Jean Eudes' story, I aim to further decipher what Le Clézio meant by that comment and the way that his literary work implicitly promotes a certain way of seeing the world, particularly in forging a link between Brittany and Mauritius through the Jean Eudes's and Kiambé's narratives.

Martin points to the link between the incorporation of French regions into the Paris-based government with its overseas expansion: "Indeed, it can be said that Brittany is presented at this point in the novel as undergoing the same process of colonization as France's overseas territories" (Martin 76). In the novel, Le Clézio implicitly links Brittany and Mauritius in several ways. In its most overt feature, Jean Eudes leaves Brittany for Mauritius. Structurally, the novel also links Jean Eudes' narrative with that of Kiambé. Jean Eudes's last entry, entitled "*Nauscopie (fin)*" details, in short fragments, the arrival of the English. In the last fragment of November 28th, he writes: "Les Anglais prennent possession de l'île, notre liberté est terminée" (406). Following this comment on the end of their freedom, the text introduces the voice of Kiambé who begins by speaking of her enslavement when she was ten years old. Le Clézio's choice to follow the end of one first person perspective with the introduction of another seemingly creates

an equivalency between the two voices. Yet, as historians have indicated, the treatment of the British towards its Franco-Mauritian population was one of tolerance, for they let their new subjects keep the French language. But here the blame does not lie with the French. Even if Le Clézio sustains a link between Brittany and Mauritius, he implicitly places the blame on the British and exonerates the French empire, even as the local French government was oppressing and committing genocide against one of its regional populations. Given that the Le Clézio is tracing the history of his ancestor through the novel, which entails a specific historical trajectory, one could argue that situating Jean Eudes' time in Mauritius during a change in empire makes sense. François Le Clézio left for Mauritius in 1798 and the British took over in 1810. Jean Eudes's comment is telling of the paradox at heart of Le Clézio's depiction of colonization. Inferior in France but considered superior in Mauritius, Jean Eudes' benefits from his position as a Frenchman in colonial Mauritius—where he could live under a notion of "liberté" —, allowing Le Clézio to focus his critique instead on the British Empire.

Sohy seemingly agrees with Le Clézio's equivalency between Brittany and Mauritius by pointing out that the "Marro" family name forges a link with Kiambé as a "marron." Rather than focusing on Jean Eudes, she focuses on Jean Marro and describes him as "figure du maronnage, fuyant sans cesse l'appel de la guerre d'Algérie par ses nombreux sursis et ses multiples voyages" (Sohy 212). Yet there is a clear difference between a family name kept for generations and the term used to describe an escaped slave (who did not have the right to keep his or her given name). Rather, as we will see, the question of Kiambé's name is of interest to Le Clézio and its links to cultural identity.

The novel links Jean Eudes and Kiambé's structurally in another way: through the narrative of the tempest that unites the two perspectives. Following the death of Ratsitatane, the

famous marron in Mauritius, the tempest arrives: “La tempête annoncée par le prêtre de Ratsitatne est venue deux ans exactement après sa mort, dans la nuit du 22 au 23 février 1824” (489). Marie Anne Naour, Jean Eude’s wife, recounts her family’s departure for Ébène: “Je reçus cette tempête comme un signal divin d’avoir à quitter cette ville.” Marie Anne describes unjust treatment of the slaves. She adds that her husband’s reaction mirrors her own, quoting him: “Est-ce pour cela […] que je me suis battu aux frontières contre la tyrannie, au nom de la république? Est-ce pour que le tryan Bonaparte annule d’un trait de plume le décret de la Convention qui avait aboli l’esclavage sur toute l’étendu des territoires français?” (492). Here Jean Eudes contrasts the values of the Revolution against the forces of colonization. Republican values of liberty, equality, and fraternity, as well as those of universalism, for which Jean Eudes fought, are not promulgated in Mauritius, as a result of Napoleon Bonaparte’s imperial strategy. Jean Eudes denounces Napoleon’s re-institutionalization of slavery that had been abolished following the French Revolution.

Marie Anne describes the conditions with a political awareness of the exploitation that occurred, even against official colonial policy. She describes being in the city and witnessing scenes of injustice and cruelty:

> […] à chaque instant, nous étions témoins des scènes injustice et des mauvais traitements que certains habitants infligeaient aux gens de couleur. Malgré les ordres du gouverneur Farquhar, nous croisons sur notre route les colonnes d’esclaves chargés de lourdes chaînes, ou entravés par des fourches. Même les femmes étaient enchaînées de la sorte. Les châtiments publics n’avaient pas été abolis comme l’avait exigé la loi, et j’ai vu des femmes fouettées sur la place pour de menus larcins, d’autres condamnées à être

exposées des jours entiers au soleil, attachées à des billots devant les maisons de leur maîtres. (492)

Marie Anne's perspective focuses also on female suffering—a link that further unites the Marros with Kiambé, given that Jean Eudes' perspective ends when Kiambé's beginnings. The two historical women are linked in the narrative space. Marie Anne draws attention to injustices committed against women. As Marie Anne shows through her use of the word "témoin," Le Clézio views his fiction as a testimony, a witnessing that sheds light on historical injustice. The novel is a testimony of injustices that have not yet been brought into the light. She calls attention to discrepancies between official policy and actual practice. She calls Farquhar out by name and he is, in fact, one of the reasons for the lack of archival resources about slaves at this time period. Teelock reports: "As the 1965 Archives report states, in the 1820s, the Chief Archivist, Baron d'Unienville went to London with Governor Farquhar, carrying with him 17 cases of documents and a number of registers, which were never returned to Mauritius" (Teelock, *Bitter Sugar* 11). Following their conquest of Mauritius, the British were unsure how to administer Mauritius, given that it was a unique space in comparison to the rest of their overseas empire as a whole. Governors were given a good deal of administrative freedom; they were able to decide on which policies to implement.[39] Le Clézio, then, makes a pointed critique about British administration, following their conquest of Mauritius in 1810, rather than one about the French Empire.

In contrast to the colonial administration, Jean Eudes and Marie Anne endeavor to create a system based on equality, rather than exploitation. They self-consciously do so with the establishment of their residence at Rozilis and subsequent communication of a political awakening of a more just world. In direct contrast to the founding of nation-states through the

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[39] Teelock explains: "Mauritius was thus geographically, administratively and culturally isolated from all other British possessions" (*Bitter Sugar* 23).

violation of human rights, the Marro family founds a new site of equality and freedom that creates a rhizomatic network through the sharing of their stories. Article 4 of their document reads: "Le but premier de la fondation de cette maison étant la réalisation de l'harmonie naturelle et des principes de liberté et d'égalité, il ne pourra être accepté aucune pratique contraire, en particulier en ce qui concerne le sort des laboureurs et des ouvriers" (495). They reproduce the language of the Revolution of "liberty" and "equality," even as they omit "fraternity," as if they cannot guarantee it, so they choose not to promise it. The boat that they take from France to Mauritius is called *Rozilis*, which is what they name their house, thus linking ocean and land through name.

The relationship between agriculture and slavery during colonization is fraught, so it is significant that the founding document of Rozilis focuses on the question of labor. To own landed property was often to own human property. As Teelock explains: "By the nineteenth century, there were few land-owners who did not also possess slaves. Indeed the relationship between agriculture and slavery had been established since the settlement on the island by the French" (Teelock, *Bitter Sugar* 39). By officially proposing to build an agricultural domain based on the ideals of the Revolution, the Marro family creates an alternative space to a capitalist system sustained through human exploitation. It is in direct rejection of the colonial project that they endeavor to build their house and commercial space.

Le Clézio decries the violent strategies used by the Revolutionary army to unite the different regions of France, an ultimate denunciation of the creation of nation-states born out of violence and violation of human rights. Yet Le Clézio's concern is not in describing or representing graphic scenes of violence, but to show how memory is transmitted and how collective memories are made in the microcosm of the family as a region or even as the nation.

The uneven formation of memory across different groups remains a subject of concern as we turn to the question of Kiambé's history.

KIAMBE'S NARRATIVE

Slavery in the Indian Ocean is as old as written history. Campbell points to the longevity of the institution: "It is in the IOW [Indian Ocean World] that the world's first known legal documents referring to the sale of slaves have been discovered—the *Ur-Nammu tablets* (*c*. 2300 BCE) of Mesopotamia, in present-day Iraq." [40] Mauritius itself, however, did not have a native population. It was only with the first settlement of the Portuguese in the early seventeenth century that people from Eastern Africa were forcibly enslaved and brought to the island.[41] The French, nevertheless, institutionalized slavery throughout its empire—which included Île de France from 1715 to 1810—through the *Code noir: Lettres patentes en forme d'Edit concernant Les Esclaves des Isles de Bourbon et de France* (December 1723). The British Empire officially abolished slavery in 1835, a difficult process given the multiple directions of slavery in the Indian Ocean, in comparison to the Atlantic Slave trade.[42]

My purpose in this section is to analyze the way that Le Clézio represents the institution of slavery in the novel. I disagree with Christelle Sohy's concluding thoughts in her article entitled "La représentation de l'esclavage dans *Révolutions*" that "Le Clézio, loin de tout exotisme, se réclame bel et bien d'une 'littérature-monde' écrite en français, mais dans un français créolisé et métissé, vibrant de toutes les langues du monde" (Sohy 213). By attributing

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[40] Campbell. *The Structure of Slavery in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia*, x.

[41] Historians remain divided on who first set foot on the island. Some agree that Arabs were the first to arrive on the island .Yet others begin with the Portuguese, then the Dutch.

[42] Campbell, *The Structure of Slavery in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia*, x

his hybridity of genre to a hybridity of language, Sohy absolves Le Clézio of any possibility of exoticism, as if the lack of overtly exotic language means that the novel offers the appropriate framework to bridge alterity.

It is my contention that whereas Le Clézio humanizes the figure of the slave through a sympathetic rendering of the fictional figure of Kiambé, he also repeats existing power dynamics as a result of the structure of the story. By giving Kiambé little narrative space, he points to the extent that slaves' voices have been wiped from the historical record. Yet the links that he creates between her narrative and that of the Marro family only serve to highlight unequal power dynamics, even as the author strives to create connections that would ultimately have sustained a multidirectional space.

Comparing the Marro family with Kiambé highlights the discrepancies between the two stories. Both Jeans have freedom of movement; as a result of new technologies that developed throughout the twentieth century, Jean Marro is even more mobile than his ancestor had been throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[43] Kiambé, on the other hand, is forced to migrate to Mauritius; as a result, her narrative, as well as that of her family, is confined to the island. Her story can only be framed around slavery, which by definition does not allow freedom of movement. Jean's bildungsroman also shows him developing and becoming the figure of the writer—the one with authority and voice to shape memory and command history. Kiambé, in contrast, does not take on the role of writer. Kumari Issur focuses on the positive aspects of Kiambé's narrative: "Kiambé est dotée d'un récit à la première personne, constitutif d'une identité intégrale. Le Clézio lui recrée un arrière-pays de mémoire, une mémoire presque complètement effacée chez les descendants d'esclaves" (*Cahiers Le Clézio*, 86). In creating this

[43] In thinking about his ancestor's travels, Jean regards him as " [cet homme] qui avait osé partir à l'autre bout du monde" (112). The same could not be said of Kiambé.

memory, nevertheless, Le Clézio presents it as a closed system, even as it does represent the reality of the community of slaves in Mauritius. Her story neatly begins and ends, whereas Jean's continues with the birth of a new baby. The two stories are not equivalent, despite the links that Le Clézio forges through the interlocking historical narratives.

Kiambé's story begins with her capture and journey to Kilwa Kisiwani, an island off the coast of present-day Tanzania. Kiambé describes her first time on the island, unaware of its historical significance: "Je n'avais jamais vu la mer auparavant, et je regardais cette surface lisse qui brillait, et je pensais que c'était le grand lac près de notre village, dans la province d'Arusha" (409). Kiambé's first time seeing the ocean is at Kilwa Kisiwani; she mistakenly thinks that the Indian Ocean is one of Africa's Great Lakes, perhaps Lake Manyara. Le Clézio depicts this journey throughout what was once the great Kilwa Sultanate, the most powerful city-state—among others, such as Zanzibar, Lamu, and Mogadishu—along the East African Coast throughout the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries. The narrative itself does not explicitly draw attention to the island's rich history. It does, nevertheless, offer an important representation of French slave practices on the Swahili Coast. G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville's *The French at Kilwa Island* (1965) details some of these practices, although, as historian Edward Alpers notes in his review of the monograph in *The Journal of African History*, the text does not place trading practices in Kilwa within the context of the East African Coast. Cultural origins of slaves remain largely unknown (Teelock, *Bitter Sugar* 5); oral history research will help fill in these lacunae.

Kiambé recounts her journey on the slave boat, concentrating on the discussion of the slave boat conditions. She describes how "le mal est venu d'abord sur les Wabwa de l'île d'Unguja" (413). Unguja is the largest island, also known as Zanzibar island, in the Zanzibar archipelago. Le Clézio offers here a description of the cruelty that characterized the slave boat.

In speaking about an illness that spread about the ship, Kiambé uses the word *ndui*, which is the Swahili word for smallpox. She describes the procession of the disease and how it slowly began affecting the people on the ship. She then describes the arrival of one of the European officials, using the term *Mzungu* (foreigner in Swahili) to refer to them in general:

> Alors le Mzungu est revenu, il était effrayant, il avait entouré son visage avec un linge blanc, sauf deux trous pour ses yeux, et il a marché lentement au fond de la cale comme un fantôme, et ses mains et ses pieds étaient entourés de linges blanc. Il a regardé chaque esclave, l'un après l'autre, et tous ceux qu'il montrait, les Wabwa les détachaient les jetaient à la mer, même ceux qui étaient vivants, et on entendait leurs cris de peur quand la mer se refermait sur eux (413). [44]

Kiambé's voice allows a firsthand description of the violence experienced on the slave ship. The use of Swahili creates a more nuanced depiction of Kiambé's life by giving limited access to her language. Yet it is here that content and form diverge; for even though Le Clézio offers a slice of Kiambé's life, overall her story is subordinated to that of the Marro family, even if Le Clézio does include swaths of details that give a more accurate representation of Kiambé's culture prior to enslavement. As this quote shows, her narrative does offer glimpses of the horror she experienced on the slave ship, but it begins with her trauma, rather than with her personality formation with her family, as the reader experiences with Jean. From the beginning of the narrative, Kiambé is history's victim. Her agency is framed only in terms of her rebellion against the existing order—a reaction, rather than action—at odds with the natural personality development that is characteristic of a bildungsroman and of Jean's story. Kiambé is not, after all, a Marro.

[44] Wabwa means "dogs" in Swahili.

Kiambé often repeats her name throughout her narrative to recall her history and family. Sohy argues that the construction of her narrative purposefully resembles orality: "Comparable à une manière de réciter rythmée, cette parole entraîne le lecteur sur les rives du conte du merveilleux, au rythme d'une veillée au cours de la nuit" (Sohy 210-211). Coupled with the use of Swahili, Le Clézio constructs her story with an eye to historical and cultural veracity. Through Kiambé's story, he points to the importance of family history (and its relation to history) with the creation of personal identity. Kiambé's faltering identity and sense of self are reflected in the textual language, rendered all the more powerful given the use of the first-person point of view. Given that it is opposed to the bulk of the novel in terms of structure—Jean's coming-of-age in the third person—in some ways, Kiambé is Jean's opposite. Rather than tracking her personality development as it occurs in Jean's story, the Kiambé narrative rather shows how the institution of slavery destroys the natural development of the self in an authentic way (to her culture and situation at the time). Her links to language and culture are disrupted and abruptly cut off. The novel is a testimony of what happened to Kiambé in direct opposition to Jean's bildungsroman. This hybridity of genre allows Le Clézio to challenge a one-sided look at history through the eyes of the colonizing figure, even if the figure of Jean Eudes verbally opposes the institution of slavery and other forms of inhumanity. The intersection of testimony and bildungsroman also raises the question of literature, pointing to the problem of access to writing.

Kiambe's narrative situates itself during British rule of Mauritius, before slavery had been outlawed throughout the British Empire in 1835. She gives the precise historical moment: "Notre bateau est arrivé à l'île Maurice, au port de Souillac, le 10 mars 1817." In 1817, Mauritius was no longer part of the French Empire, but rather of the British Empire, as of 1810. In the early nineteenth century, the British were outlawing slavery throughout the empire.

Kiambé's arrival in Mauritius coincides with a particular period throughout the British Empire where buying new slaves was outlawed (Slave Trade Abolition Act 1807), but people who had been already bought as slaves would remain as such until 1833-1835. Kiambé's description of her arrival to Mauritius reveals an ambiguous attitude towards British possession of the island on the part of Le Clézio. She recounts how the boat should have reached Tamarin Bay, but failed to do so "à cause des Anglais qui interdisaient la vente des nouveaux esclaves" (414). Le Clézio chose a contradictory moment in colonial history in Mauritius to show this tension between colonizer and slave. Yet there is no mention of the French and their institutionalization of slavery in Mauritius, aside from Marie-Anne's evocation of Napoleon.

Kiambé's narrative often evokes the question of her name, linked to her identity and her name. Kiambé decries the conditions of her new imprisoned situation and new master: "Mademoiselle Alix m'a donné comme nom Balkis, à cause de la couleur de ma peau et de la forme de mes yeux" (43). As indicated by Jean Eudes' last journal entry, Île de France was no longer colonized by France; the newly renamed Mauritius was under British control at this time. Yet, Kiambé's renaming is a reference to one of the rules under the Code noir where masters had the right to name their slaves, as it had occurred in other slave regimes in the United States and the British Empire. As a particular strand of cultural effacement that could fit under Lemkin's idea of cultural genocide, the question of names in colonial France under the Code Noir remains a topic of concern. The cultural ramifications of such a policy continue, as descendants of slaves have kept the names of their ancestors. The lasting repercussions of this act are felt today in Mauritius, as indicated by the text tellingly entitled *Les Noms de la honte: Stigmates de l'esclavage à l'île Maurice* (2006), which describes how certain last names in Mauritius signal

that someone is a descendent of a slave because of a "laughable" last name.[45] Le Clézio traces this lineage through Kiambé and how the name Balkis remains within her family.

After her period of maronnage, Kiambé evokes the question of her identity again through the repetition of her name: "Mon nom est Kiambé, celle qui est créée, fille du guerrier Askar, fille de Malaika. J'ai retrouvé mon nom, et les noms de tous ceux qui sont en moi et que je croyais morts" (483). She continues to enumerate the names of her family members and their accomplishments, free from living as Mademoiselle Alix's personal slave. Kiambé's confirmation of her name is linked to her family and her origins. Just like Jean on his quest for origins, Kiambé looks to confirm who she is and what her name is (like the protagonist of a bildungsroman), but her lack of agency results from the unnatural circumstances of the institution of slavery. This evocation parallels the introduction of her voice in the novel, drawing her back to her history and family. In contrast to Jean's coming-of-age story, Kiambé's story is marked by forced migration, rather than voluntary departure; imposed choices, rather than decisions to avoid war, such as Jean Eudes; and a general lack of agency in comparison to Jean—and, by extension, Le Clézio, the writer.

The structure of Kiambé's narrative in many ways reflects the problems with the historiography of slavery in Mauritius. As historian Vijaya Teelock indicates in *Bitter Sugar*, traditional historiography ignores the stories of the freed slaves in nineteenth-century Mauritius. Their voices have been omitted from history as a result of the paucity of archival sources. Le Clézio's contribution in this telling of Kiambé's story is thus an attempt to imagine a reconstruction of an individual's life, from natural born freedom to slavery, and then to institutionalized freedom. His contribution is not only depicting the life of someone who was forced into slavery, but also his depiction of her life following emancipation. He traces history in

[45] Examples of such names include "Bonarien" and "Lapuante."

its essential form as “change over time” to show the ways in which changes in empire impacted the lives of individuals.

Le Clézio’s historical sensibilities mirror the reality of the time period that he depicts in his fiction. Teelock refers to the slaves as “silent witnesses” to this time period. The reference to “witnessing” suggests that the testimony of the slaves is missing. In that vein, Le Clézio provides an imagined testimony imbedded in this postmodern bildungsroman, in which he gives voice and agency to a historically silenced figure. Yet the question arises: to what extent can literature be useful if Le Clézio himself is aware of the shortcomings of literary texts and the privilege that accompanies the act of reading and writing?

Kiambé’s account ends with a shift in perspective as it encompasses a look at the former slave from her granddaughter’s perspective. Yet it continues the use of the first person perspective, even if it is a different person who is narrating the story. The repetition of the name Balkis—even if the name is one imposed by Kiambé’s former master—creates a link between the Jean lineage and the Balkis lineage. Le Clézio stresses the cyclical nature of history through the repeating of names in both family lineages. Even if the characters are not doubles of each other in this case, Le Clézio suggests that they are echoes of each other in that they are both victims of history. Kiambé reveals through her trajectory the importance of names, which are linked to one’s culture, history, and personal identity. But the difference between the two names highlights the differing levels of measured freedom in both family histories. Whereas the Marro family keeps their family name intact throughout the centuries, Kiambé’s name “Balkis,” given to her by her colonial master, is the one that is passed down. Kiambé is not linked to any buildings or land; she does not have the physical liberty to create rhizomes. Given the difficult situation of Creoles in Mauritius, her descendant might face limited possibilities herself. It is this

equivocation, as Françoise Lionnet argues in her article "World Literature, Postcolonial Studies, And Coolie Odysseys: The Case of J.-M.G. Le Clézio's and Amitav Ghosh's Indian Ocean Novels," that defines Le Clézio's oeuvre. She explains that "his texts also equivocate, alternating between the desire for harmonizing resolutions and the implicit recognition that multitudes cannot be contained within a univocal version of history" (Lionnet, *World Literature* 7-8). It is also this equivocation that runs the risks of being interpreted as equivalency, as some critics have done in the studies that I have cited above.

Representing slavery in Mauritius remains relatively uncommon. Teelock explains the high stakes of discussing slavery in Mauritius, applicable to all former slave societies is the risk of destabilizing relations among different groups: "In [some societies], slavery is still such a sensitive subject that a discussion of it can threaten inter-ethnic relations. In these societies, the common factor is undoubtedly the continued existence and dominance of the very same elites that existed two hundred years ago" (Teelock, *Bitter Sugar* 6). It is significant that Le Clézio, as a descendent of the former colonial elite, is the one with the platform to discuss this history. In October 2017, Le Clézio published *Alma*, another novel that deals explicitly with slavery in Mauritius, evoking many of the same themes in his other novels, a continuation of the ambiguous space in which he represents different voices and perspectives.

CONCLUSION

Journalists and critics often ask Le Clézio questions about his literary goals, framed around the question of the "pouvoir" of literary texts. The underlying question of this chapter too concerns the "uses of literature" and the ways in which Le Clézio's novel holds political weight and international influence, despite being a work of fiction. By focusing on the defining events

of his life and the ways in which he became a writer, he implicitly highlights his own position of privilege to represent his own history, even as he takes on the role of champion of minor voices. In doing so, he provides an alternative to an official history; the Nobel Prize Committee awarded his prize for his politically charged global consciousness.

In *Le Clézio: Notre contemporain*, Marina Salles details Le Clézio's general stance toward revolution as developed throughout his oeuvre. She concludes with a general statement on the uses of literature in relation to Le Clézio's oeuvre: "Il n'appartient pas à la littérature de proposer des solutions collectives aux problèmes que soulève l'Histoire des hommes, il est de son ressort, en revanche, d'être pour chaque lecteur cette conscience vigile, cet aiguillon du rêve. C'est à ce titre qu'elle joue un rôle fondamental dans la vie culturelle de son temps" (118). The first part of her comment makes a value judgment on the role of literature and its ultimate perceived ineffectiveness in solving concrete problems that have arisen as a result of human history. Instead, she formulates literature as an instrument of conscience, a link through which an author could prick the sense of guilt of his readers. Given this relationship, however, the question arises: how could literature *not* be a way of proposing solutions, a way of rendering readers *engagés*? Another problem inherent to the way that Salles presents Le Clézio's readership is the assumption that the typical reader would need Le Clézio to act as a "conscience vigile," implying that s/he belongs to the Western world. Applauding Le Clézio for representing the historically marginalized seemingly excludes such figures from the readership, suggesting that the subjects of his texts could not belong to his audience.

Le Clézio is well aware of the contradictions in writing about minor voices in contrast to the audience of his oeuvre. He explains his inspiration for writing by quoting Stig Dagerman: "Lui qui ne voulait écrire que pour ceux qui ont faim découvre que seuls eux qui ont assez à

manger ont loisir de s'apercevoir de son existence."[46] He acknowledges his privileged position and that of his readers. So, what tangible change could his writing produce? Returning back to Moudileno's concluding thoughts on the "colonisateur de bonne volonté," it remains unclear whether Le Clézio accepts a paradoxal posture in his work. What is clear is that in trying to create an inclusive portrait of different forms of migration to Mauritius, the author instead creates another paradox: by giving a voice to the historically marginalized through the creation of multiple links with a colonial figure, Le Clézio forges a narrative structure that implicitly shows the ways in which the former slave figure lives instead in a closed system.

In some ways, the links he forges between Brittany and Mauritius are not difficult to imagine, given that the region and the island are minor voices on the international platform. In an article in the travel section of the *Telegraph*, Anthony Peregrine's 2009 article on the Vendée with the subheadline "In a region of France better known for its beaches, Anthony Peregrine heads inland and discovers a fascinating history" illustrates the way that Brittany could be thought conceivably as a minor voice, even if located within France.[47] By referring to the region as "better known for its beaches," Peregrine—and by extension his editor and the newspaper itself—reduces it to its physical beauty, as if previously unaware of its rich cultural heritage. Mauritius too is known as a destination for tourists for its beautiful beaches; it is through the works of contemporary Mauritian writers, such as Ananda Devi and Natacha Appanah, that the Western world is gaining a historical understanding of the violence that has occurred on its pristine white sand. It is a Western-centric problem of tourism to enjoy the beauty of the land without acknowledging its violent history, further supported by the use of the word "fascinating"

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[46] Le Clézio, "Nobel Speech: In the Forest of Paradoxes," 2008.

[47] Anthony Peregrine, ""France: Vengeance on the Vendée" *The Telegraph.* 18 August 2009.
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/france/6048204/France-Vengeance-on-the-Vendee.html

to describe the mass killing of the Breton civilian population in the late eighteenth century. Le Clézio's work aims to depict marginalized histories to combat a Western-centric narrative that dominates the ways in which history is recounted.

To what extent does fiction create collective memories of the past? I consider this question in the next chapter to further examine the use of fiction in reimagining established history. Ultimately, in this chapter I have evaluated the shortcomings of Le Clézio's approach to multidirectional memory in uneven equivalencies based on historical power distributions. In the next chapter, I examine how Mauritius' violent past comes to a head in the historical novels by Natacha Appanah.

CHAPTER 2: Historical violence and Multidirectional Memory in the Francophone Indian Ocean: Natacha Appanah's *Le dernier frère* and *Les Rochers de Poudre d'Or*

INTRODUCTION

On August 13, 2016, I visited The Beau Bassin Jewish Detainees Memorial and Information Centre in Mauritius for the first time. Standing in front of the rows of even, grey gravestones at the Jewish section of St Martin's Cemetery, I asked a museum guide if there was a tombstone that marked the death of a little Jewish boy named David. She laughed indulgently and explained that the David in question, from Natacha Appanah's 2007 novel *Le dernier frère,* is a fictional character. Appanah's text is so rich, she went on, that one has the impression that David will actually be at the cemetery, which is why I was not the first person to ask her that question. Of course, Appanah borrowed from reality, the guide conceded, raising the question of where the lines between reality and fiction, history and literature, begin and end. These comparative questions of the nature of historical and fictional narratives form the foundation of Appanah's oeuvre. For even though David is a fictional character, the events that constitute *Le dernier frère* retell a real history of Central European Jewish detainees in Mauritius during the Holocaust.

Appanah's oeuvre seeks to examine underrepresented histories. Born in Mahébourg, Mauritius to a Telugu family descended from indentured servants, Appanah worked as a journalist at *Le Mauricien*. In 2003, Appanah published her first novel, *Les Rochers de Poudre d'Or,* which won the le prix RFO du Livre 2003 and le prix Rosine Perrir 2004. Following her novel's success, she published *Blue Bay Palace* (2004) and *La Noce d'Anna* (2005), before

exploring a little-known episode of Mauritian and Holocaust history in *Le dernier frère* (2007). The latter novel won the 2008 Prix des Lecteurs de *L'Express* and the 2008 Prix Culture et Bibliothèques Pour Tous. It was her second novel to have been translated into English, following *Blue Bay Palace.* Translated as *The Last Brother*, it has garnered substantial attention in American media.[48] The website *Île en Île*, dedicated to indexing information about Francophone island writers, situates her work within the Mauritian context by asserting that Appanah's writing "comme chez d'autres écrivains mauriciens de sa génération, est sobre, sans recours aux exotismes, une belle écriture française d'aujourd'hui. Quant aux sujets, ils évoquent certes l'Inde, Maurice, ou la femme."[49] The history of Mauritius, particularly its history of violence, plays a major role in the author's imaginary.

Appanah participates in a growing conversation with other writers in Mauritius with regard to national memory and history. Literary critic Srilata Ravi explains: "Since the 1990s Mauritius has seen the emergence of a new generation of writers who questions the validity of the nationalist narrative of multiculturalism and seek to 're-image' Mauritian society." (Ravi 29). One such writer is Natacha Appanah. To further comment on contemporary Mauritian society, Appanah reaches back into the annals of history to explore Mauritius' *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1984) in a fictional framework. In analyzing the two novels, *Les Rochers de Poudre d'Or* and *Le dernier frère* comparatively, I examine how these texts point to gendered violence and offer innovative ways to transcend alterity in opposition to traditional historiography. By retelling histories of colonial Mauritius within the realm of fiction, Appanah destabilizes conceptions of competitive memory through the creation of dialogues among different groups of people.

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48 The New York Times Sunday Book Review concludes that "Appanah's is a beautiful new voice" http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/06/books/review/Sofer-t.html. See also PBS's interview with Appanah http://www.pbs.org/newshour/art/conversation-nathacha-appanah-author-of-the-last-brother/

49 http://ile-en-ile.org/appanah/

Her first novel, *Les rochers de Poudre d'Or* (2003)*,* grounds itself in the history of indentured servitude in nineteenth- and twentieth-century in Mauritius for individuals from varying backgrounds. Beginning in Calcutta and Madras, Appanah describes how and why different characters either decide or are forced to work as indentured servants. The narrative joins the cast of characters together as they sail to Mauritius in a ship. Shifting perspective, the novel depicts the point of view of the ship's doctor, Grant, as he expresses in his journal his racist ideology towards Indians as a group, which is at odds with his growing obsession with one Indian woman, Ganga. The journal often portrays Grant in conflict with the other British officials on the ship, thus representing metaphorically the fissures in the dominant ideological views of the British. Grant's journal traces his downfall as he succumbs to alcoholism and commits suicide before the ship arrives in the Port Louis harbor. Once colonial officers divide the new indentured servants among various plantations, the narrative follows Badri, a character with whom the novel opens, to portray the violence and difficulty of indentured servitude. Refusing to work under such conditions, Badri absconds from the plantation and encounters a community of former slaves. This encounter creates a conversation between victims of different forms of trauma, an authorial intervention that raises questions of competitive memory to favor multidirectional memory.

Similarly, in *Le dernier frère,* Appanah puts two groups in conversation to consider questions of traumatic experience and memory. In the novel, the protagonist Raj remembers his childhood friend, David Stein, brought to Mauritius with other Central European Jews during World War II as a result of policies of the British Empire. The 1,581 Jews were detained in an old colonial prison in Beau Bassin, where Raj meets David after being taken to the hospital by his abusive father. His father relocates Raj and his mother from their small town to take a job as

a security guard at the prison, after suffering from a double tragedy. In the same day, Raj lost both of his brothers in a storm, creating a traumatic wound from which he has trouble recovering throughout the novel. Raj and David's close relationship promises to recreate a brotherly bond. Yet David's untimely death, following the two boys' desperate flight into the woods to escape their respective entrapments, reopens Raj's wounds as David's ghost haunts him throughout the rest of his life. The adult Raj recounts this childhood story with an anxious earnestness to express the truth of past events. His anxiety haunts his narrative as he frequently expresses his inability to recall the exact details, as well as his ignorance as a child, of both history as it was unfolding (notably in Europe), as well as Jewish religion and culture, which he connects to "white" culture in general. Historian Dan Diner suggests that the Holocaust functions as a negative collective memory in Europe (Diner, "Nation, Migration, and Memory" 303). Conversely, Appanah moves beyond Eurocentric perspectives to examine the repercussions of the Holocaust along with other forms of violence in Mauritius. I argue that Raj's inherent loss is an allegory of the loss experienced by both the slave and indentured servant populations of their homelands, families, and other such irreplaceable aspects of life. The loss of David too is a way to mourn the six million who perished during the Holocaust. For even if David did not die in a gas chamber, his displacement from Central Europe is a direct result of policies implemented by the Third Reich. Appanah's exploration of cases of "nongenocide," as defined by Jens Meierheinrich, in this instance creates allegorical discussions in which "softer" forms of violence also lead to traumatic histories.

These novels inform my examination of representations of cases of "nongenocide," within the boundaries of literature. I contend that fictional authors who choose to depict historical cases of violent episodes, or nongenocide—that is, instances of violence that are not

confined to the definitions of genocide as outlined in the 1948 United Nations General Convention on the Prevention of Genocide—rely on historical explorations to foster multidirectional sites of memory as a historical rewriting of the past in view of the acknowledgment of a hybrid present.

As a term nongenocide needs to be vigorously studied and meticulously used. As such, genocide deniers have used it as a term to denote the absence of genocide where one has been established, even if it remains to be officially recognized.[50] I aim to use the term productively as a means to interrogate the presence of genocide for cases that have not already been established, as well as for cases that may not actually be genocide.

Other scholars have moved in similar directions to Meierheinrich with regards to the term "nongenocide," pointing to its importance. Without using the term "nongenocide," sociologist Michael Mann, in *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing,* explores instances of ethnic cleansing that scholars do not typically refer to as genocide in conjunction with established cases of genocide. Historian and political scientist Jacques Sémelin also uses "massacre" rather than genocide to analyze a broader variety of violence (Sémelin 2010). The work done by these social scientists indicates an important way forward in literary texts that focus on fictionalized memories. Given its colonial past, Mauritius is an interesting example to think through the concept of nongenocide and the ways in which representations of different forms of violence enable discussions that relate and are productive to the field of genocide studies.

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50 The website http://thealternativehypothesis.org/index.php/2016/06/02/the-non-genocide-of-northern-native-americans/ offers an "alternative hypothesis" regarding the "non-genocide" of North Americans. For an example of a scholarly tome that debunks any accusation of lack of genocide in North America, see Benjamin Madley's *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846-1873* (2016).

Despite its history of violence, present-day Mauritius is not on international watch-lists for potential escalation of violence.[51] The last major case of violence followed the death of the musician Kaya in 1999 at the hands of police brutality. Police arrested the popular singer for having smoked marijuana at a rally that was promoting its legalization and he died while in custody. Violence erupted between and among different ethnic and religious groups. At the time of the eruption of violence, *The Guardian* reported that "demonstrators have blocked main roads, looted and ransacked police stations and burnt at least 200 vehicles, according to the police and witnesses. The unrest has spread to other towns and villages."[52] The demonstrators were primarily from the Creole community, comprised of descendants of slaves and marginalized in Mauritian society. The police, with whom they clashed, on the other hand, were largely of the Hindu community. The protests were therefore ethnically charged as one group was pitted against another. In a 2015 special report investigating Mauritius entitled "Shadow of 'reggae riots' still hangs over Mauritius," the *Financial Times* pointed to the ways in which the tensions continue to linger, even as the government maintains that there were improvements within the Creole community.[53]

Mauritius is thus a productive space in which to examine inequalities among ethnic groups that could lead to conceptions of competitive memory where two major forms of violence occurred, both slavery and indentured servitude. Appanah's novels offer a space to discuss these instances and processes of violence. Her novels point to the uniqueness of Mauritian creolized identity by putting victims of the two forms of violence in dialogue with one another.

51 Violence against individual women, nevertheless, continues to be of particular concern.

[52] See, for instance: Clifford Vellien, "Rioting in Mauritius set off by jail death of singer." *The Guardian*. 24 February 1999. https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/feb/25/7

[53] Please see the article for more information: Andrew England. "Shadow of 'reggae riots' still hangs over Mauritius." *The Financial Times*. 22 September 2015. https://www.ft.com/content/1633d034-532c-11e5-b029-b9d50a74fd14

In my examination of *Les rochers de Poudre d'Or* and *Le dernier frère,* I aim to study Appanah's treatment of violent episodes of history in conjunction with the concept of nongenocide. In what ways are these representations of indentured servitude, slavery and non-European Holocaust history different from representations of "official" genocide? What kind of narrative techniques do authors use to depict various instances of violence? I begin by analyzing *Les rochers de Poudre d'Or,* which deals explicitly with the history of indentured servitude in the Indian Ocean; yet, an implicit link to slavery runs deep within the content, suggesting the inability to divorce the two processes from one another. Appanah therefore makes clear the underlying links between slavery and indenture in the novel.

I. Perpetrators and Perspectives in *Les Rochers de Poudre d'Or*

Appanah's first novel depicts the "coolie" experience from the initial decision to become an indentured servant to the final results of living and working in Mauritius. The text portrays a variety of voices in the beginning to show how Indians were either coerced or voluntarily chose to undergo the trip to Mauritius. The characters all emphasize the notion of the "contract" and how their signature ultimately becomes their death sentence—irrevocable, irreplaceable. The multitude of voices allows a panoramic portrait of Indian society, focusing on Madras and Calcutta. The exchange of signature for rupees to get through the trip is a sort of devil's pact where the characters cannot retract their decision.

Following the defeat of the French in the Battle of Grand Port, Île de France fell under British hands under the Treaty of Paris (1814). For the first two decades, the British continued to maintain the institution of slavery. Yet, as humanitarian impulses in Britain rallied stronger, the empire officially abolished slavery in 1834, even as the question of labor remained imperative.

Mauritius, as a result, became the grounds of a test case, the first country to receive indentured servants in the nineteenth century. The goal of the British was to "demonstrate the superiority of free labor," following the abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire.[54] The historical links between slavery and indenture play out in the novel at the end. The two UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Mauritius, Aapravasi Ghat and Le Morne, attest to the historical violence that has shaped Mauritian history under French (1715-1810) and British (1810-1968) rule. Appanah puts these two sites within the same novel and, in doing so, demonstrates the depth of connected histories, rather than maintaining discrete narratives about the island's colonial past.

Le Morne commemorates the history of maronnage in Mauritius.[55] French rule institutionalized slavery on the island, which remained until the abolition of slavery in the British Empire. A mountain in the South-West of Mauritius, overlooking the Indian Ocean, Le Morne recently opened up to the public as a hiking spot. There is currently no data on maintenance, but a recent archival trip to Mauritius confirms that it is covered in trash with a lack of clean up, contrasting sharply with the nicely maintained Aapravasi Ghat that offers a plethora of information to educate the visitor. Le Morne, on the other hand, currently does not offer any pamphlets or visual media.

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[54] The document produced by the Aapravasi Ghat entitled "Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site: Brief history" explains indentured servitude in the Indian Ocean in detail. It is available here: http://www.aapravasighat.org/English/Resources%20Aapravasi%20Ghat%20WHP/Documents/Brief%20History%20of%20the%20Aapravasi%20Ghat%20World%20Heritage%20Site.pdf

[55] The Oxford English Dictionary defines marrons and maronnage as the following: "The term "maroons" refers to people who escaped slavery to create independent groups and communities on the outskirts of slave societies. Scholars generally distinguish two kinds of maronnage, though there is overlap between them. "Petit maronnage," or running away, refers to a strategy of resistance in which individuals or small groups, for a variety of reasons, escaped their plantations for a short period of days or weeks and then returned. "Grand maronnage," much less prevalent, and the topic here, refers to people who removed themselves from their plantations permanently. Grand maronnage could be carried out by individuals or small groups, or it could be the result of plantation-wide breakouts, or even colony-wide rebellions." Please consult http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199730414/obo-9780199730414-0229.xml for the full definition.

In the first part of this section, I examine the first-person account of Doctor Grant and attitudes towards indentured servants as represented by the British. Grant's journal challenges his divisive racial thinking that is indicative of Hegel's master-slave dialectic that considers racial groups in static, homogenous terms to call into question notions of perspective and representation in the novel. In the second part, I explore the multidirectional space of Le Morne where an indentured servant converses with a community of former slaves and the repercussions of such a dialogue.

GRANT'S JOURNAL

In the second half of the first part of the novel, the third-person narration changes into the first-person point of view in the form of a journal by the ship's doctor. The acerbic tone quickly displays an overt disdain for the Indians on the ship. Rather than beginning with the characters in Madras in correspondence with the beginning of the novel, the journal shows the doctor at the Calcutta port. The first entry gives an exact date and location: "*23 avril 1892,* Atlas*, port de Calcutta*" (Appanah 77). Subsequent entries begin simply with the day and month, allowing the entry itself to indicate the ship's location as it stops in Madras and begins to sail to Mauritius. Despite the change in perspective and genre, Appanah still confines the journal entries within the narrative boundaries of her text by giving a descriptive chapter title, as she does for the other chapters. In this instance, "*Ma trousse de médecin contient le strict minimum*" (emphasis in original) plays a dual role of placing the doctor's voice as that of the author, while also suggesting the author's ultimate role as creator in appropriating her character's voice to display it as a chapter title. This interplay of author and character gives the most overtly racist character the most intimate portrait.

As indicated in the journal, the doctor's brand of xenophobia is unique among his compatriots. He frequently abhors what he perceives as tolerant behavior towards Indians, decrying leniency as a form of betrayal of the "mission." The doctor quietly fumes: "J'étais très énervé et choqué qu'un membre de l'Empire choisisse de rester pour cette culture prétendument 'fascinante.' Quand comprendrait-il que ce sont ces peuples-là sont nos esclaves, que nous les avons vaincus?" (91). The use of the word "esclave" is a deliberate choice on the part of Appanah to situate Grant's line of colonial thinking within the framework of "master" and "slave," which the abolition of slavery sought to dismantle. Following a verbal assault on his colleague, Devon, who expresses his fascination with Indian culture and desire to live in India upon retiring from the boat, the doctor reveals only in his journal that his xenophobia stems from a conqueror mentality. His reference to the British Empire reveals an anxiety with regards to ideology. He equates victory with worthy of being "fascinating," adding that the vanquished should learn of the victor's culture. Such an attitude decries concepts of creolization and any sort of hybridity that could emerge from an exchange.

In another instance that reflects differing colonial attitudes, Grant overreacts to an awkward moment of clumsiness when sauce is spilled on him. The ship's captain, William, remarks: "Ce n'est que de la sauce, docteur Grant," and Grant's reaction borders on paranoia as he explains that "j'ai réalisé alors que ces Anglais préféraient prendre le parti d'un salaud Indien. […] Jamais je n'aurais cru être trahi par les miens" (97). He divides the world in Manichean terms based on race, contrasting the English as "les miens" against "un salaud Indien," representative of his disdain for all men. Yet, this type of thinking also means that Grant groups all the English together as one, unified mass, even as the British on the ship do not all subscribe to the same line of thinking. Grant chooses to view William as representative of "ces Anglais," in

the same way that he views the Indian indentured servants as a homogenous group. The format of the journal allows the reader to intimately witness the ways in which racial thinking applies to different groups. Appanah chooses to focus questions on race on this one character at odds with the rest of the English on the boat. While Grant's discourse is reductive and stereotypical, the display of his journal allows the reader to access the full range of the complexity of his thoughts. The use of a third-person perspective could have risked the chance of portraying him in static turns. As such, the reader rather is able to witness his varying feelings towards Indians, as well as to the English, rendered all the more complex through the revelation of his dreams and the images that haunt him.

One such image is that of a young Indian woman named Ganga who leaves behind her noble family to escape death. Rather than be burned alive as a widow as per the sati custom, Ganga chooses to leave her family home (and escape her own death) to start a new life as an indentured servant. Grant notices that Ganga's gait that differs from the other Indian woman, commenting on her uniqueness on the ship, explaining that "mais ce qui est étonnant, c'est que, contrairement aux autres Indiens, elle ne fuit pas le regard…Elle le soutient même et c'est très amusant" (114). In discussing Ganga's steady eye contact, Grant contrasts her behavior with all Indians, not only the other women, as signaled by his use of "Indiens" and not "Indiennes." For Grant, her behavior therefore marks as an exception among her race, according to his racial logic that regards racial groups as homogenous entities.

His ruminations on race highlight how he views Indians as monolithic. He wonders: "Quel est ce peuple ? Quel est ce peuple qui brûle ses morts, quel est ce peuple qui parfois vit dans des châteaux opulents et qui parfois dort dans la rue ? Quel est ce peuple qui a peur de tout et qui, pourtant, traverse les mers pour aller travailler dans une île battue par des cyclones et

infestée de rats ?" (113). The repetition of the question "qui/quel est ce peuple" reveals an awareness of dominant Indian culture at that time, as well as an inability to fully understand it. Rather than trying to properly grasp it and the ways in which it differs from his own culture, Grant considers its opacity, which he characterizes as illogical and incomprehensible, as a factor of its inherent inferiority.

As a result of this opacity, Grant tries to minimize his contact with the Indians on the ship, even if it means neglecting his duties as a doctor. His racism overrides any desire for money; he explains that he could not be on a ship that goes to Guyana, because it would mean spending five months in a ship with Indians. He emphasizes the need for distance and the ways in which he finds the concept of the other as off-putting, even the British who are too close to Indian culture. He describes the *chef du dépôt* as looking too Indian for his tastes when he explains that the *chef* "a fini par leur ressembler avec ses cheveux gras et ses dents jaunes." Grant continues to recount how the *chef* laughs and tries to joke with him, but Grant refuses to participate in such social pleasantries. Rather, he writes that: "Je n'ai pas ri. Je n'aime pas la familiarité" (80). This need for distance is ironic given the journalistic format of the text, which creates a privileged, intimate space between the doctor and the reader, one that remains inaccessible to the other characters. His journal is a text in passage, between two countries, which ties into the experience of the *cale*.

References to the ship's hold abound in Grant's journal, building suspense until he finally descends into it to examine the *vieux* that has captured his imagination. Why show it through his perspective and not through that of one of the indentured servants? Exposure to Grant's innermost racist thoughts renders his obvious horror at the living conditions of the *cale* all the stronger. He writes with disgust: "Les Indiens n'étaient pas entassés. Ils étaient les uns sur les

autres, en grappes. La cale sentait le corps rance, la pisse, la crasse. J'ai pensé que si la misère devait avoir une odeur, ce serait celle-là" (108). Grant's descriptive language relies on the senses to impart the misery of the journey for the newly engaged Indians en route to Mauritius.

Yet even if at odds with the ship's colonial officials, Grant's attitude to women is representative of a colonial patriarchy that considers itself owners of the female colonized body. He references a previous experience in which he claims to have been examining a woman after she accused him of inappropriately touching her. The tension builds slowly in his journal, as he puts off female examinations, continues his descent into alcoholism and begins to consider Ganga as a mate. He blames her for his drinking, claiming "elle me plaît cette fille. Ce sentiment m'agace profondément et c'est pour cela que j'ai autant bu, je crois" (120). The journal format makes it unclear whether he is making excuses or reflecting on his behavior. After hinting at the scandal during a previous journey during earlier moments of his journal, Grant finally explains that a woman complained about his behavior during a check-up, leading to his interrogation by William, as well as a formal complaint to the Protector of Immigrants. Grant makes a link between the complaint and the civilizing mission, as he explains that there were not any disciplinary measures taken against him: "Et ça, William ne l'a jamais digéré! Quand est-ce que des gens comme lui vont comprendre notre mission? Nous sommes là pour que ces barbares se civilisent et tant qu'ils ne sont pas, nous serons supérieurs" (93). He expresses surprise that William has not come to terms with the lack of disciplinary action against Grant's behavior, particularly when Grant believes that he had the right to "civilize" the woman as a member of the group of "barbares" that are inferior to his "superior" status. Given that Grant avoids any punishment, Appanah makes a pointed critique to the overarching colonial structure. Yet by

placing William at odds with Grant, particularly as the ship's captain, she creates a nuanced portrait of British attitudes towards Indian indentured servants at the time.

Grant's journal also allows Appanah to put her novel in dialogue with Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, an intertextuality that challenges conceptions of perpetrators and victims. The only text that accompanies Grant in his journey is the play—to which he continuously refers throughout his chapter—*The Tempest* is a curious choice for a xenophobe. The play has had links to postcolonial literature, most notably with Aimé Césaire's *Une tempête*. Grant first mentions the play in relation to his personal reading when he explains that: "Je le lis et le relis à chaque voyage et je ne cesse d'y découvrir de nouvelles choses. Comme si pendant qu'il était clos, le livre respirait et muait" (79). He attributes a fantastical character to the text, in line with the nature of Prospero's magic.

That magic stems from the ambiguity of Grant's associations with Prospero, primarily around the figure of the older man, *le vieux*, who jumped off the ship. Grant observes him, describing his garments and physical look with the growing realization that the man was going to jump off the ship to his death. But it is when they share a long look that Grant compares him to Shakespeare's fictional character:

> Il avait ce regard luisant de désespéré et ses pieds trépignaient. Il m'a regardé longuement, je me suis demandé s'il voulait me dire quelque chose et puis j'ai eu cette impression qu'il regardait au travers de moi. Le vent lui ramenait ses longs cheveux gris sur le visage et, bizarrement, il m'a fait penser à Prospero dans *La Tempête* (84-85).

It is "bizarrement" that Grant makes this connection to Prospero, but does not explain why he should find it so. But the image of the older man continues to haunt him, even if he is not the only figure that stands in for Prospero. In one of Grant's dreams, he sees Prospero and Miranda,

with two images for Prospero, both *le vieux* and William. He associates Ganga with Miranda: "Miranda avait le crâne rasé et Prospero la retenait sur cette île perdue au milieu de nulle part. J'étais aussi dans le rêve mais quand je me penchais sur l'océan, je ne voyais que le reflet des larmes sur mes joues" (98). Critics often regard Prospero as the figure of the colonizer, a position that other academics have interrogated. Literary scholar Jerry Brotton, for example, in his article entitled "'This Tunis, sir, was Cartage': Contesting colonialism in *The Tempest*" in *Postcolonial Shakespeare* (1998) reevaluates Prospero as not just a figure of English colonialism. It is in this ambiguous space where Appanah situates Prospero, as Grant seems to relate to him at the same time that he associates Prospero with the older man who threw himself off the boat. Grant's association with Prospero is in some ways a rejection of the colonization, particularly its system of indenture, but not on moral grounds. It is after his dream where he associates Prospero with the older man and William that he decides that he will no longer travel as a ship doctor. As his racist mindset shows, he clearly holds on to a racial hierarchy. But as Grant's eventual suicide shows, he no longer desires to continue participating in the system.

Grant's story ends not through his perspective, but filtered through the perspective of his shipmates. Rather than giving him an opportunity to land victorious in Mauritius, Appanah has other characters weighing in on his behavior. William discusses Grant's eventual demise on the boat with Carter. It allows the reader to cast judgment on him with the other characters. It also brings a multifaceted dimension to the English players. One cannot help but read it as if Grant was an aberration and that many of the officers were sympathetic towards the indentured servants.

Appanah depicts the trauma of the perpetrator through the journal of Doctor Grant, which I connect to a take on perpetrators as discussed briefly by Michael Rothberg in *Multidirectional*

Memory. Appanah's novel shows the perspectives of a racist doctor who cannot reconcile his own perceptions on race with the changing attitudes that characterized British attitude towards indigenous peoples. She describes the traumatic encounter between the two groups by showing the internal diversity of both the perpetrator group and the victim group. She also shows that some victims too can become perpetrators. As Rothberg notes, "the concept of trauma emerges from a diagnostic realm that lies beyond guilt and innocence or good and evil. While everyday usage of these terms understandably lacks precision, scholarly approaches should carefully distinguish different discursive domains" (Rothberg 90). In that vein, Appanah creates a highly nuanced portrait of the process of bringing indentured servants from India to Mauritius. She depicts varying attitudes among the British, contrasting it with the extreme racist perspective of the doctor. To level his extremity and prevent him from becoming a caricature, the use of the first-person perspective allows Appanah to create a more rounded picture of the character. The journal allows an intimate access to his thoughts in a way that allows the reader to see his struggles, particularly when it comes to Ganga and the older man. It also allows Gran to develop his fixation on Prospero as a way to allow the figure of the "perpetrator" to reject the system of indenture, as well.

Following the abrupt end of Grant's journal, the perspective of the novel changes again in the beginning of its second section to offer a portrait of all the indentured servants who had travelled on the *Atlas*. This change in perspective gives a general sense of the experience of arriving at the Aapravasi Ghat as a polyphonic reflection of the arrival in Mauritius. The text does not describe individual voices, but rather groups all Indians as "ils," and sometimes as "les femmes" and "les hommes" (129-131). Appanah pays particular attention to describing the differing male and female experiences of indentured servitude. In many ways, parts of her novel

parallel the experience of learning about *engagisme* at the Aapravasi Ghat. Appanah seems concerned with the beginnings and questions such as: How did they get there? Why did they choose to go? What was the experience of doing so? Indeed, prior to departure, when focusing on Vythee's trajectory, the narrator describes the last night before the voyage as people begin sharing their personal histories and feeling closer as a community: "Cette nuit-là, tous ces hommes qui allaient voguer sur le kala pani se sentirent un peu comme des frères" (66). As I will discuss below in the section on *Le dernier frère*, the concept of fraternity in Appanah's oeuvre becomes an allegory for nationhood and belonging; indeed, it is not a coincidence that Vithy wishes to reunite with his brother and ultimately fails to do so, as a result of the system that is in place. Yet Appanah points to the ways that the ties of brotherhood remain as a result of a shared experience for indentured servants whose descendants currently make up 70% of the population of contemporary Mauritius.

In depicting perpetrators of violence during the process of indenture, Appanah is careful not to paint a Manichean portrait of the English as perpetrators and the Indians as helpless victims, but rather to extend her criticism to certain Indians, too. Roopaye, the woman who arranges contracts for the English in Madras, profits handsomely from the colonial system in place. A chapter entitled "*La seule femme et la plus douée de tous*" introduces Roopaye, collaborator of the British in manipulating her compatriots to sign the contract to become an indentured servant. In the introductory scene, Roopaye is in movement, entering the court of the British officer, sir Radcliff, who awaits her in his office. Already her position of authority is clear; she recognizes his building and enters it as the security guards nod at her to pass through the building. She wryly notes that she recognizes them as individuals whose fortune she has made and whose social standing she has elevated through her work. The first word in the chapter

uttered from the officer is her name, confirming the power her presence commands, even in relation to a British officer. She begins by referring to him as "sahib," a title that he quickly brushes away, asking her to refer to him rather as "sir Radcliff" or "sir" (57). While he continues to maintain a certain level of superiority over Roopaye through the insistence on the use of "sir," he does so in a different way than other Indians by asking her to bypass the use of "sahib."

Roopaye, however, manipulates the conversation through the use of "sahib" when Radcliff presses her on recruiting more indentured servants, which would be at odds with her reputation as a recruiter working in the interest of the people she represents and who come to her specifically to seek her help. She insists to Radcliffe that "il faut que les gens continuent à croire que je fais ça pour eux uniquement. Ni pour vous ni pour moi" (59). The unspoken is clear; she is *only* working for personal profit and not for the new indentured servants. Radcliffe worries that Madras will close just as Bombay did, to Roopaye's annoyance, who closes the conversation with a short "Oui, j'ai entendu, sahib" (60). The conversation between Roopaye and Radcliffe demonstrates the ways in which Rooopaye has mastered the system to her benefit and changes her vocabulary to manipulate social standing to meet her goals.

Another Indian character who complicates the black and white perpetrator-victim portraits is an individual whom Badri observes upon his escape from the plantation towards the end of the novel. Hidden in the sugar cane field, he spots the Indian overseer and believes for a moment that this person will be sympathetic based on race. Surprised to see him behave badly towards other Indian, he wonders to himself, "Qu'est-ce que c'est que ce pays? Lui qui pensait que seuls les Blancs pouvaient fouetter, que seuls les Blancs pouvaient ne pas avoir de pitié, que seuls les Blancs savaient manier le fouet pour qu'il fasse 'pac'" (206). The repetition "que seuls les Blancs" highlights Badri's black and white perception of power dynamics within the system

of indenture. Surprised, he decides, “Ce pays rendait les Indiens aussi mauvais que les Blancs!” (206). By referring to “ce pays,” Badri suggests that the system of exploitation of indenture in Mauritius moved beyond racial relations to profit from its workers in a way that dehumanizes them. This could suggest that race is not a binding force between people, for money corrupts and betrays, as exemplified in the figure of Roopaye who is content on maintaining her cash flow. One could only imagine that the Indian overseer continues his work at the very least as a result of enjoying a position of power that allows a release from physical labor. By showing different motivations, but not simply painting all Indians as victims and all British as racist, Appanah points to the complicated history in which racial dynamics played less of a role than it did during slavery, but continued its exploitation in new ways.

MULTIDIRECTIONAL LE MORNE

To further consider the evolution of indenture from slavery, the novel ends with Badri’s encounter with a former slave community. This moment makes visible the intertwining of different forms of violence and it creates a space where multidirectional stories can be articulated. The encounter between the two communities illustrates the stereotypes that one has of the other, such as Badri's fear that he will be eaten by the former slave community, but also refers to the differences in experience for each community. One of the former slaves, referred to as the grandfather, asserts that “hé, couillon! Nous n'avions pas de contrat, nous!” With this pointed reference to the contract Appanah creates a space within the novel that respects the specificity of the violence slavery and the fact that it preceded the violence of indenture addressed in her novel. The grandfather continues to speak, illustrating clear differences between the two communities with regards to their arrival to Mauritius:

> “ […] Vous aviez tous des sacs avec plein de trucs inutiles dedans! Ta femme? Tu peux l'emmener. Tes enfants aussi. Tu me vois? Je suis venu tout nu. Sans rien. J'avais des chaînes, couillon. Ma femme, je ne sais où elle est. Mes enfants, non plus. Pour nous il n'y avait pas de contrat, pas de paye à la semaine et on mangeait des racines, couillon” (215).

The grandfather forges a comparison between the two arrivals in Mauritius, that of the slave and that of the coolie. He illustrates the dehumanizing conditions that the slaves were forced to endue in contrast to arrival of the indentured servants. Rather than creating an atmosphere of competitive memory, however, the grandfather creates a relation between the two groups when he exclaims, “C'est nous qui étions à votre place il y a quarante ans!” (213). Yet Appanah complicates the developing sense of solidarity by the words of another former slave figure only referred to as “Le Noir” by Badri. Lowering himself to look Badri straight in the eye, le Noir attacks him as a representative of all Indians on the island and accuses him of working with the white population, colonizing the island and believing they are the equals of “les Blancs” and thinking themselves superior to the African population. He stressed to Badri: “Vous aussi, vous fouettez vos employés...” (219). This comment connects back to the Indian overseer who Badri had witnessed whipping his employees. This type of racial thinking points to problems that will create divisions between communities. But as the book itself has already shown, tensions within the Indian community itself show the futility of stereotypes across communities, particularly when Badri too is surprised to see an Indian whip other Indians on the island.

The British presence has left a conflicting viewpoint within contemporary Mauritian society, as represented by their cultural institutions. To contrast two cultural sites in Port Louis, the Blue Penny Museum and the Aapravasi Ghat, is to understand how one regime could impact

groups in different ways. In the Blue Penny Museum, the curators have made a point of noting that the British allowed the soldiers and Franco-Mauritians to keep their language and culture, whereas the Aapravasi Ghat depicts the difficult conditions in the journey across the *kala pani* for the indentured servants.

Despite archival documentation that points to the role of the Immigration Officer in maintaining sanitary conditions for indentured servants, the number of documented forms of abuse points to difficult conditions. The Immigration Annual Reports take into account several factors, such as hospital conditions and housing, examining each plantation site where indentured servants were engaged as workers. But it was the Williamson Commission that eventually raised British awareness of the level of abuse occurring throughout the colony.

Appanah draws attention to the abuse inflicted against the population of indentured servants throughout the novel, while including the perspective of the group that had suffered before the implementation of indenture in Mauritius. The representation of a former slave community enables the creation of a multidirectional or, in other ways, a creolized space. As Françoise Vergès, speaking about Réunion Island and the Caribbean in general, explains:

> Creolization is under attack. It is threatened by the ethnicization of memory, in which each group claims a memory connected to an ethnic group […] regardless of the complex history of groups, the inevitable mixing, and the diversity of origins. The shared narrative of creolization is contested by the privatization of narratives. It is also threatened by the dominant discourse of identity formation, whereby the self is understood as self-sufficient, detached from the web of debts, relations, and networks of filiation that contribute to its sense of being.” (Vergès, “Indian-Oceanic Creolizations,”149)

In speaking out against the dangers of focusing on discrete group histories, Vergès makes a point that resonates with Appanah's novel. Even if concentrating on the narrative of one group of people, Appanah allows an interweaving with another community to create a creolized narrative. By bringing together an indentured servant in dialogue with liberated slaves, Appanah creates a productive conversation between the two communities and the way their histories intersect on the island.

Appanah engages with a similar dynamic at a more intimate and profound level in her novel *Le dernier frère*. By bringing together two boys who share a traumatic past, Appanah moves beyond conceptions of competitive memory to create another multidirectional space within her oeuvre.

II. LE DERNIER FRERE

"There was plenty of friction at first," writes former Jewish detainee Karl Lenk in his journal edited and translated by his son in 1993, "but gradually a camp routine emerged and some kind of provisional normality began to establish itself. The prison gates had closed behind us for an unpredictable term, but we all live in the hope of leaving this island and of being reunited with our families in freedom" (Lenk 83). Between 1940-1945, about 1600 Central European Jews were detained in an old colonial "camp" in Beau Bassin, Mauritius. How did they arrive in that particular outpost of the British Empire? And what was their experience in the camp in a colony in which they never expected to reside for an undetermined amount of time?

The fate of this particular episode of Holocaust history might have continued to remain in relative obscurity had independent scholar Geneviève Pitot not published in 1998 her text *The Mauritian Shekel: The Story of Jewish Detainees in Mauritius, 1940-1945*. Driven to uncover the

story of her art teacher, Anna Frank, Pitot spent years combing through archives in Europe and in Mauritius and conducting oral interviews. Her text traces how this particular group of Central European Jews fled Europe to escape the Holocaust with the intent of staying in the British Palestine Mandate where, once they arrived, British authorities refused them entry and forced them to migrate to Mauritius. Such a publication brought attention to the forgotten story of the Jewish detainees in Mauritius. Drawing inspiration from Pitot's publication, *Le dernier frère* is the main novel that deals explicitly with the history of these Jewish detainees and the construction of a collective memory of the traumatic past. The success of Appanah's novel is such that it is now read in high schools in Mauritius, signaling the importance of literature's role in shaping collective memory and even, as in this particular instance, in creating a collective memory where one did not previously exist.[56]

At times, Appanah's narration resembles that of Pitot's text. The link between history and literature is clear when Appanah begins with a description of the cemetery itself, grounded in the real history of what happened to the Jewish detainees. But it is the inscription of "David Stein" on a tombstone with the birth and death dates that mark the fictional route, for there is no gravestone that marks the death of a child named David Stein. It is, despite its focus on history, evidently a work of fiction. The 127 people buried at St Martin's cemetery do not include a David Stein. At the detainee museum, along with Pitot's book, now available in French, they offer a CD for sale that lists all the names of the detainees.[57] The focus of the center is to memorialize those who lived through the experience, which might initially seem at odds with Appanah's text. Even as a work of fiction, as the museum guide insisted on in the story at the

[56] Personal interview with high school teacher, September 2016

[57] As Lionnet notes in "Dire Exactement," Pitot's book was originally written in French, but the English translation was published before the French one.

beginning of this chapter, it still fosters a memory of an event to the point where people look for David.

As he recounts his story, the protagonist Raj expresses feelings of guilt that coincide with his anxiety as an historian. Raj's guilt becomes survivor's guilt, a concept explained by literary scholar Cathy Caruth in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, one of the foundational texts of the field of Trauma Studies. Caruth poses an important question with regards to the nature of traumatic experience: "Is the trauma the encounter with death, or the ongoing experience of having survived it?" The novel exemplifies what Caruth calls a "double telling," what she defines as "the oscillation between a *crisis of death* and the correlative *crisis of life*; between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival" (Caruth 7). This double telling—that is, the story of David's death and Raj's survival— are linked to questions of historiography and race. The nature of the trauma and Raj's survival inform the two main points that I consider in this section, namely the negotiation between history and literature as Raj constructs his narrative, as well as reflections on racial relations in Mauritius. As he confronts his past, Raj begins to confront his survivor guilt sixty years after the occurrence of the trauma as he begins his traumatic tale.

NEGOTIATING NARRATIVE: MEMORY AND HISTORY

Throughout the novel, Raj explicitly discusses the difficulties of recounting the circumstances surrounding the development of his friendship with David and their harrowing journey in the forest. The different ways in which he divulges the difficulties in doing so vary throughout the text, even as certain turns of expression, as discussed below, repeat in a revelatory fashion. In one particular instance, early on in the narrative, Raj reveals his inability to accurately

recall the details of his past. Three days after losing his brothers, Raj and his parents leave Mapou to live in Beau Bassin. In describing the trip from one village to the next, Raj claims not to remember the exact details of the past, which shows how he negotiates the construction of the story by imagining the possibilities of the past. He describes his departure with his parents from Mapou in uncertain terms:

> Nous avons traversé la moitié de l'île, du nord au centre. J'imagine que sur cette longue route vers Beau-Bassin, nous avons voyagé sur des charrettes conduites par des bœufs ou des ânes, peut-être avons-nous pris un train, car il en existait à l'époque, nous avons marché […] Malgré tous mes efforts, je ne me souviens de rien. Etais-je collé à ma mère, me tenait-elle la main, pleurait-elle ses fils, sa maison, la communauté de malheureux d'entre les malheureux que nous quittions? (37).

Raj struggles to create his memory, relying on questions and hesitations to depict the scene of the past. He takes on the role of author who begins to "imagine" reality, even as this imagined reality is his own lived past. The use of "peut-être" in establishing the course of actions indicates the level of his incertitude in remembering the past. The following remark "car il en existait à l'époque" resembles that of an historian reconstructing an individual's past based on established facts. He furthermore does not question this detail, establishing that some facts are verifiable and certain. As he continues to reflect, he adds that "j'aimerais me souvenir des premiers jours à Beau-Bassin," but that he cannot, because, "je n'arrive qu'à réveiller des images éparpillées, comme jetées dans un livre sans mots, sans titre" (40). Raj gestures towards the relationship between memory and literature, implying that memory creates a rich text, even as it is not fully readable; without a clear memory of an event, there are no words, only scattered images. Memory, then, according to Raj, requires a narrative thread. Hayden White's work on history

points to the narrative technique of history that is akin to the writing of literature.[58] The process of reconstructing memory resembles both the writing of literature and history in that it requires a narrative, inevitably raising the question of author. Raj frequently refers to his inability to remember what had happened by directly calling attention to it as a frequent narrative tool.

Such an inability to recall the details harkens to Ricoeur's idea of blocked memory at the pathological-therapeutic level, which is an attempt to forego manipulated memory (Ricoeur 2003). Ravi summarizes Ricoeur's theory as "when one thing is remembered at the cost of another" (Ravi 50). Yet this question of cost participates with notions of competitive memory. The act of remembering the story, of visiting David's grave for the first time, allows Raj to have full access to his memories, and thus share it finally with his son. In bringing his son to the cemetery with him, Raj transmits the knowledge of the forgotten event, which mirrors how Mauritian society at large begins to learn of the internment of the Jewish detainees during World War II. In this way, the act of physically confronting the past by going to the cemetery enables Raj's to access, albeit not fully, his memories, pointing to the novel as a space where multidirectional memory can function.

Raj alternates between two major turns of phrase in his retelling of the past: "je me souviens" and "dire exactement." His desire to "dire exactement" arrives towards the end of his narrative as he approaches the events that lead to the death of David. When he begins the narrative, he claims at times "je me souviens," as the memory of his childhood returns to him. For instance, in discussing his time with his brothers, Raj as the adult narrator emphasizes the clarity of his memory: "J'ai soixante-dix ans aujourd'hui et je me souviens comme si c'était hier du tonnerre […] Je me souviens de la peur […] Je me souviens du brouillard fantomatique [….]"

[58] See, for example, Hayden White's *The Content of the Form*

(33). The repetition of the expressions “je me souviens” emphasizes the extent to which the memory of that particular moment has remained clear for him, in contrast to other moments that he cannot accurately describe. As Raj approaches the end of his narrative, the novel negotiates between the “dire exactement” and the “je me souviens,” that is, a negotiation between an anxiety stemming from the inability to reproduce the exact history of what had happened with the sudden certitude of moments that have remained clear in his memory. The anxiety between the remembered and the forgotten plays out in a reverie in which Raj begins his narrative. He describes how David comes to him in a dream, suggesting that his memory lies somewhere between dream and reality.

The question of archive at the end of the novel challenges notions of historical veracity within the text. As Françoise Lionnet has pointed out, a newspaper article fabricated by the author and designed to appear as an authentic archival material complicates the concept of the creation of a collective memory through its inauthenticity. Lionnet argues that “the incorrect elements of this 'archive' challenges the interplay of fiction and reality within a novel positing itself as a 'truthful' recollection of a real historical event.” It is worth further examining Raj’s comments on archives to consider the document as a site where fiction and history meet, as well as the historical facts offered by the article. The newspaper account references the 127 people buried in the Jewish section of Saint Martin’s Cemetery. Yet, as I noted in the beginning, there is no David Stein buried at the cemetery. The use of the real number of individuals buried in the cemetery within the fictional confines of a novel that includes David’s tombstone, which does not exist in reality, suggests that the newspaper account functions as a literary intersection between imagination and history. In other words, the numbers simply do not add up. Throughout the novel, Raj continuously refers to his desire to describe what had happened as an historian,

reminiscent of Pitot's meticulous work in *The Mauritian Shekel*, given that she belonged to the generation that remembered the events as they had unfolded. Examining the historically accurate representations of the past with its fictional counterparts within the same text provides fruitful grounds to consider both the uses and limitations of history within literary texts. Given Raj's commentary on archives, Appanah perhaps creates archival material to show the ways in which the sensory output of the archival enables the creation of a historical imaginary.

The story of their escape is interrupted by a short reflection on archives that show Raj's interest in working as an historian, as well as a critique for archives. The critique of archives in Europe suggests that the novel dismisses the concept of the archive, as sustained in European holdings, to favor individual memory, as supported by the disorderly archives in Mauritius that call attention to the senses, even as it acknowledges the difficulties of accessing individual memory throughout the text. He explains that when he visited his son in Europe, he spent time in archives rather than visiting the cities themselves, indicating his interest in history. He admits to it as "une autre de mes manies, fouiller dans les vieux papiers" (145). He enumerates some of the archives he has visited in Europe: the archives de la Marine à Vincennes, the Foreign Office in London, as well as the one in Amsterdam. His disappointment in archives abroad contrasts with his appreciation for the disorder that he describes as characteristic of the National Archives of Mauritius. He explains that "ici, rien n'est protégé" (146), and that one is left alone after having filled out some forms. His appreciation for the National Archives of Mauritius centers around the senses as he explains that "ça sent le vieux papier, l'encre et la rouille" (146). The power of the archives in Mauritius is that it awakes the senses and creates a concrete sensation of the past for Raj. He admits that "c'est vrai, je suis d'accord avec tous ces gens qui crient au scandale depuis quelques années, la mémoire de notre pays s'en va disent-ils, avec de tels incompétents aux

archives" (146), yet he immediately adds that he was taken aback by the forms that he was asked to fill out by the archivists with regards to his intended research. As someone who simply wishes to discover the past by looking through documents without an established plan, he explains that the forms are not a productive way to measure his interest in the archives. By extending his comment on national archives to questions of national memory, Raj makes clear the importance of feeling free in the archives and having access to the sensory outputs of old documents. Raj's appreciation for the disorderly archives implicitly point to the importance of senses in allowing an imagining of history. He offers a critique of archives in general, but valorizes certain aspects of the past made available by the lack of organization in the national archives. He concludes by reinstating his love of going to the archives as he grows older, which is how he discovered the exact date of his fugue with David: February 5, 1945 (147).

Despite the difficulty of accessing his memory, Raj, at certain moments, states the precise dates of events, lending him the air of credibility as a historian documenting the past. For example, he reflects: "Si je l'imagine un instant dans l'état où j'étais ce 26 décembre 1944 alors que je n'avais que neuf ans, j'ai envie de hurler" (74). This comment shows the difference between Raj as a child and Raj as the adult narrator reflecting on the past. This date also hints at David's stay at the camp, given that the absence of his voice in the novel means that the reader is unaware of the longevity of his stay. The year 1944 indeed marked the fourth and final year of internment for the Jewish detainees of Beau Bassin. The use of dates sprinkled throughout the novel also suggest the work that Raj had done in digging through the national archives to contextualize his memory of his childhood friendship with David.

Despite the fabricated archival material, Appanah does rely on real events to lend the air of historical authenticity to her novel. The cyclone that permits Raj's abduction of David was a

real event. Pitot describes it in her chapter entitled "Enfin libres! Le retour en Palestine," highlighting the tragedy of David's death when he was close to liberation. Pitot describes the historical significance of the cyclone: "C'était le cyclone le plus dévastateur que l'île ait connu depuis 1931" (Pitot 252). The spread of polio is also mentioned as it had actually occurred. The tension between the real and the imagined is clear from the focus on the history and the cemetery as a *lieu de mémoire* (Nora 1984).

Raj's interior struggles show the difficulties of reproducing the past as it had unfolded. He halts the narrative to reflect on whether his role as an historian is successful as he pauses the story of how he met David:

> Je crois que c'est comme cela que ça s'est passé. Après toutes ces années, je gratte et je fouille dans mon souvenir et il faut me pardonner car parfois c'est plus difficile que je ne le pensais. Il est possible que ce ne soit pas dans cet ordre-là qu'il m'ait dit les choses, il est probable que mon esprit arrange un peu les souvenirs mais ce que je sais très certainement, c'est que nous avons parlé très lentement, pendant des heures, dans la lumière déclinante de l'après-midi. (81)

Raj readily admits to the difficulty in constructing his narrative as a result of his uncertain memory. He discusses the past in terms of possibility and probability; the only certainty that he stresses is his long conversation with David in the late afternoon. The clarity of his memory is linked to his senses as he comments on the "lumière déclinante," further contributing to the contrast between light and dark that Appanah evokes throughout the novel. In this selection, Raj highlights the difficulty of explaining the exact order of how the events unfolded during the burgeoning of their friendship. The difference between Raj's reflections and history is that Raj admits to an opacity of the past that renders it difficult to fully access it. This link between

history and literature in the form of narrative is similar to the work of White whose groundbreaking work on narrative and historiography is the most commented upon in this genre. It is through this hesitation and anxiety that lends Raj some credibility as an historian, because he acknowledges the fragility of the narrative. As he emphasizes the brotherly bond borne out of their conversation, Raj also acknowledges the limits of their interaction in the form of a common language. The use of French as a strange language for the two of them (81) reinforces the link between the two boys as outsiders who share an experience of trauma.

Raj offers a memory of colonial race relations that nonetheless remains pertinent to contemporary Mauritius. The moments of the narration that are more historical in nature by virtue of the dates and specific events that had actually occurred also point to important dates in terms of world history. The very reason of the displacement of the some 1600 Central European Jews to Mauritius harkens back to fundamental questions of race and identity. The novel ends with an affirmation to keep the memory of David alive. The narrator explains that "je me dis que je raconterai tout à l'heure à mon fils l'histoire de David, pour que lui aussi se souvienne" (211). The narrator's son plays a minimal role throughout the novel as the narrator remembers the events of 1945, entering the story when the narrator asks to drive him to the cemetery, which the son unquestioningly sets out to do. The narrator attributes his son's amenability to the narrator's older age, emphasizing their differing generations.

The narrator alternates between past and present in a way that shows that literature permits to both relive an event and to reflect on it at a different time. It exemplifies the porous nature of time in a literary text.

QUESTIONS OF RACE

Raj's anxieties over memory are also fraught with questions of race that move beyond Manichean conceptions of "white" and "black." It is through the bond between the two boys that Appanah brings up questions of race and conceptions of fraternity that go beyond national boundaries. Similarly to *Les rochers de Poudre-d'Or*, *Le dernier frère* deals with questions of collective and individual memory, negotiating a multidirectional space. As Lionnet notes, Appanah's novel "builds unexpected analogies" by fostering a dialogue between Central European Jews and Mauritians, thus creating a multidirectional space where the latter could "understand both the specificity of Jewish victimization and what it shares with other forms of discrimination" (Lionnet, "Dire exactement" 118). The text indicates that history can create trans-cultural dialogues.[59] Throughout the novel, Appanah emphasizes the importance of literature in offering a different perspective on the course of history.

The relationship with David dismantles Raj's conceptions of race as created by his experience of 1940s Mauritius. The novel shows through the eyes of a young boy a nation's link with Holocaust history, as told through a non-Western point of view. The question of race arises by destabilizing a "West and the rest" mentality. When Raj discovers the prison where his father has a new job as a guard, he observes from a vantage point, offering a portrait of what the detainees' life looked like at this time. He first observes the guards, among them his father, and then he notices that "des ombres blanches sont apparues," (54). He comments on their thinness and slow, silent gait into the courtyard, only to return to his surprise at their race: "Tous des Blancs […] Je n'avais jamais vu des Blancs aussi maigres et fatigués—à huit ans, je croyais que les personnes blanches étaient des patrons à l'usine, roulaient dans des voitures et pilotaient des avions mais jamais je n'aurais cru qu'ils pouvaient être enfermés" (54). The arrival of the

59 See *Minor transnationalism* (2005)

detainees destabilizes Raj's conceptions of race in colonial Mauritius. He explains the ways that "les blancs" were usually of a certain social classes, as he points out their typical job posts. The use of the word "pouvoir" suggests that the young Raj believed in the impervious power of the white class in Mauritius and the extent to which he believed them incapable of being imprisoned like other racial groups.

Raj bonds with David over their mutual trauma, creating a creolized network of encounters, suggesting the uses of the concept of nongenocide through the comparative traumatic lens that moves beyond the Holocaust. Even as he was escaping genocide in Europe, David was himself not a victim of genocide, but rather died as a result of illness, even though his detention in Mauritius was the result of policies of the Third Reich, as well as interventions by the British Empire. Appanah therefore examines what we can refer to as "nongenocide," expanding the definition to include peripheral trauma occurring as an indirect result of genocide. The book does not explain explicitly the source of his sickness, but one could surmise that it might have been a tropical disease. As both Pitot and Appanah indicate, typhoid was common among the detainees. In similar passages, both frame the camp conditions by emphasizing the preponderance of illness. When the narrator first approaches the cemetery with his son at the beginning of the novel, he describes the environs: "À Saint-Martin, nous roulons sur un chemin de terre et de sable où de grands acacias ont jeté des centaines de coques minuscules. La voiture cahote et c'est cela qui réveille. Cela fait longtemps que je sais que David est dans ce cimetière, avec les autres, qui sont morts de fatigue, de dysenterie, de malaria, de typhus, de tristesse, de folie" (Appanah 13-14). In the chapter that describes the arrival of the detainees at the camp, Pitot explains:

> Plusieurs nouveaux cas de typhoïde s'étaient encore déclarés à bord, nécessitant une hospitalisation immédiate. De plus, beaucoup de ces malheureux en haillons souffraient

> de diarrhée, de dysenterie, de malnutrition, de diverses maladies chroniques. Il y avait chez presque tous une grande amertume et une profonde lassitude, allant parfois jusqu'à la dépression. Quelques-uns étaient même si éprouvés mentalement et nerveusement qu'ils durent être pris en charge au moins temporairement à l'hôpital psychiatrique (Pitot 145-146)

As evidenced by the two quotes, both enumerations of diseases take on an affective dimension by mentioning the mental strain on the detainees. Had David stayed at the camp, however, he might not have died at such a young age. It was rather his flight with Raj that accelerated his demise, particularly because their three-day disappearance prevented him from taking either medicine from the camp or Raj's mother's herbal concoctions to heal from his disease.

Raj's personal tragedy is that he loses both brothers in one day. He expounds upon the intense nature of this tragedy, of losing not just one, but two brothers. Raj's bond with David stems from Raj's desire to form a fraternal bond as a way of recuperating from that loss. When the two boys abscond into the woods, David also suggests that one of Raj's brothers might still be alive, given that they had not found a body, only his brother's stick. Even before David's death, Raj suffered from deep survivor's guilt in relation to his brothers' deaths in the forest. Prior to his deaths, he was the brother chosen to go to school as a result of his weaker constitution, whereas the other two had to work, creating a deep sense of guilt to which he refers as "cette chose insidieuse" (29).

Guilt and questions of ignorance haunt Raj throughout the novel. He explains his bond with David by focusing on what he descries as a mortifying moment:

> Je ne sais pas si je dois avoir honte de le dire mais c'est ainsi: je ne savais pas qu'il y avait une guerre mondiale qui durait depuis quatre ans, quand David m'avait demandé, à

> l'hôpital, si j'étais juif, je ne savais pas ce que ça voulait dire, j'ai dit non parce que j'avais la vague impression que juif désignait une maladie puisque j'étais dans un hôpital, je n'avais jamais entendu parler de l'Allemagne, je ne savais pas grand-chose en réalité. J'avais trouvé David, un ami inespéré, un cadeau tombé du ciel et en ce début d'année 1945, c'est tout ce qui comptait pour moi. (88)

He insists on his ignorance, apologetically dwelling on it as the adult narrator reflecting on his childhood self. However, he does not use the words "genocide" or "Holocaust" to refer to the Shoah in the novel; he references Germany, even as many detainees did not originate from Germany. He exaggerates his ignorance by admitting "je ne savais pas grand-chose en réalité." The reference to the year nevertheless situates the narrative within an important historical chronology. His ignorance on the existence of Jewish religion and culture is a point on which he insists upon throughout the novel, which he connects to his ignorance of "white" culture in general. He insists on David's trauma, when he writes, "David, orphelin, exilé, déporté, emprisonné, atteint de malaria et de dysenterie, m'a réconforté" (88). Raj's enumeration of David's bleak physical and existential situation emphasizes the extent of Raj's empathy. He points out the date in other instances, such as when he discusses his desire to reconnect with David after his release from the prison hospital and return to his family house: "Il faisait très chaud en ce début d'année 1945" (98), a date that reminds the reader that the novel is situated in the context of World War II, however physically removed from the overseas battlefields Mauritius was at the time of the war.

Rothberg's work tying in Holocaust studies and postcolonial studies offers a fruitful framework to think through Appanah's project, given that she creates a conversation between a colonized subject and a Jewish boy displaced as a result of the Holocaust. Appanah has

demonstrated that the repercussions of the Holocaust resonate far beyond Europe and North Africa. In a more general sense, Caruth agrees with Freud's assessment on Jewish history when she argues that "we could say that the traumatic nature of history means that events are only historical to the extent that they implicate others. And it is thus that Jewish history has also been the suffering of others' traumas" (Caruth 18). Raj's anxieties as an historian and his anxieties over race are thus linked, for he articulates a multidirectional space in linking two traumatic histories.

This idea of race and "les blancs" at the end of *Les rochers de Poudre d'Or* is also present in *Le dernier frère*. When Raj helps David escape from the prison and brings him home, Raj is pleased with his mother's reaction:

> A l'époque, j'avais été soulagé de sa réaction bienveillante, comme un enfant qui échappe à une punition, mais je me rends bien compte de l'invraisemblance de la situation. Nous ne fréquentions pas les Blancs de notre pays, nous ne les voyions quasiment jamais et à l'école je n'avais aucun ami. Il faut croire qu'il y avait autre chose dans le cœur de ma mère, à ce moment-là (122).

He contrasts past and present to show a critical understanding of his mother's reaction, signaled by the change of verb tense from his first reaction "j'avais été soulagé" and his present "je me rends bien compte." His present-day self explains racial divisions in 1940s Mauritius by using the form "nous." The "nous" could represent his family or all non-white Mauritians. David's presence is thus remarked upon by his skin color; it is his skin color that allows Raj to connect him to "les Blancs de notre pays," despite obvious differences in heritage, culture, language, and history.

Raj further discusses his first encounters with Jewish culture during his fugue with David. David discusses his Jewish star, an object unknown to Raj as a child:

> C'est aussi ce jour-là qu'il ma montré sa médaille et qu'il m'a parlé de l'étoile de David et moi, pauvre idiot, pauvre naïf, pauvre gosse né dans la boue, moi, vexé comme un pou. Et puis, quoi encore? Peut-être que la forêt s'appelle la forêt de Raj ? Comment une étoile pouvait porter son nom, hein, pouvait-il me le dire ? Il me prenait pour un gag ou quoi ? (127).

The repetition of "pauvre" with the self-deprecating adjectives shows that he uses to display his present-day regret at his past reaction. The adjectives he uses to describe himself—"idiot," "naïf," "né dans la boue"— contradict his place as the only literate member of his family. Raj's ignorance rather stems from existing racial divisions in Mauritius. He is in fact berating himself for not knowing more about "white" culture. The rhyme created by the use of the words "boue" and "pou" create an impression of a taunt that he is directing towards himself, a guilt that he continues to carry over the years. He moves into free indirect discourse that blurs the lines between Raj as a child and Raj as an adult. Such a narrative effect imparts the ferocity of his anger to the reader, allowing access to his thought process at this moment and to further understanding the impact of the guilt that developed over his reaction to David's explanation of his cultural and religious heritage. Yet the questions that exemplify the use of free indirect discourse also contribute to blurring the line between past and present, because Raj continues to refer to David in the third-person ("son nom" and "pouvait-il"). Furthermore, he uses the imperfect tense "il me prenait," which indicates that Raj the adult is reflecting on his thought process as a child. He is remembering what he was thinking, justifying his own ignorance while lamenting it and hoping that the reader will forgive him for that. The fact that he mentions it is

proof that it bothers him; is he searching for forgiveness? It is also worth noting that the only physical remnant of David that remains is his Star that Raj holds onto over the years. Even as holding on to the star points to Raj's long lasting sadness resulting from losing David, the star itself forever stands for David's Jewishness in Raj's memory.

Raj's ruminations following David's forced departure from the prison reveal the linked affective dimension of Raj and David's trauma. The use of the conjunction "et" creates a connection between the two personal histories in Raj's life:

> Je ne savais que faire, que dire, tout se bousculait en moi, mes sentiments et mes pensées étaient pris d'une frénésie sans pareille. Et je pensais à mes frères […] Et je pensais à ma vie d'après, à ma mère […] Et notre nouvelle vie à Beau-Bassin qui semblait plus facile, mais qui ne l'était pas […]. (115-116)

A "frénésie" forces him to think through all the aspects of his life thus far, in which he considers the tragedy of losing his brothers and David. The conjunction furthermore links the two boys. Literary scholar Stef Craps, in summarizing literary scholar Bryan Cheyette, discusses the sometimes antagonistic relationship between postcolonial studies and Holocaust studies: "By talking about a dominant Western 'Judeo-Christian' tradition, postcolonial theory denies Jews minority status and dismisses them as simple beneficiaries if not enablers or perpetrators of European oppression" (Craps 81). Raj's ignorance of Jewish culture allows him to move beyond such a characterization of David to acknowledge his victimhood, particularly in relation to his own trauma. Raj recognizes David's trauma as being as valid as his own, eschewing any sort of racial privilege that he could have otherwise conferred upon David if he were to engage with notions of competitive memory.

Raj's guilt plays a large role in his character development. It is worth noting that he develops some of his guilt towards David in relation to the question of race. In emphasizing the distinction between adult Raj and child Raj, he explains:

> Je suis vieux maintenant et je peux le dire, avec honte, avec chagrin, en baissant ma tête le plus possible. Voilà ce que j'ai fait et j'avais neuf ans: j'ai empêché David d'aider un de ses camarades, un Juif comme lui, enfermé parce qu'on ne savait quoi faire d'eux et si je n'avais pas agi de la sorte, David serait peut-être encore vivant aujourd'hui. (113)

He attributes his action to his desire to avoid the wrath of his father, as well as being alone again.[60] He frames his guilt around the knowledge that he prevented David from helping one of his compatriots, "un Juif comme lui," as he frames the link between the two in racial terms. Yet he also offers a pointed critique of the government with regards to the imprisonment, explaining that their time in the prison was due to an inability to properly decide what to do with the new arrivals. With this admission, this chapter of the novel comes to a close, as if the shame compels Raj to turn the page and change the subject slightly to avoid talking about his survivor's guilt anymore.

In speaking about his traumatic encounter with David, Raj gestures to the Holocaust, but without focusing on it. The tragedy here is individual in nature. Rather than engaging with debates on the uniqueness of the Holocaust within her novel, Appanah chooses to refrain from making any mention of the Holocaust, aside from pointed references to dates as adult Raj reflects on the events of his childhood. In this way, it parallels the ways in which Raj does not discuss his own family's original displacement, given that Mauritius did not have an indigenous population. The novel privileges the story of the individual merely on a surface reading of the text. Appanah

[60] He explains: "[Les policiers] m'aurait découvert aussi et qui sait ce qui m'aurait été réservé, dans la prison et ensuite, entre les mains de mon père. Et j'aurais été seul à nouveau" (113).

offers a retelling of national history. She creates a new myth that imagines dialogue between and among oppressed groups. It gives historical agency to victims through its lateral exchange in the representation of the indirect effects of a genocide.

Raj never references his socio-economic status and history of displacement that accompanied his family history, but it is reasonable to assume that his ancestors arrived from Africa or India, or from both, as a result of slavery and indentured servitude. Yet it is his lack of knowledge of "white" culture that marks his difference. Appanah makes it clear, nevertheless, the links between the two boys, even beyond their respective traumas. Both boys suffer from trauma and displacement: Raj is forced to move as a result of his father's work and David is forced to flee Central Europe as a result of the Holocaust. The links between the two boys also operate at a nominal level. As Raj explains, the names "David" and "Raj" both mean "king" in Hebrew and in Sanskrit, respectively. The novel's title could also refer to either character—Raj as the remaining brother of the three or David as the last brother that Raj was able to have before his friend's untimely death.

In expounding upon the links between different histories of trauma, Appanah makes clear the ties between Raj and David. During their fugue, as they grow closer and share a traumatic experience, Raj describes David as more than a brother, but as another version of himself: "David était mon ombre, l'écho de mes moindres mouvements, mon miroir tantôt réconfortant tantôt insoutenable, et ainsi, je ne pouvais me dérober à ma responsabilité, à mes décisions, jusqu'à la plus petite, la plus infime, la plus insignifiante. Tout ce que je faisais s'imprimait deux fois dans ma mémoire" (170-171). For Raj, David's relationship to himself extends beyond fraternity; David rather becomes his other self. He refers to David as his shadow, his echo, his mirror, using sensory images to conjure up the doubling of the self. The doubling of the two boys

indicates that, at the end, they are both *le dernier frère*, both kings, as they share their "double telling" of a narrative. The doubling also signifies the trauma that had been experienced by two communities, therefore creating a creolized network of traumatic encounters. The bonding experience of the two boys during their escape from the Beau Bassin jail further allegorizes this doubling and the cross-cultural or creolized result it produces.

The idea of displacement through its focus on David's trauma enables another way of discussing Raj's own history, a history of which he might not even be aware, given his avowed ignorance. But the racial divisions within Mauritius indicate that he is a descendent of either slaves or indentured servants or both, leading to his marginalized place in Mauritian society. On a symbolic level, the loss of his brothers could point to the ways in which families of slaves, and even indentured servants, were separated Appanah points out brotherly bonds in the two novels—such as Vithy in *Les rochers de Poudre-d'Or* who wishes to come to Mauritius to work alongside his brother, but is unable to ultimately do so. He explains to officials that his brother's employer is waiting to accept him, but the system works in such a way that his individual needs hold no importance. In the two novels, the concept of fraternity therefore functions as a metaphor of the family unit as a whole, which refers back to Vergès' comment that slave society was a masculine society. As Rothberg as shown, in referencing Freud: "Memory is […] primarily an associative process that works through displacement and substitution" (12). In this way, the displacement of memory mirrors the displacement of groups of people.

Holocaust studies scholar Lawrence Langer asks the question often posed by academics with regards to memory in his discussion of the role of Holocaust testimonies and their effects on their audience:

> How credible can a reawakened memory be that tries to revive events so many decades after they occurred? I think the terminology itself is at fault here. There is no need to revive what has never died. Moreover, though slumbering memories may crave reawakening, nothing is clearer in these narratives than that Holocaust memory is an insomniac faculty, whose mental eyes have never slept. (Langer xv)

Whereas Langer's concern lies with Holocaust testimonies, the fact that the events that occurred in this book are true means that the logic of memory could still apply here. Prior to this, Langer also explains: "A statement like 'to understand, you have to go through with it,' however authentic its inspiration, underestimates the sympathetic power of the imagination. Perhaps it is time to grant that power the role it deserves." (Langer xv). Langer refers to the reader, but it could also reference the author in terms of imagination, for the source material is authentic and inspired by actual events.

The multidirectionality of Appanah's literary oeuvre, through its staging of contact between groups who have suffered from different traumas, suggests the importance of the literary form in creating collective memories of historical violence. Literary scholar Rita Felski's manifesto *Uses of Literature* outlines four reasons for reading literature. Although she does not explicitly focus on histories of genocide and other forms of violence, her chapter on "Recognition" offers useful links in considering questions of alterity and selfhood in literature. Felski makes a case for reading to recognize oneself: "The capacity for self-consciousness, for taking oneself as the object of one's own thought, is only made possible by an encounter with otherness. Recognition thus presumes difference rather than excluding it, constituting a fundamental condition for the formation of identity" (Felski 30-31). Raj's examination of his past through his friendship with David engenders feelings of empathy, rather than antipathy,

allowing him to identify with his friend, rather than mark him as different. As his friendship with David deepens, Raj creates not only a fraternal bond with David, but begins to see him as his double, indicating the extent to which Raj recognizes the other through himself. The lateral exchange exemplifies the ways in which literature creates new forms of dialogue in a reimagining of an opaque past.

CONCLUSION

By examining cases of "nongenocide," I have analyzed the ways in which Appanah bridges alterity through the use of the first-person perspective to step into the shoes of the other, resulting in a plurality of voices and perspectives that enable the creation of multidirectional memory.

Her novels become multidirectional sites of memory with encounters between different groups of people in the novels that depict sites of creolization. Even as she points to the violence that may arise from such encounters, as with "Le Noir's" embittered threats to Badri in *Les Rochers de Poudre d'Or*, Appanah also stages sites that forge links between groups of people. The conversation between the grandfather and Badri in shows the historical overlaps between slavery and indentured servitude, even as Appanah acknowledges their fundamental differences. Similarly, the friendship between Raj and David develops as a result of their respective tragedies and not in spite of their different traumas.

Appanah provides a fruitful case for examining cases of nongenocide through her use of multidirectional sites of memory. She indicates that a collective memory of both a group and a nation could form through the writing of literature. Slavery remains a contested case of genocide, whereas indentured servitude, in Appanah's own words, was not an experience as violent as slavery had been. Literature thus provides an alternative to history in sustaining a dialogue

among different groups. Literature fosters memory for literature that takes history as its subject inevitably impacts the present; our interpretations of the past are, after all, malleable. Appanah's novels show the ways in which traditional historiography could go beyond the myth of the nation-state to consider voices of the "minor," the oppressed, the victims through the staging of conversation among different groups.

Similarly, Caruth points to the link between history and trauma when summarizing what she refers to as Freud's "central insight" in *Moses and Monotheism*: "History, like trauma, is never simply one's own, that history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's trauma" (Caruth 24). In discussing David's death, there is a notable lack of dialogue in the text, as the memory of the events leading to the loss are mostly filtered through Raj's memory. By imagining historical trauma, Appanah creates a literary retelling of history, enabling a way to see the links among different groups of people. Thus the double telling—that is, David's death and Raj's survival—suffer from a period of latency. By doubling Raj through the figure of David, Appanah eschews considerations of competitive memory to create a space that respects the suffering of both boys.

In the following chapter, literary responses to the Rwandan genocide in reaction to concerns about civil war in Côte d'Ivoire escalating into genocide inform my analysis. I compare two texts of different genres—one a travel journal and the other, a collection of poetry—to examine the ways in which representations of genocide reveal important subtexts about the anxieties about other genocides unfolding in the future, as well as the fear of cultural genocide occurring in Africa as a result of neocolonial behavior.

CHAPTER 3: Transnational Memory and Identity in Tadjo's *L'ombre d'Imana* and Torabully's *Mes Afriques, mes ivoires*

INTRODUCTION

In 1994, the Hutus extremists in power of Rwanda committed genocide against the Tutsi and moderate Hutu populations to the general indifference of the global community. The reverberations of this brutal process continue to resonate in cultural productions created in Rwanda and throughout Africa, as well as the rest of the world. Reflecting on questions of violence in Africa since decolonization of the 1960s and 1970s now inevitably raises the question of Rwanda. The name of the country itself often functions of a metonymy for the genocide that occurred there, linked to questions of identity and lingering power dynamics from the colonial period. Who, then, is remembering the genocide through the written word and which literary genres and techniques do they use to represent violence often thought of incapable of being represented? How do authors evoke the memory of *this* genocide in particular as both an African catastrophe and as one that concerns the global community?

The Rwandan genocide, now officially called the Genocide against the Tutsi, unfolded within a short period of time. In 100 brutal and bloody days, anywhere from 500,000 to 800,000 civilians were killed throughout the small, mountainous country located in Africa's Great Lakes region. Rwandan authorities estimate that the number of deaths might actually be more than a million; uncertainty about the number of deaths continues to this day.[61] Boubacar Boris Diop puts the number of deaths in perspective by explaining that 10,000 people were killed every day without interruption during a period of three months (Diop 18). The perpetrator group

[61] In her article entitled "Production testimonial: 'je' de témoins, enjeux de victimes dans *L'Ombre d'Imana. Voyages jusqu'au bout du Rwanda*" (2007), for example, Pascale Perraudin writes that "en 1994, près d'un million de Tutsi ou de sympathisants à leur cause, ont connu une mort violente" (143).

encompassed about half of the population of Rwanda with about 40-60% of the Hutu population having actively participated in the genocide.[62]

Political scientist Omar McDoom articulates the Rwandan genocide within a larger framework of violence that has occurred in Africa's Great Lakes region since independence.[63] Prior to Rwanda's independence (1962), Hutus overthrew the Tutsi monarchy in a 1959 revolution, chasing Tutsi leaders out of the country. Following this coup, Hutus led two republics in Rwanda from 1962 to 1973 and then from 1973 to 1994.[64] After several failed attempts to return to Rwanda through force, the Tutsi refugee community's 1990 effort to take over the country led to a four-year civil war, leading to the assassination of the Rwandan president, Juvénal Habyarimana on April 6, 1994—an act that marks the beginning of the Rwandan genocide.[65]

The racial animosity between the Hutu and Tutsi communities that has characterized dynamics between the two groups, leading to civil war and erupting into genocide, is nevertheless the result of fabrication. The conflict between the Hutus and Tutsi has been a result of the ethnic narrative promulgated by Belgian colonial authorities, marking differences between the two groups who had previously not operated under any particularly distinguishing racial or

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[62] Karen Krüger in her article "La radio de la haine et la mobilization des masses par la production médiatique de la peur au Rwanda en 1994" (Krüger 203) draws these figures from Dieter Neubert's *Dynamics of Escalating Violence, Sociologus* (Beiheft).

[63] He writes: "It is a sad fact that every generation born since independence in Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, and Burundi has lived through either a war or a genocide" (McDoom 550). He clarifies in a footnote that a generation constitutes twenty-five years.

[64] Prior the genocide in Rwanda, there were two genocides in Burundi (1972 and 1993).

[65] It remains contested as to who was responsible for his death.

ethnic differences. Colonial policy helped heighten differences between the two groups through the implementation of "ethnic" identity cards, creating state-sanctioned racial divisions.[66]

Such a mentality produced divisions that emerged in Côte d'Ivoire at the turn of the twenty-first century. The Civil War in Côte d'Ivoire (2002-2004), occurring less than a decade after genocide unfolded in Rwanda, was particularly alarming, given that civil war in Rwanda had preceded the genocide. In contrast to some other countries that suffered from dictatorships following independence, in the decades following decolonization, Côte d'Ivoire was known for racial harmony, a "success story," a "model postcolony."[67] In the 1990s, as a result of reform and market liberalization, the country experienced an economic boom, marked by a number of immigrants, particularly from other West African countries, arriving for work. The bubble burst in 2002 with an attempted coup d'état in September, led by the Mouvement Patriotique de Côte-d'Ivoire (MPCI). The country split into two distinct geographies with a Muslim dominated north, controlled by the MPCI, and a Christian south centered in Abidjan, the capital city, around President Laurent Gbagbo.

In 2011, fighting resumed as a result of a disputed election. The international community recognized Alassanne Ouattara's victory, but the democratically defeated Laurent Gbagbo, refused to step down. In an article posted on CNN, journalist Christian Purefoy posits the main questions as the following: "The issue for many citizens is what constitutes an Ivorian - and this comes down to where someone lives rather than their religious beliefs. Gbagbo, for example, has made frequent play of Ouattara as being an outsider and unpatriotic." Prior to his successful presidential bid, Ouattara had been attacked as a foreigner in other elections, as well. From December 2010 to February 2011, Gbagho supporters unleashed a series of violent attacks

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[66] Catherine Newbury, 12.

[67] It had been a French colony from 1893 to 1960.

against Ouatarra's supporters. Similar to tactics of Hutu-controlled media, state-sponsored media in Côte d'Ivoire spewed hateful speech against the Northern Ivoirians, as well as Western African immigrants.

There is a larger tension between blaming the Hutu perpetrators and acknowledging the lingering Belgian colonial dynamics at play in Rwanda. In "La radio de la haine et la mobilization des masses par la production médiatique de la peur au Rwanda en 1994," Karen Krüger writes about the two state-sponsored radio stations, *Radio Télévision Libre des Milles Collines* (RTLM) and *Radio Rwanda* (RR), both of which diffused racist hate speech that helped propagate the genocidal mindset. Krüger points to the ways in which the tradition of orality plays a role in the population's reception of radio shows: "la tradition orale du pays semble accroître l'influence des mots transmis par la radio," adding a quote from W. A. Hachten's article "Broadcasting in political crisis," that radio listeners believed it was the government "literally" speaking to them (Krüger 206). By focusing on the ways in which the genocide unfolded, Krüger holds the Hutu majority accountable for the events, without delving into the colonial history that preceded the series of displacement and civil war that have characterized Rwanda since independence. She mentions in a footnote that ethnicity in Rwanda is a European concept, but does not name any specific countries, but rather formulates the ways in which colonial fabrications created a "self-fulfilling prophecy" (Krüger 208, footnote 20). She also mentions it at another point as "des stéréotypes ethniques de l'ère coloniale" (Krüger 213). Her work done on outlining the ways in which the use of the radio as a tool to create an atmosphere of fear and "reactivate" stereotypes about the Tutsi is useful to think through, but does a disservice to the larger context by not delving a bit more in the history of colonial ethnic narratives.[68]

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[68] The premise of the article is how radio disseminates notions of "fear," yet the Hutu invariably grounded fear of the Tutsi in questions of race. As historian Ben Kiernan outlines in *Blood and Soil*, racism is one of the four themes

The question of perspective of victim and perpetrator is often at the forefront of discussions about literary representations of violence. Isaac Bazié and Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink in their "Avant-propos" to *Violences postcoloniales* wonder how in violent political contexts, such as genocide, "la conscience […] des 'bourreaux' demeure largement marginalisée par rapport à celle des victimes" (Bazié and Lüsebrink10). They comment on the uses of literature, particularly in relation to genocide. The introduction to the volume also discusses the Rwandan genocide in relation to the Holocaust, considering its defining qualities in comparison to the Holocaust. My intent in this chapter is to move beyond the primary perspectives of victims and perpetrators, of which there has been considerable work.[69] I seek to analyse the perspective of what I call the "anxious bystander," figures who are drawn into the conversation from worries over a shared cultural heritage marked by violence on the African continent and in the Indian Ocean. The different forms of violence are not only physical, but include deep cultural loss, often formulated around the idea of silence.[70]

The concept of "silence" defines, in many ways, attempts at understanding the Rwandan genocide. Focusing on the Rwandan catastrophe, political scientist Mahmood Mamdani argues that three forms of silence surround accounts of genocide. He defines the first as the historical narrative of genocide: "Many write as if genocide has no history and as if the Rwandan genocide had no precedent" (Mamdani 463). In other words, some academics do not sufficiently place the genocide in its appropriate historical context alongside other genocides within and beyond Africa. The second silence results from the academic discussion surrounding the "*agency* of the

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that links genocides across centuries and spaces.

[69] See, for instance, Nicki Hitchott's *Rwanda genocide stories: fiction after 1994*.

[70] Michael Rothberg has a forthcoming publication on the "implicated subject" to think through figures who are not quite victim, not quite perpetrator. They are implicated in the system, but not directly responsible for it. He uses the Sonderkommando as an example.

genocide" (emphasis in original). According to Mamdani, academics tend to focus on the state-sponsored character of the Rwandan genocide without devoting enough attention to its "subaltern" and "popular" character. Finally, he explains that the third form of silence is the tendency to view the genocide as restricted to the geographical boundaries of Rwanda, precluding the possibility of understanding regional processes.[71] The two texts that I discuss in this chapter, Véronique Tadjo's *L'ombre d'Imana* and Khal Torabully's *Mes Afriques, mes ivoires*, militate against the various forms of silence that surround the genocide, as they often evoke and interrogate the concept of "silence."

To Mamdani's contention, I would add that scholars in francophone postcolonial studies often discuss the 1994 genocide in Rwanda without placing it within a context that acknowledges other genocides that have taken place in Africa. The events that constitute the Genocide Against the Tutsi were not the first genocide to occur on the African continent. The first genocide of the 20th century—a title often erroneously conferred upon the 1915 Armenian Genocide committed by the Young Turk party ruling the Ottoman Empire—took place in German South-West Africa against the Herero and Nama populations from 1904 to 1907.[72] Academics do not often discuss this genocide, but, when they do, they often focus on the elements of this genocide that later developed into policies implemented by the Nazis during the Holocaust.[73] German authorities, for example, created concentration camps on Shark Island, later inspiring one of the Third

[71] Gérard Prunier explains this in *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (1995).

[72] Some important works on this genocide.: Sven Lindquist, Joan Tate, trans. *Exterminate All the Brutes* (New York 1996); Enzo Traverso, Janet Lloyd, trans. (New York 2003); A. Dirk Moses, 'Conceptual Blockages and Definitional Dilemmas in the 'Racial Century', Patterns of Prejudice, Vol. 36, No. 4 (2002), 31; and Isabel V. Hull, 'Military Culture and the Production of "Final Solutions" in the Colonies', in Robert Gellately and Ben Kiernan, eds, *The Specter of Genocide* (Cambridge, MA 2003).

[73] One wonders, however, whether doing so takes away from the specificity of this genocide and its victims.

Reich's tactics of persecution.[74] The 1904 genocide was nevertheless an example of state-sponsored colonial form of violence, a series of massacres orchestrated by a white, imperial power, rather than by one group of Africans against another. Writers such as Patrice Nganang discuss the specificity of the Rwandan genocide as violence committed by Africans against one another.

Yet, as Michael R. Mahoney's "The Zulu Kingdom as a Genocidal and Post-Genocidal, Society, c. 1810-preset," (2003, the Rwandan genocide is not the first time that genocide unfolded in Africa in the postcolonial period. A. Dirk Moses and Laase Heerten further explore the history of genocide in Africa in the context of Nigeria in *Postcolonial Conflict and the Question of Genocide: The Nigeria-Biafra War, 1967-1970* (2018), an edited volume in which they examine what is often known as the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), using the hyphenated "Nigeria-Biafra war" to emphasize the two-sided conflict. The state-sponsored famine in the Biafra region of Nigeria led to a massive international humanitarian aid effort. An estimated one to three million people died during the war. As a former colony of the British Empire, Nigeria became independent in 1960. Like Côte d'Ivoire, it promised to become a successful postcolony, yet ethnic lines created during the colonial period—in some ways, like Rwanda—created the conditions of its instability (Moses and Herrten 4). The articles in the collection argue convincingly that the events constitute genocide, indicating the ways in which the colonial turn in genocide studies could offer fruitful studies on postcolonial genocide.[75] The twenty-first

[74] Benjamin Madley's article "From Africa to Auschwitz: How German South West Africa Incubated Ideas and Methods Adopted and Developed by the Nazis in Eastern Europe" (2005) shows the ways in which German "jargon of genocide" in Namibia was later adopted by Nazis.

[75] In his manifesto, Patrice Nganang anticipates Moses and Heerten's work, as well as a transnational perspective, when he writes: "c'est lui aussi, le genocide, qui illumine la production de plus en plus grandissante sur le Biafra, d'auteurs nigérians contemporains, dont le magistral *Half of a yellow sun* de Chimamanda Adicihie, auteurs qui n'ont pas vécu le moment d'horreur lui-même" (Nganang 25).

century began with its first genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan, a conflict that continues with no end in sight. The world's newest country, South Sudan, which became independent in 2011, began a civil war in 2013 that has since become a genocide. Studying genocide in Rwanda within the larger context of genocide in postcolonial Africa merits further exploration.

My interest lies however in thinking through (post)colonialism and genocide within an exclusively francophone context. For by focusing on the Rwandan genocide, francophone writers consider questions of language and literature in relation to larger questions of African identity and culture. The question of the French language in relation to violence in Africa offers writers such as Véronique Tadjo and Khal Torabully, the opportunity to create transnational links in a lateral exchange. In other words, as we will see, these two writers engage within a transversal network of minor transnationalism, rather than across a hierarchy of colonizer/colonized binaries (Lionnet and Shih 2005).

Born in Paris and raised in Côte d'Ivoire, Véronique Tadjo is a writer, journalist, painter, and academic who has worked in universities in Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, South Africa, and the United States. For Tadjo, one cannot divorce the political from the literary. In an interview with France Culture entitled "La francophonie agissante," Tadjo discusses the uses of the French language and how it becomes an emancipatory language for her. She explains that "grâce, on va dire, à la langue française, on a accès à pas mal d'idées, puisque c'est une langue internationale."[76] According to Tadjo, the uses of French extend beyond its colonial legacy as an "international" language that permits dialogue across cultures. Yet, as we will see, she self-consciously employs elements of orality throughout her literary production to celebrate traditional African history.

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[76] For the full interview, please consult: Olivia Gesbert. "La francophonie agissante de Véronique Tadjo." Audio blog post. La grande table. *France Culture.* 1 February 2018. Web.

In 1998, Véronique Tadjo travelled to Rwanda to document her experience of a country having suffered through a genocide in a collective project entitled "Rwanda: writing as a duty to remember? Or 'duty of memory'," as part of Fest-Africa festival and Fondation de France. The "devoir de mémoire" project was conceived as a way to combat the silence of African intellectuals with regards to genocide in Rwanda. In this chapter, I will study Tadjo's contribution to the project, her travel journal that documents her two trips to Rwanda in 1998, four years after the genocide. A certain uneasiness permeates *L'ombre d'Imana* signaled early on by Tadjo's direct admission of her uncertainty about her presence, as an outsider, in Rwanda to explore the aftermath of the genocide. Tadjo's text raises immediate questions of authorial right and literary justice: does one have the right to write about a trauma that one did not personally experience?

Khal Torabully, in contrast, does not evoke the same ethical questions as Tadjo. His literary sensibility forges links among different groups of people and uses literature as a tool to fight against injustice. Born in Port Louis, Mauritius, Torabully is a *poète engagé* who has written about different forms of inequality and violence throughout his lifetime, ranging from the 1989 massacre at Tiananmen Square to violence against the Palestinian people.[77] To articulate his work within a broader theoretical context, Torabully developed his concept of *coolitude*, drawing from Aimé Césaire, Léon Damas, and Léopold Sedar Senghor's concept of *négritude*.[78] Inspired through their meetings with figures of the Harlem Renaissance, Aimé Césaire, Senghor, and Léon Damas created the concept of négritude as a way of giving dignity back to Africans. Similarly, Torabully does so for the figure of the coolie. He develops the idea in two principal

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[77] *Le Printemps des ombres,* editions Azalées, 1991; *Paroles entre une mere et son fils fusillé*, Editions du Mont Popey, 2002.

[78] The term originally appeared in the journal *L'Etudiant* noir (numéro 3, May-June 1935). Important texts linked to *négritude* are Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939) and Senghor's *Chants d'ombre* (1948).

texts. In the first one, entitled *Cale d'étoiles, coolitude* (1992), Torabully takes back the term "coolie" to think through questions of memory and silence. In *Chair corail, fragments coolies* (1999), Torabully traces the history of the "coolies"—an otherwise derogatory term that he repurposes—creating links among other "insular" people. As Bragard notes, "the poet's polyphonic work foregrounds diversity while it challenges rationality with a very poetic, scattered formality" (Bragard, *Transoceanic dialogues* 53). Césaire remains an important point of reference for Torabully; he echoes Césaire's famous poem *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939) in his last collection entitled *Cahier d'un retour impossible au pays natal* (2009), written on behalf of the Chagossian people.[79]

Torabully's 2004 collection of poems entitled *Mes Afriques, mes ivoires* raises questions of African identity and transnational dialogue. The civil war in Côte d'Ivoire is the main subject of the text, even as the Rwandan genocide haunts the poetic "je," as I will demonstrate. Structurally, the poem does not follow any particular rhyme scheme. The collection offers a meditation on writing and the role of the written word as Torabully directly engages throughout the text with writers who constitute his literary heritage, one anchored in the French language, but one that is not exclusive to French. He values a multilingualism that defines his idea of coolitude through the inclusion of words from different languages to create an inclusive space within the confines of the poetic form.

Torabully participates in the rich poetic heritage of Mauritius, with writers and poets such as Malcolm de Chazal, Edouard Maunick, and Ananda Devi. With Césaire and Senghor, poetry was integral to the movement of négritude; here it also functions as a way for Torabully to articulate his coolitude. By means of the poetic form, Torabully inhabits and uses the French

[79] Torabully writes about the deportation of the Chagossian people from their homes in the Chagos Archipelago that began in the 1960s, as implemented by the British government to allow the US navy to use it as a naval base.

language to his own ends. As I will show, the constraints of the poetic forms allows the writer to invent a new language while also incorporating enduring and respected African oral traditions, evident in the literary techniques that he employs throughout the poem.

Tanella Boni, an Ivoirian writer known for her poetry and feminist thought wrote the introduction to Torabully's collection.[80] In this introduction, Boni refers to the way that Torabully discusses Africa to celebrate its multiplicity. She explains: "Le poète parle d'un continent pluriel, les Afriques de tous les maux et d'un pays aux *défenses* nobles, comme le matériau qui résiste au feu destructeur" (15). She continues in praising the poetic form:

> Il ne reste que les mots pour dire l'innommable et l'étendue du désastre, des mots polis pour conter la métamorphose du poète, qui, désormais, possède un pays fait de rencontre imprédictibles. Au nom de ses nouveaux pays intérieurs, il s'autorise à prendre *la défense* de ses frères et sœurs de sol et de mer, confrontés à la folie des hommes qui gouvernent le monde... (17)

Boni formulates Torabully's use of literature as a "defense" of solidarity, implying that his poetry is a form of protection, a way of uniting people against the global elite in power. She references these "nouveaux pays intérieurs," celebrating the poem as a space for new transnational spaces. Boni's evocation of solidarity alludes to the possibilities of creolization in Torabully's work, a concept I will further explore in this chapter.

The immediate justification for my desire to put these two texts in dialogue is the concern they both share about genocide erupting in Côte d'Ivoire, as it did in Rwanda. The question of genre and perspective frames my discussion of these literary representations of civil war in Côte d'Ivoire and genocide in Rwanda. In my chapter on Natacha Appanah's *Le dernier frère*, I

[80] With regards to her stance of women, Bruno Gnaoulé-Oupoh writes: "Sa poésie est avant tout une vibrante exhortation de la femme à la lutte pour sa dignité" (243).

showed how the Holocaust could become a negative point of reference not only in Europe, but in the Indian Ocean, as well. In this chapter, I aim to elucidate what is at stake in using the Rwandan genocide as an important point of reference in relation to questions of a postcolonial African identity. To bring these texts together is imperative, because Tadjo is, to a certain extent, responding to the genocide for a Western audience, whereas Torabully decenters his audience, as I proceed to demonstrate.

Nicki Hitchcott argues that the texts that constitute the "Ecrire par devoir de mémoire" project dominate the conversation surrounding post-1994 literary projection. In this chapter, I wish to compare the ways in which these two texts with such distinct origins create transnational dialogues about genocide. Tadjo's is one of the most widely read publications from the Fest'Africa project, whereas Torabully's collection of poetry was published outside of the continent, geographically distinct as an island yet belonging to Africa in terms of geography. While I agree with Hitchcott that academics should pay more attention to fiction produced in Rwanda about Rwanda, I wish to further evaluate the role of these writers and the ways in which the Rwandan genocide functions in the African post-colonial imaginary. The perspective of the "anxious bystander" offers a way to think through the creation of a multidirectional space and its important subtexts, which can become more visible by means of a comparative perspective.

In discussing literary critic Robert Stockhammer's text *Ruanda: Über einen anderen Genozid schreiben*, Véronique Pourra describes Stockhammer's insistence on framing the Rwandan genocide around the Holocaust. She delineates two defining ways in which responses to the Rwandan genocide differ from that of the Holocaust. Firstly, she points out the rapid response to creating memories of the genocide, in contrast to the Holocaust where it developed

slowly and with ethical concerns about the impossibility of representation.[81] Secondly, she focuses on the international response in particular. For Pourra, a major difference between the Rwandan genocide and the Holocaust is the extent to which writing about Rwanda is performed by those who did not personally experience the genocide. Voices of victims do not dominate in these literary productions. I would add that the texts that I study in this chapter do not use the Holocaust as a point of departure and do not refer it to instill a sense of importance, but rather use the possibility of future violence as the possible point of connection, a worry stemming from past colonial violence. Contrary to Pourra's contention that texts published outside of Rwanda are written "d'un besoin et d'une initiative personnels et isolés" (Pourra 145), my aim is to interrogate the uses of these transnational perspectives and the value they place on empathy and solidarity, instead of purely individual outlook.[82]

Other scholars suggest ways in which discussions about genocide need to focus on the Holocaust to draw out comparisons and differences. Rothberg, for example, discusses the uses of multidirectional memory in an article that acknowledges the limits of his theory: "Ultimately, the goal of a radical democratic politics of multidirectional memory today is not only to move beyond discourses of equation or hierarchy, but also to displace the reductive, absolutist understanding of the Holocaust as a code for 'good and evil' from the center of global memory politics." (Rothberg, "From Gaza to Warsaw" 540). Examining the Rwandan genocide and the ways in which it informs a growing public consciousness of what is and is not genocide is one of the tasks of this chapter, where the Holocaust is not the only point of reference in discussing

[81] As Tadjo's unease shows, ethical concerns continue to a play a role in representing the Rwandan genocide, as well.

[82] Pourra references Jean-Luc Raharimanan's *Rêves sous le linceul* (1998), Hans-Christoph Buch's *Kain und Abel in Afrika* (2000) and Gil Courtemanche's *Un dimanche à la piscine de Kigali* (Bazié et Lüsebrinks 144-145). These authors are from Madagascar, Germany, and Quebec, respectively.

genocide.

How does this genocide resonate through the world at large? What is its legacy? One of the issues that surrounds discussions of the 1994 catastrophe concerns its larger resonances–that is, the tension that exists between what happened in Rwanda as either a specifically African phenomenon and as concern for the global community. Tadjo expresses this tension on the first page of her text, which she posits as a "hypothesis": "Je partais avec une hypothèse: ce qui s'était passé nous concernait tous." The "tous" not only includes the African continent, but a global "nous," a community that witnessed the genocide and did not appropriately react. Her book functions as a way to represent what had happened, as well as argue for the genocide's larger implications to the global community through its exploration of the role of the bystander. The question of the bystander concerns everyone; we are all bystanders to the violence that occurred; reading literature surrounding the catastrophe continues to put us in the position of bystander.

The position of bystander also enables the writer to comment on possibilities of violence erupting in the writer's homeland. In engaging with the idea of a literary return to historical violence in recent Mauritian literature as raised by literary critics Emmanuel Bruno Jean-François and Evelyn Kee Mew, Bragard argues that the return illustrates "un passage par l'autre pour se dire et exprimer l'instabilité d'une histoire de métissages, résultant des violences (post)coloniales dans l'océan Indien." It is in this multidirectional space where speaking through the other enables the self to consider questions of violence. She continues: "Dans ce contexte, l'écriture du conflit génocidaire exprime la crainte des espaces communautaires indocéaniques" (Bragard, "Dire ta chair mes révoltes" 102).

Bragard points to the literary tool of detour in Mauritian literature as a way of opening Mauritius up to the world. She explains that this technique enables the creation of a dialogue that

transcends borders: “Plusieurs critiques (Arnold, Magdelaine-Andrianjafitrimo) ont récemment mis en avant la manière dont la littérature mauricienne contemporaine utilise le détour, la délocalisation géographique pour lire Maurice à travers un nomadisme dynamique qui ouvre l'île au monde” (Bragard, “Dire ta chair mes révoltes” 102). Reading Torabully's detour by focusing on violence in Côte d'Ivoire as a way of both remembering genocide in Rwanda and a way of reflecting on coolitude, allows us to consider the creation of transnational identities through literature. In other words, detour forges minor transnational dialogues through empathy and solidarity.

In his 2007 *Manifeste d'une nouvelle littérature africaine,* writer and literary scholar Patrice Nganang argues against various frameworks used to discuss literature in Africa, including postcolonial studies, *engagement*, and *créolité*. Nganang describes the genocide as a symbol of the idea that it was “*l'extermination de masse perpétrée par des Africains sur des Africains*” (Nganang 24, emphasis in original). Michael Syrotinski explains that “Patrice Nganang's central thesis is that the Rwandan genocide has to be read as a metonymy for a wider *self-destruction* in the context of the history of francophone Africa” (Syrotinski, “The Post-Genocidal African Subject” 275, emphasis in original). While it is true that the Hutus committed genocide against the Tutsis, this argument relieves a number of countries of their responsibility while centering the blame uniquely on the Hutus and ignoring the historical context in which violence occurred. I am more interested in examining how Tadjo and Torabully engage with the Rwanda genocide for a wider African audience, but at the same time I take into account perspectives, such as Nganang's, who discuss the Rwandan genocide as a way of reflecting further on concerns of cultural genocide taking place elsewhere in postcolonial Africa.

My argument runs along two main axes. In the first, I consider the uses of the concept of "genocide" in literature and suggest that the fear of genocide occurring again in another country is bound to a fear of cultural genocide linked to colonial histories and legacies that turn ethnic groups living in the same territory against one another—e.g. Hutu against Tutsi, North Ivoirian against South Ivoirian. In my second axis, I consider literature as a source of collective memory through which authors bend genre to represent the past and consider the possibilities of the future using traditional African orality to create a hybrid text. By bending genre, they create continuation of a literary heritage that incorporates oral history. Tadjo's text incorporates elements of orality since she gives voice to survivors, whereas Torabully fosters techniques of orality through his creative use of form to create a hybrid, or in other words, creolized history of the violent past.

I. Bridging alterity in Tadjo's *L'ombre d'Imana*

In this section, I explore the phenomenon of genocide as represented in literature by focusing on Tadjo's experience of writing as an Ivoirian in Rwanda addressing herself to her Western audience. The text raises questions of alterity: is the writer the figure of the other in relation to the victims, writing of an unlived experience? Or does the writer "other" the victims, both as a result of different cultures and different experiences?

In analyzing her book, I will argue that the text is not genocide *as experienced* by the victims, but an alleviation of guilt and a search for understanding for an audience *made aware* of the trauma. Whereas Audrey Small asserts that the project as a whole is intended for an African audience from an African viewpoint,[83] various aspects of the text lend themselves to more

[83] She writes: "This article looks at how the project was posited from the outset as a specifically African response" (Small 1)

general appeal; that is, the relationship between reader and writer does not ground itself in the notion of a shared race, but rather the shared experience of the text itself. One simply needs to read the text to become a part of it. Tadjo's travel diary functions as a personal account of her observations that inevitably recall her native Côte d'Ivoire. As she presents her thoughts, doubts, observations, and analysis, she consciously implicates both author and audience. In considering the notion of genocide itself and establishing a collective memory of the 1994 Rwanda genocide, she respects the individual memories of the victims, thus intertwining the particular with more general reflections.

I have divided this section into three parts. In this first part, I examine the concept of genocide, especially its origins as a term and the effects of its fairly recent codification. In the same section, I then question the concept of genocide in view of the fact that Tadjo avoids the use of the word so as to employ instead two substitutes that attempt to bridge alterity by universalizing, or generalizing, the experience of genocide. I then proceed by examining the role of the author in the text and the ways in which both writer and reader are implicated in the experience. Tadjo's uneasiness and constant use of pathos attests to the difficulty of writing about a traumatic experience that is not shared with an audience that has not experienced the trauma. The memory of the experience then brings up questions of individual memory in contrast with collective memory. Tadjo presents individual memories by permitting a backline discussion of the violation of women during the genocide, even as she creates the common ground for both reader and writer.

GENOCIDE AND LITERATURE: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Despite its recent naming, researchers and theorists in the interdisciplinary field of

Genocide Studies agree that genocide is an ancient, historical process experienced and suffered through throughout the centuries. Ben Kiernan's seminal book, for example, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur* argues that genocide is not a modern invention, but a process dating back to the extermination of Neanderthals by the ancestors of modern humans. Indeed, when Raphael Lemkin coined the term in 1943, in light of the Holocaust, he consciously named a process that he had observed occurring in recorded history. He was engaged in an effort to shift the ways in which historians consider history—namely, history viewed as wars waged between states, instead of wars waged between humans intent on exterminating each other. Lemkin's definition of genocide encompassed a focus on cultural destruction as a form of extermination, which suggests that literature, as a cultural product, becomes a powerful tool in post-genocidal politics. The term "genocide" has been codified in a definition including, but not limited to, the purposeful, state-sponsored mass extermination of a specific group of people, with intent to destroy that group, in part or in totality.[84]

Yet, uneasiness toward the term persists, particularly through its continuing definitional debates.[85] The impact of the word genocide carries a political weight, impeding some from comfortably employing it. Tadjo shows this uneasiness in dancing around the term of genocide and principally applying two other terms as substitutes. Firstly, the ambiguous notion of "Le Mal" functions as a metaphor for genocide throughout the text. Early in the text, Tadjo raises the

[84] The entire UNGC is available online: https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/unts/volume 78/volume-78-i-1021-english.pdf

[85] See, for example, Benjamin Madley's article "Reexamining the American Genocide Debate: Meaning, Historiography, and New Methods" in *American Historical Review* 2015.

question of history and literature in an important subsection entitled “The Writer,” where she attests to the difficulty of writing about the genocide. The subsection consists of a series of connected quotes that are not easily attributed to a particular person. It begins with the declaration: “‘Le génocide est le Mal absolu. Sa réalité dépasse la fiction. Comment écrire sans parler du génocide? L’émotion peut aider à faire comprendre ce qu’a été le génocide. Comprendre le sens réel du génocide, l’accumulation de la violence au fil des années’” (36) The reality of genocide, which she refers to as “Le Mal,” cannot be contained within fictional boundaries. Yet, the speaker then wonders, “L’oralité de l’Afrique est-elle un handicap pour la mémoire collective ?” (36), an important question that will be treated in a later section. This suggests that it is perhaps somewhere between written and spoken language where one might find a means to express the “Evil” that had occurred. Following this admission, Tadjo expands upon the metaphor of “Evil” to discuss the genocide.

The aforementioned section reveals two important points regarding Tadjo's treatment of the concept of genocide. The first point is that while one has the distinct impression that Tadjo herself is the speaker, the use of quotes complicates the writer-reader dynamic, particularly when the speaker questions the effectiveness of Africa's oral tradition (itself offered in an oral fashion in a written text). The speaker seemingly implies that writing is a concrete offering to a readership, but not through fiction. Both fiction and an oral tradition do not satisfy the speaker in relation to recounting and remembering genocide. Secondly, the speaker, allegedly Tadjo, affirms the need to “reconnaître” Evil and “l’exorciser par la justice” to combat the fear dynamics that continue to occur between the perpetrators of genocide and their victims. Does recognizing and (re)naming it (“Le Mal”) represent the first step, then, towards easing the fear and suffering caused by a bloody phenomenon that, prior to Raphael Lemkin's 1943 coinage, did

not even have a name? The use of the metaphor of evil allows for an easier understanding on the part of the audience to recognize the atrocity that occurred and also serves to profit from already-existing negative emotions towards the concept of evil. But the question remains whether doing so would take away from the victims' own lived experiences.

Another term used by Tadjo to indirectly refer to the genocide also serves to universalize the concept, as well as appeal to the audience's pathos. In considering the potential for genocide to occur in her native Côte d'Ivoire, Tadjo says, “Le Rwanda est en moi, en toi, en nous. Le Rwanda est sous notre peau, dans notre sang, dans nos tripes. Au fond de notre sommeil, dans notre esprit en éveil. Il est le désespoir et l’envie de revivre. La mort qui hante notre vie. La vie qui surmonte la mort” (48). Rather than using the term “genocide,” Tadjo expands the idea to signify more than mass extermination: rather, to something very close to the notion of the human experience itself. She equates “Rwanda” with both “life” and “death,” implying an endless circle that encompasses both trauma and reconciliation. In using a term that designates a specific geographical location, as well as a particular culture, Tadjo universalizes the trauma of genocide by equating it with the natural cycles of life and death. Referring to the trauma with the name of the country in which it occurred is also a way of memorializing the event. Yet, if we consider the text as a monument to the genocide, then a potential problem arises. In an entry on “Genocide and Memory” in *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies,* historian Dan Stone quoting James E. Young asserts that “the desire to memorialize traumatic events such as the Holocaust 'may actually spring from an opposite and equal them' since the assumption that a monument is always there tends to encourage a lack of engagement with the issues” (Stone, “Genocide and Memory” 112). Although Tadjo seems to memorialize Rwanda through a universalizing experience, she does not show a “lack of engagement.” Tadjo does not wish to forget the experience, as

evidenced by the publication of the text that ensures that the memory of the genocide lives on. As we will see, she calls for action in the form of analysis and understanding. This engagement derives from the understanding that the text functions not simply as a memorial to the past, but also as a warning for the future.

Another author who participated in the "devoir de mémoire" project, writer Boubacar Boris Diop, shares the same uneasiness about the possibility of genocide occurring in Senegal, his homeland. He writes: "Personnellement, l'implication de l'État français dans le génocide m'a fait sentir plus nettement à quel point il est dangereux d'être un petit pays dominé, ce qui est le cas du mien, le Sénégal. Cela m'a amené à m'intéresser de plus en plus aux dérives criminelles de la Françafrique" (Diop 34). For Diop, the implication of the French state meant that genocide could happen in other former colonies that share the same cultural heritage, a significant point he makes with the use of "Françafrique."

From the opening of the text, Tadjo frames her trip to Rwanda in a transnational context. Before travelling to Rwanda, Tadjo spends time in South Africa. She does not mention it only as an event that occurred chronologically, but rather as one imbued with meaning. Tadjo decides that her conference in South Africa will be a "bon point de départ" (12), which she formulates in terms of South Africa's post-apartheid society. But she adds at the end of the paragraph, "Et puis, mon premier contact avec ce pays entraînerait d'autres voyages, j'en étais sure. L'Afrique du Sud fait partie de notre mémoire collective" (12). Her trip to South Africa will inevitably inform her trip to Rwanda; in visiting the latter, she indicates that she is participating in a greater reflection on a history of violence that has marked Africa following independence, with South Africa's apartheid regime functioning as an extreme example. Yet she does not force a comparison between the two countries; she expresses the uniqueness of what happened in

Rwanda.

Tadjo returns to the metaphor of "Rwanda" in her concluding section to elucidate on her concept of genocide as observed in the country of Rwanda. As she reflects on her time spent abroad, Tadjo writes: "Je ne suis pas guérie du Rwanda. On n'exorcise pas le Rwanda. Le danger est toujours là, tapi dans les mémoires, tapi dans la brousse aux frontières du pays. La violence est encore là, de tous les côtes" (133). Again, she substitutes "genocide" for Rwanda, indicating that the trauma derives from a central locus. Yet to do so discounts the historical longevity of genocide and its presence lurking throughout human history. She continues to explain, in her ending words: "Comprendre. Disséquer les mécanismes de la haine. Les paroles qui divisent. Les actes qui scellent les trahisons. Les gestes qui enclenchent la terreur. Comprendre. Notre humanité en danger" (133). Tadjo points to specific ways in which perpetrators begin a campaign of hate, noting "les paroles," "les actes," and "les gestes" that contribute to the process. Her own text, in turn, is an antidote of sorts; it wishes to analyze those contributions by encouraging the "nous" to follow a path of resistance. The notions of "Le Mal" and "Rwanda" as substitutes for "genocide" indicate the extent to which the trauma needs to be understood, with the text representing one step towards comprehension.

By indirectly referring to genocide through the use of metaphor, Tadjo creates the common ground for the reader to identify with both the writer and the victims of the trauma. "Le Mal" as a metaphor provides the identifiable literary grounds for the reader. Employing the term "genocide" might perhaps be a decisive act that could exclude others, given its political and social weight. The inability to bridge alterity when considering such a violent trauma suggests that a reader would not relate to the text; reading it would be motivated perhaps more by imagining blood, not words. The historical presence of genocide suggests that it is, indeed, an

inevitable, integral part of human existence that has occurred on every continent. Tadjo also raises concerns about its reoccurrence beyond the borders of Rwanda that she explicitly evokes in the text. How, then, to relate the experience to those who have not lived through it?

NEGOTIATING BETWEEN THE "JE" AND OTHER VOICES

The predominance of the pronoun "nous" throughout the text indicates the extent to which Tadjo consciously addresses her text to her audience. She negotiates between the ever-present "je," the writer, with the inclusion of the audience, regarding the trauma experienced by the victims. Tadjo reconciles three points of view throughout the text: that of the victims, that of the audience and that of herself. The latter two groups essentially constitute the bystander group; there exists a tension between bystander and victim/survivor.

Fully cognizant of her limited role as outsider and observer, Tadjo nevertheless proves herself willing to offer support and help in any capacity. Her early admission—"Je ne suis pas médecin mais je pouvais quand même essayer de m'administrer les premiers soins" (11) —indicates a willingness to step out of her prescribed role to attempt to bridge the lack of knowledge. In the same vein, Tadjo cannot rely on the term "genocide" to speak to her audience, but rather provides the two metaphors to describe it in her—or rather *their*—own terms. This text, then, is a very personal account of genocide and the ways in which the author attempts to understand the tragedy of the trauma and the ways in which both reader and writer can forge forward. Tadjo's account of Rwanda, for example, becomes more personal when she explains that, in Kigali, "Les visages me semblent familiers. Tout est tellement comme chez moi que cela me brise le coeur" (17). The comparison to her homeland exemplifies a pathos of relation, raising questions of empathy; even if the experience is not shared, the similar space is all too

familiar. The personal account is nonetheless not simply an autobiography, tracing her travels in Rwanda. Tadjo signals from the beginning of the text the importance of the relationship between writer and reader. As I showed in the introduction of this chapter, Tadjo expresses the premise of her book in the beginning: "Je partais avec une hypothèse: ce qui s'était passé nous concernait tous" (11). The notion of the "nous" implicates the audience in her purpose of writing, the "premise" that signals the beginning of the book. Despite Tadjo's personal account, she expands her point of view to include her audience, including the audience of Fest'Africa, as well as the global community. This expansion becomes particularly significant in her encounters with survivors.

As Tadjo explains in an interview in the *Society for Francophone Postcolonial Studies' Bulletin*:

> Rwanda is distant (in terms of miles) but in fact I quickly found out that it was very close to me, that the people there did not appear foreign to me at all: they looked like people I knew and could identify with. I thought I was going to a foreign land but it immediately struck me as something familiar, and that started the whole internal journey. I couldn't say 'them' anymore: that it's just 'them', just what happened to 'them'..." (Hemsley)

In speaking about her time in Rwanda, Tadjo indicates that she had trouble in using pronouns to distinguish between the self and the other, as we see in the text itself. Despite the physical distance between Côte d'Ivoire and Rwanda, she feels a shared cultural heritage in Rwanda, as expressed by the admission that they were people that with whom she could "identify." Even if she did not experience genocide herself, Tadjo expresses feelings of empathy towards the survivors.

An early instance shows the shared grounds that Tadjo establishes between reader and

writer in considering the inaccessible experience of genocide. The notion of the "reality" of the genocide is present at the beginning of the text as Tadjo becomes acquainted with Kigali. In examining Ntarama Church as a site of massacre, Tadjo describes "le petit vieux" (22) and his experience as a survivor. As she considers him, he shares his thoughts: "Il parle en sachant que notre imagination n'atteindra jamais la réalité" (23) The use of "notre" brings together writer and reader and complicates the notion of alterity, because it is the author and audience who are the other. Tadjo acknowledges the inability to recreate the genocide and the resulting suffering through the vehicle of the text. She also implies that her interest does not lie in doing so. Tadjo recognizes the potential of the trauma and its potent, yet latent presence in everyday life. The text suggests that Tadjo views the possibility of genocide as a silent, teeming force that lies dormant in the heart of man; its eyes could snap open at any moment and turn a civil conflict into a bloody massacre on a much larger, much more dangerous scale. She gives voice to survivors to bear witness to the massacre they survived, offering something to analyze, whether it be a story or a memory. Yet, the two points of view also bring forth for the reader Tadjo's doubts.

In a moment of incertitude, Tadjo brings reader and writer together to consider the act of writing about a trauma and tragedy. In the section entitled "Tonia Locatelli," Tadjo describes an Italian nurse who tried to warn international forces through a foreign radio station that the government was launching a campaign of propaganda and violence. Her call for help was unanswered and the soldiers killed her two days later. In this way, Tadjo valorizes the Western bystanders who did try to help as the genocide unfolded. In reaction to this story, Tadjo asks the question, following an extra space from the preceding paragraph that functions as a type of afterthought to the section: "Si nous ne sommes absolument rien, pourquoi écrire?" (26) The existential question she asks parallels the type that a survivor would ask, following a trauma.

Tadjo's shared feelings of emptiness resulting from her stay in Rwanda are extended, however briefly, to the reader, through the repeated use of “nous.” The nurse's position as an outsider renders the story particularly relevant for the writer and for the reader. Tadjo wonders in this moment of doubt whether their efforts to help would ultimately be for naught. Her continuation and subsequent publication of the text implies nevertheless the answer to her unsettling question.

In creating a common ground with the audience, Tadjo shares not only her concern, but also her willingness to act and analyze. The universal “us,” in reading the text, becomes a potential force that can set into motion the mechanisms for change. The story of the Italian nurse who failed to arouse the help of foreign powers exemplifies the power of memory, particularly when it is relatable.

COLLECTIVE AND INDIVIDUAL MEMORIES OF GENOCIDE

As Tadjo's moment of doubt suggests, the question of memory is pivotal to literature representing the experience and history of genocide. The individual trauma of the lived experience is one type of memory, whereas the collective memory of nation or a people represents another. Literature too is memory; Tadjo weaves together authentic accounts on the individual scale with her personal observations to implicate the audience in creating a collective memory of the Rwandan genocide.

Some aspects of genocide rely on memory, as do, in some ways, those of literature. Returning to a quote raised earlier in the section entitled “The Writer,” Tadjo wonders: “L’oralité de l’Afrique est-elle un handicap pour la mémoire collective?” (Tadjo 36). This leads to the question of transmission: could this have been avoided and will the text in question help avoid it further? Tadjo suggests that written literature could be a more effective way of sustaining a

collective memory. Indeed, as Stone explains, in considering the role between genocide and memory: “Genocide is bound up with memory, on an individual level of trauma and on a collective level in terms of the creation of stereotypes, prejudice and post-genocide politics” (Stone, “Genocide and Memory” 117). Tadjo's text allows victims of the genocide to bear witness, allowing little room for the existence of stereotypes or prejudice. She carefully considers the prospect of reconciliation without pointing an accusing finger at the Hutus as perpetrators. The Western world outside of the lived trauma partakes in the collective memory that forms the event; the genocide's impact is not restricted to its geographical boundaries. Tadjo's use of “Rwanda” as a substitute for genocide expands these borders of the country into the collective memories of those who read and learn of the atrocity.

Collective memory is important in how genocide is later studied and recounted in history. Stone explains that, “If collective memory is essential for mobilizing perpetrators, it also underpins attempts to commemorate genocide in its immediate aftermath and to advocate on behalf of survivors in their quest for justice” (Stone, “Genocide and Memory” 111). The ways in which Tadjo advocates on behalf of the survivors relies on how she represents their individual stories within the boundaries of the text itself. Furthermore, in describing genocide memorials, Stone explains that the mass of bones that often mark a memorial nevertheless serves, through their anonymity, to “recapitulate the logic of genocide: the reduction of individual human beings to representatives of a (perpetrator- defined) group” (Stone, “Genocide and Memory” 113). The effectiveness of Tadjo's text is strengthened by the individual voices that she represents within the boundaries of the book. Victims are not simply victims, but rather people like Thérèse and Nelly. Even if she avoids the term “genocide,” Tadjo relies on naming the victims to personalize the trauma for the reader.

Memory is an ineffable, unseen force that nonetheless plays an important role in the daily lives of those who suffered through genocide. Tadjo observes that: “Les vestiges de la guerre sont rares dans la ville mais les mémoires foisonnent d’images empoisonnées. Sans tambour ni trompette, la vaste majorité des êtres porte sa déchirure dans l’âme et trouve encore l’incroyable force de vivre le temps ordinaire qui reprend” (19). She admires the victims’ ability to carry on, despite the trauma. The testimonial aspect of the text, in particular, brings attention to the gendered, physical crimes that occurred during the genocide. Holocaust and genocide studies scholar Elisa Von Joeden-Forgey uses Zainab Salbi's, founder of Women for Women International, terms of “frontline” and backline” to explain that: “War and peace usually understood solely according to the largely male 'frontline discussion' of soldiers and politicians. But life is lived in a 'backline discussion' of feeding families, raising children and nurturing strong community bonds.” (Von Joeden-Forgey 63) A defining quality of genocide is the extent to which the perpetrators target women in waging war against a community. The text attests to the prevalence of rape. During the Rwandan genocide, women were knowingly infected with HIV, a clear disruption of the “women's deep symbolic life-giving powers” to “pursue the destruction of the target group's reproductive powers”(Von Joeden-Forgey 72). The text allows for a backline discussion of the war, permitting for a more complete view of the different facets of the massacre. The text does not attempt to reflect the reality of the abuses, but rather to recount them. In other words, Tadjo's aim is not render the specific, violet details all the more tangible for the reader, but for the reader to acknowledge that they occurred.

The importance that the writer attributes to her own text derives directly from its testimonial aspects. Tadjo asserts: “Oui, se souvenir. Témoigner. C’est ce qui nous reste pour combattre le passé et restaurer notre humanité” (Tadjo 85). Tadjo suggests that the text functions

as a document that will “témoigner” the trauma, evoking the notion of a collective memory in speaking about the need to “restaurer *notre* humanité” (emphasis mine). She continues to speak of a universal “nous,” implicating both writer and reader in the Rwandan genocide. Indeed, she allows the victims to bear witness themselves, but her specific focus on the trauma experienced by women allows for an important discussion on an oft-overlooked aspect of genocide to occur. Tadjo’s call to restore our “humanity” is linked to questions of culture and literature, given that creative expression forges collective memories. The call to “humanity” links physical violence with the destruction of human culture. In another section with the “le petit vieux” who guards the Ntarama church, Tadjo uses free indirect discourse to allow him to speak to us unfiltered. Like Tadjo, he refers to genocide as “le Mal,” adding that it is a reflection of “notre inhumanité” (24). The Ntarama church is a site of destruction, a site of inhumanity; the literary text, in contrast, is a site of creation, forged through memories of loss, a celebration of our capacity for humanity.

Despite universalizing the genocide for the reader by the metaphor of Evil and the concept of “Rwanda,” Tadjo herself exemplifies a need to keep a distance from the trauma, suggesting that alterity remains an integral aspect of genocide. After describing a particularly colorful person named Nelly, Tadjo explains that “Elle continue à me remercier mais je ne l’entends plus. Je veux juste me passer de l’eau sur le visage. Je pense: C’est ça la vie, on ne peut pas s’approcher des gens sans qu’ils s’introduisent qu’on le veuille ou non dans notre existence” (46). Her intimate reflection reveals two important points: her belief in the interconnectedness of people and her acknowledgement that such a connection is not always welcome nor enjoyable.

CONCLUDING ANALYSIS

In her acknowledgments section, following the last section of the text, Tadjo explains that

the Fondation de France asked ten African writers “pour une résidence d’écriture au Rwanda portant sur la mémoire du génocide” (134). The project's initial goal is memory, but from a perspective that does not include a firsthand experience of genocide. Tadjo's concern with the possibility of the recurrence of the same level of tragedy in her own Côte d'Ivoire, nevertheless, renders the text more personal. The text provides a common ground for reader and writer to relate to the experiences of genocide, while showing an acknowledged distance of not having lived through the trauma. Tadjo allows victims to present their own, identifiable voices throughout the text, even as she inserts her own worries of the potential of genocide and, in one critical moment, her own uneasiness with bridging alterity, as exemplified with the survivor named Nelly. One method for creating a common ground relies on shrouding the notion of genocide and the implications of its name in a metaphor of Evil, as well as universalizing the experience of life and loss in the concept of “Rwanda” as the experience itself.

Yet the problems of alterity remain in the text, particularly in the difference of memory; the victims have a memory that is inaccessible to Tadjo's (Western) audience, a memory that not only affects their past, but also their present. It is their companion in Rwanda, it affects too the future, in considering the possibility of reconciliation. To bridge the memory of the lived experience with the knowledge of its history, Tadjo's text functions as a way of establishing a collective memory that relies on the individual memories of the victims for its own creation. The collective memory respects the individual memories that it cannot emulate. Tadjo’s text also features an important subtext where she expresses concern about the possibility of genocide unfolding in Côte d’Ivoire, pointing to a larger conversation about postcolonial violence.

II. "Entre Césaire et le griot désespéré"[86]: Coolitude and identity in *Mes Afriques, mes ivoires*

Questions of literary creation in response to loss and destruction inform the work of Torabully. In this section, I examine the ways in which Torabully's concept of coolitude enables him to present an alternative literary form. His reflections on poetics and literary history allow him to create an alternative history of the colonial encounter where he gives voice and agency to the historically marginalized. In *Mes Afriques, mes ivoires*, Torabully discusses civil war contemporary to the time of his writing as a way to forge a multiplicity of spaces bound together through violence in the colonial and postcolonial periods. Torabully considers similar transnational questions as Tadjo, but takes it a step further in his literary production created with its governing theory of coolitude.

Khal Torabully defines coolitude as "the redefining of 'India,' of the relation to India, to other cultures, in the setting of their adoptive homelands" (Carter and Torabully 194). Whereas India is in many ways the center of coolitude, Torabully opens up the idea to liken it to the process of creolization. In other words, the coolie "symbolizes, in its broader definition, the possibility of building a composite identity to ease the pain and enrich culturally the lands in which he/she settled" (Carter and Torabully 144). In enumerating his reasons for coolitude in *Cale d'Étoiles*, Torabully advocates for its importance: "*Coolitude: parce que je suis créole de mon cordage, je suis indien de mon mât, je suis européen de la vergue, je suis mauricien de ma quête et français de mon exil. Je ne serai toujours ailleurs qu'en moi-même parce que je ne peux qu'imaginer ma terre natale. Mes terres natales?*" (Carter and Torabully 217, emphasis in original). The anaphora "je suis" enables Torabully to claim multiple origins defined by a series of metonyms related to his various cultural experiences. Despite the acknowledgement of

[86] Torabully, *Mes Afriques, mes ivoires* 23

multiple origins, he speaks of belonging to “ma terre natale.” But it is the question that follows—“mes terres natales?”—that is a defining feature of Torabully’s work, in which he moves from the singular to the plural. Not only does Torabully create lateral exchanges in his work through his acknowledgement of being “creole” and “indien,” he furthermore acknowledges his “European” and more specifically “French” origins, signalling the ways in which he strives to decenter the colonizer-colonized dichotomy to favor the multiple self. As this quote shows, Torabully’s literary oeuvre offers the best definition of coolitude as he puts his theory into practice.

Torabully articulates a plural geography throughout his discussion of transnational violence. In speaking about India, for example, he refers to it as “Les Indes” not as a way of reproducing colonial language, but so as to represent the diversity of the Indian subcontinent. Torabully explains his use of the plural in speaking of India when describing his meeting with Aimé Césaire in 1997 in Fort de France, Martinique: “I spoke of *les Indes*, not the mythical Indies of Columbus, but the general name of a plural India, and stressed the fact that India is not such a monolithic nation as one would sometimes think it is, being in fact a mosaic of Indians” (Carter and Torabully 145). He continues to explain how his concept of coolitude diverges from the way in which Césaire constructs négritude with its accusations of being essentialist. Torabully argues:

> Therefore, the India I would make reference to is one of Diversity, the Indies or Indias we spoke about, a reminder that even when searching for lost fragments of one’s memory, to evolve a dialectics of identity, one should not forget that these origins cannot be exclusive of the differences of others, whether of language, creed or culture…The ontological approach must therefore be coupled with the approach of a complex identity,

in which the source remains open to other sources. (Carter and Torabully, 149).

The "approach of a complex identity" defines Torabully's literary sensibility in discussing civil war in Côte d'Ivoire through poetry. In speaking of Abidjan in *Mes Afriques, mes ivoires*, for example, he expands the geography of the city to speak of it in its plurality. From the beginning of the collection, he addresses himself to the capital of Côte d'Ivoire, but in the second section of the collection, he expands the notion of the city from a singular entity: "Et Abidjan du Ghana, Abidjan de Sierra Leone" and "Abidjan de Burkina Faso, de Djenné Jeno" (63). He speaks of people who live in these plural Abidjans, then he notes that he hears their voices, ringing out with a call to "'Abidjan de toutes les Afriques,'" to what the poetic "je" believes is an "Abidjan de toutes parts" (63). This plural "Abidjan" parallels Torabully's discussion of "Les Indes." He self-consciously creates networks among different spaces through the use of plural names. I am particularly interested in examining Torabully's techniques of plurality as they structure *Mes Afriques, mes ivoires* within the context of civil war and genocide to consider Africa's future through his consideration of its past.

Torabully negotiates between a "je" and a "toi" with regards to the concept of genocide. As Véronique Bragard notes: "Dans une alternance et une identification Je/Tu qui ne peuvent plus être distingués, l'empathie mène à une mise en relation dans laquelle l'île et son identité recomposée resurgissent" (Bragard, "Dire ta chaire mes révoltes" 108). As Bragard suggests, empathy characterizes Torabully's poem, a tool that allows him to foster a multidirectional space that recognizes tragedies in other countries and thus create a collective memory of different forms of violence.

Torabully weaves references to key African writers throughout the collection, a technique that brings up questions of language and literary heritage. The principal references are to Aimé

Césaire, Sony Labou Tansi, and Ahmadou Kourouma. The references to Kourouma are particularly apt, given Kourouma's role in Ivoirian literature and the subject of Torabully's collection. Torabully address Kourouma directly and references one of Kourouma's novels, *Les Soleils des indépendences* (1968), the most famous Ivoirian novel in French, when he writes "Tu avais trouvé un soleil dans l'indépendance, / une lune/ Dans l'asservissement de la liberté" (86). Literary scholar Bruno Gnaoulé-Oupoh explains the novel's importance in *la francophonie* at large: "C'était la toute première fois qu'un écrivain africain de l'espace francophone rompait avec le discours académique pour, comme le dit Barthélemy Kotchy, 'plier la langue française aux structures linguistiques et de ce fait mentales de sa langue maternelle,' en l'occurrence ici le malinké" (391). Torabully has acknowledged his own desire to move beyond the idea of a monolithic French language to consider the possibilities of a creolized French, indicating the ways in which his own work is an extension of Kourouma's literary production, among others writers.

In speaking about the ways in which he pushes the boundaries of French and evokes words in different languages in *Cale d'Étoiles*, Torabully explains: "Therefore, another implication of my book was the desire to take French language to my meanings, doing away with a certain *francotropsime* or excessive French linguistic or literary formalism" (Carter and Torabully 157). The poem does so, not only through references to African and Indian geography and to African languages, but also through references to African and Indian cultural elements, such as food and clothing. He speaks, for instance, of "le karité" [shea], which is native to Africa. In speaking of clothes, he speaks of "du pagne au dhoti," the dhoti being an India men's garment. What is particularly significant is that Torabully does not include any footnotes or other explanatory details to explain these cultural items. In this way, the reader does not approach the

text as having been produced for a Western audience, but rather as a text that purposefully decenters its readership. Torabully expresses the ways in which he forges coolitude in multilingualism:

> And also, with the reticence of the Indian descendent towards the French language, which was in the 80s often perceived as the tongue of 'the Other.' This explains why I introduced so many words from Hindi, Bhojpuri, Creole and even a 'strange French lexicon' in *Cale d'Étoiles*, so that the spirit of coolitude could fully express itself, in a complex relation to words and identities. (Carter and Torabully 157)

As Torabully indicates, the use of Indian languages and Creole also functions as an invitation to his Mauritian readers, as well as a way to fully access and represent multiple identities on the island.

The literary link forged between Torabully and Boni reinforce the poetics of plurality and minor transnationalism at play. In section 5 of the poem, Torabully makes a series of references to Kourouma. In the last stanza where he speaks to the writer, he speaks to "Ahamadou," then Torabully moves on to address directly Tanella Boni, writer of the preface to the collection. He writes to her in a one-line stanza: "Et toi Tanella, nouvelle generation de l'encens!" By evoking Boni after Kourouma, Torabully traces the literary genealogy of Côte d'Ivoire, a heritage in which he inserts himself. He continues addressing himself to Boni, speaking of the two as figures "devant nos remparts de mémoires," then moving to declare "J'enterre avec toi le sac précoce du fiel, Je tisse ton silence tendu au ciel." The movement of solidarity at the beginning of the stanza, where he buries "avec" Boni, moves into a recognition of empathy where he "weaves" her silence, as he does the poem. He finishes the stanza, as well as the second section of the collection with the words: "En ta prière devenue crucifixion, Je dis mes Afriques, mes ivoires"

(86). For Torabully, there is no question of competitive memory, as emphasized through the use of "nos" when speaking of "nos remparts de mémoires." As he expresses his poetic agency through his telling of "mes Afriques, mes ivoires," Torabully fosters a space of multiple voices, because he is speaking through Boni's prayers. His poem, in this way, becomes a palimpsest, as well as a polypohony, where he builds on the works of other writers as a means of creating a creolized space.[87]

Torabully brings together the idea of genocide with his concept of coolitude in a stanza where he highlights his poetic and historical agency:

> Quand ces sombres pensées en moi remuent le
>
> cri du génocide,
>
> Et que pour dire lumière il faut rependre cette
>
> quête des noms
>
> Dans l'écuelle de la poussière fétide, je te dis ma
>
> coolitude. *Mes Afriques, mes Indes. Mes Europes*. (81)

"Je te dis ma coolitude" is an expression of agency. At the end of the stanza, Torabully evokes a plurality of spaces, emphasized through the use of italics. The use of the period in between "*mes Indes*" and "*Mes Europes*" separates the two spaces, a division that acknowledges the ways in which the latter created unequal conditions throughout the colonial period. Yet, he includes "mes Europes" in the same verse through the continued use of italics, functioning as an ultimate recognition of his multiple origins, even if some were created in violent conditions framed by cultural loss.

To comment specifically on the links between genocide in Rwanda and the risks of

[87] See, for instance, Max Silverman's *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film* (2013)

seeing it in Côte d'Ivoire, Torabully relies on the dominant image of the machete. He creates a multidirectional space:

> Dans ma gueule s'affrontent les souffrances
>
> Du Rwanda, du Burundi,
>
> Des Baoulés, des Bozos…Massacres pour
>
> Machettes. Pures machettes? (29)

He speaks of Rwanda and refers to the machetes, but in a way that questions whether one could define the catastrophe through the image of machete, as the West has done in its imaginary of the genocide. The question "pures machettes?" challenges the dominance of the image of the machete, particularly through the use of the adjective "pure," implying that it wasn't only the machetes, and thus Hutu racism at work as an underlying cause of the genocide, but that repercussions from colonial dynamics were also at play in inciting the violence. The play with "pour" and "pures" links the two thoughts. Rather than engaging with the sort of thinking that characterizes Nganang's thoughts on the Rwandan genocide, Torabully offers a space of solidarity.[88]

Torabully shares with Tadjo the same concern about the risk of genocide occurring in Côte d'Ivoire. He expresses his alarm: "Entre la distance et les départs, tant de relents de naufrages…/ Mes ivoires soudain ramenés du seuil des génocides" (101). Torabully explicitly connects his concern about the risk of genocide developing from civil war in Côte d'Ivoire, a way of expressing empathy without blaming one group. He refrains from dividing them into groups of perpetrator and victim by referring to all Ivoirians as "mes ivoires." Binaries do not have a place in Torabully's poetic vision.

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[88] In one moment, he does express a crisis, but one in which he takes on a defiant tone: "Me voilà, île fratricide, terre fertile de la mort/ sublime! Me voilà vil genocide/ L'Afrique m'enserre, sa terre me libère" (46).

The sustained use of “mes ivoires” throughout the collection enables Torabully to consider what writing means in relation to violence and memory. As he considers the uses of literature, he interrogates the possibilities of the written word through the use of the question mark: “Ecrire mes ivoires? Une réconciliation sans/ défense?/ Un adieu au souvenir que l’on doit consacrer?” (89). He formulates the memory of what has happened in Côte d’Ivoire as “mes ivoires,” a multipurpose term that he uses to also refer to Ivoirians. The use of the possessive reinforces the link between the writer and his subject, showing how he feels personally invested in the country, while respecting it in its diversity, as indicated by the use of “ivoires” in the plural. He continues: “Ecrire, pour résister à la mutilation?/ Espoir pour celui qui se rappelle d’oublier?” (89). He wonders whether writing can be a form of resistance, and he uses “mutilation” as a reference to the fragmented self that has characterized the historically marginalized. In this sense, he considers the possibility of writing as a way of healing the fragmentation that has resulted from (post)colonial violence. Writing also provides a source of hope, despite the evocation of violence and human rights violations. The use of question marks shows how he interrogates the dominant discourse surrounding literature produced around questions of violence.

The collection celebrates the creation of a collective memory through poetry. At the end of one stanza, Torabully writes: “L’amour expiatoire porte le sang de ta langue./ Pour nos audaces, puisqu’il faut tes Afriques à/ mes audaces, je trace le mot de nos cris tenaces” (37). The poetic “je” desires to create collective memory, rooted in violence, indicating by the shifting pronouns in the last verse. It is the “je” who traces the word but not of his own “cris” but rather “nos cris,” creating a space of solidarity. The “cri” evokes the question of orality embedded within the written text.

It is through the poet's expressions of agency and ability to create that Torabully explicitly confronts genocide in the collection. He purposefully "names" genocide in the second section by using capital letters for the first time in the collection, an action that precedes an inventive and extensive series of words written in capitals that plays with the collection's title later on in the section:

> Je porte au dos ce crime commis contre nous.
>
> Je témoigne par ce crime commis contre toi.
>
> Je te nomme génocide. TU ES GENOCIDE.
>
> Et l'apeuré invente le verbe génocider.
>
> Comme ces caravanes inquiétantes dans les
>
> syllabes
>
> Qui rappellent les proues assassines des galions. (54).

He begins the first three verses with the poetic "je," displaying agency, rendered all the more powerful with the assertion that he is carrying on his back this crime committed not only against victims of genocide, but rather "nous," a plurality. The poet's task becomes one of testimony and recognition, although it remains unclear to whom Torabully addresses the pronoun "tu." It might be to the process of violence that constitutes genocide itself. The evocation of "l'apeuré" and the neologism of a new verb, "génocider," points to the literary creation borne out of violence. The reference to the "galions" furthermore connects colonial violence—which had subjugated the historically marginalized to institutions like slavery and indentured servitude—with genocide.

Torabully furthermore brings to the fore the question of history and memory through his evocation of identity and naming:

> Que veulent dire vos héros sans nom ?

Le dernier des damnés, le hors histoire,

le hors-là…

Dans la brise tenace de notre parole réconciliée,

c'est nous ce hors mémoire, ce hors nom

d'homme.

Que répète le tabla du tam-tam :

Il n'y a pas d'autre pulvérisation que l'oubli. (58)

The evocation of the "tam-tam" coupled with the repetition of "hors" creates a rhythm in the text. He defines the "nous" in terms of historical marginalization; a group that brings together "notre parole réconciliée." The idea of "oubli" functions on different levels. It is first a reference to the "never forget" and "never again" slogans that accompany genocides, such as the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide. But more than a reminder to remember the genocidal events, Torabully here implicitly points to the underlying current that surrounds discussions and analysis of the genocide in Rwanda: cultural genocide.

The physical annihilation of groups of people is coupled with the destruction of their cultures. Historian Dominik J. Schaller explores the idea of cultural genocide in conjunction with colonization in Africa (Schaller 360-61), referring to the term "ethnocide" that anthropologists use to describe the deliberate destruction of indigenous cultures and cultural institutions.[89] During the colonial period, colonists set out to deliberately undermine existing economic structures in Africa to force indigenous groups to participate in the newly burgeoning capitalist structures, such as plantations, imposed by imperial powers. Doing so involved the dissolution of

[89] The term "epistemicide" has also been used in decolonial studies to point to the destruction of local knowledge and local epistemologies. See, for instance, Denis Masaka's article "The Prospects of Ending Epistemicide in Africa: Some Thoughts" in *Journal of Black Studies* (2018).

indigenous cultural life. Raphael Lemkin believed that annihilation of culture was a form of genocide and advocated for its inclusion in the United Nations General Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (UNGC). The UN General Assembly, however, voted to remove cultural genocide from the UNGC. Religious studies scholar Kevin Lewis O'Neill explains the reasons for this decision:

> Cultural genocide, for example, includes curtailing or banning a language, traditional socialization practices, artistic endeavours, ritual practices, social institutions, and so forth. The framers of the 1948 Convention on Genocide erased these aspects from the text for conceptual/legal reasons (some argued that cultural genocide was already prohibited in international law) and practical reasons (colonial powers, for example, likely feared accusations of cultural genocide). (O'Neill 193)

It is faulty reasoning to prohibit "cultural genocide" in international law with the argument that it already exists, given that "genocide" was a neologism. The supposition about protecting the interests of colonial powers is likely the principal reason for having omitted cultural genocide from the UNGC, reflective of the continuation of colonial domination, given that the UNGC does not allow for prosecution of past crimes.

Yet, as power structures developed throughout the colonial period remain largely intact, the question of cultural genocide remains implicit in cultural development in Africa. Diop, for example, in *L'Afrique au-delà du miroir* discusses African cinema and how it is currently controlled by the French *ministère de la Coopération* (Diop 204) to the point that African directors create films more for viewings in the West, rather than in Africa: "Ils renvoient, bien que signés par des Africains, un regard étranger sur le continent" (Diop 204). The transition from his discussion of the genocide in Rwanda to concerns about contemporary cultural production

reveal an important subtext to discussions about Rwanda; for, even if the West does not exhibit an overt intent to destroy the development of African cinema for an African audience, associating this action with the Rwandan genocide imparts a sense of urgency. Tying in questions of cinema culture in Africa to a discussion of genocide in Rwanda within the same text raises the question of the functioning of multidirectional memory in the public space. Rothberg discusses the important role played by recognition of the Holocaust in public consciousness since the 1960s:

> My argument is not only that the Holocaust has enabled the articulation of other histories of victimization at the same time that it has been declared 'unique' among human-perpetrated horrors […] I also demonstrate the more surprising and seldom acknowledged fact that public memory of the Holocaust emerged in relation to post-war events that seem at first to have little to do with it. (Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory* 6-7)

Yet, as these authors demonstrate, bringing up the Rwandan genocide can lead to fears of similar events, from cultural destruction and other forms of victimization to the risks of genocide unfolding in other states, such as Côte d'Ivoire. This raises the question as to whether the mere articulation of the concept of "genocide" can create a multidirectional space, particularly as it invites a code of legal prosecution and protection that could empower the subaltern. Through their expressions of concerns about genocide in Rwanda and the likelihood of its occurrence in other countries, authors reveal their anxieties towards the neoliberal, neo-colonial patterns of behavior that characterize postcolonial Africa. Here literature becomes a space to explore these anxieties, as well as a means to provide a solution through an alternative history. Torabully, for instance, creates a hybrid text through his creation of a poem that incorporates techniques of

orality that offers a different genre for writing history. In other words, he brings together elements of orality to the poetic form as a way of creating an alternative history, one that values solidarity, empathy, and the hybrid self.

In his manifesto, Nganang emphasizes the importance of the notion of genocide with regards to the development of African literature, and when examining cultural productions in Africa in general. He explains: "Le génocide au Rwanda l'a crié même aux sourds; l'a impose même aux aveugles: la littérature africaine contemporaine ne peut plus se définir sans une réflexion sur la tragédie" (Nganang 118). For Nganang, the genocide in Rwanda defines the cultural landscape of Africa. He speaks of the need for "la pensée africaine" to engage with the genocide: "La pensée africaine n'a pas le droit d'être absente une seconde fois du lieu du drame, et avec elle, la littérature, tout comme la critique de celle-ci" (Nganang 118). Torabully's collection illustrates this transnational sensibility by bringing together concerns about Côte d'Ivoire with direct references to genocide in Rwanda woven throughout *Mes Afriques, mes ivoires*.

Are there other forms of cultural productions that could foster this type of dialogue? Pourra argues that the texts in "devoir de mémoire" project are written for reasons of personal catharsis and for a European audience. Yet, the question of writing for a European audience raises the issue of publishing in Africa, when she affirms: "Si le people rwandais doit être véritablement intégré au travail de deuil et au travail d'une mémoire qui est avant tout la sienne, il est à craindre, dans le contexte culturel qui est le sien, que le roman, en effet, ne soit pas la forme artistique la plus adaptée (Pourra 161). Hitchcott argues in a similar fashion—but without an indictment of the novel—of the need for fiction written by Rwandans to commemorate and mourn the genocide on their own terms and in their own words. Yet, as Diop shows, cinema, as a

completely different medium, is not a way to access an authentic cultural representation of Africa in all of its diversity and plurality. Torabully's collection of poems presents the possibility of a creolized medium that expresses transnational empathy through the development of a history that harkens back to traditional orality in African cultures.

One of the ways that Torabully engages with orality is through the use of capital letters throughout the different poems to create the effects of a call and response system. Doing so creates a rhythm in the poems that evokes the power of a storyteller. It reinforces an African identity by using the method through which African history was traditionally transmitted.

Yet, Torabully couples his techniques of orality with different interpretations of the notion of silence. Torabully addresses the griot, the traditional African storyteller: "En toi mes îles sont légendes à la source de/ l'oubli. En ta mémoire aussi/" (38, with the last dash as a part of the poem). The use of legend evokes the written word, in thinking through the legend of a map or a caption for a photograph. "Légende" comes from the Latin word *legenda* meaning "something to read" from the verb *legere* (to read). In two powerful verses, Torabully explores the role of the griot in relation to memory and forgetting. When Torabully speaks to Kourouma, he continues to explore the notion of silence in relation to literature. He writes: "*Poème est patrie et patrie silence*" (85, emphasis in original). By equating "poème" and "silence" by way of "patrie," Torabully implies that literature is paradoxically a form of silence; reading is usually a silent act, in contrast to oral history. By referring to Kourouma as "frère," the "patrie" to which Torabully refers therefore implies that they share a homeland, transcending the political borders that otherwise separate the two writers. This homeland could be the literary space, the poem itself.

In her introduction, Boni also explains the role of griots and silence in the collection: "La

fin du poème renvoie à une poésie des griots, qui interpelle, prend à témoin, dit l'intensité du déluge au moment où les passerelles entrevues dans un premier temps sombrent et se noient dans la boue et le sang" (15). Evoking griots within the confines of the poetic text allows Torabully to bring together genres; he himself becomes one. With regards to the use of silence in the poem, she writes that Torabully "prend aussi les mots pour être du coté du 'camps des vaincus', des sans voix" (13). In his evocation of silence throughout the collection, Torabully explores silence in its different iterations: from the silence of the perpetrator and bystander to the silence of the victim. It is *against* yet paradoxically *with* silence that he writes; his literature gives voice to the marginalized, rendered all the more powerful through his frequent use of capital letters—a silent cry that slices through the poems.

In the last stanza of his collection, Torabully evokes the question of memory in relation to identity. He writes:

> *Aux visages bafoués,*
>
> *ces décombres de la haine,*
>
> *si l'éléphant revient sans leur mémoire*
>
> *pourrons-nous encore nous dire?* (130, emphasis in original)

He pairs the elephant with "leur" mémoire in the plural instead of the singular. The figure of memory, the elephant, becomes a source of the memory of the many. Torabully ends his powerful collection with the question of self-representation. He implies that keeping memory intact and alive allows people to tell their own stories and histories, rather than have it told on their behalf.

The concept of silence plays a fundamental role throughout the poem as an indictment of those who did not speak about the genocide and as a clear opposite to the possibilities of

literature. Silence permitted the blood to spill and the machetes to slice; by writing and thus drawing attention to violence in Côte d'Ivoire, Torabully's poem acts as a testimony to the past, present, and future of genocide. By referencing moments of violence and loss, Torabully creates out of destruction, and suggest that violence can be creative and productive if its lessons are heeded or if its consequences are taken to heart.

CONCLUSION

Mes Afriques, mes ivoires and *L'Ombre d'Imana* draw on genocide in Rwanda and civil war in Côte d'Ivoire to examine questions of violence and cultural destruction in Africa and the Indian Ocean. The question of literary genre plays a fundamental role in thinking through the ways in which one can represent violent events. In these texts, the "I" and "you" are not necessarily markers of a discussion between the center and the periphery, between the colonizer and (formerly) colonized. The predominance of the pronoun "nous" throughout both texts indicates the extent to which both writers strive to understand genocide, civil war, and cultural destruction on a transnational scale.

Collective memory throughout Africa requires a hybrid genre to respect African heritage. In speaking about Tadjo and Boni in *Littérature féminine ivoirienne: une écriture plurielle*, Viviane Gbadoua Uetto discusses the ways in which their novels *Royaume aveugle* and *Une Vie de crabe*, respectively, discuss real histories of corruption without conforming to the rules of realist novels. Uetto explains: "Ces textes sont fondés sur un entrelacement de différents types de récit […] Des éléments tirés de la tradition orale africaine tels que les mythes, les contes, les rituels ou les récits initiatiques sont insérés dans le texte" (Uetto 27). The title of Tadjo's text on

Rwanda, for example, makes reference to Imana, the Rwandan deity of creation, a reference to pre-colonial culture. For Tadjo, African traditions play an important role in her literary creation:

> I follow the African tradition of storytelling which gives me a great freedom of interpretation of our myths and legends. I am interested in preserving the richness of our cultural heritage for the generations to come. Many of us live in big African urban centres or in the diaspora and are increasingly losing contact with oral traditions. One after the other, our stories and mythical characters are disappearing. Instead of lamenting this phenomenon, I feel it is my role as a writer and as an artist to fight against alienation and amnesia.[90]

Tadjo affirms her desire to retell African mythology as a result of what she perceives as contemporary Africa's continual alienation from oral tradition. In the context of human rights violations and processes of violence, the stakes of Tadjo's work are high in that she wishes to challenge neocolonial patterns of behavior.

The question of commemoration is of utmost importance. My intention in this chapter is not to disregard important literary work written by Rwandan authors to memorialize and commemorate the tragedy. Rather, I have sought to consider how authors from other places can figure as anxious bystanders, write about Rwanda in a postcolonial context, and reveal several important subtexts.

These subtexts concern the violence Africans commit against one another, as exemplified by the work of Nganang. By focusing on genocide, I am able to articulate a way of discussing parallel risks—that is, the risks of cultural genocide. The very act of commemorating the Rwandan genocide through literature raises the question of cultural genocide, because it is

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[90] Hadrien Diez. "Véronique Tadjo: Discussion with an African Voice." *Institut français du sud*. http://www.ifas.org.za/index.php/books/events-and-news-books/548-veronique-tadjo-discussion-with-an-african-voice

through a Western form, the novel, which, as Hitchcott points out, was not even actively present during the 20th year anniversary commemoration of the genocide due to the absence of bookstores. It is my contention in this chapter that writers of the Fest'Africa project, such as Tadjo and Diop, raise these worries about cultural genocide in implicit ways, but that it is a writer like Torabully who can forge a literary way forward with his imaginative theory and poetics. Torabully creates historical agency in his poetry through a creolized past and present, offering the poetic form as an alternative history, one that connects transversally different geographical and cultural areas.

On a macro scale, the implicit concern for cultural genocide and continued cultural domination from the West suggests that the United Nations might need to think through the UNGC and whether it would be possible to ratify it to include an amendment on cultural genocide. Academics often accuse trauma studies of operating as field with an implicit Western bias; such a bias could be the result of bias within the network of international law. A first step forward would include a consideration of Lemkin's work on cultural genocide and how it played a role in his development of the concept of "genocide" at its inception. Works produced in literary studies, memory studies, and cultural studies point to the ways in which concerns about genocide linger over questions of culture. One wonders also if people would be rallied into expressing concern about present-day occurrences of genocide if the word "culture" were affixed to public discussions of on-going threats.

Speaking of Rwanda is a way of negotiating with the postcolonial state, with the repercussions of the colonial act leading to genocide and civil war among different racial and ethnic groups in Africa. Commemorating the genocide in Rwanda allows for a discussion on postcolonial modernity and the fragmented self, as discussed by Césaire, to create a collective

identity and a heritage to replace what has been lost in the silence. I have argued that Tadjo and Torabully, among other writers, sustain a transnational African identity through the creation of literary texts. They do so by incorporating elements of orality that reinforce a common African cultural heritage. The use of the pronoun "nous" emphasizes empathy for victims and survivors– a necessary and subtle step, perhaps, to unraveling the ethnic lines reinforced and exploited throughout the colonial period. Ultimately, this approach encourages a means of linking, rather than dividing, ethnicities and cultures on the continent and its island peripheries.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this study, I have worked at the intersection of francophone postcolonial studies and genocide studies to analyze literary representations of historical violence in contemporary francophone literature. To do so, I have drawn primarily from the works of pioneering scholars in postcolonial studies, genocide studies, and memory studies, such as Françoise Lionnet, Dirk Moses, Michael Rothberg, respectively. In bringing this variety of literary texts together, I have interrogated the uses of Rothberg's multidirectional memory, evaluating the ways in which some texts succeed in creating a lateral exchange, such as Appanah's novels, and the ways in which a text could fall short in doing so, notably Le Clézio's *Révolutions.* I have also questioned whether the evocation of "genocide" in discussions of the Rwandan Genocide point to the ways in which the articulation of genocide itself creates a multidirectional space.

Examining the role of genre and perspective has been integral to my analysis of the texts. The texts push the boundaries of their respective genres of travel journals, bildungsroman, and poetry to bridge alterity and develop techniques of polyphony. Le Clézio, for instance, further develops the traditional bildungsroman–as discussed by Joseph Slaughter when he treats the question of that particular genre in relation to human rights–by using postmodern techniques, notably through the use of alternative third and first person perspectives, rather than sticking to the traditional use of one perspective. Yet this technique also fails in some regards, notably in its treatment of history. The governing idea of *révolution*—that is, of a cyclical history punctured by significant moments—inevitably shows how Kiambé's own history is limited to the island of Mauritius as a result of her forced enslavement from Kilwa Kisiwani as opposed to Jean Marro's travels around the world. As I suggest, Le Clézio implies that walking is a way of owning

history; Jean's travels thus point to his freedom of movement and freedom to tell his own history. Despite the first person perspective, Kiambé's narrative is limited in scope, indicative of a greater problem in Le Clézio's treatment of women throughout his oeuvre, as other scholars have pointed out.[91]

Appanah's polyphonic *Les Rochers de Poudre-d'Or* also plays with perspective by incorporating the first person account of the xenophobic and racist Doctor Grant. Doing so presents a nuanced portrait of the British during the period of indenture in the 19th century. In this novel, Appanah brings together different groups together in dialogue, whether it's the English on the ship with the Indians and whether it was the encounter between the group of former slaves and Badhri at Le Morne.

As my chapter on Natacha Appanah shows, it is possible to evaluable the uses of multidirectional memory through specific literary techniques. The doubling of the two characters, Raj and David, enables the creation of empathy to eschew notions of competitive memory.

This dissertation examines the way that literature defies the silence that has surrounded the historically marginalized through its representation of these events. Boubacar Boris Diop speaks about the silence surrounding the Rwandan genocide: "C'est surtout tirer la sonnette d'alarme, car on voit bien l'inquiétant projet politique qui se profile derrière la négrophobie triomphante" (12). Yet, the process of genocide continues in the world today, without a decided lack of actions against a variety of groups of people on different continents. It has become a truism that justification for political intervention seems invariably linked to political gain; we invade when we can benefit, never for purely humanitarian reasons. It is colonialism and economic reasons that are often at the heart of why genocide occurred; it is also neocolonisation

[91] They have notably done so notably in *Les Cahiers JMG Le Clézio,* no. 3-4, entitled "Migrations et métissages."

and economic reasons why we intervene or not. The question of genocide and prevention are linked to power dynamics. The tranversal dialogue, as theorized by Lionnet and Shih, therefore offers a way to destabilize the power dynamics, even if, as Le Clézio suggests in his Nobel Prize speech, access to writing and reading remains a privilege for an elite few. This silence brings us to the valuable role of the bystander writing about genocide and civil war.

Most of the authors that I have studied generally avoid the use of the term "genocide" for varying reasons. Only Torabully engages with the word and even offers a neologism through his use of the verb "génocider." It is Torabully who calls out directly, "je te nomme genocide TU ES GENOCIDE" (Torabully, *Mes afriques* 54) a powerful display of agency that stands in direct contrast to the West's usual responses to human rights violations, as well as Le Clezio's own equivocation. This naming enables Torabully to imagine a plurality forged in empathy; it is therefore his ability to use the word genocide that further fosters his creativity and fuels his agency.

Another thread running through these texts is the question of "fraternité," one of the three components of the French national motto. The Marro family could not guarantee "fraternité" as they forge their house based on a new economic system, as they explicitly write out that the house is founded on "liberté" and "égalité." Conversely, Raj and David are bounded by a fraternité. The concept of "fraternité" develops in my third chapter through the prism of coolitude and minor transnationalism where anxieties about civil war in Côte d'Ivoire progressing into genocide guide the authors in their lateral network of dialogue.

Opposed to fraternity is the idea of a feminine bond, which the texts sometimes do not focus on. In Le Clézio's case, women serve as sources of guidance, inspiration, and fascination in *Révolutions*, but the only instance in which we witness a female voice speak on her own

behalf is Kiambé's narrative. Appanah depicts Ganga's struggle against a patriarchal society that expects widowed women to engage with the tradition of *sati*. And Tadjo gives voice to female victims, but does not explicitly focus on questions of gender. In some ways, these authors do not bring questions of gender and gendered violence to the fore; when they do it is mediated through the male gaze (particularly through the eyes of Doctor Grant in *Les Rochers de Poudre-d'Or*).

To articulate my analysis, a precision of language was sometimes necessary to do so. The ideas of the "imagined testimony" and the "anxious bystander" offer a new framework to consider these texts and what they have to offer. Rather than focusing on the question of whether Tadjo, for example, has the right to write about a trauma that is not her own, I consider the uses of her perspective and what it offers her transnational audience. Examining this perspective draws out the implicit worries about cultural genocide having occurred in Africa and whether it will continue to occur throughout the postcolonial period. By examining *L'Ombre d'Imana* in conjunction with *Mes Afriques, mes ivoires*, I continue to probe the uses of the anxious bystander and how Torabully's creativity draws from the destruction.

Does creating a literature then allow the creation of a collective memory, necessary to the healing process? Even as historian Jay Winters argues that collective memory does not exist, this thesis has analyzed the ways in which literature creates a collective memory mediated through fiction, even as elements of real history play a role within the texts. This thesis is ultimately a call for a third wave of the field of genocide studies to include the humanities in what has defined itself as an interdisciplinary field since its inception. Further research will continue to address the lacunae of other fields in the humanities, such as art history and film studies, within genocide studies.

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