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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Background to the Study

Between April and July of 1994 Rwanda experienced a devastating genocide in which nearly 1 million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed by Hutu extremists. Literature on genocide explains the historical origins of Rwanda genocide. Written works on media have tended to focus on the role of Radio-Television Libre Des Mille Collines (RTL) and newspaper *Kangura* in instigating the Rwanda genocide. Not much research has been done to reveal how the film language has been used to debate the Rwandan genocide. Language is a system of signs/codes (Barthes 1972) that carry peoples norms, values, histories and word-views (Ngugi 1987). Hall (1997) contends that if language is used to reflect on one side of social phenomena, not other sides, the result is a stereotype. Bhabha (1996) contests the basis on which a stereotype is built by viewing it as ‘sutured or fractured’. This means when stereotypes emphasise singularity of values, this very act invite critics to search for alternative values and meanings that are deliberately drowned out by stereotypes. There is no authoritative work that reveals the dialectical nature of stereotypes as both ‘open’ and ‘closed’ (Bhabha, 1996) systems of constructing the reality of film representations of the Rwandan genocide. The fragmentary research on the role of film in depicting the Rwandan genocide appears in journals that are not easily accessible. Also, the few material research on the film does not pay sufficient attention to the language of film in its varied manifestations of the verbal, visual, sound, colour and silence, all which constitute the semiotic system of film. Therefore there is a gap in the study of language and stereotypes in the Rwandan films. This study seeks to contribute by exploring critically how language is implicated in the creation of as well as resistance to cultural and political stereotypes in four selected films on Rwanda.

1.1 Statement of Research problem

The problem identified, and that is going to be critically explored in this study is that Rwandan films have popularized images and representations based on stereotypes of Tutsis as the only victims of genocide. These must be contested because they distort understanding of the forces at work during the genocide.

1.2 Research Aims

The aim of this study is, therefore, to:

- Interrogate the language used in representing genocide in some selected Rwandan films. The films to be considered are *A Good Man in Hell* (2002), *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), *Sometimes in April* (2005) and *Keepers of Memory* (2004).
- Apply post-colonial film and language based theories on the body of selected films.
- Create awareness on what has been researched on the Rwandan genocide.

1.3 Research Objectives

By the end of the study, it is hoped that:

- Various language techniques used in the films are identified, explored and analysed.
- Post colonial theories of film and language have been used to interpret language in order to reveal and contest political and cultural stereotypes in the representation of Rwandan genocide.
- Research questions are answered and new understanding is generated in the use of filmic verbal and audio-visual languages.

1.4 Justification of Research Study

There are several reasons why it is necessary to study the Rwandan genocide through the medium of film. Immediately after the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the new Tutsi-led Rwandan government enjoyed unprecedented international sympathy in response to the death of nearly 1 million Tutsi and moderate Hutus. This international sympathy has become more visible through films such as *A Good Man in Hell* (2002), *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), *Sometimes in April* (2005), and *Keepers of Memory* (2004). In the depiction of the Rwandan genocide the Tutsis in general, and Tutsi elites in particular, have been represented as the 'natural' political saviours of the Rwandan people. Most Hutus are depicted in the films as criminals so that where they are shown protecting the Tutsis it is presented as a way of ameliorating a collective sense of guilt. These representations of the Rwandan genocide compromise an understanding of the contradictions

that characterise those Rwandan people who were involved in the genocide. The main problem created by these representations to Rwandans is that the new Tutsi-led State is accorded the right to “speak” on behalf of everyone, with the consequence that this inhibit tolerance of alternative views that those not in power can bring to explain how and why the genocide took place. Representations authorised in the genocide films on Rwanda exaggerate conflicts between the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) and the Hutu Extremists. Political contradictions among the Tutsi are collapsed and rendered barely recognizable despite the fact that in real life there are intra-class struggles between the Tutsi elites and the Tutsi masses. Stereotyped representations of Hutu in the films underestimate the intra-class struggles among the Hutus before, during and after the genocide. Representations of Tutsi people in the films as the only victims of genocide can be a dangerous stereotype or mythology that can be abused through political discriminations against non-Tutsi in the period after 1994. These stereotypes must be contested because the regime in Rwanda can use the images as evidence to silence dissenting views from within Tutsi people and also from the Hutu people. The political views of many Rwandans whose perspectives differ from those of the authorities in Kigali can be silenced under the slogan, ‘*Never Again*’ (Mamdani 2001).

1.5 Research Questions

The questions that this study raises in relation to the depiction of the Rwandan genocide in the films are:

- What are the specific manifestations of language stereotyped depictions of genocide in the Rwandan films under study?
- Why have international films encouraged stereotyped representations of the genocide images after 1994?
- What are the forms of political discriminations these film stereotypes generate and promote among the Rwandans, and with what implications to the understanding of genocide in Rwanda, and Africa?

In order to respond effectively to these troubling assumptions, I will interrogate the competing film narratives on genocide in Rwanda. This involves contesting the language of political and

cultural stereotypes of the Rwandan genocide portrayed in the films. I will argue that the first level at which to understand the stereotypes in the film narratives is to critically examine how the narratives are themselves competing to deliberately create and authorize a version of history that sits comfortably with official representations of the genocide. Using Derrida's notion of "*iterability*" or the repeatability of a text (Lucy 2004:59), helps in explaining why film language produces structures of repetition-as-difference, which both enable and limit the idealization of every single stereotype's attempt to emphasise singularity of values and pure identities. And yet neither creative works (Courtemanche 2004) historical accounts (Mamdani 2001) nor media works (Thompson 2007) on the role of the radio and print media have altered or challenged language that falsely creates a sense of authentic realness through the visibility of visual images. The language of naturalness that the immediacy of visual images impose on a viewer must be interrogated because it hides cultural stereotypes through simulated experiences.

I will highlight the fact that the four films analyzed in this study share similarities in linearity of plot, types of characterisations used and the predictable ending in which the new Rwandan nation controlled by Tutsi is vindicated, justified, and provided with legitimacy. I will demonstrate how stereotype can be used to countenance dissent invoking the images of Tutsi as victims and saviours. At this second level in the analysis, I argue that the films desire is not to so much radically counteract each other's stereotyped representations of Tutsi people, but that the interest in the film is to erect images that reveal extraordinary levels of spectacles of excess of signification in order to underwrite a narrative of Tutsi ascendancy to new forms of hegemony. I complicate my analysis by suggesting that this expectation is never met and actually formally prevented in the films because every repetition of a previous text, trace and film narrative is "never pure: it always leads to alteration. To repeat something is to alter it, to awake a difference (ibid, 60).

The second reason for comparing the depiction of the Rwandan genocide in four films is to bring out different tendencies in the understanding of the notion of contesting stereotypes. The assumption here is that even a single film is technically and ideologically uneven, and that a close analysis of it can demonstrate how the film contests as well as uphold political and cultural stereotypes of the Hutus and the Tutsis. This contradictory depiction of the genocide is implied

in the technique of the spectacle of excess inherent in the narrative interstices of the films. I will use the work of theorist Wolffe which suggests that such characterisation of the genocide based on the spectacular image should be contested because excessive significations can prevent or inhibit (Wolffe 1992: 706) other productive interpretations of the film images. To contest, and question the notion of ‘excesses’ in the images of the Rwanda genocide, I also use Bhabha’s(1996: 40) understanding of stereotype as an ‘arrested image.’ I will complicate Bhabha’s notion of stereotypes as constituted by excess of signification and argue that cultural stereotypes are not static: they are constantly reconfigured at higher levels and manifests themselves through the desire to be described as at “any one time secure a point of identification” (Bhabha 1996:40). I will then argue in my analysis that representations of genocide in the film that recognize single meanings refute different values. Stereotypes attempt to prevent the reader from understanding the complexity of social realities. The irony is that the one-sided face that a stereotyped image projects actually invites the critic to search for the meanings in the other sides of the image hidden from view. This subversive interpretation of the stereotype enables the study to interrogate the political discriminations that this techniques of excess and inhibitions produce on the shifting politics in the understanding of representations of genocide in Rwandan films.

Thirdly, my study will use the most recent theoretical works to explain the structure and functions of stereotypes of genocide in *A Good man in Hell*(2002), *Hotel Rwanda*(2004), *Sometimes in April* (2005), and *Keepers of memory* (2004). The aim here is to question narrative techniques that the film directors have used in the two documentaries and two feature films. I will demonstrate how these narrative techniques/forms encourage us to view stereotype as a potential space of suture, a liminal space in transition, and a “zone of occult instability”(Fanon, 1963 154) that is resistant to fixed forms of representations despite the initial impulse in the images to want to represent genocide through a single factor explanations.

The fourth reason for carrying out a study of the depiction of genocide in the medium of the film is motivated by the academic desire to contrast modes of narrating the genocide. This reason is all the more important because it brings analysis of various films under one study. This way, it is hoped that similarities and differences can be drawn out of the use of different techniques by

different directors. It is also possible to argue that a comparative study can reveal that an analysis of a single film cannot capture the entirety of the production of political and cultural stereotypes in the Rwandan genocide.

Fifth, and lastly, Hollywood format used in the films makes use of verisimilitude visual language that creates a false sense of authenticity of image and real experience. This language of narrative should be questioned to reveal the mask behind the image.

1.6 Literature Review

A sizeable amount of literature has been produced on different aspects of the Rwandan genocide, but this literature participates in constructing social stereotypes. For example, Gourevitch (1998) wrongly assumes that pre-colonial Rwandan ethnic groups were united at all times; that the genocide was preconditioned by colonialism and the Hutu. The critic gives a one-sided view of the genocide and this unwittingly provides succour to the Kagame regime. Gourevitch enjoys ‘critical official patronage’ and his study justifies political discriminations of the Hutus and some Tutsis by the officials in Kigali in the period after 1994. This study will explore whether or not film’s ideology and techniques used allow multiple explanations of the Rwandan genocide.

Taylor (1999) and Semujanga (2003) explore the problem of ethnicity in the Rwandan society. However, each of these scholars erroneously suggests that it is the existence of ethnicity that is responsible for the genocide. The mere fact of ethnic groups living in the same geographical space is not a precondition for genocide. Pottier (2002) argues differently that the Rwandan genocide was a manifestation of the simmering class struggle within the Rwandan society. This view may explain why some Hutus were prepared to vanquish other Hutus. The explanation of the genocide in terms of class struggle side-steps the issue of poor Hutus who killed poor Tutsis and the poor moderate Hutus. Pottier’s (2002) class struggle thesis does not problematize why some Hutu women participated in the killing of Tutsi and other Hutu women (Africa Rights 1995). This study will explore depictions of women in the films regarding the roles they played during the Rwandan genocide.

Mamdani argues that although the Rwandan genocide possessed a ‘popular’ dimension, no scholarly work on the Rwandan genocide convincingly explained this aspect. He argues that among the masses who carried out the genocide there were, ‘those enthusiastic, those reluctant, and those coerced’ (2001: 18). Mamdani’s work distinguishes killings of combatants and civilians on both sides during the civil war (1990-1994), from killings of Hutu moderates by Hutu extremists and the killings of Tutsi civilians by civilian Hutu mobs. Human Rights Watch (1999) further complicates the nature of the killings between 1990-1994 by suggesting that the Tutsi-led RPF also killed innocent Hutus in the RPF’s march to Kigali, and when the Tutsi-dominated government was pursuing Hutu extremists into the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The challenge in seeking to understand the Rwandan genocide is therefore, how to avoid merging and dissolving the genocide in the civil war in which case it would cease to exist analytically and to sever it so completely from the civil war that the act of killing would become devoid of motivation. As Mamdani puts it, ‘to see the genocide as one outcome of the defeat in the civil war would be to see it as political violence, an outcome of a power struggle between the Hutu and Tutsi elites’ (Mamdani 2001: 268). This study explores whether or not the film’s verbal and audio-visual language challenge contradictions among Tutsi liberators and Tutsi survivors.

Umutesi’s *Surviving the Slaughter: The Ordeal of a Rwandan Refugee in Zaire* (2004) reveals that there is deafening silence in international media on the Rwanda Patriotic Front’s aggression towards innocent Hutus as the army marched to Kigali between April and July 1994. Umutesi’s work also brings out the atrocities committed by the RPF when they pursued and bombed refugee camps in Eastern Congo. Rusesabagina and Zoellner’s *An Ordinary Man: The true Story Behind ‘Hotel Rwanda’* (2006) contradicts the accounts that depict the Hutus as entirely evil and murderers. While autobiography as narrative is based on selective memory – a fact that problematizes the ‘authority’ of its own truths- the work of Rusesabagina and Zoellner(2006) suggests that genocide did not end in Rwanda. It went beyond the borders of Rwanda precisely because genocide had a history and precedents in the Great Lakes Region (Courtemanche 2004, French 2004, Newbury 2005, Songolo 2005, Habimana 2005, Lemarchand 2005). This study explores whether films depict the historical precedent of the Rwandan genocide in the periods before, during and after the 1994.

Chretien's (1995) study argues that the Rwandan radio and newspapers run by Hutu extremists incited and urged the mass of the Hutu people to kill, rape and maim the Tutsi people. *Kangura* newspaper described Tutsis as 'coachroches' and 'traitors' bent on undermining the sovereign of Rwanda through collaborating with the RPF (Human Rights Watch 1999). Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) campaigned for a 'pure Hutu' nation that was ruled by the majority (Melvern 2004). This study examines whether or not the films provide reasons why some Hutus did not heed the radio's biased reportage while some people heeded the call to kill. Moderate Hutus who were killed by the Hutu extremists and those who survived are evidence that there were some Hutus who ignored the power of the media. And yet only little of this complex picture of this reality is depicted and dramatized in the international films. Where it is shown that some Hutus helped the Tutsis escape slaughter as in the case of the film, *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) it is only one Hutu who is depicted and projected as the single Hutu hero, in a country with a population that has the Hutu as the majority. Analysis of several films under one study can produce broad characterization of the genocide.

On the other hand, Rwanda Patriotic Front controlled its own radio and Kagame, the incumbent president of Rwanda used the language of 'cleaning' when describing Hutus considered 'innocent from the killers' (Radio Rwanda UNAMIR, Notes Radio Rwanda 19.00, July 27 1994). McNulty (1999: 268-9) writes that the RPF conducted killings of the Hutu people 'off-camera in the full knowledge that where there are no images there is no story'. Again, most of the films on the Rwandan genocide do not show the RPF-dominated Tutsis as aggressive to innocent Hutus. The problem that the films do not address is that even where a photograph has a story to tell, scholars still need to ask, 'whose story does it tell' (Karnik 1998: 35-42). Fourie concurs when he argues that a film shot is a window-scape providing limited perspectives; "everything beyond the window-frame is out of sight (Fourie 1996:182). International films on the Rwandan genocide promote the myth that the minority group is always weak, and that it needs 'protection' whereas in the post genocide Rwanda the Tutsi minority wields enormous power that it uses to silence democratic opposition (Mamdani 2001). This study interrogates the linguistic silences in the films on violence of the RPF forces to innocent Hutus.

1.7 Theoretical Approaches used in this Study

No single theory can adequately explain the semiotics of images in films. In selecting theories for film analysis one aims to set those theories, 'one against the other, forcing them to speak to common issues, making them reveal the basis of their thought' (Andrew 1976: v). This is a process that should enable the critic to explain the complex articulations that film texts can suggest. For example, production and text theories suggest that meanings are embedded in the text that is assumed to influence how audience interprets it (Strelitz 2005: 8-9). The theories take it for real that script writers, producers, editors and film directors have a story to tell, and then assume that the intended meanings can be framed in ways that pre-dispose or pre-determine how the films are watched and its meanings consumed. The philosophical basis of production/text theories is that the ideas in film texts reflect the ideas of the dominant classes in society. It is assumed in the theories that the message encoded in the texts reach the audience exactly as it is intended and that the efforts to control the minds of the audience are guaranteed.

In production/text theories meanings are said to be carefully selected, constructed and human values are viewed as 'common sense' (Gramsci 1971: 322) so that 'dominant readings' are 'produced by a recipient who agrees with and accepts the dominant ideology and the meanings that it offers' (Lemon 1996: 216). This happens when the films try to encourage conditioned responses or meanings. In reality, audiences bring their own experiences to the watching of a film, and this cultural baggage can confirm or subvert dominant meanings.

In contrast, audience theories emphasize the heterogeneity of human experiences and suggest that audiences can rewrite the surface appearance and meaning of the film images in unexpected ways which only the interpreters can render visible (Jameson 1988: 19-20). Films do not merely reflect reality. They *mediate* reality, so that meanings are constituted at the point of representation and this brings into being different kinds of being and consciousness (Rantanen 2005:8). Mediation then, can allow audiences to bring entirely different protocols or frames of references for watching films. For Morley (1992) and Strelitz (2005) film audiences have some critical freedom and autonomy to deconstruct 'dominant meanings' in order to emerge with their own oppositional meanings. These oppositional meanings can undermine the film directors' intended meanings. Oppositional meanings arise from an understanding by the audience that the

film text is only an approximation of reality; that events, relations and structures do exist separately from the discursive space of the text, and that film ‘constructions’ or ‘representations’ of reality cannot exhaust all the meaning potentials of films and of life (Bobo 1992: 66).

My reading of the Rwandan films subscribes to and promotes this notion that film audience (such as myself) display ‘extraordinary’ abilities to subvert some attempts by dominant ideologies to want to control and minimize social differences. Audiences can free the film text from ‘complete ideological closure’ (Lemon 1996: 217) because the audience do not necessarily and ‘always follow a prescribed ideological route’ (Bobo 1992: 70). Interpreting the Rwandan films against the grain of dominant or preferred readings requires a nuanced theory that can penetrate the assumptions of the figure of stereotype and suggest alternative ways of reading the meanings or effects of the stereotype on the human imagination.

My study uses insights from postcolonial theories which in general explain mediated relations of power through revision and re-interpretation of social realities in ways that recognize the importance of historical context and give precedence to discourses of resistance. Post colonial theories also suggest that texts can ‘authorize’ their own patterns of meanings which often refuse consciously or unconsciously to sub-serve dominant official ideologies (Appiah 1996). Fanon’s *Black Skin White Mask* (1967) provides the most incisive and up to date explanations of the psycho-socio, political and economic factors that produce the colonial and postcolonial stereotypes in contexts of contestations for power and hegemony. In the book, Fanon (1967) demonstrates with lucidity, the conflicting desire characterising the Negro who wants to behave like the white commandant who force blacks to work for him. On the other hand, the same negro also can apply systematic pain on her/himself as well as on the collective made up of other blacks. Fanon’s theoretical works especially *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) and *Black Skin White Mask* (1967) have instigated nuanced studies on the power of stereotype. It is from this body of these works that my study will situate itself in that strand of postcolonial language theories that usefully explain the systems of linguistic signs of films in particular, and cultural texts in general.

Post colonial language theories have registered explanatory shifts from Saussurean language theories that concentrate on the formal relations between units within a system; external linguistics on the relations between language and race, languages and political history, language and institutions. Recent postcolonial language theories reject the idea that language reflects reality: languages construct and mediate realities. Brusila (2002:36) uses the term '*mediaization*' in a specialist way, to describe how meanings are created by different technologies such as the medium of film which in itself contains multimedia elements of the visual, the verbal, sound and the aural. Words, sounds, pictures and setting are depicted cinematographically to make up the 'heteroglot struggles of languages' (Pechey 1989: 56) in film narratives. My study argues that historical forces are manifestly mediated in conflict through discourse. Bhabha's theories on language stereotypes and how they are constructed in cultural and political discourses suggest that film texts are open to centripetal forces that encourage polyphonic readings of the texts.

Pechey (1989) suggests that although cultural stereotypes expressed through language aspire towards monologism, stereotypes never achieve an absolute identity since stereotypes are 'practically modified and theoretically exposed by the dialogism they vainly seek to occlude'(1989: 50). This process of 'dialogic leakage' (ibid, 55) or instabilities internal to signs, that is characteristic of all cultural texts, makes possible incorporation of subversive values as well as encouraging resistance to dominant ideologies in film (Hall 1996). A critical interrogation of 'codes of content and codes of form' (Fourie 1996: 54) in the Rwandan genocide films emphasize exploration of the use of technical innovations embodied in codes such as the verbal or non-verbal, light, colour, camera- view- point and mis-en-scene because each of these film elements is suffused with particularised ways of ordering facts, talking about others, and naming things within the context of culture and history. Using social semiotics to understand how different meanings are encoded in the films on Rwandan genocide should then entail understanding the 'relation between the subject and the text, between text and subject and text's power to determine the subject's position' (Fourie 1996: 78). These elements are linked together by discourse, which according to Sonderling, 'refers to the social process of using language to construct meaningful cultural texts' (1996: 95).

Semujanga (2003) who uses discourse analysis to tease out the causes of the 1994 Rwandan genocide observes that certain derogatory clichés, words and stereotypes were used to describe the Tutsi prior to the actual killings. In the official radio and newspaper discourse of genocide in Rwanda (1994), the Tutsis were described as *'inyenzi'* or *'coachroches'*; their women were portrayed as seducers or *'snakes,'* while Tutsi men were depicted as having absolute control on the economy of Rwanda. These perceptions of the Tutsi, according to Semujanga, created a *'threshold of acceptability of stereotypes, prejudices, clichés, myths and ideologies'* (2003: 62) around which it became easy to *'Other'* the Tutsis in preparation for their physical slaughter. Discourse analysis of film texts can show that stereotypes and prejudices can become *'guides for action within a society where there is existing conflict'* (Semujanga 2003: 60). On the other hand, Howarth(2005) proposes a shift from concern with words in discourse analysis and suggests that in analyzing film, critics need to understand the discursive contexts of power within which words, pictures, sound and colour are used. This discursive approach will be used in the study to supply the socio-economic background to the analysis of the films because the presence of stereotypes in film underlines the unequal relations of power between those who write history or produce film narrative and those who are marginalized in that process.

1.8 The Research Method

This study uses the qualitative research method. For Bradley (1992) applying qualitative methods to the study of phenomenon should be guided by the need to reveal and explain variations, and deviations in phenomena that is normally assumed to have a single identity. The idea is to critique identity in order to arrive at different interpretations. Rubin and Rubin suggest that the explanatory potential of qualitative methods are that they can suggest and bring in new *'dimensions and nuances [to] the original problem that any one individual might not have thought of'* (1995: 140). Qualitative methods make use of the technique of *'open coding'* understood by Babbie and Mouton (2001: 499) to mean the conscious creation of certain categories pertaining to the literature or films that are being analyzed. Each category further consists of dimensions, properties and specific but similar attributes that will be interpreted in different ways. For example, films can be analyzed from the point of view of form (whether they are documentary, Feature or Docu-feature) and more significantly, in terms of the emphasis on the ambivalent content of the language stereotyped image in films.

While there are different strands within the qualitative method (Plooy 2002), the specific strand in qualitative method that my study uses is the interpretive paradigm. McQual says that the ‘altermative paradigm’ arose to counteract:

The linearity of the model of effect and its generally mechanistic character.

The influence of market and military demands on research and the media...The too rosy interpretations of research findings about media effects and Audience motivations;... (+) the potentially dehumanizing effects of technology;... the excessively quantitative and individual behaviourist methodologies;... (and the) neglect by communication research of vast areas of culture and human experience (2000:49)

The Interpretive paradigm is best suited to explaining the multimedia aspects of film because of its assumptions that mass media produce, and sell images, ideas and symbols as commodities that can either be subtracted or confirmed during interpretation (Lindof 1995). People communicate through symbolical systems, and acknowledge that reality is subjective and accessed from multiple sources of knowledge that can be arrived at using different interpretive value system, experiences, and cultures. An interpretive paradigm can shed more light on the meaning of texts through continued references to the contexts in which texts exist, circulate and are consumed. The construction of images in film is mediated practices, and the shifts towards interpretive paradigms for decoding the semiological system in these films is dictated by elements of ‘intersubjectivity which shifts according to changes in our biographical situation and our stock of knowledge at hand’ (Lindof, 1995: 33). In the case of the Rwandan genocide, new knowledge about the complexity of the genocide, its historical players, motivations and representations are emerging (Umutesi 2004) and they question and contest the figure of the ‘stereotype’ whether of Tutsi or Hutu that are depicted in the films under discussion. Symbolic interaction implied in the interpretive paradigm also ‘offers a way inside the meanings inherent in roles and actions’ (ibid, 45) of human beings. In short,

the interpretative approach to film texts is decided upon in this study because it can explain the polysemic signs and semiotic systems that constitute the film text. Anderson and Meyer (1988: 314) assert that:

‘The (film) text becomes a site of contested interpretation with different audience communities producing different sense-making achievements... Regardless of how interpretation is explained, it is the individual as an interpreting actor that is of interest’.

In other words, questioning stereotypical images in the films texts proceeds from an understanding that all human inquiring is necessarily engaged in understanding the human world from within a specific situation. This situation is always and at once historical, moral, and political. It provides not just the starting point of inquiring but the point and purpose for the task of understanding itself.

1.9 Selection of Specific films and interpretation of data

The theme of genocide is sensitive in Rwanda. While some films are shot in Rwanda, most audio-visual materials have been produced outside Rwanda—that is, in South Africa and Belgium. Laying one’s hands on a film on the Rwandan genocide whether in the form of a video cassette, Compact disc or DVD is, therefore, a very difficult process, ironically for an African researcher based in Africa where the genocide took place. Against this background, this study adopts convenient sampling as the strategy to collect films to be studied.

Convenience sampling encourages the researcher to lay hands on any source of data that is available at the time or within the duration of the period in which the research is conducted. Convenience sampling could be considered as open-ended as the researcher does not work with pre-determined conceptions of the material. In convenience sampling, the researcher is constantly challenged to review his/ her conclusions in the light of new data being produced to which the researcher may have access in the process of research. Convenience sampling can also be said to share an advantage in that the ‘provisionality’ or incompleteness of the available

material makes conclusions appear tentative and thus can help the researcher to modify or completely reject absolute methods that claim the capacity to exhaust the interpretation of social phenomena undertaken in a single study. Since convenience sampling encourages one to work with available literature, apriori conclusions are difficult to arrive at and maintain in the light of potential new material that can bring out alternative ways of understanding film phenomena. In this sense, convenience sampling interrogates the assumptions of purposive sampling, which according to Marshall aims to 'select the most productive sample to answer the research question' (1996:523). The 'dispersed' nature of convenience sampling actually helps the researcher to notice and explain unintended results of the research process. In fact, "during interpretation of the data it is important to consider subjects who support emerging explanations and perhaps more importantly, subjects who disagree (Marshall 1996: 523). There is need to bring out 'disagreements' in the depiction of the Rwandan genocide in the narratives of *A Good Man in Hell*(2002), *Hotel Rwanda*(2004), *Sometimes in April*(2005) and *Keepers of memory*(2004).

The flexibility of convenience sampling allow a body of theories to be used on selected films; the method allows films to suggest new meanings not easily accounted for by existing theories.

10.0 Chapter Organisation

This study consists of seven chapters. The introduction is the chapter one that interrogates language-based theories of film and demonstrates how they can be applied to an analysis of films on Rwandan genocide. I will emphasise those language-based theories that refer to the notion of dialogic imagination (Bakhtin1981), carnivalesque (Bakhtin1984), and heteroglossia (Hirschkop & Shepherd 1989) that encourage open-ended interpretations of the representations of genocide in the films. Bakhtin's notion of the double voiced nature of language denies stereotype the authority to dictate interpreting it in a single direction. This theoretical chapter will also make use of Young's(1995)observation that the desire and quest for fixity of identity in stereotypes within cultural texts should actually be taken as an ironic acknowledgement of 'situations of instability and disruption, of conflict and change' (1995:4) in stereotype as in real life.

Chapter two of the study provides an extended literature review of the theoretical sources that will be used in the study. Chapter three analyses *A Good Man in Hell*(2002), paying attention to

the construction of language stereotypes based on the racial superiority of the western world that were imposed on the Africans in Rwanda. Chapter four analyses the verbal, visual, and aural aspects of the film, in *Hotel Rwanda (2004)*. Here, my interest is to interrogate ethnic constructions of the Tutsi people. The stereotype of Tutsi as the only victims of genocide is questioned. In the film, the presence of moderate Hutus who did not kill but instead attempted to protect Tutsis from being massacred in the film is viewed as confirmation and evidence that deny single interpretation of the film. I will argue that *Hotel Rwanda(2004)* is a fractured narrative and thus explore the sources of these ideological dissonances between the highly visible and politicized visual images of suffering Tutsis, and the sub-text that prepares Tutsi hegemony and the establishment of some authoritarian institutional structures in post 1994 genocide Rwanda (Reyntjents 2005:15-46).

In chapter five I explore and critique the notion of ‘spectacle of excess’. I argue that excess signification can authorise ‘limits’ or and imposes ‘inhibitions’ to depictions of genocide. This can foreclose critical debate on the Rwandan genocide. The concept of ‘ideological silence’ is that texts are prevented from saying certain things by their creators, and also by the prevailing social ideology in the cultural context where texts are created. The task of the critic is to search for these gaps or silences. To reveal language of ideological silence in *Sometimes in April (2005)* I will also draw on the work by White (1987) whose central idea is that every text including *Sometimes in April(2005)* is constructed on the principle of non-disclosure, on the basis of narrative facts which could have been included, but are not. Using recent theoretical and historical evidence of Tutsi military personnel who are being put on trial for acts of genocide committed against the Hutu and some Tutsis, I argue that a monologic depiction of Tutsis as the only victims in the film is a technical strategy to foreclose critical and broad-based debates on the genocide and its aftermath in which political discriminations against the Hutu and the ‘Old casehold’ Tutsi people are intensifying.

Chapter six analyses the language of gendered silence in *Keepers of Memory (2004)*. I will question Smith’s (1992: 56-64) assertion that the documentary form authenticates the ‘facticity’ of the known and ‘knowable set of facts to anchor accounts between history and fiction’ and the assumption that the documentary form encodes an authoritarian point of view. Mhando quoted in

Bryle (2006: 27) explore, reveal and interrogate the ideologies of the silent languages imposed on Tutsi female survivors testifying on their pain and the structures that enable women to wittingly or unconsciously promote their own silencing through fear of victimization, cultural stigmatizations or lack of confidence on the validity of their own stories. *Keepers of Memory*(2004) uses the notion of ‘worthy victims’ who are women, children, the disabled, the old and sick to provide reports of ‘eyewitness accounts’ of ‘gory details and quoted expressions of outrage and demands for justice’ (Herman & Chomsky 1988: 39). I argue that the selection of who is brought to the camera, the ordering of what to say in front of the camera within the documentary is not innocent; it is part of the arsenal of images that the director of the film uses to create and seek to legitimate a version of patriotic history that resents the disloyal questions posed on the complexity of the genocide.

Chapter seven is the conclusion. Its main aim is to capture arguments advanced in the study and make recommendations on possible future areas of research in genocide studies in Africa.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

From European Holocaust studies to African genocide studies

‘Human beings are capable of committing the most heinous crimes to promote specific political objectives, or for ideological reasons, or to save their own lives, or because they feel they can act with impunity’(Lemarchand, 2005: 57).

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews some critical works on Holocaust and genocide found in scholarly writings in Europe and Africa. This review starts with a critical exploration of German experiences of mass murder of the Jews. I will refer to countries in Europe that also suffered from mass killings before proceeding to analyzing the African scenario in which the Great Lakes Region is treated separately because of the recurrence of genocides from 1959 to 1994. This approach has been chosen because it allows this review to identify ‘gaps’, and ‘silences’ in the studies of African genocide. The approach has also been chosen because it problematizes the artistic representation of genocides in the feature and documentary film narratives. The aim is to seek to find out how and whether or not there are similar or different notions of patterns of cultural and political stereotypes in studies that focus on representing the cause and course of genocides in Africa. The chapter ends with critically reviews of the most current and authoritative sources on the Rwandan genocide.

2.1 Holocaust and Genocide trends outside Africa

The etymology of the word Holocaust is from Greek (‘holos’=whole, + ‘kaustos’= burnt) which means large-scale destruction especially by fire (The Oxford Study Dictionary 1999: 305). The word Holocaust is associated with Hitler’s ‘final solution’ (Kershaw 2000: 34) in which six million Jews were burnt to death in Germany by the infernal heat of gas inside gas chambers between 1939-45. The idea of a Holocaust in Germany can be traced back to the writings of Charles Darwin (1871). Through his racist treatise *‘The Descent of Man’*(1871) Darwin espoused his theory on natural selection explicitly used justify the extermination of indigenous people (Magubane, 2007). The concept of ‘survival of the fittest’ (1871: 501) was then developed to

‘fix’ and ‘normalize’ (Hall 1997:258) the so-called inevitable process in which the ‘master race’ Darwin (1871: 501-511) stands to benefit because of its capacity to conquer all other races. Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) believed in ‘survival of the fittest’ and puts it clearly when he says that, ‘inferior races would either be left behind in a primitive or backward state or they will perish’ (Magubane 2007: 158).

Patterson(1999) points out that the Nazi project to eliminate the Jews was informed by the notion of autonomy of the ‘self’ as the basis for freedom, a notion that was part of thinking of the Nazi philosophers—a notion antithetical to Jewish teaching’. Daniel (1997) elaborates Patterson’s (1999) point when he says that it is the concept of the ‘self’ which bore seeds of anti-semitic/anti-Jewish sentiments. Against this backdrop of anti-semitism, the cultural and political stereotypes were constructed in the discourse of anti-semitism and it permeated through Germany institutions such as schools, universities, churches, corporations and professional associations. According to Gottlieb (2005) this explains the ‘popular’ or mass participation of the ordinary people or the subaltern classes in condemning the Jews.

This background on holocaust reveals or shades light and help explain the racial basis of theories that justify mass murder. Also from this background, one may be able to understand how racial/ethnic stereotypes were used to justify the killings of Tutsis and moderate Hutus in Rwanda. In Rwanda, writers such as Semujanga(2003) show how historical language has consistently been used to discriminate against Tutsis. The language names, marks and defines subjects of potential demise. The background on holocaust is also important for one to draw some differences between European holocausts and African genocides. The conditions and players are different. In Germany, the ruling elites killed the Jews while in Rwanda the ordinary people worked together with government extremists to kill Tutsis and moderate Hutus (Mamdani 2001).

2.2 Problems of representing the holocaust in some European Films.

The initial dissemination of newsreel of British army bulldozers ploughing thousands of emaciated cadavers into lime pits of Bergen –Belsen raised some of the many problems relating to the depiction of the Holocaust. Zelizer (2007) says one aspect of this problematic area is ‘the image’ as a signifier of meaning in mass media cultures. While the intended purpose of showing

bulldozers ploughing dead bodies was meant to highlight the fate that Jews faced in Germany, this very act constructs cultural and political stereotypes that Jews can be killed and dumped anyhow without considering their decent burial. Dorland (2007: 419) asserts that the naïve belief that ‘a picture is worth a thousand words is a highly dubious preposition, especially if the picture depicts something never seen before’. Douglas (2001) points out that a footage of the bulldozing of murdered concentration camp inmates caused uproar at Nuremberg Trials of major Nazi war criminals, rather than the massive documentary textual evidence assembled by prosecution that journalists covering the trials found so boring. A footage of the murdered is metonymic; it represents something other than itself. This means the same footage can carry over meanings beyond the literal. It can be metaphorical, representing the depravity of humanity or its heroic aspects especially for those who fought and survive the mass murder. The problem induced by instability of language of symbolism will be explored using Bhabha’s(1996) notion of language as fractured medium of communication.

The teleplay and novelization of Television series of the film ‘Holocaust’ have been criticized for their stereotypical characterization, wooden dialogue and patronization of Holocaust victims, and yet the critical reception of ‘Holocaust’ was ‘rhapsodic’ (Schartz 1999: 162). The problem of re-constructing memory through film is also reflected through Claude Lanzmann’s (1985a) nine and half hour documentary entitled *Shoah*. The documentary include live footage of present-day Sobibor, Chelmo, Treblinka and Auschwitz or what remains of these major killing fields (Dorland 2007). A survivor of Holocaust—Simon Srebnik was taken back to the present-day site of Chelmo only to be confronted by a thick forest. Lanzmann (1985b: 6) quotes Srebnik who said that, ‘...it’s hard to recognize, but it was here. They burned people here...Yes, this is the place. I can’t believe I’m here...It was always this peaceful here. Always. When they burned two thousand people—Jews—every day, it was just peaceful’. The story given by Srebnik is important because its authenticity can derive from the fact that it is an eye-witness account. But the problem with an eye-account is that the subjects may not recollect everything; what is left out could be of significance than what is included. This gap will be addressed in Rwandan films by combining textual analysis with historical data to give a better understanding of film representations in different dimensions.

Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985a) conveys the painful recognition that memory is the only cognitive avenue to retrieve information on past events. This viewpoint is supported by Avisar (1997 : 38) when she writes that, '...the principal channel to the past is memory. The avoidance of archival footage further enhances the reliance on personal memories as the sources of knowledge, while the camera documents the on-going dramatic processes of painful recollection....' The painful recollection can even call for the director to help narrators shape words into meaningful sentences that make up a story. The pressure of selecting information created by the process of memory recollection can make some narrators lie in order to fulfill the objectives of constructing stories for mass media consumption. Although *Schindler's List*(1993) is shot in black-and-white to signify the 'real past' Dorland(2007:422), asserts that Spielberg can be criticized for creating a stereotypic world-view through special effects that in turn build a narrative closure and deemphasizes the horror of Holocaust in the context of Jewish revival and Independence in Israel. Documentary films, television series and feature films can be used to re-construct memory that create negative stereotypes of the people whose lives are being depicted. The other problem is of trying to authenticate evidence without exaggerating information since Holocaust happens off-screen. This background is useful in anticipating the technical problems that face the Rwandan genocide film in the actual analysis of specific films in this study. The study also explores the innovative ways through which directors can deal with genocide themes particularly in a situation in which every film narrative is unstable and therefore cannot exhaust all meanings of genocide experiences.

2.3. Re-defining Genocide

Apart from the Holocaust that occurred in Germany, there are a number of mass killings which happened in Europe and Africa for a variety of reasons. These mass killings are often referred to as 'genocide' because of 'the epistemic conditions' (Roth 2005: 3) leading to the killings, the number of those killed and the intensions of the perpetrators of murder. The word 'genocide' was coined by a refugee Polish lawyer Rafael Lemkin from the Greek 'geno' (race or tribe) and the Latin 'caedere' (killing) which means a coordinated plan of different actions aimed at the destruction of the essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves(Lemkin, 1944). Zegeye and Vambe in Zvomuya (2009: 1) point out that, 'genocide must be explained first in terms of the number of bodies that lie dead, but also most

importantly, in terms of the conditions that result directly or indirectly (in) the death of masses of people'. The definitions given by Lemkin(1944), Zegeye and Vambe(2009) allow for broader understanding of genocide as compared to one the United Nations arrived at in 1948 which is that genocide is what happens when one ethnic group seeks to destroy another in part or in whole. The shifts that have taken place in defining genocide are useful for this study that adopts a historical approach. This approach focuses on people who die, and on the conditions that make mass killing possible. Applied to the study of Rwandan films, the historical approach aims to explain the mass killings from different perspectives and motivations that directors of film can technically represent using different film forms and language.

The factors of impunity, complicity and racism explain how nearly entire populations in the island of Hispaniola and Tasmania were killed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Magubane 2007). To substantiate a point made by Magubane (2007), DuBois (1965: 21) writes that, '...there was no Nazi atrocity, concentration camps, wholesale maiming and murder, defilement of women or ghastly blasphemy of cold blood, which the Christian civilization of Europe had not long been practicing against coloured folk in all parts of the world in defence of a 'superior race' born to rule the world'. While DuBois (1965) is particularly concerned about a genocide perpetrated on the coloured people in America his study does not mention genocides that were carried out on black people on white settler colonies in Africa. This 'conspiracy of silence' (Mamdani 2001: 40) creates cultural and political stereotypes in which the black body is viewed as the object of exclusion and derision.

For the Cambodian genocide, Chandler(1999) uses Jean Lacouture's term 'autogenocide' to describe the Khmer Rouge crimes of mass killing because they were largely committed against other Khmers. The novelist Lustbader (1984) reveals the difficulties of trying to document facts as well as fictionalizing Cambodian events when he says that, ' No account, written or oral, can be automatically accepted as fact . Incidents and especially the motives of the principles involved ,shift like sand. There is no one who seems able to provide an unbiased and objective look at that time because of the political ramifications of the situation in Cambodia'. Filmmakers also find it difficult to deal with the Cambodian question. Joffe's *Killing Fields (1994)* is probably the best – known film in the west which grapples with the difficulties of portraying the fall of Phnom Penh to the Khmer Rouge armies in the spring of 1975 and the most instantaneous evacuation of the

cities' populations into forced rice-growing in the country-side. However, like *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), the *Killing Fields* (1994) depicts a complex link between white foreigners and non-white locals and what happens to the locals once they are abandoned to the local fate. Dorland (2007) argues that while the *Killing Fields* (1994) succeeds in showing the hypocritical nature of the western world, the film fails to delve into critical issues that made the Khmer Rouge armies to kill other Khmers in the guise of protecting Cambodia from western influence. The present study utilizes insights from anthropology and history of genocide from Mamdani (2001) to help explain why ordinary Rwandans killed other Rwandans. The role of western powers in the Rwandan genocide has not been adequately analyzed in Rwandan films, and therefore will be carried out in this study.

Genocide has a long history in Europe. There are obvious links between Holocaust studies in Europe and genocide studies in Africa. Lemarchand (2005), Zegeye and Vambe (2009) however suggest that in Africa, a different set of factors, actors and colonial conditions shaped genocide studies in ways that make it worthwhile to research on African genocides on their own right.

2. 4 Genocide trends in Africa outside the Great lakes Region

Hegel (1956: 61) justified the subjugation of non-Europeans when he wrote that the Native America are 'physically and psychically' powerless and the aborigines were said to 'vanish at the breath of European activity' (1956: 61). Bateman (2008) suggests that the genocide perpetrated on the Nama and Herero's in Namibia(1904-05) has its roots in the historical scramble and partition of Africa of the 1880's. Germans introduced forced labour and forced taxation on the Nama and Herero. The Nama and Herero responded by organizing resistance, and in the ensuing war with the Germans, the Namibians were ruthlessly defeated. Bateman (2008) therefore emphasizes political and economic factors in order to explain genocide perpetrated on the Nama and Herero's in Namibia. Magubane (2007) brings in the racial dimension and argues that the era of colonialism in Africa brought with it racism, virulent xenophobia and intolerance in which negative cultural stereotypes were constructed about black people and re-enforced through social institutions like schools, churches and the media. There was a belief in the unbridgeable and fundamental differences between the dark and white skinned branches of humanity. On the other hand, Zvomuya (2009) says in post colonial Nigeria in 1960, more than a million Igbos died of

starvation or were slaughtered in the Biafran war by Federal Nigerian troops. The Biafran war was sparked by the region's desire to break away from the rest of Nigeria. The Nigerian government denies that what happened in the Biafra amounts to a genocide. 'Instead it was described (by the Nigeria government) as a preservation of national sovereignty—a euphemism that every dictator in Africa is now using' (Zvomuya 2009:2). But when communities are killed it is not only individual lives that are lost, language too is distorted as government resort to obfuscation and saying things it did not believe. The selective use of vocabulary to insulate acts of aggression and violence in 'officialese or diplomatic speak' (2009: 2) can indeed encourage and escalate the violence. This explains why there has been confusion about what happened in the conflict in Biafra also known as the Biafran war. Zvomuya (2009) points out that to describe it this way was comfortable for the Nigerian government because the statement implies that the people who were fighting one another were equals and all were armed. This phenomenon reflects the power of those who write history.

The on-going genocide in Sudan is motivated by a combination of historical, social, economic and political factors (The African Perspectives 2009).

In Africa, Ethiopia is known for its 'artificially manufactured' (Zvomuya 2009: 1) hunger and starvation that has killed many lives. Zvomuya(2009) writes that in the 1980's a million people died of hunger and starvation in Ethiopia as the government was busy buying weapons to fight against 'real and imagined' (2009 : 1) enemies.

In Zimbabwe, integrating a community with serious divisions is not an easy task (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, 1997) The CCJP report (1997) brings out the complexity of the matter when it writes that:

'The Government attitude in 1980 was that the two conflicts were one and the same, and that to support ZAPU was the same as to support dissidents. Rural civilians, the ZAPU leadership and the dissidents themselves all denied this allegation. Whatever the ultimate truth on that issue, it is indisputable that thousands of unarmed civilians died, were beaten or suffered loss of property during the 1980's, some at the hands of dissidents and most as a result of the actions of Government agencies'(p.1).

What happened in Matabeleland reflects how a fight for political hegemony between contesting parties ZAPU (mainly Ndebele) and ZANU(predominantly shona) resulted in ‘collateral damage’(CCJP 1997: 4) in which some innocent civilians were made to suffer for the crimes they have not committed.

2.5 Genocide trends in the Great Lakes Region

Lemarchand (1998 : 3) says that, ‘there will not be peace in the Great Lakes Region unless one takes seriously the task of shedding light on the circumstances, the scale and consequences of the genocide of Hutu by Tutsi in Burundi (1972) of Tutsi and moderate Hutu by extremist Hutu in Rwanda (1994) and of Hutu by Tutsi in Congo(1996-1997)’. Umutesi agrees (2004: 9) and explains the origin of the cycle of conflict in the Great Lakes Region by asserting that, ‘...the Tutsi who had been spared in the killings and exile of 1959 were persecuted and many were killed. Others who had joined the ranks of the exiles in Uganda, Congo and Burundi had their land taken and redistributed’. Vambe (2008) supports Umutesi’s (2004) perspective by saying that the 1959 persecution of Tutsi by Hutu gave a historical precedent for a genocide carried out against Hutu by Tutsi in Burundi(1972). Newbury contends that reprisals and killings were done in the spirit of revenging the deaths of Tutsi caused by the Hutu during the 1959 ‘social revolutions’ (2001: 45). However, Prunier (1995) argues that after the Burundi genocide of Hutu by Tutsi, there was room for a peaceful resolution if Tutsi had not been arrogant.

Taylor(1999) subscribes to Prunier’s (1995) argument by asserting that the minority Tutsi in Burundi have not bothered to correct past mistakes by emphasizing equality among Hutu and Tutsi, and by also improving relations with Hutu government in Rwanda. Instead, as Umutesi (2004: 12) writes, ‘ The Rwandan Hutu felt threatened by the killings of the Burundian Hutu. What is more, the Rwandan and Burundian governments traded insults broadcast over their national radio stations’. This understanding of the genocide in Rwanda challenges the one-sided argument given by Taylor(1999) in which the Tutsi are seen as the only victims. The repercussions of the Rwanda genocide were felt in Zaire (DR Congo). According to French (2005) the *machete* culture over-spilled into Zaire mainly because of a deal that was struck among Laurent Kabila (Zaire’s rebel leader), President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and

President Paul Kagame of Rwanda. French (2005) contends that when Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) of Kagame followed Hutu refugees in the forests of Eastern Congo between 1996-1997 the military expedition was supported by Laurent Kabila. Kabila supported genocide on Hutu civilians by Tutsi (RPF) because the previous Hutu government of Juvenal Habyarimana received military support from Mobutu Sese Seko who was Kabila's political rival in Zaire. Jennings (2000) says that President Yoweri Museveni—with a Tutsi mother, completes the triumvirate for his support of Kagame who is a Tutsi. French (2005) concurs with Jennings' (2000) perspective when he says that Museveni joined in to support Kabila in order to create space for the 'Banyamulenge' Tutsi pastoralists in Zaire.

Museveni was also considering the prospect of controlling the vast mineral deposits in the *Katanga* and *Kisangani* areas of Zaire. When Laurent Kabila embarked on his military expedition to Kinshasa, he had the full support of 'Banyamulenge' who seized this opportunity to take revenge on Hutu civilians in Zaire (DR Congo) for the genocides carried out on their fore-fathers in 1959 and 1994. Lemarchand (1998) confirms French's (2005) viewpoint by saying that between 1996-1997, Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL)—an alliance between local Zairians and Tutsi pastoralists 'Banyamulenge' destroyed Hutu communities on their way to Kinshasa. As can be expected, the Tutsi thesis was that all those people who were killed were former *Interahamwe*—a Hutu militia that had carried out a genocide on Tutsi in Rwanda (French, 2005). The genocide in Rwanda (1959), Burundi (1972), Rwanda (1994) and Zaire (1996-1997) had far reaching effects. For example, Van Woudenberg (2007) says that in 2007, Laurent Nkunda, himself a Tutsi, organized a military campaign saying that he was protecting Tutsi population against ethnically motivated attacks from other Congolese groups and from a Rwandan opposition force called Forces of the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), some of whose leaders participated in the Rwanda genocide against the Tutsi. Nkunda's forces raped women and girls, looted property and killed Hutu civilians. Although Nkunda's military campaign was ended following a mediation by former Nigerian President—Olusegun Obasanjo, Nkunda's actions show that the Great Lakes Region remains volatile, and to use French's (2005: 60) words, 'a dormant volcano which can erupt anytime'. This brief historical background gives the Rwandan genocide a regional dimension. One would want to find out whether this detail is captured in the Rwandan films. The background also creates a new picture on the role of some African leaders in the Rwandan

genocide. One would want to explore whether or not the films capture this complicit role of African leaders. Lastly, this background brings out the ethnic, class and gender dimensions of the genocide. My study interrogates whether or not film language captures these factors in their depiction of the genocide.

2.6 Scholarly Criticism on the films on the Rwandan Genocide

The depiction of the Rwandan genocide through films such *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), *Sometimes in April* (2005), *A Good Man In Hell* (2002), and *Keepers of Memory* (2004) has been useful in bringing the genocide experience to the international audience. There are several critical reviews of the films that evaluate the successes and failures of the films in representing the Rwandan genocide. For example, Longman (2004) lists substantial works on the Rwanda genocide that have appeared in the past decade and provides bibliographical references to scholars unfamiliar with the Rwandan genocide. Unfortunately, the article says little on the status of criticism of the specific films on the Rwandan genocide. My study fills this gap by analyzing four films on the language of Rwandan genocide. Adhikari (2007) criticizes the film *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) for not explaining the historical origins and mass character of Rwanda genocide. Adhikari (2007) points out that *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) singles out ethnic animosity as the major contributor to the Rwandan genocide. However, Adhikari (2007) does not stress that the central protagonist of the film is a moderate Hutu married to a Tutsi and that he suffers in the hands of Hutu extremists. Lu (2004) subscribes to Adhikari's (2007) viewpoint when she says that *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) to a certain extent, fails to elaborate on the discrimination suffered by Hutus under the Belgian colonialism, where they were regarded as inferior beings to the Tutsis and deprived of numerous education and job opportunities. While Lu's (2004) observations are correct, she fails to highlight the danger of reverse ethnicity in 1994 where previous victims (Hutus) had become killers. Harrow (2005) has high opinion of *Hotel Rwanda's* (2004) ability to deviate from conventional history in the process of constructing its own truths about Rwanda genocide. However, Harrow (2005) does not show that emphasizing the film's capacity to construct its own truths about Rwanda genocide neither includes nor challenges conventional history. Clearly a gap in research on historical factors exists. In the same line of thinking, Nzabatsinda (2005) asserts that the successes of *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) can be measured by the fact that the film is reliable, painful, terrible and yet, fascinating. While agreeing with this evaluation other critics

have also argued that the film's romanticized picture that emerges from celebrating individual heroism forces *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) not to present '...a balanced picture of all 'players' that were involved in killing people during the genocide'(Vambe and Rwafa 2009:12). Onstad suggests that if the director, Terry George, had given a balanced picture he would have succeeded in, '...making heroes and villains out of perpetrators and victims who may be both, or neither---but also require some nod to the unshowable reality beyond screen-space'(2005: 4). Vambe and Rwafa (2009) use Bakhtin's (1981) idea of a chronotope as a place of encounter in genres of popular culture in which meanings shift, are miniaturized, or expanded depending on the genre's capacity to carry verbal and visual languages at the same time. Samuel (2009) ably demonstrates the advantages of using both film and literary texts depicting the Rwandan genocide because where film time cannot permit to elaborate extensively, the novel has sufficient physical space to individuate characterization. Dorland(2007) thinks that *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) succeed considerably in depicting the illusions surrounding the question of social identities when the film brings out the subject matter of Hutu versus Tutsi and black versus white. The black versus white dimension is brought out clearly when Rusesabagina is told by Colonel Oliver that the west cannot help Rwandans because they are blacks. But Dorland(2007) does not explain how racism expresses itself through class and gender struggles within the Rwandan society. *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) has been criticized for using South Africa as its setting and employing a predominantly non Rwandan cast. *Hotel Rwanda*(2004) is judged as a film that has got a foreign trade mark , and because of this, it fails to capture the spirit with which the Rwandan genocide should be remembered, had the surviving victims of the genocide were included. On this level and several others, *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) is viewed by critics as less successful when compared with *Sometimes in April* (2005) with three quarters of its cast who are Rwandans. This study critiques *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) for explaining the genocide mostly through emphasizing an ethnic perspective.

Sometimes in April (2005) also received mixed criticism because of the way it represents the reality of Rwanda genocide. Adhikari (2007) praises *Sometimes in April's* (2005) ability to place the Rwandan genocide in its cultural and historical contexts. This has made the film to succeed in breaking what Mamdani describes as one of the(2001: 7) 'silences' in which the Rwandan genocide is often presented as an anthropological oddity with no history nor plausible reasons to its occurrence. Abrahams (2008) comments that the core strength of the film lies in its attempt to

analyze the effect that the Rwandan genocide had at a personal, family and national level. Peck's (director) skill in knitting up a story that depicts contradictions which create protagonists not heroes out of ordinary people brings to the fore the dynamic character of Rwanda genocide (Taubin 2009). Jost (2009) contradicts the above critics of *Sometimes in April's* (2005) depiction of the black body that is aimed at creating sentimentality in the audiences of the film. But sentimentality is prone to manipulation by the ruling government and if it happens, this could gag dissenting voices under the guise of maintaining peace. This study critically interrogates *Sometimes in April's* (2005) tendency of representing reality through the figure of the spectacle of excess. This image prevents audiences from seeing different dimensions of the genocide experiences of individual characters.

Documentary films on the Rwandan genocide are treated less fairly by Nzabatsinda (2005: 233) when she says that they '...are frequently based on testimonies of unequal reliability and doubtful information'. For example, the act of showing skulls and bones accompanied by stories from survivors is done without specifying the ethnic identity of those narrating the stories or whose bones are displayed. The omission does not reveal the idea that documentaries only deal with factual information. Tadjó (2002) counters Nzabatsinda's (2005) assertions by saying that it is not to the best interest of the spirit of national reconciliation to specify the identities of the narrators of stories or those people whose bones are displayed. If identities were specified, those left out would start to feel that they have been discriminated against on the basis of ethnicity. That is why in the documentary *Keepers of Memory* (2004) audiences cannot pin-point with absolute certainty that the people depicted narrating the stories are Hutu, or Tutsi or Twa. This open-endedness makes audiences to have their independent choices that are not affected by the director's influence. From this literature review given on films, it can be deduced that research still needs to explore how filmmakers can weave the broken pieces of stories that can present clear but different pictures of the Rwandan genocide narrative.

2.7 Contribution of the study to African scholarship on film and the Rwandan genocide

This study hopes that research on how films portray the Rwandan genocide can benefit audiences, policy makers and government officials if the films foreground and emphasize the socio-historical reasons that caused the genocide. The study will therefore examine in detail, not only the material conditions that made the genocide possible, but also explore the artistic

techniques through which the genocide narratives are rendered. This thrust is important because my study's specific emphasis is to contest how language has been used to unwittingly reproduce political and cultural stereotypes. The emphasis on exploring language in its diverse manifestations of the film's verbal, visual, aural, audio-visual, colour, sound, and on language as the content of power relations (Ngugi 1987) is both deliberate and willed. It will enable the study to examine how cultural stereotypes produce political consequences that result in decisions being made on the basis of exclusion or marginalizing some voices. The emphasis on language will hopefully contribute in interrogating how political decisions made on the basis of perceived cultural attributes that can naturalize the social conditions of people.

2.8 Conclusion

Chapter two has reviewed literature that gives different perspectives about factors that motivated a Holocaust in Germany, genocides in Cambodia and Tasmania. The literature review has revealed an interplay of social, cultural, racial, political, economic and ideological factors that caused the Holocaust in Germany and genocide in Western and Eastern Europe. It was reflected that it is not an easy task to re-construct memory through feature films or documentary narratives about what actually took place during the Holocaust or genocides alluded to. In trying to appropriate images that can capture the reality of a Holocaust or a genocide, filmmakers are 'self conscious' of their task and thus, have tended to construct stereotypes around the groups of people whose plight they want to highlight.

The problem can be attributed to the factors such as the racial, gender, class and ideological outlook of filmmakers that have a strong bearing on how they construct their stories. The chapter then reviewed literature on the genocide that occurred in the African continent. Here, initial focus was on mass killings that occurred outside the context of the Great Lakes Region. The mass murder carried out on the Nama and Hereros in Namibia by the Germans is explained in racial, political as well as economic terms. This is different from a genocide that happened in Nigeria on the Ibogos in which the government was involved in its attempt to muffle dissenting ethnic voice. The Darfur region of Sudan was treated as a special case because of the racial and religion-based on-going genocide on the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa groups who are viewed by Al Bashir as major threats to his political power. The review also made reference to mass killings

which occurred in Zimbabwe, and Ethiopia. The cultural, political and economic factors have been singled to explain mass killings which occurred in Zimbabwe, Kenya and Ethiopia. These case studies were used to anticipate factors that could shade more light on the Rwandan genocide.

In this chapter on the literature review, the cycle of conflict which occurred in the Great Lakes Region led to genocide in Rwanda (1959), Burundi (1972), Rwanda (1994) and Zaire (1996-1997). The review has shown that although ethnicity can be the major cause of the genocide, other factors like, the culture of impunity, complicity, political and economic factors play a fundamental role. Previous reviews of literature on Rwandan genocide left a gap because the literature did not focus on the socio-economic and political background of Rwanda, the Great Lakes and Africa shaped by colonialism and post colonial African elites. It was noted that representing Rwanda genocide through films is still a problematic area. Some films like *Hotel Rwanda (2004)* neglect historical factors in favor of Hutu-Tutsi split to explain the occurrence of the genocide. On the other hand, *Sometimes In April (2005)* which emphasizes a historical approach is accused of exaggerating the plight of Tutsi and moderate Hutu so that they are viewed as useless beings who failed to defend themselves. It was also found out that no research has been done to establish and critique through film the Rwanda Patriotic Front's (RPF) own self-serving positive image of itself as a national savior. This area is well documented in written literature such as that of Umutesi's (2004) autobiography that reveals the darker side of RPF forces who are depicted also as killers responsible for the deaths of many thousands of Hutu refugees in Congo and Kibeho in Rwanda.

The following chapter analyses the documentary film, *A Good Man in Hell (2002)* paying attention to the language of an eye-witness account from General Romeo Dallaire who was a leader of United Nations forces in Rwanda.

Chapter 3

Rethinking myths of Whiteman's Burden in the documentary, *A Good Man in Hell* (2002)

*Take up the White man's Burden -
The savage wars of peace -
Fill full the mouth of famine,
And bid the sickness cease*

Rudyard Kipling
"The White man's Burden" (1899)
(Easterly, 2006: 3)

3.0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore cultural and political images of the Rwandan genocide as depicted in Romeo Dallaire's documentary film *A Good Man in Hell* (2002). The chapter describes the important features of a documentary film, explores some theories used to explain the documentary film and analyze the history of the perceptions of the black body in western imagination. The chapter also critically evaluates the historical myths of Whiteman's burden and exposes the stereotypes that Dallaire unearths in his representation of the genocide in *The Good Man in Hell* (2002). Dallaire's own ways of creating new modes of stereotypes of the Rwandan genocide is also critiqued. The central argument of this chapter is that the Whiteman's burden is not a reflection of Western philanthropy but an ideological strategy aimed at maintaining the status quo of projecting European superiority over Africans. This argument can be justified by analyzing reasons which made United Nations (UN) and the International Community abandon Rwanda during the 1994 genocide in which nearly a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were slaughtered by Hutu extremists. The chapter demonstrates that Dallaire's film contests the racial myths of Whiteman's burden that implies that it is white people who should civilize Africans. In attempting to undermine this myth, Dallaire re-inforces it, addressing the moral conscience of a western audience who remotely know little about the Rwandan genocide. In the film, the African people who more than any people need to prevent genocide are addressed, only indirectly.

3.1 The plot of the story in *A Good Man in Hell* (2002)

Briefly described, *A Good Man in Hell* (2002) narrates the story of Romeo Dallaire, a white Canadian general who was the commander of the United Nations Assistant Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), during the 1994 genocide. The film is scripted and directed by Dallaire and his obvious advantage is that he uses an eye-witness account in narrating the story. *A Good Man in Hell* begins with the depiction of a map of Africa, but highlighting the location of Rwanda. The film then uses voice-over and visual images of the dying Tutsi and moderate Hutus. The high point of the film is the portrayal of western foreigners in Rwanda being evacuated by the United Nations. In the process, vulnerable Rwandans are left to their fate of imminent death. The film ends through the depiction of Dallaire addressing western audiences on the evils of genocide in Africa. In *A Good Man in Hell* (2002) Dallaire comments on the Rwanda genocide and also questions the moral conscience of the UN, the International Community (western world) and unfortunately not the African people. The following section defines the documentary film and describes the factual information as well as creative elements of language that make up the form of the documentary.

3.2 Defining the Documentary film

Although the documentary film is based on factual information, its power to communicate depends on the ability of the director to include elements of fiction. Grierson argues that the documentary film, ‘emphasizes the creative treatment of actuality’ (Grierson quoted in Giannetti, 1982: 334). Smith suggests that documentary film gestures towards the use of a ‘knowable set of facts to anchor accounts between history and fiction’ (Smith 1992:56). In documentary film, language aspects such as sound effects, mis-en-scene, voice, names of actual persons and their faces on the screen provide authenticating evidence of the truth of the story. The language of the documentary film and the actual people who are its actors make up the core of the narrative; they are the meaning and the message of the story. These function to fill what Jones describes as the ‘accusatory space’ (Jones 1992:95). In the accusatory space that the documentary film provides, images tell parallel stories.

In contrast to the above views, Gray(1991) suggests that although documentary films may deal with factual information, real places, people and events, the question of obtaining hundred percent’ objectivity’ is not tenable. Documentary narratives are constructed on the basis of information selected from a body of factual information. These selected facts are then organized

in a coherent artistic pattern that can challenge the presumed ‘...naturalness, singularity and purity’ (Gray 1991: 170) of the documentary genre. The selected and organized ‘significant details’ (Gray 1991) are-- therefore, already a distortion or violation of the actual events. For Giannetti (1992) distortion of truths in the production documentary is influenced by factors such as place, time, natures of audience, technical aspects of camera angles, motion, editing and the ideological goals of those people producing the film. Alluding to how fictive elements are blended with documentary facticity, Renov asserts that, ‘...nonfiction contains any number of ‘fictive’ elements, moments at which a presumably objective representation of the world encounters the necessity of creative intervention’ (1993: 2). The creative moments in a documentary are embedded in the use of emotional language, invocations of history, story narration, selected background scenery (mis-en-scene), sound and music, which are all designed to heighten emotion, create suspense or dramatic effects. Because of these constituent elements, a documentary film cannot be free from human biases or subjectivities.

3.3 Language theories and *A Good Man in Hell* (2002)

In analyzing *The Good Man in Hell* (2002) theories of language can help to bring out ambiguities in the depiction of images of genocide. O’Sullivan describes a stereotype as, ‘the social classification of particular groups and people depicted in highly simplified and generalized signs, which implicitly or explicitly represent a set of values, judgments and assumptions concerning their behavior, characteristics or history’ (O’Sullivan in Fourie 1996:299-300). Social, cultural and political stereotypes are damaging forms of representations that emphasize binary oppositions and differences within people in a manner that strengthens myths, or prejudices. Cultural and political stereotypes distort and misrepresent social identities of people and this can lead to discrimination based on gender, race, class, sex and ethnicity. Hall (1997) says that within the discourse/ language of representation, stereotypes can feature as a signifying process, a practice of closure and exclusion. The stereotypes can also manifest themselves as symbolic frontiers between the ‘normal’ and the ‘deviant’. The relevance of each of these levels shall be analyzed within the context the film, *The Good man in hell* (2002). Derrida’ concept of ‘undecidability’ (quoted in Lucy, 2004:146) suggests that cultural images are unstable and that if analyzed from different perspectives, can yield a wide range of meanings. Furthermore, Derrida’s writes that when an image depicted in performance within visual texts and oral words

is repeatedly narrated in new cultural and political contexts as exemplified in Dallaire's documentary, old meanings are altered by limiting, expanding and filtering the idealization of every event's singularity, purity and presence (Derrida quoted in Lucy 2004). This is because practices of representation always implicate different positions of the narrator's 'enunciations' (Hall 1992). Language theories of enunciation therefore, suggest that although we speak in our own name, of our own experience, the subject who is spoken of can never be exhausted in an interpretation of images from one angle. In short, a poly-vocal position of representing the diversity of the experience of genocide can give 'voices' from Africa a chance to narrate their side of the story regarding the Rwandan genocide. Poly-vocality puts into cognizance the fact that '... every mimesis (representation) can be shown to be distorted and serve, therefore, as an occasion for yet another description of the same phenomenon' (Renov 1993:7). The next section interrogates the racial origins of the myths of Whiteman's burden as it is depicted in *A Good Man in Hell* (2002).

3.4 Understanding racial stereotypes in *A Good Man in Hell* (2002)

Post-colonial discourses question the myths which suggest that it is the 'white man's burden' to civilize Africans. In the discourses, western theories are pre-occupied with the African black body and how this is represented through oral, written and visual texts. The depiction of the African black body in colonialist works (Achebe 1987) and its symbolic representation is premised on racial connotations. These racial connotations reduce the black body to a random collection of external organs which 'negate[d] its authentic self' (Butchart 1993: 56). The idea of the 'negated' or objectified African black body is confirmed by Magubane (2007) who notes that in western theories, racial stereotypes of the black body figure it as the 'dispensable Other' (2007: 11). Jackson, et al (2009) assert that in American literary discourses, black bodies are viewed as collective 'others' without their distinctive lives outside the definitions given to them. These one-sided depictions of the black body undermine an understanding of the complex identities of black people. The negative stereotypes of the black people have their historical roots and justification in the white-authored narratives that celebrate the idea that it is the white man's burden to civilize blacks and protect them against their violence on each other.

3.5 The Historical Context of the Myths of White Man's burden.

The phrase, the 'myth of the White man's burden' was coined by Rudyard Kipling in his poetic writings of 1899. Kipling urges white people to engage in wild and fierce wars in order to bring peace, confront famine and stop sickness as a measure of redeeming humanity from possible extinction. Ironically, Africa came to be described as the place of savagery, famine and sickness. In this understanding of the perceived role of the white man, Kipling suggests that Europe has a moral obligation to retrieve Africa from potential self-destruction. This colonial mentality is also found in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1906) in which Africa and her people are also represented through racial trope of a chronology of decline.

Western racial prejudice created racist myths and stereotypes in which Africa is viewed as inhabited by savages with primitive cultures. Such descriptions of Africa's cultural and political identities exaggerate Africa's problems and at the same time simplifies African people's historical agency. Essentializing on African identities enabled the western powers to impose their colonial systems and consolidate their ideological projects through the political conquest of Africa. Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation became the ideological tools with which European colonizers justified their presence in Africa. As early as 1800, western cultural representations of Africa in music, theatre and film were tailor-made to reinforce the master narrative of 'whiteness'. The ideological entrapments in the discourse of 'Whiteness' '... brought the power to define self and other, a power that whites could wield to justify the process of inventing and conquering a continent (Africa) and naming its 'primitiveness' or 'disorder' as well as the subsequent means of its exploitation and methods of 'regeneration' (Steyn 2001:8).

From the cited quotation, words such as 'inventing', 'conquering', 'exploitation' and 'regeneration' (Steyn 2001:8) reflect the ideological workings of western stereotypes as a manifestation of power and fantasy. Western fantasies created a wild imagination that viewed Africa as 'untamed' but inhabited by wild animals and primitive people, as well as virgin land' awaiting conquest. Writing about the cultural branding of Africa, Givanni (2000) gives as evidence films such as *Congo* (1995), *King Solomon's Mines* (1937), *Sanders of the River* (1935), *Reassemblage* (1983) and *Gorilla in the mist* (1988) in which Africans are depicted in negative terms. Invented cultural myths were used negatively to foreclose debates on the possible routes for black emancipation by 'excluding' them from important political activities. For

example, in the films cited by Givanni (2000), Africans were under-represented or given peripheral roles that made them look like buffoons or kindergartens constantly seeking European guidance. African actors were consciously left out or relegated to subordinate roles. White actors were given leadership roles. Here, the master narrative of 'whiteness' configured what was supposed to be viewed as the norm – that of excluding blacks from taking up effective acting roles which would eventually challenge the status quo.

According to Frankenberg and Dyer, 'to look at the social construction of whiteness was then to look head-on at the site of dominance. To speak of whiteness was to assign everyone a place in the relations of racism' (2000 :296). Frankenburg and Dyer question Montag's apologetic view on the discourse of whiteness when Montag writes that, 'we should not judge universalism and enlightenment by failures of a single person (even if his/her failures are expressions of a contemporaneous collective invention of white race' (1997: 284). Further evidence that Africans fair negatively in western discourse is manifest in films such as *Tarzan* (1950), *The Ape Man*(1932), *Magambo*(1953) and *Safari*(2006). The films create a symbolic frontier from what is termed the 'normal' and 'deviant' what 'belongs' and what does not or the 'other' (Hall, 1997:285). Ironically, what was referred to as 'normal' was the Western way of life whereas what was referred to as 'deviant' was the African way of life. Consequently, negative feelings clustered around African culture. In other words, the cultural stereotype about African civilization found in western writings simplifies the image of Africa and those of Africans.

The images of the supposed African barbarism are deliberately promoted in western scholarship through the idea of 'cultural deformation' (Steyn 2001:8). In this ideology, symbolic representations achieved through verbal language, costume, sound, colour and mis-en-scene are systematically deformed so that the relations of domination and dependence are reproduced and the processes of meaning-making are naturalized. This process can divert attention from the real causes of social, economic and political inequalities in Africa. By naturalizing symbolic representations of Africans, European cinema attempts to 'fix' the African cultural, economic and political images. In a stereotype, the process of 'fixing' must always add to the 'spectacle of excess' of what can empirically be proved or logically construed (Bhabha 1996). Steyn (2001) contends that the myth of the White man's burden is a euphemism for oppression of African people. This narrative of exploitation of Africa's economic resources can be located in

hegemonic discourses that are 'fixed' and repeatedly represented as standard measurement to judge the progress of the 'other' (African). Describing the nature of the European standardization, Steyn says that '...the broad contours and patterning's of the master narrative have provided the hegemonic discourses in contradistinction to which other narratives accounting for relations of European dominance over subordinated others would have to differentiate themselves' (2001:22). The disastrous consequences of myth-making during the Rwandan genocide of 1994 are ironically contested and affirmed in the documentary film, *A Good Man in Hell* (2002).

3.6 *A Good Man in Hell*: paradox of failure of white civilization during the 1994 Rwandan genocide

The documentary film *A Good Man in Hell* (2002) was produced by United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The film documents the story of Canadian General Romeo Dallaire who was the commander of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) during the genocide. With profound sentiments and sense of regret, Dallaire narrates how the United Nations and the International Community failed the people of Rwanda during the genocide in which nearly 1 million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed within a period of three months. *A Good Man In Hell* (2002) raises some serious questions about the nature of the operations of United Nations and the International Community in Africa. The film also questions Africa's capacity to solve its own problems without placing too much faith in the UN and the International Community. *A Good Man In Hell* (2002) is one among several films on Rwanda that grapples with the problem of representing the genocide from the perspective of a white soldier serving in the UNAMIR.

Dallaire's documentary narrative approaches the theme of Rwandan genocide using a three-pronged style. First, there is the voice over which gives a chronology of events regarding the preparation of genocide, its actual occurrence and brief comments about the post-genocide period. Second, there is the visual narrative/text which complements and even contradicts factual information presented through the voice over. Third, there is the oral testimony by the protagonist—Romeo Dallaire who comments on events of genocide as well as interrogate the moral conscience of the UN, International Community and humanity. *A Good Man In Hell* (2002) introduces its theme of genocide by showing a map of Africa. The camera zooms-in

slowly to enlarge a tiny country called Rwanda. This camera motion is immediately followed by the voice-over which says that 'Rwanda also known as the Land of Thousand Hills is one of Africa's smallest nations. For three months in 1994, the country experienced a genocide that killed eight hundred thousand Tutsis and moderate Hutus. General Romeo Dallaire was there to witness the genocide'.

Confirming the narrative of the voice-over, the camera captures a visual image of a man excavating bones of a relative for proper burial. This action is followed by the voice-over which comments that, 'This genocide might have been prevented'. Gradually, the camera pans to show a military drill of the *Interahamwe* militia preparing to carry out the killings. As depicted in the film, although daylight graces this military drill, the evil intentions of the *Interahamwe* militia complicate an image of hope in Rwanda. Despite visible signs that the *Interahamwe* were being trained to carry out genocide, the United Nations and International Community did not denounce these actions. The United Nations also refrained from using the word 'genocide' to describe the massacre of people in Rwanda. Chaon (2007: 163) argues that, 'using the word genocide would have necessitated action under the United Nations Genocide Convention of 1948. Echoing Chaon's viewpoint is Pottier (2002: 157) who also points out that, 'the term (genocide) had been avoided because it invoked legal responsibility under the international law. In the film, Dallaire says that none of the Western nations were prepared for military intervention after the Somalia debacle in which America lost eighteen soldiers. For the narrator in the film, to 'close' and 'exclude' the use of the term 'genocide' reveals the power of those who write history. In the case of Rwanda, the sanitization of vocabulary reflects the repressive workings of the grand narrative of 'Whiteness'(Steyn 2002: 22) in which western nations can have the powers to sanction words that may best describe cultural and political conditions in Africa. On the surface level, what is played out in the film is the fact that African lives do not matter. This age old stereotype is further reconstructed on a meta-level, where cultural stereotypes project Africans as sub-humans. This mode of depicting Africans enabled western countries to create a consensus that made it possible to isolate Rwanda at a time the country needed help.

However, inspite of the U.N and International Community denying that a genocide was occurring in Rwanda, in *A Good Man In Hell*, the camera pans slowly to depict horrific images of corpses scattered all over the streets of Kigali. In showing such images, the director's camera-

point-of-view constructs its own truths of the story of genocide in Rwanda. In this story, the mass death of ethnic Tutsis is projected as the essence of the Rwandan genocide. In a conversation with Ted Koppel in the film, Dallaire (2002: shot 6) complicates the visual narrative when he rhetorically asks “Can you imagine? Dogs eating human flesh. Families living with corpses of family members! Can you imagine? The blood, the smell, the maggots coming out of rotting corpses....” Animals and humans are one in Africa. It’s a place of irrationality. It is abandoned by God, hence it is hell. A repetition of the rhetorical statement, “can you imagine?” appeals to the western audience’s moral repugnance as well as their fantastic imagination of the perceived depravity of African people. The moral depravity of Africans who kill Africans in Rwanda, and African countries that fail to stop the genocide is brought home in Dallaire’s use of words such as blood, smell, maggots and rotting corpses. These words distil the poetics of horror that epitomizes the tragic reality of genocide victims in Rwanda. ‘Dogs’ ‘human flesh,’ and ‘corpse’ is the vocabulary that describe Africa as the heart of darkness and the antithesis of progress and development as it is known in the western world. To the extent that Dallaire exposes the hypocrisy of western powers, in not intervening to stop the genocide, *A Good Man In Hell* can be said to have contributed in attacking the western-held racial stereotypes that figure Rwanda as a place where anything negative can happen.

In fact, the *Human Rights Watch* report confirms that when General Romeo Dallaire, a representative of United Nations Peacekeepers in Rwanda and UN Secretary General Jacques – Roger Booh-Booh were tasked to write reports about the political situation in Rwanda, ‘...the Secretariat of UN’s Security Council favored Booh-Booh’s interpretation which gave no sense of the systematic and ethnically based nature of the killing (2004:4). This description of Rwandan genocide as ‘senseless’, shows the extent of the UN’s casual approach to the Rwanda genocide. Dallaire comments that the UN and the International Community must have considered that no one should get involved, ‘...in a small country in black Africa that nobody is interested in’ (2007:14). Here, the idea of ‘interests’ clearly locates the materialistic and ideological taproot for which the west can be prepared to sacrifice its own. In fact, Jones extends Dallaire’s assertions by saying that, ‘Member nations of United Nations (Britain, USA, France, Russia and China) are usually reluctant to risk their troops to stop aggression or genocide alone unless it is in their own interests’ (2005:269).

In *A Good Man In Hell*, Dallaire shows that politically, African life is viewed as not worth protecting if the life is not linked to material gains. Given this background, it may have been ill-conceived for African nations to think that the UN and the International Community could be prepared fully to intervene in Rwanda's political crisis when that country offered little of interest to Western nations. It is unfortunate that in the film, Dallaire does not show that African nations also bear the brunt of criticism for failing to stop a genocide happening in their own back yard. African nations are depicted as following narrow politics of regionalism by not intervening and this undermines the spirit of Pan-Africanism whose collective vision had previously guided the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in its assistance of liberation struggles in Africa. The fact that African nations failed to work collectively to avert the Rwandan genocide forces Dallaire in *A Good Man In Hell (2002)* to appeal to the moral conscience of Europe. He addresses and conducts lectures in Europe to European audiences who are far away from the scene of genocide. The result of the failure to stop the genocide by African countries gives the impression that the African continent is not economically and politically competent to solve problems faced by its people. That is why in *A Good Man In Hell (2002)*, UN armored cars and not African military forces are depicted patrolling the streets of Kigali. This visual image reinforces the myth that the UN is an 'international redeemer' that serves all nations without fear or favor (Melvern 2000). When African nations are constructed as passive on-lookers to the Rwandan tragedy, the cultural and political stereotypes being questioned as well as reinforced in the film is that the west can act on behalf of Africa for humanitarian reasons.

In his film, Dallaire testifies that his forces could not match the power of the Hutu extremists. He says that, 'We had no adequate military equipment. No adequate troops and the Bangladeshi soldiers had virtually no pot to cook food' (Dallaire 2002: shot 9). In his book, *Shake Hands With the Devil (2004)* Dallaire goes further to show how competition among European nations to control UN foreign missions has often compromised the role of the UN. Dallaire implies that while in Rwanda, he was deliberately denied access to powerful equipment that would have allowed him to stop the genocide. It is here, on this point that *A Good Man In Hell (2002)* attacks western racism. For him the west is as much 'hell' as Rwanda was, during the genocide. Dallaire suggests that he suffered to see Rwandans die and that that suffering could have been averted had America, the UN and other western powers given him a go ahead to militarily stop the genocide.

Put differently, when political decisions were made by the US through UN's Security Council to down-play the possibility for UN military intervention, Dallaire's (a Canadian) efforts to bring peace in Rwanda were undermined. Ultimately, Rwandans suffered 'collateral damage' caused by European struggle for supremacy in Africa. Pottier (2002) suggests that the American experience in Mogadishu (Somalia) during October 1993 in which eighteen soldiers perished could have significantly changed the will of the Western world to commit itself to the betterment of the developing world. Dallaire counter-argues that the year which Rwanda experienced genocide (1994), Americans were spending a lot of money and sending many troops to Yugoslavia (Dallaire, 2007). Some American soldiers actually lost their lives in Yugoslavia and yet America continued with the Yugoslavian mission in order to ensure peace and stability. In fact, in *A Good Man in Hell*, Dallaire (2002:shot 11) explains the noncommittal attitude of the west to Rwanda as a product of the west's racial bigotry that discriminates African blacks. In the film he says that, 'In Rwanda, the Western world considered it that it was just a bunch of tribes going at each other like they always do. Rwanda is black. Yugoslavia is white European.'

Credit should be accorded to Dallaire in his film for bringing out how western racism dictated western conduct during the Rwandan genocide. An American representative who spoke to Dallaire confirms this when the diplomat says to Dallaire, 'in fact, what there's too much here (Rwanda) is people. Well, we're not going to come because of people' (Dallaire 2007:13). What is implied is the notion that good-will is dependant on the political interests of the west. For the west therefore, every action must bring some material advantage. The significance of the two statements is that they mirror the height of western stereotyping in which the African body is perceived as a 'thing', 'a fragmented being', or 'a random collection of body organs whose essence is far below that of physical objects' (Butchart 1998:56). In Rwanda, the theme of social fragmentation of African life was legitimized by UN and the International Community who abandoned Rwandan Tutsis and moderate Hutus to be cut into pieces by the merciless *machetes* of the *Interahamwe* (Melvern, 2000).

The failure of the UN and International Community to commit themselves fully to the Rwandan cultural and political crisis can also be attributed to the factor of agenda-setting in western and African media circles. According to Dallaire (2007) during the hundred days of the Rwandan genocide there was more news coverage of Tonya Harding, a sports personality who got

embroiled in a drug scandal. His story preoccupied the Cable News Network (CNN), British Broadcasting Cooperation (BBC), Agence France Presse (AFP) and Associated Press(AP) than the genocide itself. In addition, the Nelson Mandela presidential inauguration in 1994—the same year that Rwanda experienced genocide, also stole the limelight from potential coverage of the genocide and this diverted media attention towards that event. It is a blind sport that *A Good Man In Hell* does not critically explore the role of the international media in reporting or not reporting the Rwandan genocide. Dallaire's own film thus is given the space and the role to represent western views on the genocide. The fact that the film is in the form of a documentary is thus deliberately primed to make it appear as the most authentic, and truthful account of the genocide from the perspective of the western media.

If the western media should be criticized for their racism that made them minimally report Rwanda during the genocide, African media should also be criticized for not at all daring to report on the genocide. In Rwanda itself, and during the genocide, Radio-Television Libres des Mille Collines(RTLM) and the newspaper *Kangura* fomented acts of violence by labeling or stereotyping Tutsis as 'coachroaches' or *Inyenzi* that should be eliminated. Bobo(1992:66) suggests that, '...the way a group of people is (mis)represented or underrepresented can play a determining role in how those people are alienated socially, culturally and politically. This means the process of media (mis)representation or underrepresentation is a politically charged act'. In short, the racism of western media ironically manifested itself during the Rwandan genocide through salience. The notion of salience applied to the reporting of news about the Rwandan genocide. By not giving prominence to the genocide, western media adopted the notion of salience in which there was absence or minimal reportage of the genocide. By focusing on Yugoslavia and South Africa, and not Rwanda that was experiencing a deadly genocide, the western media also emphasized the importance of specific international events and not what was happening in Rwanda. Thus salience is a form of language; it is censorship and in the case of the Rwandan genocide, it amounted to complicity with the forces that were encouraging the destruction of the ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

Dallaire suggests that in 1994, the governments involved in Rwanda---France, Belgium and United States of America---had substantial information about the political situation in Rwanda but they shared this information with a few others or even ignored some important suggestions

from peacekeepers operating in Rwanda. For instance, in *A Good Man In Hell* the voice-over puts it clearly when it is said that, 'when General Romeo Dallaire discovered plans for a mass murder, he informed United Nations and asked permission to seize the arms cache, but he was told that it was outside his mandate'. To substantiate this verbal statement, the *African Union Report on Rwanda Genocide* (2000:76) reveals the segregatory and inflexible nature of UN policies when the report notes that Dallaire was starkly told that '... you should make every effort not to compromise your impartiality or act beyond your mandate,' The April 9 cable from Kofi Annan and Iqbal Riza added, 'but (you) may exercise your discretion to do (so) should this be essential for the evacuation of foreign nationals'.

To Dallaire's credit, the reproduction in verbatim form of the above '*communiqué*' reveals the social forces that prevented him from acting even when he could act and make a difference. The United Nation argued that Dallaire was sent to Rwanda as a 'peacekeeper not a peacemaker (Melvern 2000). This line of reasoning does not explain how Dallaire was to keep peace when there was no peace in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide. As is depicted in *A Good Man in Hell* it is possible to see the workings of the grand narrative of 'whiteness'—in which African lives which were considered to be different are viewed as the negative 'other' and therefore, should not be taken seriously (Hall 1979:258). In other words, the discourse of 'Us' (Europeans) and 'Them' (Africans) is a binary opposition and is made possible through the construction of cultural stereotypes that can be used as weapons to discriminate against or even persecute those perceived to be different in terms of race, gender, class and ethnicity.

In Dallaire's documentary narrative (2002: shot12) it is said that 'within five days, all expatriates had been evacuated....' Visual images of UN vehicles evacuate foreign nationals much to the bewilderment of Rwandan people. *A Good Man In Hell* to a large extent succeeds in questioning the racial stereotypes embodied in the conduct of western powers and also expressed through the language of the western media. To this extent, the film attempts to move its depiction of the Rwandan genocide 'beyond colonial stereotypes' (Nkunzimana 2009:79) that project Africans as inferior beings. *A Good Man in Hell* can therefore, be said to have contested the racial stereotypes that were used to define the Rwandans during and after the genocide. At the end of the film *A Good Man In Hell*, Dallaire's authorial and philosophical standpoint comes out when he underlines the significance of considering Africans as human beings worthy of UN protection.

He says (2002: Shot 13) that ‘All humans are equal no humans are more equal than others.’ On one hand, this is what *A Good man in Hell* was proving. On the other hand, some critical questions can be asked regarding Dallaire’s blame game that assumes that as an army General he virtually had no power outside the commands of his superiors to act in ways that could have stopped the genocide. Below I engage the implication of this question and show some ways in which Dallaire’s film narrative loses the moral high-ground that he intended it to have when he recreates the myth of the superiority of the white man by addressing European audiences in his film.

3.7 Genre, Setting, Audience and the dynamics of interpretation in *A Good Man in Hell* (2002)

This section is going to explore Dallaire’s choice of documentary as a film genre, his choice of a European setting and European audience. As a documentary genre *A Good Man In Hell* (2002) combines elements of the talk-show and the interview to articulate its theme of the Rwandan genocide. Derrida in Madsen (1992) views genre as a rhetorical strategy in which language codes should provide identifiable traits (signifiers) that can be re-marked or shifted in response to the ideological inclinations of the producers of those codes. To understand the technical connections of Dallaire’s documentary film narrative, it is important to start by analyzing its title. The title *A Good Man In Hell* (2002) can be viewed as a rhetorical strategy that is primed to echo and convince western audiences that Romeo Dallaire is a good white man who was destined to confront political trials and tribulations in Hell-projected as Rwanda in particular and Africa in general. *A Good Man In Hell* (2002) suggests a binary of good versus evil which in itself is a cultural stereotype that justifies UN and the International Community’s actions of abandoning Rwanda during the genocide. The binary of good versus evil is also a one-sided depiction of the Rwandan political crisis that attempts to ‘close’ alternative readings of the documentary’s messages by appealing to the emotional landscape invoked by the biblical theme centred on Heaven (good) and Hell (evil). The reality of the Rwanda genocide is that there was a mixture of good people who helped other people to escape and bad people who killed others and those who were both good and bad depending on the situation (Umutesi 2004, Rusesabagina & Zoellner 2006).



Fig.1 Romeo Dallaire explaining details about the Rwandan genocide

Source: 216 x 148 - 21k – gif
canadianwild.ca (2009)

The above film shot captures Dallaire explaining details about the Rwandan genocide to the European audience. The visual significance of this picture is that Dallaire draws attention of his audience to the seriousness of Rwandan genocide. He is seen here using gestures thereby capture the emotional landscape as well as tease out the imagination of his western audiences some of whom have never set foot in Africa.

By narrating his genocide experiences, Dallaire acts as a source of authentic information about the tragic events of the Rwandan genocide. The idea of authenticity is especially re-enforced by Dallaire's method of combining elements of talk show and interview in his documentary narrative. Elements of talk show and interview in *A Good Man in Hell* provide alternative ways of understanding the reality of Rwanda genocide. For instance, the probing questions provided by Ted Koppel to Dallaire during the interview makes it possible for the western audience to have a glimpse into the ethnic, cultural and political factors that informed the Rwandan genocide. The very act of plucking and re-contextualising elements of interview into documentary is a kind of artistic creativity that expands the meanings of the genocide narrative (Derrida quoted in Lucy, 2004). However, the talk genre is not exploited fully by Dallaire. He talks down to the European audience which in the film is depicted as a petrified group and does not ask difficult questions to the narrator of the story of the Rwandan genocide. A talk show could have opened

up dialogue in which Dallaire is denied the power by audiences to be the only focal point to narrate the ordeal of the genocide. According to IIIouz the advantage of a talk show is that it, ‘...makes us aware of distant forms of injustice and suffering and create a relationship to the subjects through imagination, compassion, and our identification with a person in his/her subjectivity and particularity’ (2003: 216).

Seated at the centre of the stage in the film, Dallaire becomes the source of credible information on the Rwandan genocide. The white audiences are depicted as a passive lot, all too willing to hear how depraved Africans are. None of the audiences asks complex questions that could have unsettled Dallaire’s privileged narrative. There are no African survivors of the victims of the genocide in the audience in *A Good Man In Hell*. These could have complicated Dallaire’s narrative by providing alternative narratives. The voice or presence of the survivors who actually experienced the brutality of genocide in Rwanda could, if inserted in the film, have lend further authenticity to the documentary facticity that the soldier-narrator scripts, and directs. Instead, what one sees in the documentary are images of foreign audiences struggling to create empathetic connections to the subject matter that is alien to them. In fact, IIIouz denounces *A Good Man In Hell* (2002) as a manifestation of, ‘...unprincipled commerce of misery in which Rwandan cultural and political misfortunes are turned into a commodity of affect’ (2003: 216). Nkunzimana (2009) substantiates this point by saying that there is something ambiguous and ethically questionable about narrating tragedies of other people and turning them into marketable products.

Dallaire may not have had commerce in mind when he created his important documentary *A Good Man In Hell*. However, the fact that his testimonies are now circulating in the public domain as part of the global flows of images can prompt critical readers to think that his documentary film is a commercial product that sells European sympathies about the fate of Tutsi and moderate Hutus. Here, what is being suggested in this interpretation of the film is that Dallaire has unwittingly re-enforced the cultural stereotype in which Africa is viewed as a weak continent (Hegel 1956). It is also thinkable that when Dallaire chooses a western setting and audience it could be his way of showing how African misfortunes can easily be turned into money. Yet, on the other hand, it could also be Dallaire’s way of acknowledging the existence of information deficiency among his foreign counterparts regarding the story of the Rwandan

genocide. This partly explains the pedantic way of Dallaire who in the film assumes the role of a teacher, pointing at the map of Africa to make his audience identify the position of Rwanda.

In his documentary, Dallaire uses the first person 'I' narrative to emphasize that this is an eyewitness account in which facts are being told as they were. The irony is that this 'I' narrative position enables the narrator to monopolize the language of truths. This position contributes to the univocal position of enunciation. As Samuel (2009) argues, a documentary film is more closer to an autobiographical narrative and sometimes its emphasis on the perspective of the one who bears the witness to trauma prevents it from providing 'individualized representations and access to the interiority of a range of characters who can introduce narrative that can break down the stereotypical understandings of victim and perpetrator (Samuel 2009: 13). The fixed position of telling the story of genocide excludes other possible narratives that have the potential to tell and reveal different stories about the realities of the Rwandan genocide. In fact, the screen theory unveils how faulted the position of the authorial 'I' can be in assuming to be both the source and guarantor of the 'truth' of any enunciative statement (Hall 1992). In the context of Dallaire's documentary film narrative, the 'I' narrative as a personalized signifier can be viewed as a cultural stereotype that undermines stories of the collective 'voices' from Rwandans. Commenting on the concept of 'voices', Shohat and Stam (1994) say that the (voices) are open to plurality, voices are not merely voices, but they relay discourses of difference, of polyphony and cultural heterogeneity. Discourses of 'difference' are statements that give ambivalence to meanings and values to particular experiences of individuals, groups, societies and institutions. But, the distinctive identity of a collective 'voice' is the ontological nature of its 'fractured self' (Chow, 1993). This means that the incomplete nature of 'voices' that are thought to be collective could only reflect 'parts' not 'wholes' of the narrative(s) that characterize the reality of the Rwandan genocide. Dallaire's documentary *A Good Man in Hell* (2002) gives that part of the story which represents the one aspect of the Rwandan genocide that took place between April and July of 1994.

3:8 Romeo Dallaire: A Brief Critique of His Moral exposition during the Rwandan Genocide

A Good Man in Hell questions the open and sometimes hidden language of racial stereotypes related to the genocide in Rwanda. The film allows both westerners and some Africans access to

an approximation of a re-presented reality of what it was like during the genocide. However, it is possible to raise some ethical questions relating to some harmful ways through which Dallaire re-instates the very racial myth of the superiority of the whites that his film has all along been criticizing. For example, Dallaire was the man on the spot during the Rwandan genocide. Yet he could not creatively disregard the instructions from his superiors in Europe and intervene in ways that could have stopped the killings of most Tutsis. It is true ten Belgian soldiers were killed during the genocide. But compared with a figure of 800 000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus this is a small number to frighten Dallaire. Besides, though his was a small contingent army, it was far well equipped and could easily have overrun the militias who were using primitive weapons such as the *machete*.

That Dallaire did not take advantage of the help from the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPF) that was fighting the Hutu government is more a question of choice. Dallaire can be said to have squandered a rare moment to redefine the notion of social responsibility in times of war. He had received instructions that in the event that white people were in grave danger, he had to fight back. Eventually, he did not because it was only black people who were being killed by other black people. There is, therefore, some reasons to suggest that Dallaire himself was not completely above the European racism that his film partially but significantly attacks. All these criticism of Dallaire and the visual language of *A Good Man in Hell* might appear unwarranted. But in the eyes of the relatives of Tutsis who were killed, Dallaire's conduct slips into the very stereotype of the grand narrative of 'whiteness' that his film seeks to undermine and expose for scrutiny. In the documentary, Dallaire (2002: Shot 12) is at pains to explain his moral dilemma as a soldier when he says that 'what would a soldier do if he sees that a girl is killing another girl of the same age who is having a baby on her back, and the girl escapes into a group of people upon seeing the soldier? Should the soldier opens fire into the group in order to kill the girl or simply walks away?'

Dallaire's moral dilemma presents enormous challenges to the whole concept of ethical responsibility. This is because if he had fired into the group, the soldier would have killed more than one person, even when this would have been done to uphold sanctity of human life. On the other hand simply letting the girl free, the soldier would have in a way promoted more acts of killing---which in itself is an indirect way of legitimizing acts of genocide. Derrida tries to

suggest possible answers to a context such as the one Dallaire found himself in. Derrida asserts that ‘...any condition of responsibility is an experiment and experience of the possibility of the seemingly impossibility’ (Derrida quoted in Lucy 2002: 107). Samuel agrees and adds that ‘the outsider status of the writers and filmmakers shapes the ways in which they represent the trauma and kinds of memory they attempt to produce about it, as they find themselves having to grapple with questions of responsibility, complicity, inaction and guilt’ (Samuel 2009: 9).

The April 9 cable from Iqbal Riza and Kofi Annan which stated clearly that Dallaire was to use his discretion (as a soldier) should the lives of foreigners be in danger meant that the UN did not rule out completely the possibility of military intervention. But the racial connotation of that possibility is that protection was only to be confined to white foreigners not Rwandans. In *A Good Man In Hell* Dallaire gives a passionate account of having witnessed mutilated corpses being mauled by dogs while others were left to rot in the open, and yet he chose to adhere to the inflexible terms of the UN. Ultimately, Dallaire’s failure to rise above the same stereotypes he is condemning can make some critics to view his documentary film as a half-baked project produced to support the master narrative of ‘whiteness’ (Steyn 2001). In *A Good Man In Hell* there is no criticism of the politics of violence also practiced by the liberating forces of the Rwanda Patriotic Front led by Paul Kagame. This absence of criticism of the RPF suggests that Dallaire’s film carries favor with the new government in Kigali so that the production and filmic representations of genocide becomes in his film, a means of working through his guiltiness. Although *A Good Man In Hell* was not part of the new Rwanda government sponsored project of ‘*The Rwanda Forum*’ (Samuel 2009) in which creative authors and filmmakers were invited by the new officials to write about the genocide, the structures of ideas in Dallaire’s film are inhabited and inhibited by the official ideology from criticizing the post 1994 coercive politics of the new Rwandan state.

3.9 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to analyze how Romeo Dallaire’s documentary film, *A Good Man in Hell* contested the racial stereotypes that informed western decisions not to militarily intervene to stop the Rwandan genocide. It was argued in the film that the belief in the Whiteman’s burden is a myth or smokescreen used by western powers to intervene in Africa only when it suits their immediate material purposes. Using the voice of an eye witness account or the ‘authority of the

presence' (Chennells 2009), Dallaire correctly criticized the hypocrisy of the western conduct during the Rwandan genocide. The chapter revealed cultural and political stereotypes that were used by United Nations and the International Community to justify their lack of action to stop genocide in Rwanda. The significance of *A Good Man in Hell* is that it provides a critical voice to a growing body of films that focus on the Rwanda genocide. Dallaire's film provides the necessary counter argument and suggests that the Rwandan genocide was preventable if only the western powers had the political will-power to do so. This point is important but it marginalizes the passive role that African countries assumed during the genocide. It is a point that predisposes Africans to look to Europe and not to Africa for African solutions to African problems. *A Good Man In Hell's* over- criticism of the inaction of the western powers suggests that Europe and America are morally obliged to serve humanity in Africa. These facts can legitimize European control of Africa resources. In addition to that, the chapter questioned Dallaire's indecision in dealing with the Rwandan genocide. The chapter argued that Dallaire's film runs the risk of confirming the age-old stereotype that whites cannot sacrifice their lives to serve Africans. This line of thinking is symptomatic of mimicking the operations of the grand narrative of 'whiteness'.

Dallaire's choice of the documentary genre enabled him to lay claim to a monopoly of truths in his telling of the story of genocide in Rwanda. The documentary mode that was employed to lend authenticity to the narrated events of the genocide, unfortunately did not allow the possibility of a wide range of views and interpretation of the Rwandan genocide. The film director's choice of a European setting and audience that the film addresses is impoverished because there are no survivors of the Rwandan genocide in his audience. This ironically contributes to the control of the discursive language of what can be said of the genocide in Rwanda and this is typical of the master narrative of 'whiteness' (Steyn 2001). The film talks to whites on behalf of the African people in Rwanda. In short, the language of the documentary is contrived and not natural; the film is made and therefore the truths it tells are contestable. In chapter four I am going to explore the continuities and differences in the representation of the Rwandan genocide in *Hotel Rwanda (2004)*. The emphasis will be placed on questioning the film's depiction of history and how the ethnic factor in the film is debated.

CHAPTER 4

Hotel Rwanda: Contradictions in the representations of the Rwanda Genocide

4.0 Introduction

The previous chapter analyzed the narrative of the Rwandan genocide as depicted in Romeo Dallaire's documentary narrative *A Good Man In Hell* (2002). It was argued that the documentary reveals that western nations still paint a bleak picture on Africa by stereotyping the continent as a 'primitive', and characterized by endless and senseless civil and ethnic wars. It was also pointed out that the main strength of *A Good Man in Hell* (2002) derives from the eye witness account of personalized experiences of Romeo Dallaire, the film producer who was a UNAMIR commander during the Rwanda genocide. Although the facticity of the eye witness genre forces the viewer to acknowledge the 'authority of presence' (Chennells 2009: 98-114) of the producer/director, Dallaire, who was involved in the Rwandan genocide from the perspective of a white general of UNAMIR, this does not mean that the documentary is beyond contestation. Because of this realization, it was been argued that in attempting to deconstruct racial stereotypes authored by the western media, Dallaire's film also recreated new stereotypes in which the Rwandan genocide was represented mainly as result of primitive African instincts manifested in endless and senseless civil and ethic wars. While the documentary on genocide authenticates the truths of its narratives and arguments about the Rwandan genocide because it can resort to real live and provable data, the feature film has to rely almost entirely on the imaginative creativity of its director. This opens the feature film to a multiplicity of interpretations of the genocide narratives and at the same time allows the film to create its own patterns of meanings not necessarily tied to the events in the actual genocide of 1994 (Harrow 2007).

This chapter focuses on *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) a feature film whose story was written and produced by Terry George in 2004. The aim of this chapter is to interrogate the ways in which the Rwandan genocide is represented in *Hotel Rwanda*. The film uses mostly black characters and a few white characters in order to depict the Rwandan genocide in which nearly one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed by Hutu extremists between April and July of 1994. The

core argument of this chapter is that *Hotel Rwanda* over-emphasizes ethnic animosity as the major contributor of the Rwanda genocide thereby underplaying the significance of historical, political and economic factors. This chapter relies on written historical narratives, and employs different theories to interpret the ambivalence in the representations of the genocide in Rwanda, not so apparent in the film. For example, Mamdani's historical approach to the genocide helps in bringing out what he calls the 'three silences' (2001:7) that have characterized studies on the Rwanda genocide. In addition, Adhikari's (2007) critical approach to film studies can assist in contextualizing the Rwanda genocide depicted in the film, *Hotel Rwanda*. Theories on production/text, audience/reception and discourse analysis will be used to interpret the verbal and audio-visual language formations in *Hotel Rwanda*.

Production/text theory also known as Hypodemic needle, magic bullet or stimulus response theory emphasizes the power of media to influence the decisions of audience [Strelitz 2005:-8-9]. The theory suggests that the meanings in films such as are in *Hotel Rwanda* are inscribed and embedded in the text/message. The philosophical basis of production/text theories is that the ideas of the dominant classes in society can be used to control the way people watch and understand films. It is also assumed in the theories that the audiences are 'gullible' in receiving media messages. Although the assumptions of production and text film theories can be overstated, this chapter reveals that since not every-one of *Hotel Rwanda*'s audience is endowed with the capacity to interrogate the deeper meanings of film images, it is possible that the intended meanings can reach an intended audience.

Audience and reception theories claim that the cultural practice of watching film and decoding messages is a complex reality. Morley [1992] and Strelitz [2005] suggest that audiences have some critical freedom and autonomy to deconstruct 'dominant meanings' in order to emerge with their own oppositional readings. Oppositional meaning arise from an understanding by the audience that a text or film like *Hotel Rwanda* is only an approximation of reality, and that events, relations and structures do not exist separately from the discursive space of film text. Thus, any film 'constructions 'or 'representations' of reality cannot exhaust all the meaning potentials of films and of life (Bobo 1992:66). The audience/reception theories can guide one to the fact that audiences can display extraordinary abilities to subvert some attempts by dominant ideologies to want to control and minimize social differences. Audiences of films dealing on the

Rwandan genocide can reject attempts at homogenizing their experience and even question both the filmmakers' original intentions and their own initial meanings. Hence, the ultimate meanings of *Hotel Rwanda* can be informed, conflicted and negotiated at the point of message production and reception. Referring to images enmeshed in systems of language, Roland Barthes (1972) argues that the language of film is very unstable because of its multi-media orientation which ensures that no single genre, whether the verbal, the pictorial, sound and colour in the film can be allowed to predominate or settle for unitary meanings or monological interpretations. Each of these aspects of film language creates a complex semiotic system that constantly interrogates the protocols of representing reality at any given time in the film. Supporting Barthes' understanding of how meanings are generated in film in particular and popular culture in general, Derrida's (1973) theory of the instability of language suggests that the 'unstable' nature of oral language and images is that they 'differ' and 'defer' meanings in every speech and audio-visual acts of communication. Derrida's (1973) concept of 'différance' can therefore help a critic to resist *Hotel Rwanda's* 'fixed' ways of representing the inter-ethnic conflicts in the genocide narrative.

To further complicate the argument in this chapter which is that *Hotel Rwanda* simultaneously contest old stereotypes and erect new stereotypes in the language of genocide in Rwanda, the present chapter makes use of Deleuze and Guattari's (1983) theory on the rhizome. The theory of the rhizome establishes surface connections and contradictions in imaginative narratives. The rhizome approach is useful in helping to understand that verbal and non-verbal codes are diverse systems, challenging the idea of stable language formations exhibited by stereotypes. The rhizome type of analysis on films therefore can result in decentring and off-loading genocide narratives that would otherwise be represented as fixed and inflexible. Rhizome approaches encourage reading and watching of films that promote the search for levels of signification that promote multi-accentual interpretations. From this vantage point, one can be motivated by the idea that '...if a rhizome is broken at any point it resumes activity and continues growing making lines of subterranean connections in other ways' (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 45). In other words, it is possible to re-interpret the genocide narratives in *Hotel Rwanda* and the stereotypes they embody and explain them in different and untested ways.

In line with the search for multiple explanations of the stereotypes encoded in *Hotel Rwanda*, the chapter will also use Bakhtin's (1981) theory of the dialogic imagination and the carnivalesque

in the representations of both stereotypes of people as victims and aggressors. The essence of this approach is that it can encourage in an audience a predilection to subvert the modalities of dialogue promote adaptability to different situational contexts, multi-voicedness, semantic indeterminacy and expressive plasticity of social interaction. This means the dynamics in verbal and audio-visual codes can be used to challenge 'preferred readings' in *Hotel Rwanda* out of position, forcing all reassuring certainties and univocal ties to vacillate or split into multiple interpretations (Bakhtin in Ponzio 1993). Supporting the idea of multiple interpretations of stereotypes, Tomaselli (2005) says that all cinemas are expanded, as meaning is a text created by viewers with their own specific frames of reference, values, histories and experiences. Lastly, this chapter uses insights from the important theories of post colonialism ably conceptualized in Mbembe's notions of the 'aesthetics of vulgarity'(2001:102) that can explain *Hotel Rwanda's* 'Box Office' or commercial format which ironically forces the film to (mis)represent the grim realities of the Rwanda genocide. It is argued that *Hotel Rwanda's* 'Hollywoodized' approach to Rwanda's cultural and political conflict creates a romantic picture, and therefore 'vulgarizes' (2001) a genocide subject matter that should call for some serious reflection. Harrow (2007) has reminded us that in analyzing a film balance must be struck between using background historical material and interpreting the film on its own terms so that it yields meanings that can contest meanings contained in conventional histories.

4.1 Hotel Rwanda: Rethinking myths, Memory and Historical Perspectives of the genocide

This section gives a historical background as well as sets a stage for a practical criticism focused on *Hotel Rwanda's* ways of handling its theme on the Rwanda genocide. In doing so, it is imperative to examine how myth, memory and history can be used to confirm, negotiate and contest the genocide text constructed by the feature film, *Hotel Rwanda*. Mamdani calls attention to what he calls 'three silences' (2001:7) in the study of genocide in Rwanda. The first silence he considers is that works on Rwanda are written in a way that gives the wrong impression that the Rwandan genocide started and ended in 1994. In other words, the Rwandan genocide is presented as an anthropological oddity with no history or plausible reasons to its occurrence. Commenting on the importance of history, Rosenstone asserts that the 'discourse of history relates, reflects, comments on or critique the already existing data, arguments and debates about

a topic/subject matter at hand' (2006:39). By implication, Rosenstone (2006) suggests that history can be used by the dominant groups to suppress 'other histories and memories' worth of telling which belong to the oppressed group or subaltern masses. Ironically, the oppressed classes can also show tendencies of adopting the same 'histories' that have been used to suppress their stories when the ordinary people explain their lives. On the other hand, referring to the functions of myth in society, Check contends that 'myth as a precursor to memory gives meaning and purpose to even the most seemingly disparate and fragmented elements of culture, in as much as it affirms life processes of change and refashioning of meaning'(2008:251). Vambe agrees with this understanding of myth when he states that the politics of memory and remembering, implicates acts of writing narrative as arbitrary because memory is '... always in flux to the extent that there is not only potentially one memory but also multiple memories constantly battling for attention within the cultural space' (2004:7) of a film.

This insight can imply that the memories that *Hotel Rwanda's* genocide narrative frames, are not an end in themselves but are battling with off-screen memories which were left 'unsaid' but could also provide alternative readings of the film. Therefore, a recourse to pre-colonial and post-colonial history can partially help in reconstructing some elements of these 'unsaid' memories in *Hotel Rwanda* and may provide one with alternative ways of interrogating the nature of ethnic relations in Rwanda.

Prior to the arrival of the German in 1884, the social groups who came to be identified as Hutu, Tutsi and Twa shared the same language (*Kinyarwanda*), believed in the same God (*Imana*) and lived side by side throughout the country. According to Mamdani (2001) there are few cases known anywhere in the world of different ethnic groups sharing so many characteristics. This has led many scholars to challenge stereotypic notions regarding the existence of totalized antagonistic views when writing about ethnic groups in Rwanda. Mamdani (2001) goes on to say that some authors suggest that cohabitation and inter-marriage had produced some loose 'integrated' social system wherein the categories of Hutu and Tutsi were largely occupationally defined. That is, it was possible through the practice of *Kwiihutura* (shedding Hutuness) for a sizeable number of cattle-owning Hutu to become Tutsi, and also a change in social status from Tutsi to Hutu (*Gucupira*) was possible. Therefore as Adhikari (2007) argues, the distinction

between Hutu and Tutsi was not rigidly defined by birth but was in essence a social –economic and political distinction defined by one’s ability to challenge the status quo.

In other words, differences within pre-colonial Rwanda society were more prominently those of region and class than of ethnicity. However, Newbury (2001) brings in a controversial dimension when he says that relations among ethnic groups in pre-colonial Rwanda were often confrontational. Confrontation was much more frequent in situations when the Tutsi King Rwabugiri in the 1890s used his power to force Hutus to supply the notorious *corvee*/forced labour. What is known is that when the Belgians took over in 1913, they went a step further in their formalization processes by issuing identity cards in which colonial subjects were identified as Hutu, Tutsi and Twa. Ironically, it is the same identity cards that were used by the *Interahamwe* militia groups in 1994 to weed out Tutsis from all other people, so that they could be killed. It can be argued that the formalization of Hutu –Tutsi division by Germans and Belgians may not have withstood a firmer grip if this rigid construction of ethnic groups was contested from within and outside Rwanda. Lemarchand (1998) contends that the Tutsi sense of superiority and elitism was buttressed by the Hamitic hypothesis propounded by John Hanning Speke in the late 19th century. The Hamitic history summed up Tutsi as carrying superior blood of Galla civilization of Southern Ethiopia who arrived in Rwanda in waves, perceived as better armed as well as more intelligent than the dark agricultural Negroes (Hutu) already living in Rwanda.

Check (2008) suggests that the historian Alexis Kagame, a Tutsi accelerated the ethnic animosity between Hutu and Tutsi by arguing that pre-colonial Rwanda was a Hamitic kingdom built on conquered land inhabited by dark agricultural masses (Hutu). This line of thought authorized the ‘myth of Tutsi dominance’ and reinforced a discourse of ‘other’ as a stereotypic reference to the Hutus. Check further cites one of the damaging myths that was constructed to enhance Tutsi superiority over the Hutus when he says, ‘to perpetuate Tutsi dominance over Hutu, the genitals of subjugated Hutu chiefs (*bahinza*) were smeared on the royal Tutsi drum (*kalinga*). In Tutsi folklore, only the genitals of cowards and vanquished adversaries of Tutsi were adorned on the Kalinga. By adorning the Kalinga with the genitals of Hutu Chiefs, the Tutsi inordinately bestowed coward status onto the Hutu (2008:252).

This myth cited by Check (2008) worked well to boost the political ego of Tutsi kings. However, and, on the other hand, it bore seeds of its own deconstruction since it enabled the Tutsi to be viewed by Hutu extremists in 1994 as evil people who should be killed so that their bodies could be sent back to Ethiopia via *Nyabarongo* River (Melvern 2000). It would be interesting to explore whether or not *Hotel Rwanda* challenges this myth, as well as help explain why there was mass participation during the violence committed by the Hutu extremists on the Tutsi minority and some moderate Hutus. Adhikari (2007) reminds us that in analyzing films such as *Hotel Rwanda* it is important to take full recognition that there are limits to what can be packed into two hours of viewing, to the demands that can be made on the attention span of audiences and the commercial imperatives that inevitably weigh on a film narrative.

Adhikari (2007) further claims that it would be important to draw comparisons between *Hotel Rwanda* and some films on the Rwandan genocide such as *Sometimes in April* (2005) written and directed by Raoul Peck a Haitian, that also deals with the same subject of genocide. The latter film will be explored in chapter five. It would also be interesting to evaluate *Hotel Rwanda* by comparing it with *Sometimes in April* with its use of semiotic languages of old newsreel footage, voice-over's, radio broadcasts, television interview and snatches of conversation, verbal and audio-visual aspects. Commenting on the significance of possessing historical knowledge surrounding the production of a film narrative, Ford-Smith says that, 'we need to know something about the topic that a film is attempting to portray as well as about the historical context that gave rise to the film itself' (2007:533). Furthermore, analysis of the film *Hotel Rwanda* can benefit from considering film narrative as metonymic text or as an ideological 'window' into the world. The concept of 'window' means that a film narrative is not able to capture and accommodate all conflicting subjective and inter-subjective voices within its screen space.

Mamdani's (2001:8) 'second silence' revolves around the failure of literature on the Rwanda genocide to explain how a state project of genocide 'easily' mobilized the subaltern or the 'popular' classes to participate in the ritualistic and bizarre violence engendered in the Rwandan genocide. It would be critically important to measure the distance between the representations of genocide in *Hotel Rwanda* from the phenomenon of 'historical exceptionalism' (Vambe and Zegeye, 2008) that distorts narratives because it is based upon a single factor of explaining a

Hutu–Tutsi animosity. The result in the film narrative is an underestimating of the interplay of socio-cultural, political and economic factors that had a direct bearing on the Rwandan genocide. For Adhikari (2007:287) because of the ‘unfettered control over the Hutu peasantry under Belgian rule, the Tutsi elite became rapacious, increasing both tribute payments and demands for labour services’. By implication, the Hutus who failed to comply with the demands of the Tutsi king were subjected to ill-treatment such as beating or denied access to land – a sanction that spelt disaster for many peasants. Check (2008) notes that for the Tutsis to consolidate their power, they spurned cosmological myths that justified their control of the Hutus. Check writes that in Rwandan folklore, ‘...in order to test their dependability, God decided to entrust Gahutu, Gatutsi and Gatwa each with a pot of milk to watch over during the night. When dawn came gluttonous Gatwa had drunk all the milk, Gahutu had gone to sleep and spilt his milk, and only Gatutsi had stayed up throughout the night to keep guard over his milk. So Gatutsi was entrusted by God to command the others’ (2008: 256-3).

The myth cited by Check (2008) establishes that any form of emplotment of narrative which generates a story, a history and meaning can be marked at every moment by the exclusion of stories and histories of those (Hutu) who are considered to be the subordinates. However, Uvin (1997:93) complicates the way myths operate when Uvin argues that ‘Hutu officials’ also came to believe that Rwanda was indeed invaded by ‘foreign’ Tutsi cattle herders who gradually managed to install a system of oppression and exploitation. Uvin (1997) goes on to say that psycho-cultural perceptions, images and stereotypes manifesting explicit values were formed among Hutus who also begun to view Tutsi as aliens worth eliminating. From another angle, the psycho-cultural images and political stereotypes became building blocks on which unchangeable myths of ‘distinct difference’ (Mamdani 2001:57) between Hutu and Tutsi were radicalized and politicized by Hutu politicians from the 1950s and until 1994. Here, the concept of ethnicity is viewed as a myth because ‘individuals may attach themselves to, or withdraw from any one identity or category in more fluid way, depending on the context, and situational processes of identifications’ (Cohen and Kennedy 2004: 47).

According to Mamdani the ‘Third Silence’ (2001:8) in the writings on the Rwandan genocide arises from the failure to consider the geography of the Rwanda genocide. To understand the Rwanda genocide in its regional context implies possessing knowledge of the cycle of ‘conflict

system' which defines the Great Lakes region. About this cycle of violence in Great Lakes Region Umutesi writes that 'the Tutsi who had been spared in the killings of 1959 were persecuted and were killed. Others who had joined the ranks of the exiles in Uganda, Congo and Burundi had their lands taken and redistributed (2004: 9). In other words, the mass murder of the Tutsi in Burundi had far reaching effects in the entire region. For instance, when a Tutsi government assumed power in Burundi there were reprisals and more killings of the Hutu by the predominately Tutsi army in Burundi in 1972 (Vambe 2008). This genocide of Hutu by Tutsi in Burundi hardened Hutu feelings against Tutsis in Rwanda. Umutesi writes again that 'The Rwanda Hutu felt threatened by killings of Burundan Hutu. What is more, the Rwandan and Burundian governments traded insults broadcasts over their national radio stations' (2004:12).

This historical background to the actual analysis of *Hotel Rwanda* that follows in the next section is intended to achieve several things. First, the historical approach provides the context in which the film *Hotel Rwanda* was produced and received, and in the process attempts to partially reconstruct the history of genocide in Rwanda. Second, the historical approach also supplies verifiable historical data that can be used for a critique of *Hotel Rwanda*. Third, the historical knowledge of Rwanda and its people is not intended to be a substitute of the ways in which the film can reconstruct its own patterns of meaning that do not necessarily have to coincide with historical data point for point. Fourth, *Hotel Rwanda* is an imaginative work and as such can, through its representations of the genocide in Rwanda, confirm, modify and even reject the claims that are made by historical narratives. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the historical background provides space on which history as facts and history as imaginative creativity can interrogate each other with a view to contesting the political and cultural stereotypes which both historical narratives and fictional works such as *Hotel Rwanda* are capable of authorizing. It is important therefore to avoid superimposing the understanding of the genocide from conventional historians onto the creative art that is captured in *Hotel Rwanda*. The following section therefore, closely analyses *Hotel Rwanda* on its terms as a creative text, exploring how it represents the genocide of 1994.

4.2 Contesting 'Dominant' Verbal and Audio-Visual Narratives in *Hotel Rwanda*

Briefly described, *Hotel Rwanda* is based on a true story about the heroic acts of Paul Rusesabagina (Don Cheadle) a Hutu and manager of Des Mille Collines –a Belgian owned five

Star Hotel in Kigali. Together with his Tutsi wife, Tatiana (Sophie Okonedo) and their children, Rusesabagina saved about 1 268 lives of Tutsi and moderate Hutus through words clothed in witticism, business acumen, simple bribes and lies. Terry George, the script writer and director of the film gives an interesting dimension to the aim of directing *Hotel Rwanda* when he says that, 'I wanted people to feel a love story, an individual story rather than a docudrama about a massacre. I wanted to give more of a sense of fear and craziness of it, an epic story shot in classic style told under the eyes of his man' (Chiwengo 2008:84). This is the understanding of the story of *Hotel Rwanda* from the point of view of its creator. However, as this section unfolds, it reveals that the constructedness of *Hotel Rwanda* in relation to genocide as lived experience provides surplus meanings that can modify the 'preferred readings' of its writer-cum-director. Surplus meanings can be accessed through an interpretation of the film that focuses on and emphasizes a critique on the film's dominant verbal, and audio-visual narratives.

Hotel Rwanda starts with a dark screen and sound of switching radio channels. The cacophony of voices is gradually translated into one voice of an announcer from Radio-Television Libre des Mille Collines (RTL) - a Hutu power radio station identified as having raised the spirit of violence that eventually led to genocide (Harting 2008). In fatalistic tones the radio announcer in the film encourages the Hutus to come out and decimate the Tutsis. The use of the radio demonstrates the importance of multi-media languages within the film. The radio announcer asks a series of rhetorical questions that predispose the Hutus to sharpen their hatred of the Tutsis:

'When people ask me, good listeners, why do I hate Tutsi, I say 'Read our history'. Tutsi were collaborators for Belgian colonists. They stole our Hutu land, they whipped us, Now they have come back, these Tutsi rebels. They are cockroaches. They are murderers. Rwanda is our Hutu land. We are the majority. They are a minority of traitors and invaders. We will squash their infestation. We will wipe out the RPF rebels. This is RTL Hutu Powa Radio' (*Hotel Rwanda* 2004).

In this announcement, Tutsis are imaged and stereotyped as 'collaborators', 'rebels', 'cockroaches', 'traitors', 'invaders' and there are also suggestions that Tutsis are pests. These negative descriptions are all essentialized stereotypes with grave consequences for Tutsi lives in the context of the genocide. Thus, RTL presents Hutu extremists as insinulators of violence and death as symbolized by the dark screen in the film. Over and above this negative function of the radio, its text message presupposes all the Tutsi were collaborators of Belgian colonists. While it is true that Belgians were accomplices in causing a Hutu-Tutsi split, the RTL text partializes

history by failing to mention other culprits such as King Rwabugiri (1810s) and Germans (1884) who contributed immensely to the creation of a Hutu and Tutsi ethnic divide.

Credit is due to Terry George who in directing *Hotel Rwanda* incorporates and brings out the negative role of the medium of the radio that constructs and reinforces the stereotype of Tutsis as people who deserve to die. The construction of the political stereotype of Tutsis as ‘cockroaches, traitors, invaders and murderers’ is a name-calling strategy that attach superficial labels’ (Pfukwa 2001:41) which were used to vanquish nearly one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus during the 1994 genocide. By arguing to wipe Tutsi off the face of Rwanda, the RTLM also intends to turn ordinary people into murderers. This attitude is evident in the ‘iteration/repeatability’ (Derrida in Lucy 2004) of the collective ‘we’ which is meant to appeal to the social and emotional instinct of the supposed Hutu recipients of the instructions to kill. Chow (1993) observes that hate speech encouraged by the collective ‘we’ is ironically subverted by its ontological nature which is defined by an awareness as ‘fractured’ narrative of the ‘self’. Meanings passed on in the name of the collective voice can be altered by limiting, expanding and filtering the idealization of every moment of their singularity, purity and presence (Derrida in Lucy 2004). In reality Hutu moderates rejected this call by RTLM to wipe out Tutsi rebels. This rejection by the moderate Hutus to heed the voice of the radio announcer is enacted by the likes of Ruresabagina whose presence in the film undermines the myth that projects all Hutus as having the same motives of wanting to kill the Tutsis.

In other words, the very existence of some Hutus who refused to comply with the message in the hate speech directed against the Tutsis shows that media/film audiences have freedom to deconstruct dominant meanings created in the name of the collective ‘we’ in order to emerge with their oppositional readings of the message (Morley 1992). Again, it is to the credit of the director to have punctured the underbelly of the stereotype of all Hutus as killers.

According to Varadharajan (2008) the RTLM text pronounces the emergence of a new political dispensation and tropological discourse of Hutu Power which sought to challenge a small Tutsi minority that had enjoyed feudal tyrannies in Rwanda and neighbouring Burundi for centuries. The comment by Varadharajan (2008) seems to justify the killing of the Tutsis. In the process, the comments reinforce another pernicious stereotype which is that during the genocide, the Tutsi gave themselves up without a fight. In fact, in *Hotel Rwanda*, little space is given to depict

Tutsis fighting back as they were being killed. This absence distorts history, and in the process, projects the Tutsis as perpetual victims. In reality, the Rwanda Patriotic Front, largely a Tutsi political movement was able to defeat the *Interahamwe* militia in July 1994. This aspect is given little space in the film.

In the film, as the narrative of genocide unwinds, its major protagonist Paul Rusesabagina is surprised to see the *Interahamwe* (Those who work together) dancing, beating drums whistling and chanting slogan as they demonstrate violently in streets of Kigali. There is an uncanny connection (Deleuze and Guattari 1983) between the oral message from Hutu Radio (RTL) and what can be seen through visual images as the *Interahamwe* prepares to carry out the killing. In juxtaposing the two scenarios, *Hotel Rwanda* can be commended for acknowledging that there was a direct link between the use of Hutu Power radio station and the actual preparing and carrying out of the genocide. More importantly, *Hotel Rwanda* makes a crucial statement that in spite of such signs of impending disaster, local politicians and the international community trivialized the genocide intentions of RTL and the *Interahamwe* militia. Despite the thread that connects RTL and the *Interahamwe* narrative of death and killing, alternative possibilities are created and encoded in the narrative as Rusesabagina's journey into the heart land of Kigali is graced by daylight and green vegetation, as if to symbolize defiant hope amidst terror. Such a presentation of hopeful scenes can defy simplistic versions contained inside the dominant narrative of good guy (Tutsi)/bad guy (Hutu) dichotomy, a mode of representation that predominates the story of *Hotel Rwanda*. Moreover, a good guy /bad guy stereotype cannot explain intricacies in which Hutu extremists killed moderate Hutu, some powerful Hutu assisted their powerful Tutsi friends, neighbours and relatives to escape, some Tutsi also killed Hutu extremists in self-defense and revenge (Melvern 2005).



Fig. 2 Paul Rusesabagina helping refugees at the Hotel Mille Collines.

Source: 396 x 258 - 17k - jpg
weekinrewind.com(2009)

The above film shot projects Paul Rusesabagina as the hero of the Rwandan genocide who helps desperate refugees who are threatened with death. Rusesabagina is consciously depicted in a black suit, and his figure is magnified against the backdrop of struggling refugees to emphasize his heroism and sense of individuality. Although this shot has evidence of technical faults, its blurred nature may suggest that hope during the Rwandan genocide was so elusive that individuals lived under constant fear of being attacked and killed at anytime.

It is true that when *Hotel Rwanda* depicts Rusesabagina- a Hutu, the film is sending out a message that during genocide there were those brave men and women who took sides to protect the Tutsis who could have easily fallen victim to the *machetes* and knobkerries of the *Interahamwe*. However, it can also be argued that by giving prominence to the exploits of a single person – Rusesabagina, *Hotel Rwanda*'s narrative promotes a Eurocentric stereotype in which an individual is raised above the community (Adhikari 2007). This kind of representation of the participants in the genocide simplifies the genocide, even when such portrayal of individual heroism is meant to suggest that individual people's efforts can make a difference in a context of violence and death (Prunier 1995:40). The idea that people make history is confirmed in *Hotel Rwanda* when the audiences sees Rusesabagina's meeting with George Rutaganda who is the leader of the *Interahamwe* militia. The two enter into a deal in which Rutaganda is

supposed to supply beer to the hotel—Des Mille Collines. But instead of having crates of beer, brand new *machetes* from China fall down from the truck. At this point in the narrative *Hotel Rwanda* introduces timbre sounds that issues from a flute to capture the heightened sense of fear in Rusesabagina. China's double standards is revealed and condemned since in third World discourses on development, China is often portrayed as a redeemer of Africa. This depiction of China as complicit in the troubles in Rwanda shows how the director is sensitive to the international dimension of the forces that were defining the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. It is therefore, to the credit of *Hotel Rwanda* to have deconstructed the image of China so that the negative stereotype attached to China should make the African audience of the film to rethink their relationship with the international arena.

In other words, *Hotel Rwanda* uses the *machetes* as metonym for the bestiality of China. The film therefore succeeds in bringing into its narrative structures a questioning of the off-screen realities of competition brought by the concept of globalization and commercialization that force countries like China to become unscrupulous in their dealings with Africans. In a sense then, the genocide in Rwanda is also a product of the greedy of not only Western but also some Asian countries. The internationalization of the guilty for genocide in Rwanda is significant in so far as it undermines the image of the West and of China in particular as centres of modernity because their notion of progress is in part based on the violation of African people and exploitation of their resources.

4.3 *Hotel Rwanda* and the Politics of the language of silencing the RPF narrative

One of the criticisms that can be leveled at *Hotel Rwanda* is that the film leaves the audiences in suspense as to who could have carried out the assassination of president Habyrimana, the event of which triggered the killing of the Tutsis. The criticism here is that the director did not do sufficient research to establish this fact which could have undermined Hutu claims that it was the Tutsis who brought down the plane that killed two Hutu presidents from Rwanda and Burundi. But the 'multi-voicedness' and expressive plasticity (Bakhtin in Ponzio 1993: 20) of verbal messages issued by RTLM can transgress its intended aim which was to point a finger at the Tutsi and actually ends up pointing a finger of blame on the Hutus. For example, Grunfeld and Huijboom suggest that is possible that '...Hutu extremists shot down the airplane to prevent the

Arusha negotiation from being implemented, and to use Habyarimana's assassination as a pretext to start their planned genocide' (2007:154).

Another explanation from Grunfeld and Huijboom(2007) suggests that major general Paul Kagame himself a Tutsi ordered the attack which was meticulously carried out by an elite group of ten Rwanda Patriotic Front(RPF) officers. Although these findings are contestable, their potency can be used to deconstruct the dominant motif in *Hotel Rwanda's* genocide narrative that always portray Tutsi as victims and Hutu as aggressors. For example Umutesi (2004) draws attention to the atrocities that were carried out by RPF soldiers on Hutu refugees in the forests of Eastern Congo and Kibeho refugee camp, and this evidence of RPF cruelty also shows that the Tutsi narrative of victimology is brittle. Harting (2008) gives another interpretation when he comments that through its rhetoric of darkness and the embedded voice of ethnic hatred, *Hotel Rwanda* ironically constructs Africa through the Conradian trope of the monstrous and the spectacular that promotes an exceptionalist narrative to the Rwandan genocide. In support of this criticism on *Hotel Rwanda's* failure to bring into crisis the ethnic narrative it constructs, Adhikari describes extensively the divisive tactics of westerners when he asserts that it was the Belgians that created divisions between the Tutsi and the Hutus: '... They picked people with thinner noses, lighter skins. They used to measure the width of people's noses. The Belgians used the Tutsi to run the country. Then, when they left, they gave the power to the Hutus and of course the Hutu took revenge on the elite Tutsi for years of repression' (2007:283).

Instead of interrogating this representation without ambiguity, *Hotel Rwanda*, repeatedly uses an image of Hutu- Tutsi split in most scenes of its narrative to 'fix' and essentialise' the cultural and political stereotypes centred on the notion of 'distinct difference' (Mamdani 2001:57). This criticism can however, be balanced by the fact that in one of the scenes in the film, *Hotel Rwanda* depicts a two-minute bar room scene in which a Rwandan journalist explains the difference between Hutu and Tutsi to a western counterpart, Jack –Dalglish(Joan Phoenix). After questioning two patrons at the bar about their identities –of which one turns out to be Hutu, the other, Tutsi – the journalist concludes that the two Rwandans from the two ethnic groups could be 'twins'. Here, *Hotel Rwanda* effects a revision of the stereotypes of social identities of the Hutus and the Tutsis that threaten to solidify or fossilize into unchanging images, especially when these identities are given a biological slant. Fortunately, at this point in the Rwandan

narrative of genocide in the film the director shows that the ethnic distinctions that are often used to describe the source of the genocide are indeed, artificial. In other words, it is the manipulation of social identities by politicians and political parties for their own purposes during the Rwandan genocide that was central to the inflaming of Hutu-Tutsi animosities with fatal consequences.

Hotel Rwanda therefore also succeeds in showing that biological traits that are physical were racialized and ethnicized to a point where those to whom the identities were ascribed began to believe in them with the ugly reality that neighbours turned against each other in an orgy of killing the Tutsis and some moderate Hutus. It is thus important that *Hotel Rwanda* never ceases to seize the moment to depict Rusesabagina and Tatiana because their presence in the film as a Hutu, and Tatiana as a Tutsi married to a Hutu enables the film to refute the stereotypes that all Tutsis were victims and that all Hutus were killers. The actual person Rusesabagina and Zoellner reveal in their book that: ‘there would have been almost no survivors of the genocide without the thousand of secret kindnesses dispensed under the cover of night. We will never know the names of all those who opened their homes to hide would-be victims. Rwanda was full of ordinary killers, it is true, but it was also full of ordinary heroes’ (Rusesabagina and Zoellner 2006:255-6). This frank admission is important for its realization that the genocide narrative is a memorial that reveals that ordinary men and women participated in the genocide both as victims and heroes. In other words, the constructed heroism invested in Paul Rusesabagina and Tatiana is just but a part of the story that is constantly battling with off-screen memories of other heroes and heroines which could not be filled in *Hotel Rwanda’s* running or screening time and space of enunciation that takes 90 minutes. This romance narrative in *Hotel Rwanda* indicates the possibility of reconciliation of the ethnic groups in post genocide Rwanda.

4.4 *Hotel Rwanda* and the portrayal of Tutsis as children of Sisyphus

Although *Hotel Rwanda* attempts to capture the realities of the Rwandan genocide, the plot of its narrative is not further explored beyond the boundaries of the family drama. This has prompted scholars like Umutesi (2004) to suggest that while a film may not cover all aspects of a genocide, *Hotel Rwanda* suffers from self-censorship because its director fails to capture the killing of Hutu refugees in Zaire because the film was produced to placate the new rulers of Rwanda who enforce democracy in the post genocide period in which ‘dissentious’ voices are silenced by the new government of Paul Kagame under the slogan ‘never again’ (Marysse and Reyntjents 2005).

As further argued by Mamdani (2004) the ideology of ‘never again’ seem to say not again will Tutsis be nationally humiliated, but this ideology of ‘never again’ is not necessarily extended to protect any other people who are not Tutsis. In *Hotel Rwanda*, ‘never again’ is an ideology of exclusion; the contradictions between the RPF and Tutsi survivors , between the new Tutsi-led government and the entire Hutu population are not hinted at and consequently not resolved.

Because of this particular failing, *Hotel Rwanda* sustains its narrative of the suffering of the Tutsi in contrast to the cheering *Interahamwe* militias in the streets of Kigali. Although the *Interahamwe* militias are stereotyped as senseless and ruthless thugs, nothing can steal away their communal sensibility (Mirzoeff 2005:3) which makes them work together for a common objective of trying to eliminate all Tutsi and moderate Hutus. For example, the memorable cut-up shot in the whole film is the one in which the cameraman uses a live footage of a possibly Tutsi woman being hacked to death by what appear to be five *Interahamwe* militia men. This central but repulsive scene is captured in a long shot as if to distance it from the audience, showing alternative blows from *machetes* slicing into the body of the woman in a fashion that approximates what Mbembe describes as the ‘systematic application of pain’ (Mbembe 2001: 103). This ugly scene summarizes what the Hutu extremist government had chosen to do to its citizens.

The almost silhouette effect of the ugly scene showing the hacking of a woman with *machete* wielding men is beautifully and graphically presented, and yet its ritualistic dissonance is the knowledge that one is being murdered. It is important to highlight the fact that such depiction of the victimhood of the Tutsis is meant to draw the audience’s attention to the depravity of the *Interahamwe* militias and their state sponsors of violence. Since this scene is a real picture of a real event that can be verified, one can draw the conclusion here, that *Hotel Rwanda* also uses raw pictures as evidence to authenticate the film’s construction and representation of the Tutsis as the people who bore the brunt of the genocide the most. More significantly, the moral outrage that this scene generates reveals how *Hotel Rwanda*’s representation of violence is meant to create a sense or an awareness of the evil of genocide. This portrayal shows how the director of the film succeeds in reaching to the affective domains of human horror, pity, and creates revulsion that is supposed to conscientise Rwandans in particular and Africans in general about the need to prevent genocide. To this extent, *Hotel Rwanda* succeeds as an imaginative narrative

to interrogate the darker side of human beings and thus provides irrefutable evidence that the Tutsis were a targeted group in the genocide.

The success of *Hotel Rwanda* in bringing the horror of genocide in the audience's living rooms has however, not gone unquestioned. For example, the identity of the woman who is being hacked is not revealed and therefore it can be difficult to conclude that the woman is Tutsi. The militias who are killing are depicted as remorseless and yet in some situations, innocent Hutus were forcefully co-opted into the *Interahamwe* movement and then forced to kill the Tutsis and moderate Hutus (Mironko 2006). In support of *Hotel Rwanda's* stereotyping Tutsis as victims and Hutus as aggressors, it can be argued that the director of the film's overall concern is not to isolate the killing and argue whether it is of Tutsis or moderate Hutus, but to condemn any such killing. Further, the director seems not interested in understanding or explaining the motivations of those who killed, because some Hutus such as Rusesebagina refused to kill, but agreed to protect the Tutsis and moderate Hutus. This said of *Hotel Rwanda's* contradictory representation of the genocide, scholars such as Onstad have argued that depicting acts of cruelty in a melodramatic fashion such as in the film's scenes where dead bodies are scattered everywhere can, '... desensitize viewers to horror and violence because of their extremities' (2005:3). Apocalyptic depictions of gory situations such as those that obtained in the Rwandan genocide are said to remind film producers and audiences that pain is an individual experience that is irreproducible, and it dies with those people whose bodies were subjected to that pain (Sontag 2004).

However, despite the presence of grim images showing the horror of death, *Hotel Rwanda's* narrative is not without its lighter moments. There is this fascinating scene at the hotel, Mille Collines when everyone's spirit is high as symbolized by broad daylight, children playing games against the background of a green *mis-en-scene*. There is a general atmosphere of excitement because everyone expects to be rescued by UN peacekeepers and transported to peaceful neighboring countries such as Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. But *Hotel Rwanda* subverts this optimism by representing this hope of a possible rescue as only for western whites and some few diplomats from some African countries. The majority of the Tutsi minority are not admitted into possible safety. The UN representative in the film makes this point clear when he says that: 'No Rwandans, foreigners only'. The background but ominous sounds in the film accompanying this

announcement suddenly intensifies to capture the dejection of the Tutsis and moderate Hutus who are prevented from boarding the UN vehicles even after trying to struggle and haggle only to be pushed back by UN representatives to make way for white foreigners. At this point, *Hotel Rwanda*'s narrative should be commended for showing the selective and hypocritical nature of UN staff that smacks of cavalier attitudes of the international community whose cameras were focused on the installation of Nelson Mandela as the first black president of the new South Africa which was being worldly celebrated against the background of the massacre of nearly 1 million people in Rwanda. Bowden captures the racial attitudes of the west in abandoning Rwanda to the *genocidaires* when he recreates the perception in America that: 'One dead American is equal to a handful of Europeans. Hundred of Asians might die to 'rate' the same treatment. And bottom of the list, shamefully, are the thousand of Africans who must die before their tragedy will measure up at all' (200:53).

It is possible to argue that the representations of the Tutsis as lacerated, mainly with corpses scattered around, in *Hotel Rwanda* inadvertently 'fixes' and links black bodies to notions of savagery, wildness and uncouthness (Jackson et al 2009). Further commenting on the concepts of body and 'visuality', Fuery and Fuery (2003) argue that the body and all its contours exemplify the questioning of all cultural and political institutions and their inflexible values and meanings embedded in their signifying processes. This observation by Fuery and Fruey (2003) can make some perceptive audiences to interrogate *Hotel Rwanda*'s ways of signifying the black body in the genocide narrative. Sontag thinks that '... uglifying—showing something at its worst, is a modern function of image presentation of war and violent conflicts that serves a didactic purpose and invites active response' (2004:4). This form of representation should become the species of rhetoric that reiterates and agitates for social change by showing violence at its worst. In contrast, (Varaharajan, 2008) believes that whatever advantages understood as real or imagined, such a style of representing images of dead people has largely been criticized for creating a 'spectacle of excess' that reduces the subject reference to a 'commodity' of affect. In fact, Harting (2008) expands Varaharajan's (2008) argument when he says that through its depiction of the dead black body, *Hotel Rwanda* creates a spectacle of the African corpse that serves as a historically and rhetorically continuous signifier of the abject object and that off-screen the bones of the death Africans are memorialised for the purpose of attracting western tourists.

This comment implies that *Hotel Rwanda* has not totally been able to wade off the lure of representing Africa using the colonial trope of Africans as people needing the west to serve them from destroying themselves. It is a portrayal of Africans that ironically invest the west with the moral authority to pass judgment on Africans even when the west (America and France) played a major negative role in the Rwandan genocide first by refusing to declare the massacre as genocide, and second, by not volunteering armed forces to Rwanda which is what the west was doing in Bosnia and Serbia in 1994, the same year of the Rwandan genocide.

4.5 *Hotel Rwanda* and the suppression of a Third World political language of resistance

Nzabatsinda has high opinion of *Hotel Rwanda*'s stylistic rendition of the genocide when she praises the film for conveying

'...dramatic images that at times are breathtaking in moments of suspense, unbeatable in portraying of human suffering death, especially hard in the showing of human suffering and fear at the time soon to be victims contemplate powerlessly their own execution by assassins. The rhythm of the film evolves with trepidation and tension with many special effects: fire, blood, cars, gunshots, herders of people, at times clustered together in tiny spaces in a dire wait for death for some illusory salvation or rescue' (2005:234).

The images of fire, blood, cars, gunshot and hordes of people clustered in the tiny space of Hotel Mille Collines accentuates the sense of desperation and extreme vulnerability for the victims of the genocide. At the hotel, while the number of those seeking protection, injured and bloody refugees are being attended to by Rusesabagina who plays the role of the hotel manager, Gregoire—a worker at the hotel who has enormous connections with Hutu extremists, womanizes as if there is no war or death occurring outside the hotel. His numbed sense of the reality that he has contributed in violence intolerable for the Tutsis and moderate Hutus makes Gregoire a memorable caricature of a human being only typical of the militias who kill without remorse. Contrasted to the hurtful heart of Gregoire in *Hotel Rwanda*, is Rusesabagina who manages to bribe General Bizimungu by offering him 100 000 Francs for him to protect those Tutsis and moderate Hutus who have sought protective shelter at the hotel. It is arguable that this scene underscores that not all Hutus were murderers as both Rusesabagina and Gregoire are Hutus of different ideological persuasions serving different ends in life. This scene also enables the director to reveal the creativity of Rusesabagina, the hotel manager, and turns him into a hero

who saves lives by any means possible. This depiction of Rusesabagina helps to revise Mbembe's half-baked understanding of the notion of the, 'aesthetic of vulgarity' (2001:102) in which the banality of the human heart and life are negatively foregrounded as beyond spiritual redemption. This characterization of the positive role of Rusesabagina in *Hotel Rwanda* suggests that despite all the suffering and death in Rwanda, individuals had the temerity to use money to bribe their way in order to save human lives.

The irony is that Rusesabagina's creative intervention to prevent further killing of Tutsis and moderate Hutus through bribery can negatively suggest that African life is cheap, and can be equated to a commodity that can be bought and sold. For example Dallaire (2004) is less charitable towards Rusesabagina whose role in film when he trivializes him, by viewing Rusesabagina simply as a manager who worked with other people such as priests and nuns to keep the morale of refugees high while the actual physical protection of 1263 Tutsis and moderate Hutus at the Hotel was done by Tunisian and Ghanaian UNAMIR forces who were manning the area around Hotel Mille Collines. Dallaire (2004) further reveals that the actions and positive virtues that the character of Rusesabagina is often positively identified with were possible in real life as in the film because of the support that he got from UNAMIR forces. Adhikari (2007) is more critical of the romanticized portrayal of the positive stereotype given to Rusesabagina's character whom he views as an opportunist who took advantage of the support he got from Hutu extremist elites with lovers, relatives and friends who were entrusted to him. Implied in this critique is that *Hotel Rwanda's* depiction of Rusesabagina does not fully discourse the fact that he was selective of whom he chose to protect, and that no one may never know exactly to what extent Rusesabagina was implicated in the genocide. While there is no evidence in the film that the hotel manager chose to protect the victims of genocide on the basis of ethnicity, the fact that these criticisms are raised suggest that there could be more than one version of the story of Rusesabagina's heroism which have been suppressed in the film.

What is known is that the director of *Hotel Rwanda* has negatively stereotyped soldiers from the Third World countries who were present in Rwanda during the genocide. No where in the film does the audience see these soldiers actively engaging the *Interahamwe* who had the *machete* against the guns of UNAMIR. Malleus (2000:3) uses the term 'symbolical annihilation' to describe the absence of important characters from the scene of conflict such as the Rwandan

genocide. In *Hotel Rwanda* the constructed and represented passivity of the soldiers from Tunisia, Ghana, Bangladesh and other soldiers from Third World nations can tend to reinforce a negative stereotype which ‘naturalizes’ the perceived notion of the incompetence on the part of soldiers from Third World countries. Again, in its portrayal of the potential agency of the soldiers from the third world countries in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide, the film can create a sense in which the audience will feel that the film is suggesting that only the social forces from the west can change African lives for the better.

In the film, Colonel Olivier, head of UNAMIR, and a Canadian suggests that the west’s attitudes towards Rwanda is motivated by racial considerations. Colonel Olivier tells Rusesabagina that the western world cannot help him because he is ‘black...not even a nigger...[but] an African’. Fanon’s *Black Skin White Masks*(1967) had shown how levels of inferiority complexes were built among colonial subjects in Africa. In the actual film narrative of *Hotel Rwanda*, a sense of inferiority complex is revealed when Rusesabagina cries in the arms of Tatiana and begins to scold himself that: ‘I have no history. I’m nothing but a fool. They have handed me their shit and I’ve swallowed it’. This scene is accompanied by the sonorous sound from a flute whose timbre imitates the mournful behavior and the pathetic position of the victims of genocide in Rwanda.

4.6 *Hotel Rwanda* : Silencing of female discourses of human agency

Despite a spirited attempt to reveal and undermine the stereotypes that caused and were at the same time produced by the Rwanda genocide, *Hotel Rwanda* can also be faulted for providing a one-sided stereotype of the character of the Rwandan women in the film. For example, in the film, Rusesabagina’s attention is drawn towards the houses from which incessant cries and screaming from women emerged. The film uses the darkness as semiotic language to shroud the identity of men who urged other men to kill the Tutsi women, shouting, ‘kill them, prostitutes and witches’. The darkness that surrounds this event can symbolize the iniquity of the violator’s minds who view Tutsi women as prostitutes and witches. Here, women are portrayed negatively as weaklings. In the film, Tatiana is memorable as a character who is in constant fear of death. Other women are depicted as vulnerable and *machete* fodder. There is nowhere some Tutsi and Hutu women came together to defend their humanity or that of their children and husbands. Also, it is as if in the film the genocide only happened in the city of Kigali. Mamdani argues in the contrary, pointing that during the genocide some Hutu women ‘were actively involved,

killing with *machetes* and guns while others acted in support roles-allowing murder squads access to hospitals and homes, cheering on male killers and stripping the dead and looting their houses' (2001:225). It can be argued that if *Hotel Rwanda* is guilty of promoting an infantile and stereotypical image of the Rwandan women, Mamdani is also guilty of making a warrior out of most Hutu women. Umutesi (2004) has argued convincingly that during the Rwandan genocide some Tutsi women and Hutu women worked closely together not only to protect their loved ones but to grow food crops in rural Rwanda.

Furthermore, *Hotel Rwanda* should receive a fair share of criticism for only focusing on the pristine character of the church in most of its scenes involving nuns and priests. Evidence from written literature shows how some priests and nuns actually killed refugees and ordered gangs of young people to rape and kill Tutsi women. Mamdani suggests that, 'rather than a passive mirror reflecting tensions, the church was more of an epicentre radiating tension' (2001:22). Hospitals, schools, universities and colleges were involved as sites of genocidal murder. Although a film is metonymic or representational and has limited time and space to elaborate on all the intricacies of the genocide, one hoped that *Hotel Rwanda* could have given a spotlight of diverse 'players' that were involved in the genocide to capture a contradictory picture of the genocide narrative so as to '... mak[e] heroes and villains out of perpetrators and victims who may be both, or neither—but also require some nod to the unshowable reality beyond screen space' (Onstad, 2005:4). Instead, the film was more concerned in screening the dead bodies presented as mostly belonging to the Tutsis. The film made no efforts to explore how the Rwanda Patriotic Front also killed innocent Hutus and some Tutsis when the military machine of Kagame moved to dislodge the government of the Hutu extremists. Furthermore, the film does explore alternative explanations made by the real Paul Rusesabagina in his interview with television personality Oprah Winfrey when he says that '...we have to make it clear[that]: The million people who were killed included both Hutus and Tutsis. Because the president [Habyarimana] was a Hutu from the north, all Hutus elsewhere in the country were considered opposition'(Winfrey 2006:118). This revelation also considers regionalism as one of the primary factors that motivated the Rwandan genocide apart from its ethnic dimension.

While the stereotypic reference to Tutsi as 'tall trees' is meant to create a discourse of 'otherness' that would justify the elimination of Tutsi who 'looked Hutu', a good proportion of

people fall somewhere between the two radicalized identities (Adhikari,2007:284). So, in the context of the genocide, it is not possible that the *Interahamwe* killing machine could always succeed in identifying with precision who was Tutsi or Hutu especially for those people who did not have identity cards (Umutesi 2004). Despite this creative lapse on the part of the director of *Hotel Rwanda* the film should be credited for consciously undermining the stereotyped image of the *Interahamwe* as always subduing Tutsis. In the film, during one of the military encounters between the militia and the RPF before the complete defeat of the government of the Hutu extremists, audiences can view the *Interahamwe* being beaten to a retreat and with so many of them killed by the soldiers of the RPF. Dallaire actually argues that although the Rwanda genocide is the ultimate responsibility of those Hutu extremists, who planned, ordered, supervised and eventually conducted it the ‘... deaths of Rwandans can also be laid at the door step of Paul Kagame, who did not speed up his campaign when the scale of genocide became clear and talked with me (Dallaire) at several points about his fellow Tutsi’s who might have to pay the price’ (2004:515)

4.7 *Hotel Rwanda* and ideology of narrativity

According to White (1987) narrativity is the conscious and sometimes not-so-evident way in which a story is emplotted , its words and images selected, organized, edited and deployed to achieve coherence of a tale with a recognizable beginning, middle and ending. Narrativity is ideological because this process suggests how a story can resolve contradictions. *Hotel Rwanda* ends on a happy note with Tatiana and Rusesabagina united with their children and surviving relatives and friends. This ending re-establishes stability to the narrative of genocide that was through the film produced from the perspective of a fractured narrative. It is possible to argue that this ending of the film with a united family, and an extremist government thrown out of power can be interpreted as the triumph of the ideology of national reconciliation over ethnic particularism, a success story of love over death, and above all, a win for peace against war. *Hotel Rwanda`*s narrative is told through a simple linear plot with a little bit of flashback evident in the initial stages of the film. A linear style of presentation of the story may enable the audience to follow the film step by step. Nzabatsinda (2005:233) marvels at *Hotel Rwanda`*s way of exploiting what she calls, ‘the specificity of fiction’. That is, ‘the actors are not Rwandans and

the filming was done in the scenario of South Africa, yet all these representations in *Hotel Rwanda* seem so reliable, painful, terrible, and fascinating' (2005:233). Nzabatsinda's (2005) high regard of *Hotel Rwanda*'s setting and characterization in part derives from the expectation that the verbal and audiovisual images can open up possibilities of modalities that permit dialogue and multi-voicedness (Bakhtin 1981). Unfortunately, *Hotel Rwanda*'s method of representing the genocide did not allow for the creation of a broad as well as differentiated characterization of the main players in the story because the underlying motive of the film was the desire to implicate ethnicity as the main cause of the genocide. This is hardly plausible because ethnicity by itself does not cause genocide; but competition to scarce resources does, especially in a poisoned context in which one social group is perceived to be benefiting from state resources at the expense of other groups of people. The romantic narrative in *Hotel Rwanda* that revolves around the family also dissolves, and the film has not complicated it in a manner that reveals self doubts on the part of Rusesabagina and Tatiana about the future of Rwanda after 1994. This has robbed the film of a rare moment to reveal the different perceptions of its main characters in relating to the resolution of the issue of genocide in the film. The Hollywood format that *Hotel Rwanda* copies which emphasizes the existential exploits of an individual hero at the expense of collective heroism resulted in an epic story in which the commercial considerations to make it at the 'box office' in America, subordinated potential contradictory cultural and political narratives that were likely to produce a complicated representation of the genocide. This somewhat linear plot of the film confirms the desire for a coherent narrative with a beginning, middle and ending signified by ideological closures. These closures undermine critical debates on history, memory and individual as well as collective identity formation in the period after 1994. The structure of the film plot, and the language of characterizing contradictions in depicting the genocide is manipulated to imply peaceful resolution of conflicts when in reality post-genocide Rwanda is a fractured space of contending royalties.

Beyond the problem of the failure to effectively use the semiotic systems available in Africa to portray the genocide in its material, spiritual and cosmic dimensions, *Hotel Rwanda* left some questions unanswered. Umutesi laments that 'little has been written or said through oral or visual images of the mass killings that targeted one and half million Hutu refugees who fled to Eastern Congo' (2004:84). Lemarchand comments that the 'conspiracy of silence or historical amnesia' that Tutsi officials used to seal off the fate of Hutu victims at Kibeho and Eastern Congo can

reflect how official symphonies of power work in order to undermine the ‘stories and histories’ of those considered to be weak in the society(1998:4). In the film, *Hotel Rwanda*, the RPF is depicted largely as ‘uncontaminated’ automatons who share with the same passion the need to remove the Hutu extremists from power. Internal discord within the ranks and file of the RPF were suppressed. Mirzoeff (2005) observes that events at the global market which caused the fall in coffee prices at the international market and set in motion a serious economic crisis in Rwanda has not been explored as constituting one of the most important factors that helped spark the genocide even when it manifested itself as a struggle between ethnic groupings.

A drop in the price of coffee, Rwanda’s major export, meant that all those people who were employed in the coffee industry had to be retrenched and therefore forced to join more numbers of those unemployed roaming the streets of Kigali. Furthermore, the retrenchment of ‘bread winners’ also meant that a lot of families had to suffer with little or no provision of education and health facilities with peasants also suffering from lack of adequate farming inputs. According to Prunier (1995) the economic crisis in Rwanda, widespread corruption, geographic exclusion and disappointment with the slow pace of development all combined to challenge Habyarimana’s power from within. The film does not recreate the internal struggles within the government of the Hutu extremists thus, living it to the audience to think that the Rwanda society of 1994 was ruled by a cohesive group of people with similar aspirations. This is a political stereotype that needs to be contested because if left to itself, it will help the new Rwandan government to discriminate against all Hutus.

Because the film seems to have been produced with the need to placate the new government, no where in *Hotel Rwanda* has the style of leadership of Paul Kagame during his struggle to remove the Hutu extremists, and after 1994 been brought to scrutiny. French argues that:

‘...nothing could ever pardon the organizers of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, yet it is no less a fact that the wild adventurous of the Tutsi leader Paul Kagame, who mounted a Rwandan insurgency from the bases in Uganda in 1990, primed a country that has already long been a powder keg for a sharp escalation of violence and hatred’ (2004:143)

Hotel Rwanda’s genocide narrative started from, and ends in 1994 leaving behind a host of factors that made the genocide possible. The film is therefore complete in its incompleteness or incomplete in its completeness.

4.8 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to explore the ways in which the Rwandan genocide is represented in the film, *Hotel Rwanda*. In particular, the chapter sought to question how memory and history related to the genocide are creatively given form in the film. The chapter also aimed to analyze the film on its own terms as an independent creative work of art. The overall objective was to critically contest the stereotype of the ethnic narratives of genocide that *Hotel Rwanda* mainly constructed but also attempted to deconstruct in the same film. Theories of production /text, audience-reception and postcolonial analysis were used because of their superior advantage to reveal the contradictions in the film's ways of constructing and critiquing various political and cultural stereotypes that were used to justify killing of nearly one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

A combination of the theories also enabled this chapter to explain where, how and why *Hotel Rwanda* adopted an ambivalent attitude towards the political and cultural stereotypes the film so, created. It was suggested in the analysis that the strength of *Hotel Rwanda* lies in its capacity to first, base its narrative of genocide on the assumption that ethnicity was at the core of the genocide. *Hotel Rwanda* was also credited for attempting to revise this assumption. The presence of Rusesabagina (Hutu) and Tatiana (Tutsi) was depicted as a tool used to undermine explanations that the Rwandan genocide was only motivated by ethnic considerations. Despite these successes, *Hotel Rwanda's* authorial ideology remained janus-like; it still considers ethnicity to have played an important role in determining the causes and the courses of the genocide. The analysis disagreed and argued that ethnicity does not, by itself, create genocide, but that the struggle for competition of scarce resources can contribute to violence that leads to genocide. It was also observed that the film constructs and sustains a Hutu-Tutsi binary through its use of a romantic plot based on a family drama during the genocide. However, this plot was used only to demonstrate that Hutus could marry Tutsis. There was no attempt to complicate this narrative by portraying the self doubts in the characters. It seems that the characters in the film knew exactly all they wanted; Rusesabagina wanted to protect the Tutsis and some moderate Hutus, Tatiana wanted to play a supportive role as Tutsi victim and wife to a Hutu man. The *Interahamwe* only wanted to kill all Tutsis. No space has been left to reveal the contradictions within the *Interahamwe*, the Hutu extremist government, and the liberating force of the Rwanda

Patriotic Front. Thus, history was re-embedded in the ethnic dichotomies that *Hotel Rwanda* failed to totally question and dislodge.

Hotel Rwanda also puts undue emphasis on the heroic exploits of the individual character when in fact recent literature shows that many Hutus and Tutsis helped each other to survive the genocide. The community of fighters against genocide have been pushed in the background and what has been projected by the film is a major protagonist-Paul Rusesabagina, and this romanticises a theme of genocide which needed some serious reflection. The chapter suggested this simplification of history is caused by the underlying commercial imperative rooted in Hollywood film paradigm. The central scene in *Hotel Rwanda* in which a woman is being hacked by some Hutu militia is the best example of how the film created a sense of moral outrage for the audience to act against genocide in future. However, the chapter also argued that the scene evinces the spectacle of excess in which it was depicted that violence came only from the Hutus to the Tutsis. This problem of creating the spectacle of excess can inhibit clear analysis of the historical forces implicated in the film. In the following chapter, I will closely analyze the phenomenon of the spectacle of excess and inhibition in the film *Sometimes in April* (2004). The aim will be to interrogate the roots of this mode of representing genocide, and the effects of such a depiction on an audience increasingly demanding to have a more complicated and nuanced understanding of the dynamics of the Rwandan genocide through the medium of film.

Chapter 5

Contesting the language of ‘Spectacle of Excess’ in the portrayal of the Rwandan genocide in *Sometimes in April* (2005)

5.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter four I analyzed *Hotel Rwanda* and showed that the film suggests in its depiction of the Rwanda genocide that not all Hutus killed. But the film did little to dispel the myth that all who died were ethnic Tutsis. *Hotel Rwanda* relapsed into portraying an ethnic narrative in which all who suffered were Tutsis. The film elevated an individual moderate Hutu as the hero, and in the process *Hotel Rwanda* forgot to depict the role of regional powers such as Burundi and Uganda in the Rwandan genocide. Hutu masses are depicted as spontaneous killers. These [mis]representations or under-representations of the players in the genocide fail to differentiate the levels at which different people were involved. The effect is that the film reduces the genocide into one solely motivated by ethnic envy and hatred of the Hutus over the lifestyle of the Tutsis. *Hotel Rwanda* therefore sentimentalizes history in order to sustain a narrative in which only the Tutsis suffered in the genocide. The potential political effect of such a misrepresentation is that it can encourage political discrimination against the Hutus in post-Rwanda society, and criminalizes all the Hutus. This inadvertently undermines the possibility of solid reconciliation in the post genocide Rwanda.

5.1. Defining the ‘spectacle of excess’ in film images

Chapter five focuses on *Sometimes in April*(2005), a film directed by Raoul Peck, whose subject is also on the Rwandan genocide. Using the benefit of hindsight, *Sometimes in April* is constructed in such ways that compensates for the lack of ‘historical data’ in *Hotel Rwanda* .The film consciously addresses the historical origins of the Rwanda genocide, its actual occurrence and the post-genocide period marked by the ‘truth and reconciliation’ tribunals that were used to try and convict people who committed acts of genocide in 1994. *Sometimes in April* (2005)

provides a plausible understanding of the Rwanda genocide. The film introduces real verifiable history through its incorporating of cut up pictures of real people commenting on the genocide during the genocide. Furthermore, the film produces its own meanings via the manipulation of the language embodied in dialogue, visuals, sounds and the central theme of death and the dead African body.

However, while *Sometimes in April* shows successful ways in which its scriptwriter and director, Raoul Peck, changes conventions of fictional cinema, history and introduces some documentary snippets in a largely feature film, the central argument of this chapter is that *Sometimes in April* (2005) largely fails to escape the depiction of the genocide in sentimental terms. This is because the film director opts for the figure of the 'spectacle of excess' in depicting the horror of the genocide. Sentimentality as a tropological discourse of power can trivialize representations of the genocide but in *Sometimes in April*, sentimentality encourages depiction of the genocide as a 'spectacle' whose power or authority is based on excess of signification on events' single dimension or aspect. Ndebele suggests that the 'spectacle of excess' in literary and film representations dwells on the most startling or shocking events in which 'it is the manifest display of violence and brutality that captures the imaginations of the spectators'(1991:37) since 'there is little attempt to delve into intricacies of motive or social process.'(ibid: 39). Russell adds that 'in cinema, spectacular violence has become the sign of crisis, seducing the spectators into a belief of an apocalypse' (Russell 1993:174).

According to William Warner, in the Hollywood film, the spectacular action of Rambo is related to the popular pleasures of pain because 'the appeal of the film depends upon subjecting hero and audience to a certain masochistic scenario – the pleasure of intensely felt pain, and crippling incapacity, as it is written into the action, and onto the body of the hero.'(1992:673). In Warner's understanding, therefore, the 'spectacle' emphasizes the excess of pain, and 'suffering' and these aspects can prevent the audience from interpreting the same images in different ways.

As a technique of depicting reality, the 'spectacle of excess' immobilizes and undermines the process of generating alternative and creative knowledge during interpreting films. Janet Wolff(1992: 706-718) suggests that since the 'spectacle' is an image constructed only on a basis of singularity of values that emphasize difference, the image depicted in spectacular terms can hinder, prevent and inhibit access to more profound meanings in film texts during interpretation.

However, Bhabha complicates the notion of how the spectacle of excess can function within cultural texts. First, Bhabha believes that a stereotype is born out of excess of signification, where an image is offered as secure, stable, and coherent. In this line of thought, the spectacle of excess that is based on projecting ‘singularities of difference’ (Bhabha 1996:44) is an arrested, fixated form of representation. The desire for stability, for purity in the stereotype or the spectacular promotes an understanding of life from an unchanging and singular position. The irony is that the images represented through the spectacle of excess are inherently divided and unstable so that it is possible to recognize the potential of a wide *range* of interpretive possibilities in the stereotype. Bhabha’s radical reinterpretation of the ‘stereotype-as-suture’ (Bhabha 1996:49) suggests that the spectacular symbolized as excessively unified is actually fractured against its own desire for uniformity. This reality reveals the ‘ambivalence’ (Ibid, 49) in the potential meanings of any object represented through the spectacle of excess. To fully explain and understand how the figure of the spectacle of excess is used in characterizing the Rwandan genocide in the film, *Sometimes in April*, we can enlist the help of theories of spectatorship.

5.2 Film theories and genocide in *Sometimes in April* (2005)

Theories of spectatorship acknowledge that in the ‘negotiable’ terms between a film text and spectators, cultural meanings are not static, and a pre-constituted entity. Spectators shape and are shaped by the cinematic experience within an endless dialogic process. Bakhtin’s (1981) idea and use of the term ‘heteroglossia’ explains how culturally and politically generated narrative ‘voices’ are a place of encounter between spectators and film text. Regarded through this theory of spectatorship, *Sometimes in April* (2005) is seen in this chapter, as a space of ‘...liminality involving changes, resistances, slippages, confirmations and even subversions of the ‘intended cultural and political codes’ (Shohat and Stam 1994:354). Reading a series of ‘gaps’ and ‘silences’ in *Sometimes in April* (2005) can undermine the signifiers of stability in stereotypes that tend to ‘naturalize,’ ‘fix’ for all times and ‘essentialize’ the cultural and political meanings in film language.

Theories of language and discourse analysis are used in this chapter to explain the nature of film language such as the verbal and audio-visual and to deliberately unsettle any attempt at formalizing the cultural and political stereotypes in *Sometimes in April*. Philosophical

deconstructionists such as Derrida (2005:42) have suggested that ‘points of undecidability’ in film texts can enable film language to undermine the desire to both ‘cohere’ and ‘organize.’ This subversive action is useful when fracturing the unitary systems in monological representations of weighty subjects such as genocide in *Sometimes in April* (2005). Interpreting film ‘against the grain’ of ways of seeing what has become ‘commonsensical’ (Gramsci 1971) is a desirable undertaking that draws out dynamic, and unexpected readings from the film’s genocide narrative.

In this chapter, the portrayal of the ‘spectacular African corpse’ manifests in *Sometimes in April* through piles of dead black bodies. This depiction can reinforce and validate the Rwandan genocide as ‘spectacle of excess’ of the bestiality of Africans. The chapter then shows that the number of nearly one million people who are confirmed as killed in the actual genocide is a huge number; it belies the aspect of the spectacle of excess. The modes of signifying the genocide in a highly impressionistic language that acts as a fictional analogue of the actual genocide is also a spectacle of excess. As Williams (1993:210) comments, ‘...what counts in spectacle is not the visible as guarantee of veracity (of truth or reality) but the visible as a mask or lure. What counts is not the instance of looking as observation, but rather as a fascinated gaze.’ It is further argued that although *Sometimes in April* (2005) finds it important to uglify the African corpse in order to put across ‘a never forget’ moral lesson, the act invites a ‘fascinating gaze’ that confirms racial stereotypes. Racial tropes are used to view the black body as a symbol of abjection, dejection, un-cleanliness and social fragmentation. This denigration of the black body is an age-old cultural stereotype. The international community has made important political decision on Africa and Rwanda that are based on the wrong assumptions in these stereotypes.

When theorizing visual culture, Kristeva (1982) views the body –both in its lively and deathly state as a visual code of communication in which the symbolic order is displayed and maintained. Through verbal and non-verbal codes, a living body is a purveyor of the ‘preferred objectives’ of film producers. In its deathly state, the body is an object that can be used as evidence to support the aims of the dominant ideological system in suppressing alternatives narratives of the same dead body. While the image of the body can allow images to refract and reflect meanings that question the status quo, the same dead body in film, as in real life, can be manipulated by contesting sides to seek legitimacy for their ascending cultural narratives.

In this chapter, the dead African corpse is interpreted as a 'speaking' subject and an object of death, and a signifier of disruption, challenge and revolt against its 'excessive portrayal in *Sometimes in April* (2005). Kristeva (1982) uses the word *semiotique* to show that the dead body can be opposed to rigidity of signification in preference to the generation of new meanings, new perspectives, and new ways of articulating countercultures (Gilroy 1992). As a space of split meanings, and 'spectacle of excess' the representations of the dead body in *Sometimes in April* are paradoxical in that the condition of knowing and seeing the dead body in the film is dependent on an antagonistic but exaggerated mode of depiction in the film. Having outlined the central argument, supporting arguments and their theoretical anchorage, it is important to proceed to the next section that outlines the plot of and briefly gives the thematic background in *Sometimes in April* (2005).

5.3 The plot of *Sometimes in April* (2005)

Responding to interview questions from HBO film studios online from his home in Paris, Raoul Peck the writer and director of *Sometimes in April* (2004) states that the film's storyline is drawn from the biblical allusion of Cain and Abel. At the core of *Sometimes in April* (2004) is the relationship between Augustin Muganza (Idris Elba), a captain in the Rwanda army in 1994, and Honore (Oris Erhuero) his brother who is a Hutu extremist and broadcaster at Radio-Television Libre des Mille Collines (RTL). Augustin is married to Jeanne (Carole Karemera) a Tutsi, with whom he has three children and so he is also a target of the *genocidaires*. Trapped in their house at the outbreak of genocide in early April 1994, Augustin opts to entrust his wife and sons to his brother Honore who unwillingly agrees to drive them to the Hotel Mille Collines where they hope to seek protection. This is the last time Augustin was to see his family as he gets himself caught up in a desperate struggle to save his own life.

This simple and straightforward plot allows Peck, the director of the film to let the events in the film flow clearly and it helps viewers to follow the story without agonizing for the meaning of the film – at least at the surface level. However, White (1987) has argued that the mode of emplotment of a story is not neutral. A small detail that the story is a fictional analogue of the biblical story of Cain and Abel produces ways of significations that have helped to structure the film. For example, in the bible Cain and Abel are blood brothers but due to envy, jealousy and anger, Cain killed his sibling. The analogue cannot be lost, for as many critics have remarked,

the Hutu and the Tutsi and the Twa once lived peacefully before the Hutus massacred the Tutsis in 1994. This murder was despite the fact that the Hutus, Tutsis and Twa in Rwanda speak the same *Kinyarwanda* language, and shared the same culture, until the genocide of 1994 (Mamdani 2001; Semujanga 2003; Pottier 2002) whose conditions of possibility were partly created by the Belgians who favored the Tutsi, and the French who favored the Hutu. This binary plot sets the context of depicting the Hutu as bad and the Tutsi as good. Furthermore, this characterization is the beginning of the production of the image of the genocide through the figure of the spectacle of excess.

5.4 Interrogating the cultural and political narratives of genocide in *Sometimes in April* (2005)

Sometimes in April (2005) begins by showing a map of Africa captured in a long shot. The map gradually zooms-in as the History of Rwanda, in subtitles dashes up-screen. A voice-over confirms the history captured in words as Rwanda is brought into focus to cover the whole screen. The technique of montage (layering) used to capture the history of Rwanda through the use of sub-titles, narrative voice-over and a map allows the viewer to visualize the geographical space of the Rwandan genocide, internalize the features of a country that experienced a devastating genocide in which nearly 1 million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed in a space of three months by Hutu extremists. Commenting on the importance of the 'discourse of conventional history' in giving film narratives a sense of authentic rootedness in real experience, Bickford-Smith (2007:532) says that it, '... relates, reflects, comments on, or critiques already existing body of data, arguments and debates about the topic at hand'. Harrow (2005) believes that some snippets of real history can help contextualize a film narrative within a known cultural milieu. However, film narrative is a 'complete' cultural text which does not always need raw data from history to compensate for the absence of reference to known people. Harrow argues that in fact, film texts aim to de-familiarize our experiences so that we should experience life as depicted through the imagistic language of film which is not the everyday language.

Put differently, Harrow suggests that the danger of imposing or interpreting film meanings against or alongside a finished historical text wrongly implies that the veracity or truthfulness of story in a film text can grow in stature when measured against common history. The danger is

that authored histories can suppress other histories and memories worth of telling which film texts try to manifest through a combination of visual, verbal and auditory sensory images.

In the case of *Sometimes in April* (2005) Rwandans are let to narrate their own history as most of the cast and the crew are Rwandans. Commenting on the use of local actors, Taubin (2009:1) says that, ‘much of the film gravity and grace comes from the fact that the people on-screen are acting out their own national tragedy’. This gives Rwandans a sense of ownership of the film, and of the stories that reflect their experiences in the genocide. For example, in *Sometimes in April* (2005) the narrative unfolds by flashing back in time to show a visual image of how Tutsi kings were installed to leadership positions by European colonizers. A voice-over confirms what is being shown through visuals by narrating the relationship that existed between the Tutsi king Rwabugiri (1880s) and German (1884-1933) colonizers and later, the Belgians (1933-1962). By giving a glimpse into the history of colonialism, *Sometimes in April* (2005) tries to correct what Mamdani’s (2001) has observed as the ‘silences’ in academic research on the Rwandan genocide. These silences relate to the presentation of the Rwandan genocide as an anthropological oddity with no history nor plausible reasons to account for its occurrence. The task of providing elements of factual history that *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) failed to do, is in *Sometimes in April* well presented in order to help the viewers to understand the Rwandan past and link this past to the genocide of 1994. In Rwanda’s recent history embedded in myths, folklore, legends and memory, Tutsis are negatively stereotyped as ‘cockroaches’ ‘collaborators’ ‘murderers’ ‘traitors’ ‘invaders’ and rebels’. This negative labelling or ‘card-stacking strategy’ was used by Hutu extremists in 1994 to build a case against Tutsi so that they could be politically persecuted.

Sometimes in April (2005) has a literary history to tell and in this history some Hutus are also victims of the genocide. *Sometimes in April*’s responses to the narratives of genocide constructed by conventional historians is both to affirm their narratives as true and also the film narrative questions some of the ideological assumptions about ethnic explanations on the origins of the genocide. In the film, through a flash-forward move, audiences are brought to a classroom where the killing of some Tutsis took place. In the classroom, the teacher is at pains to describe the history of genocide to his pupils. A girl asks an emotionally disturbing question: “why could it (genocide) not have been stopped? The teacher answers that, ‘I don’t know what people could

have done to stop it". In this exchange there are different interpretations of the film that one can establish from this brief dialogue. First, a question from the pupil is given as a rhetorical device to bring to the fore how humanity failed the people of Rwanda in 1994 by not stopping the genocide. Secondly, the answer from the teacher symbolizes that there was a lack of political will-power to solve the Rwanda's recurrent problem of mass murder of ordinary Hutu and Tutsi people. Third, and on a sublime level, the answer from the teacher can be used as a negative stereotype which can suggest that African leaders are bereft of alternative ideas to solve political problems faced by their people. In this stereotype of Africa and the lack of care from its leaders the continent is portrayed as a de-historicized space of global political crisis and social abjections (Harting 2008). Thus, the innocence of a child's perspective encoded in the girl's question passes moral judgment to a generation of African leaders who have failed their own people.

Sometimes in April (2005) complicates the narrative of the Rwandan genocide by showing that one actor in the genocide could be a husband, father, hero, murderer and victim. These contradictions indicated in the shifts in roles during the genocide are brought in the film through the character of Augustin. During the genocide, he is in the Rwandan army and provides the murderous *Interahamwe* militia with training in effective methods for killing the Tutsis. And yet, Augustin is himself married to a Tutsi woman. The very act of providing military training to the *Interahamwe* means that Augustin is complicit in violence that caused genocide. Augustin thus participates in destroying his family. Although Augustin shows serious misgivings of being part-and-parcel of the military force that raises the spirit of genocide, he cannot extricate himself from the mishmash of military contradictions and challenges. When *Sometimes in April* (2005) provides the audiences with visual images of *Interahamwe* training sessions, the film is making a statement that the genocide was well planned and executed in a manner that oppose the views of those critics who argue that the Hutu extremists' participation in the genocide was spontaneous and uncoordinated from above. The film uses the visual images of the militias undergoing training to indicate that before the genocide there were visible signs that the militia was being trained to kill, but Africa and the whole world chose to look askance (Martin 2002). In this reading of the film, a political image is presented in which African governments are held responsible for training 'death squads' that are used to destabilize peace and stability much to the benefit of the African ruling elites.

In contrast to *Hotel Rwanda* that depicted the ordinary people committing acts of atrocities on other ordinary Africans as spontaneous, *Sometimes in April* is brave enough to suggest that it is the middle class, and the ruling elites who fomented the violence that resulted in the genocide because they stood to benefit the most from it. It is arguable that *machete-wielding* peasants and the lumpen people in Rwanda in general and Kigali in particular, could have been stopped from murdering the Tutsis, if there was enlightened leadership among the highest echelons of the Hutu ethnic group. The mass character of the killers can suggest that there were ‘legitimate’ historical grievances that the ordinary Hutus felt against the Tutsis. But, the anger and sometimes, the envy of the ordinary Hutu killers were goaded by the Hutu ruling elites. *Sometimes in April* is therefore more analytical in its depiction of the Rwandan genocide. The film does not downplay the role of ethnic stereotypes in creating conditions of animosity between the Hutus and the Tutsis. But *Sometimes in April* also suggest that the genocide was a product of inter- class struggles between the Hutu and Tutsi elites, as much as there were intra- class jealousies within the ruling class of the Hutus based on regional affiliations. The ideology of the Hutu extremists faction of Bogosora, Bizimungu and Bizimana’s strong coalition of hardliners pressured President Habyarimana to abandon talks for peace. This hardliner stance won the day in this Hutu intra- class war and its views were propagated onto the masses. To analyze the film in this way is not to accept the premise that the ordinary people do not have the capability of killing each other. In *Sometimes in April*, the ruling elites planned the genocide; the soldiers trained the militias and the militias executed the Tutsis and some moderate Hutus.

For example, in the film, Augustin talks to his wife about a death list that has just passed through his hands while at work. Regrettably, Augustin says that, in many regions in Rwanda, Hutu doctors, priests, nuns, and professors are implicated in organizing the genocide. Teachers register students by ethnicity. *Sometimes in April* (2005) reflects on the dynamic role played by the middle- class in the genocide. The myth of the middle class as the “voice of the voiceless” is questioned. In fact, by constructing the character of Augustin Muganza as the major protagonist, and also from a middle–class background, but married to a Tutsi wife, *Sometimes in April* succeeds in questioning misconceptions about the historical agency of the middle class in Rwanda in particular and Africa in general. Their role is not always progressive (Adhikari 2007).

However, the film director is too cautious and simply refuses to essentialize on human motivations, apportion blame, and at the same time the film refuses to apologize for the killers. It is arguable that *Sometimes in April* succeeds in capturing through the character of Augustin, the ever shifting roles of the killers and victims to the extent that one agrees with Mamdani's characterization of the Rwanda genocide as having been carried by people who were once victims but had now turned into killers(Mamdani 2001). The nuanced depiction of Augustin's character in *Sometimes in April*, - his role as husband to a Tutsi woman and trainer of *Interahamwe* - with his unresolved personal conflicts makes the film a credible account of the genocide. More important to read in *Sometimes in April* is the political argument being advanced which is that Africans can undermine each other. This perspective emerging from the film critically engages those views that heap all Africa's misfortune on Europe (Rodney 1982). *Sometimes in April* reveals that if colonialism has brought violence to Africans, the Africans themselves are capable of re-directing this violence onto other Africans.

In *Sometimes in April*, Kigali is a space not of peace but war. Smoke bellows from every corner. Human corpses are strewn everywhere in the streets. Augustin is seen giving instructions to his brother Honore to take his family to Hotel Mille Collines for protection. In an emotionally touching scene, Augustin is separated from his family. The sentiments that are built at this moment can lure audience's attention and make them castigate Augustin's tormentors, without considering the reality that Augustin is also complicit in violence that has caused the splitting of Tutsi families. Sentimentality as an alluring feeling and a narrative technique is used in *Sometimes in April* to show that some Rwandans who supported the Hutu extremists also lost their lives. Sentimentalism is a language of visual culture, particularly when the camera focuses on the characters' costume. In *Sometimes in April* the images of the 'rags' show that the social fabric in Rwanda has been tattered and reduced to a rag. As visual images, 'rags' in the film are a metonym for suffering and are used as a technique to channelize audience's attention towards a predetermined belief that those 'rags' belong to Tutsi and moderate Hutus.

Further viewing of the unfolding of the narrative of *Sometimes in April*, reveals that barely before Honore has travelled far together with his brother's family, their car is stopped by soldiers manning a roadblock. Honore introduces himself as a party cadre working for the RTLM extremist radio station and that he is going to a supermarket for a shopping with his family. As

for the family, Honore says that ‘they are ours’ meaning that the family also supports Hutu extremists. After a brief exchange of words with his superiors, one of the soldiers goes to the car and asks Jeanne to produce her identity card. The moment Jeanne announces that she forgot the identity card at home the soldier violently breaks the window amidst loud screaming from Jeanne and her two sons. Honore’s plea that, ‘I work for the party’, go unheeded and the soldiers willfully harass the children in the car. Later that night, Honore wades through a corpse-filled ditch to retrieve his unconscious sister-in-law. By constructing this scene, Peck, the director of the film, succeeds in depicting how the realities of the genocide were such that individuals suddenly found themselves doing unpleasant things they had not done before in order to survive.

On a meta-level, *Sometimes in April* (2005) constructs negative cultural stereotypes that suggest that Africans lack perceptive minds to foresee the possibility of the implications of their actions. Augustin is implicated in causing violence that result in the splitting up of his family. He is a villain. However, since an ‘intended meaning’ is ‘... always open to being deferred, staggered or serialized’ (Derrida in Howarth 2005:227) it may not be fair to condemn the depiction of character of Augustin as a total villain without considering the contradictory environment that brought him to that situation. Serialization of film shots also reveals a very vulnerable figure of Augustin as he jumps down from the ceiling to inspect the damage done on his house. Broken glass and destroyed property litter the house and this confirms the barbarism that is attributed to Africans in tropes within the images of colonial Empire (Mayer 2002). In a close-up shot, Augustin is shown contemplating seriously his next move. He is now trapped in a dilapidated building with no hint of where to find security.

When Xavier—Augustin’s cousin brother emerges from where he was hiding, the two hatch out a plan to escape using Augustin’s bullet riddled car. Augustin drives at high speed through the barricades on a road where a roadblock is manned by the *Interahamwe*. He had not travelled far before the two come up to a T-junction at which their car is forced to stop to give way to lorries full of corpses to pass. The bodies of Augustin’s sons occupy the top most of one lorry. Augustin sobs ‘bitterly’ and his ‘inner mind’ tells him that as Hutu and army captain who trained the militia, he is also responsible for the carnage. This moralizing depiction is part of the dominating discourse in *Sometimes in April* (2005). But, from another angle, when *Sometimes in April* shows visual images of lorries full of corpse travelling to the dumping ground, the film constructs a

cultural stereotype in which the black body can be viewed as dirty, diseased, disoriented and therefore unpleasant to give it (the black body) decent burial. Such a negative stereotype is in the film, reinforced by yet another visual image showing an *Interahamwe* scrapping a *machete* on the tarred road. Scrap! Scrap! the *machete* goes as if it is being prepared for the killing of an animal. The discourse that ‘animalizes’ African lives in Rwanda is also the one which Western nations used to justify their actions of abandoning Rwandans. The sinister sound repeated in the scrapping *machete* inscribes (Derrida in Howarth 2005) violence into the text of *Sometimes in April*. That violence is in the film, depicted as directed mainly towards the Tutsi ethnic group.

For example, because Xavier is Tutsi, he is pulled out of the car at a roadblock and Augustin (Hutu and Xavier’s cousin) is given a *machete* to finish him off. When he says that he cannot possibly kill his cousin, Xavier is shot from the back. In a kneeling position, Xavier murmurs something to Augustin while Xavier drops down and his body starts to kick unceremoniously in rigor mortis. Again, Augustin is tormented psychologically for having contributed to Xavier’s death by his action of training the *Interahamwe*. The spectacle of excess in the representation of the genocide is that sometimes relatives were demanded to, and some complied in killing their own family members. The spectacle of excess or power inflation is also dramatized in the cold blooded murder of Xavier.

Other grotesque aspects of the Rwanda genocide in *Sometimes in April* are the depiction of the desacralization of religious places of worship. In the film, at a Catholic Girls Boarding School, the *Interahamwe* demonstrate, sing, joke about death, and blow whistles as grenades explode. There is great commotion as school children scream about, run around amidst the rattling of rifle fire. A soldier demands that all girls be brought to an assemble point. Martine, a Tutsi girl murmurs to Anne- Marie,--Augustin’s daughter that the *Interahamwe* ‘ are going to separate us. They want all Tutsi to come out into the open’. A ferocious soldier shouts menacingly that, ‘Hutus here! Tutsi there!’ The soldier grinds his teeth as he fires wildly killing most of Tutsi girls. After the soldiers have gone, Martine unearths herself from a heap of bloody corpses. Her friends together with Anne –Marie are still alive. Martine with her friends struggle, taking turns to help Anne –Marie who is seriously injured. The three girls escape through a green maize field as if symbolizing defiant hope amidst terror. But this hope for Anne-Marie is dashed away as she drops down to succumb to death caused by serious injuries. The focus of the camera on innocent

and defenceless Tutsi girls who are being murdered is not accidental. Film representations rely for effect on depicting the suffering of human beings described in the media as soft targets. These include children, the old and women. In the language of *Sometimes in April* the 'worthy victims' are featured prominently and dramatically. These victims are then 'humanized' and their victimization receive detail and context that generates sympathetic emotion. The images of dying Tutsi girls are primed to elicit revulsion against the Hutu extremists. *Sometimes in April* is detailed when it portrays the suffering of the innocent Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

Chari (2009) argues that the mass media has the capacity to influence what and how people think about certain issues because of media's ability to identify, select, prioritize, include and exclude issues. *Sometimes in April* also employs a range of media techniques such as salience (the importance attached to an issue), framing (the selection of an aspect of perceived reality and presenting it in a way that compels attention to it) and priming, (drawing attention to certain issues even in a neutral manner). Intertextual language codes that capture the violence in the Rwanda genocide abound in *Sometimes in April*. But the ideological ends to which the language codes are used in the same film narrative are never consistently the same. The meanings in film narrative differ from one shot to another, especially when different scenes are juxtaposed to each other or depicted back to back. For example, in one of the most memorable flash forward, in *Sometimes in April*, Augustin Muganza (Idris Elba) is captured by the camera reading a letter from his brother Honore (Oris Erhuero) who is languishing in jail for crimes against humanity committed during the genocide. 'I'm sorry to what happened to your family', Muganza read solemnly as Jeanne (Carole Kamera) listens attentively. After Muganza finishes reading the letter, his wife Jeanne gives her response that, 'you should go, he is your brother.' Here, *Sometimes in April* (2005) could be suggesting that the Rwandan genocide tore families apart because of differences in political and ideological beliefs.

Yet, by investing a spirit of unwarranted forgiveness in Jeanne, who has suffered from Honore's extreme political views and involvement in the genocide on the side of the Hutu extremists, one can argue that the assumptions of easy forgiveness promoted in *Sometimes in April* becomes a spectacle of excessive generosity. This spectacle is rooted in the cultural constructs of gendered stereotypes premised on a cultural beliefs that women are 'softer' at heart than men. This notion is reinforced by the film's failure to acknowledge in its visual narrative, that some women

actually killed or conspired with murder squads to cause death during the genocide (Mamdani, 2001).

In another flashback audiences are transported back into the heartland of Kigali where Radio-Television Libre Des Milles Collines (RTL) is issuing out 'hate speech'. Caught up in a medium shot, Honore and a colleague are having a discussion in which the two are providing their mettle as broadcasters of 'hate speech'. In the film shot, Honore says that, 'Cockroach will give birth to cock-roach. We have vowed never to be ruled by *Inyenzi*....' Cockroaches are domestic pests that symbolize dirtiness, secretiveness, discredibility and conspiratorial moves. '*Inyenzi*' as a negative cultural stereotype built upon the work of disavowal, fixity and fantasy is being used by Honore to justify the political elimination of Tutsi and moderate Hutus. In another film shot in *Sometimes in April*, the captain explains to Colonel Bogosora that, 'these machetes are from China', at which Colonel Bogosora comments that, 'farmers need to go to work'. In the film representations in which the spectacle is the main avenue for depiction of reality, killers are referred to as 'farmers', Tutsi's are referred to as 'tall trees' and killing is given a decent description of being at 'work'. Whether it is the words 'cockroaches', *inyenzi*, 'farmer', 'work' and 'tall trees', the overflow of meanings in language is also a major spectacle that masks the hurtful ways of describing the Tutsis and their death.

The insistence on the language of hate speech camouflaged in the language that appeals to national sentiment of working for the country through killing shows how *Sometimes in April* has uncovered the role language can play in obscuring reality. During the genocide, language words are used to mask as well as mark the ambiguities between appearance and reality. A *machete* is a simple agricultural tool used by farmers to clear virgin land in preparation for ploughing but in the Rwandan genocide, the *machete* is turned into a lethal weapon to hack down Tutsis and moderate Hutus. The politicization of language underlies the significance of a stereotype. The spectacle of excessive use of language that distorts reality suggests that the version of the genocide narrative that *Sometimes in April* authorizes is just but one among many potential stories that films can be allowed to tell in any moment of enunciation. The success of *Sometimes in April* is, therefore, its capacity to bring the viewers' attention to the slippages in language, to its inherent multi-vocality that lends the language to potential multiple interpretations.

In *Sometimes in April* Honore is fomenting violence through his 'hate speech'. This violence affects the members of his brother's house. The Tutsis and moderate Hutus suffer from being 'killed' within the language of representations before they are eventually physically eliminated. Therefore, to the extent that language is used to mark identities, in *Sometimes in April* the stereotype is a marker of death; it is a death sentence. In *Sometimes in April* (2005) the descriptions of Tutsis as 'cochroaches' is linked to a flash-back shot showing a soldier, captured in a deep-focus shot aiming a rocket launcher at the aeroplane carrying the Hutu presidents of Burundi and Rwanda. In a flash, the aeroplane is reduced to huge ball of fire. Music from a flute introduces a mournful tune to underscore the disaster. At home, Augustin is watching Television with his family, and suddenly a news reader brings out the disturbing news that, 'we are sorry that President Habyarimana has been assassinated'. In these successive shifts from verbal stereotyping of Tutsis as 'pestilent' to the visual stereotyping of Tutsis as 'terrorists' working against the nation, a double palimpsest of the range of negative stereotypes that Tutsis can assume has been enacted as enemy. Elements of Hutu extremists within the Rwandan society have been sufficiently psyched to prepare for killing.

According to Tomaselli (2003) the 'intertextual' method in which a particular medium of communication is used to interpret events in another medium, brings heterogeneity to the reading of media messages. In the case of *Sometimes in April* both radio, television snippets and voices-over are used in the film. Their use from the point of view of the Hutu extremists is meant to authenticate a narrative of Tutsis as treacherous and therefore deserving of death. But when Hutu soldiers are shown killing Tutsi and moderate Hutu, the action confirms the reality that the Rwandan genocide was a state sponsored project in as much as the genocide was supported by popular masses. At this point in its narrative of genocide, *Sometimes in April* (2005) should be commended for bringing into the open, the role played by the Rwandan army as initiators of killing during the Rwanda genocide. This depiction contradicts the portrayal of soldiers in *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) where soldiers are presented as saviours of Tutsi refugees and moderate Hutus sheltered at Hotel Mille Collines.

5.5 Symbolical instabilities in the Spectacular African Corpse in *Sometimes in April*

So far, I have argued that the hurtful narratives of genocide and its pains that are anterior to the depictions in *Sometimes in April* appear to appeal to the viewer's sense of moral repugnance. The

film succeeds largely to paint a picture of the violence visited to the Tutsis and Hutu moderates and the idea was to shock the audience, and reveal the insensitivity of the Hutu extremists who committed the crimes. When political insensitivity reaches spectacular proportions, it justifies violent actions performed in the name of an ethnic group, or of a class purporting to defend the nation. But as Anderson(1983) has argued, the nation is an imagined community, and the Rwandan genocide with its fratricidal tendencies expressed through ethnic and class killings in *Sometimes in April* reveals how brittle and limited the idea of ‘national consciousness’ is (Fanon 1963). However, it can be possible to re-interpret *Sometimes in April* in alternative ways that reveal the instabilities of meanings associated with the image of the African corpse. Russell has suggested that ‘in cinema, spectacular violence has become the sign of crisis, seducing the spectators into a belief of an apocalypse’ (Russell 1993:174). Implied in the statement by Russell (1993) is that visual images of violence and death in film have become signifying codes to lure audiences into the belief of the end of worlds and possible judgement day. Through visual images of violence audiences participate as witnesses to the violence, and they also are made to consume the images.

Writing about the phenomena of widow-burning in one religious cult in India, Lata Mani describes the widow burning and the audiences’ emotions to the process in the following ways;

Women were not merely persuaded to commit sati. They were also physically coerced into immolating themselves. There are numerous examples of women being tied to the pyre, held down with bamboo poles, or else weighted down with wood. Women were also hanged. One widow, who managed to escape from the pyre testified to having been given large quantities of opium and bang. Other women were observed to have been barely sensible and to have been physically assisted onto the pyre(Mani 1992:399).

In the passage above, the spectacular symbolization is lodged in the epistemic ritual of violence that is made to pass as normal and natural. There is also the depiction of the spectacular knowledge that one is made to kill oneself, and die painfully. The audiences to *sati*, just as the audience of genocide in *Sometimes in April*, and by extension, the audience made up of the

perpetrators in the actual genocide in Rwanda are brought in the spectacular action as guilty. They enjoy the spectacle of seeing another person die, and have relieve in that they are not the ones dying painfully. But the frightening aspect of the content of the images based on spectacle of excess signification is that it reminds some audiences of their powerlessness while affirming the cruelty of the perpetrators as powerful since their actions are rationalized by those who tell them that in killing the Tutsis, the Hutu militias are doing ‘communal work as well as performing national duty’ (Mirzoeff 2005:3).



Fig. 3 Scenes about the Rwandan genocide in *Sometimes in April*. Source: Photos by Roger Arpajou (2009)

The above shots depict some emotional scenes extracted from *Sometimes In April*. Clockwise, the first shot shows Rwandan civilians begging and pleading desperately for protection by UN peacekeepers from the deadly Hutu extremists. The medium shot emphasizes and symbolize the emotional distress which the targeted Tutsis and moderate Hutus underwent during the genocide, pinning their hope on UN peacekeepers who, ironically, abandoned them to be slaughtered by Hutu extremists. The second shot shows the grotesque social positioning of the two girls who escaped death at Catholic Girls Boarding School. The girls’ desperation, tiredness and hopelessness is registered on their confused stare on the harsh environment of *Kayumba* swamps. The spectacular absence of help and fear is also evident on the faces of Tutsi girls on the third

shot who have just been selected so that they can be killed. The last shot foregrounds the protagonist—Augustin Muganza contemplating over his escape from the pursuing Hutu extremists. The spectacular in this shot is that the UN are very much present and are strategically placed as if to prove a point that nothing bad will happen to Muganza in their presence. Yet, during the Rwandan genocide, some Tutsis and moderate Hutus were actually killed right in front of the UN peacekeepers.

In *Sometimes in April* (2005), the representation of the spectacular also manifests itself through the social ordering of African corpses via a ‘fascinating gaze’ in the discourse of visual cultures. The fascination with the dead body is a necrophilic attitude, and a privileged feeling of the powerful. This image of the African corpse is naturalized as unchanging and not allowing of any other interpretations (Bhabha 1996). However, the dead body as an image is not ‘passive’ and simply a site of the object because it can reflect and perform the rebellious act against a ‘symbolic order’ which tries to capture and ‘domesticate’ its social positioning (Kristeva 1982) in visual cultures.

The first explicit image that shows the denigration of the African corpse in *Sometimes in April* depicts the *Interahamwe*, holding up a corpse, swinging it a bit, and in a curled up position, the corpse is thrown into the river. Here, a voyeuristic pleasure (Bignell 2002) is built up in knowing that this African corpse is the ‘unwanted’ social baggage that can be eliminated anyhow without even contemplating over its decent burial. Harting (2008) argues that the symbolical economy of the African body invariably lends it to be understood in researches on Africa, through the tropographical discourses of cruelty and social dismemberment. For example, in *Sometimes in April* the dead body thrown into the river ceases to be part of community. It is alienated, cannot be given ‘membership card’ or join others who are decently buried at cemeteries (Jost 2005). *Sometimes in April* chooses to use ‘rags’ to depict the wasted lives of the Tutsis and moderate Hutus. Being cultural stereotypes in themselves, ‘rags in *Sometimes in April* (2005) are used to portray ‘... what is not being said, but what is to be shown’ (Hall 1997:263). As metonymic images, the rags can encourage audiences to interrogate the capacity of African countries to protect their own people and solve their own problems without resorting to violence. Thus in the context of the Rwandan genocide, at one level, the African corpse and the rag are synonymous;

they all contribute in confirming the film's construction of negative stereotypes that view Africans as wild, savagery and uncouth (Jackson et al 2009).

I commented previously that the lorries full of African corpses in *Sometimes in April* produces interpretations from the Western media that represent Africa as a place where anything that can possibly go wrong in human affairs is confirmed through sordid violence. To this extent, *Sometimes in April* imposes visual images in its narrative of genocide so that they work as a form of control and 'governmentality' (Fuery & Fuery 2003) to structure a field of semantic meanings for the viewing audiences. In other words, *Sometimes in April* uses the power invested in dead bodies as visual image, not only to force but also to seduce, solicit, induce and wins consent of audiences to agree with its message which is that genocide should never happen again. However, the moral lessons embedded in this 'regime of regimenting' (Hall 1997) audiences towards a 'fixed' interpretation of visual images is evidently questioned from a scene in which a soldier is depicted spraying bullets to writhing bodies of girls at a Catholic Boarding School. The 'excessive' act of shooting is meant to draw pathos and revulsion from audiences whose social norms are expected to be above the barbarity of the soldiers in the Hutu led war of attrition against the Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

However, the African body as a viable physicality within the symbolic order of visual cultures functions as a signifier of disruption, challenge and revolt to its 'pre-determined' reading. In other words, while the depiction of the 'excessive' shooting of the girl's bodies that are already dead is meant to cause 'sentimentality' and 'revulsion' in the spectators, this very act invites a fascinating gaze of military adventurism. Unexpected messages such as that the black body can be shot at, at will as if one is shooting dogs are also affirmed as possible. This runs against the initial spirit of the film that depicted and used excessive violence to deplore the culture of violence. The repeated shooting at an already dead body is a reflection of 'self-hate' on the part of one who shoots; there is the phantasmagoric aspect in the soldier's 'spectacle of excess' that tries to force the audience to internalize the idea that the black body must die 'several deaths' before it is finally considered dead. That fantasy of powerfulness manifested in annihilating the weak is a cultural stereotype that is a product of systematic application of pain (Mbembe 2001) on the black body for it to die. When the African body does finally die, the black body is: 'read

as sublime spectacle of death, like an Aristotelian tragedy which invite pity and fear as well as functions as an exhibited commodity to create a consensus of affect that helps reproduce Africa as an object of Humanitarian aid' (Harting 2008:66).

When the black body is still living, it is wished for a ruthless demise by denying it means for the bodily regeneration. The black body is only loved in death as a 'fascinating object' that provokes as well as withdraws pity and fear from people. This assertion is true in *Sometimes in April*, a film in which the United Nations and International Community became obsessed with helping refugees in the post- genocide settlement in Rwanda than with stopping the genocide during the period when Rwanda was experiencing mass murder. In another shot in the film, Martine and other girls pass through *Kayumba* swamps where grimy rooting corpses and skeletons of nameless people are floating in the dunk waters. Here, in the film, the camera focalizes on a skeleton with wide opened jaws, crashed ribs and a dismembered spinal cord. There is a visual image of a naked boy wading through a corpse filled path, and sometimes stepping on floating bodies to manoeuvre his way out. These decomposing and smelling bodies are portrayed to serve as the didactic specimen or memorial narratives that should remind and challenge the viewers to be put off, and condemn the perpetrators of the genocide. The film succeeds in communicating the horror of the genocide. However, there is no obvious link that the dead bodies belong to the Tutsis or moderate Hutus. They could also have been of the Twa people of Rwanda.

This observation points to the fact that focalization on dead bodies in film is a politically charged act and that it is used to select the depiction of some images of dead bodies but not others. Peck is a humanist and as such seems not concerned with the authenticity of whose bodies it was that were floating in the *Nyabarongo* river or the swamps of *Kayumba*. Whether they are the bodies of the Tutsi or Hutu or Twa, it seems the film is suggesting that what matters is that human life is lost and wasted in the killings. But Chiwengo (2008) takes issues with the fact that the media has tended to project the bodies and the bones of the dead in the Rwandan genocide as if all were from the Tutsi people. Chiwengo says: 'while Tutsi bones at the memorial sites articulate their pain, the cries of other dead are silenced' (Chiwengo 2008: 83).

My interpretation of the dead bodies and the bones through which genocide is signified is further complicated by the fact that despite its positive and fairly balanced depiction of the genocide, *Sometimes in April* also narrativizes the genocide through the motif of 'social fragmentation'. There are no moments when the Tutsis are portrayed as fighting back; they sheepily go to their death. It seems, this is the kind of interpretation that sits comfortably with the expectation of the United Nations and international community- themselves committed to constructing political stereotypes that fail to differentiate who dies, and who survives in the Rwandan genocide.

The assumption is that if the black body is 'socially fragmented' it means the body did not in the first place, need political protection because it is already broken. Thus, the 'permanency,' 'stagnation' and the 'stasis' attributed to the black body and its 'fragmented state' may fail to draw out empathy from audiences. Rather, this portrayal can invite a spectacular gaze in which audiences are overawed by the 'bestiality' of Africans. The audience might even come out with a 'feel good' attitude that is grounded on sentimental comparisons of Europe's supposed humanist ideals based on Eurocentric notions of democracy contrasted to Africa's slide into the abyss of heartlessness(Chabal & Daloz 1999).

But *Sometimes in April* (2005) also recreates other narratives we have not seen in *A Good Man in Hell* or *Hotel Rwanda*. For example, *Sometimes in April* depicts a scene at the church in which a priest leads soldiers to identify Tutsi refugees. A soldier demands that, 'I need more names and I need them by tomorrow.' A bell rings and identified Tutsis are led to a banana plantation to be executed. The camera pans slowly to reveal close-up faces of those about to be killed. At this point in the narrative, *Sometimes in April* (2005) de-bunks the myths of church as a place of pristine innocence. The spectacular action here is that those who prophecy to be spiritually upright were in fact the ones who condemned members of their religious flock. Further examples of the spectacle of excess representations in the film are; rotting corpses in the church, in the class-rooms and from the dormitory where they had been massacred weeks earlier. The positioning of a corpse, the stench and the maggots as drivers of the genocide narrative are used to create a sense of revulsion in the audience about the dreadful results of any mass killing of people.

However, Bhabha suggests that much as stereotype is created on the basis of singularity of content and values, audiences can, during interpretation, split the figure of stereotype to make it

articulate contradictory meanings. Bhabha thinks that although the stereotype turns on the recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/historical differences, the stereotype can constitute a problem for the representation of the subject since it can split and multiply conflicting meanings at the point of enunciation (Bhabha 1996: 37-54). It is thinkable to suggest that the scattered social positioning of the African bodies and their stench can confirm racial stereotypes that project the black body as an ugly object that exudes bad odor (Mayer 2002). The political unconscious of *Sometimes in April* (2005) is to unwittingly reproduce perceptions of African corpses as images that stink and therefore justifies the political elimination of blacks as 'undesirable animals who stink' (Jackson et al 2009 :317). The portrayal of the spectacle of the dead African body in *Sometimes in April* is unrelenting; *Interahamwe* militias lift and throw corpses into the nearby river. The militias are depicted as heartless through and through. There is no space allowed in *Sometimes in April's* depiction of the militias, to imagine that some of them may have had been coerced to join its rank and file, and that the militias did not always enjoy killing. Dallaire (2004) observes that there were times during the genocide when the tired *Interahamwe* would just look at a person, guess his /her ethnicity and make a quick decision either to kill the person or leave him/her to proceed with the journey. Through this way, many Hutu who fell in between Hutu and Tutsi in terms of their phenotypic / physical appearance lost their lives. Many Tutsis who looked like Hutus were allowed to pass the roadblock without harassment.

Therefore, there must be some other reasons as to why *Sometimes in April* concentrates on the spectacle of the African dead body. The dead body conjures memories of suffering, but it can also be manipulated by politicians to clamp down on dissent voices in post-genocide Rwanda. The dead African body can force humanity to act before and not after the death of people, but it also reassures Europe that she is far ahead in civilization than Africa. The refusal to focus on the surviving Tutsis gives the impression that the film director does not want to open a Pandora's box. In this box, one would see the emergent struggles for power between the Tutsis who were in the country during the genocide and those who came with the Rwanda Patriotic Front to remove the government of Hutu extremists (Mamdani 2001). There is also absence in the film of the depiction of *Interahamwe* who are still active in eastern Congo, a fact that implies the possibility of another planned genocide. There are also contradictions between the Hutu and the Tutsis understanding of the spectacular number of innocent Hutus who were massacred by the Rwanda

Patriotic Front as it advanced towards Kigali, after the RPF took over Kigali, and during the march by masses of Hutus towards Eastern Congo.

Arguably, the number of a million people who died is a spectacular number of Tutsis and moderate Hutus who died during the genocide. But there are also spectacular numbers of Hutus who died in the hands of the new government (Umutesi 2004). In other words, the spectacular silence on the numbers killed by the new government in Rwanda and in Congo can be interpreted as a way of lending legitimacy to the Paul Kagame government in post -1994 political dispensation. More importantly, *Sometimes in April* spectacularly fails to account or depict how those Tutsis who survived managed to do so. For Peck, it seems that focusing on the dead African body is meant to be deterrent; those who have viewed the film, have an awful experience of remembering the different postures of death from the Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

5.6 Rwandan Genocide and the images of International Community in *Sometimes in April*

However, credit must be accorded to Raoul Peck for providing huge amounts of film space to depict the complicit role of the international community. When Zegeye and Vambe(2009) argue of the myth of the ‘international community’ they suggest that the non-committal attitudes of Europe, and America to the plight of the dying in the genocide was not out of incapacity to act. They *acted*, but in a way that ensured that their people would not be involved in a problem that they viewed as African. In *Sometimes in April*, America and Europe are very much ‘present’ in the streets of Kigali, even when physically the Americans did not sent any forces. For example, in the film, an old newsreel is used to show former US president Bill Clinton lamenting on the political situation in Rwanda, on one hand, and clarifying the U.S policy of non-military intervention, on the other hand. The spectacle here is the double standards because the very year of 1994, America and Europe were heavily present, militarily, in the Balkans, in Eastern Europe. Rothchild (2001: 7) comments that, ‘... the U.S government decided against taking action of a preventive nature, fearing, according to President Clinton that the risks of strong military action outweighed the potential economic benefits of intervention’. By downplaying the nature and extent of the systematic killing of Tutsi and moderate Hutus by Hutu extremists, the United States was undermining its moral obligations stipulated under genocide convention (UN 1948) to intervene in situations that threaten global peace.

By not coming to the help of the dying, Europe created and reinforced a cultural stereotype which amounted to suggesting that African life is not worth having American soldiers die for. This belief was put forward forcefully by Bowden (2000) who spoke in no uncertain terms that the American public and its leaders have every right to be cautious about committing troops to distant local conflicts. The idea of 'distance' here is used consciously to reflect on the racial and cultural chasm that separates blacks and whites. This suggestion is not ludicrous considering the fact that Americans helped Yugoslavia militarily in 1994, and yet Yugoslavia is located far away from United States. A possible explanation is that Yugoslavia got American help because it is white European (Mayer 2002). The spectacle created by absence and conspiracy of silence from the west as well as African countries constitute a dereliction of international duty to fellow humanity.

Sometimes in April succeeds in using the camera lens to suggest that the international community knew almost everything that was happening in Rwanda during the genocide. In the film, in one instance, the camera switches attention from Rwanda to focus on events in Washington D.C in USA. A female news reporter is saying that there has been mass killing reported in Rwanda, and that, '...there is growing concern about getting American soldiers in Rwanda'. In another film shot, in *Sometimes in April*, in Washington D.C, a journalist asks the Minister of Foreign Affairs whether it is not a good idea for U.S to jam the air- waves of RTLM Hutu Powa radio station so that it does not continue issuing out 'hate speech'. The Minister replies that, 'it is against international law to jam radios of other nations. Radios don't kill people, people kill people'. Dallaire (2004) argues that a radio jamming equipment was used by America in Cambodia to distort the radio communication systems of Khmer Rouge. This could have been done in Rwanda to stop the hateful radio from operating. The US refused to name the mass killings in Rwanda as genocide because under the 1948 UN Convention on the prevention and punishment of crime of genocide the international community would then have been forced to intervene. The American government was absolutely not prepared to intervene.

In another scene in *Sometimes in April* captured through an eye-level film shot, soldiers of the Rwandan army are scuffling with United Nations peacekeepers who want to evacuate white foreigners. Rwandan civilians are also there fighting to get into UN vehicles but they are pushed back violently. The UN peacekeepers fire in the air to scare away Africans. This depiction shows

the conscious discriminatory politics that were practiced by the UN in Rwanda. It puts paid the UN argument that it did not know the extent of the carnage until it was too late. In yet another film shot in *Sometimes in April* there is debate in Washington D.C, and US secretary of foreign affairs is addressing congress about the welfare of American citizens in Rwanda. The secretary says that, 'the situation in Rwanda has just become unbearable but Americans are not yet targeted.' This speech from the secretary suggests that the US was concerned only with protecting its own citizens. In the eyes of Americans the darker skin forebode the sinister, horrific, unpleasant (Jackson et al, 2009) experience of the US experiences in Somalia (1993) where the US soldiers were killed by Somali militias.

Henderson (2009) simplifies the reasons of US non-intervention in Rwanda when Henderson suggests that the US did so in order to confirm its fascination, with voyeuristic pleasure and beauty of US citizens who enjoyed seeing the black body perish. The more plausible explanation is suggested by Colonel Bogosora, a Rwandese who in the film, says that Rwanda has no '...oil , no dams, and we have nothing you need in Rwanda. Why would you come?' US eventually concluded that the risks of strong military actions outweighed the potential economic benefits of intervention. Rwanda is stereotypically referred to as a place with '... nothing you (U.S) need ...' This image of representing 'nothingness' is a racial stereotype with a long genealogy in which Africans are written about as monstrous creatures possessing nothing of human interest (Mayer 2002). Even Hegel (1997), the German idealist philosopher had argued in the past that Africa is still in the childhood of history. Trevor-Roper (1986), the historian said Africa has no history. Joseph Conrad (1999) the Polish-born English writer of *Heart of Darkness* portrayed Africa as the 'heart of darkness', a place where evil, ignorance and human stupidity abounds. The spectacularity of the depiction of the non-intervention of the western powers in Rwanda that *Sometimes in April* reveals is thus rooted in a long imperial history in which Africa can only matter to the world if it can provide raw materials to the west.

Sometimes in April(2005) does not give space to the UN representatives in Rwanda to openly specify all the reasons which made United Nations and International Community abandon Rwanda during the genocide. The film shows the UN convoys leaving distressed Tutsi and moderate Hutus, and in showing this, the film director hopes that the audiences can be able to make out their own reasons as to why Africans and westerners did not intervene positively to

stop the genocide in Rwanda. The danger that *Sometimes in April* (2005) can run into is that its 'silence' about why European countries did not intervene in Rwanda appears to be promoting the grand narrative of 'whiteness' (Steyn, 2001) in which Africa was /is stereotyped as 'hell' that can only be protected from itself by Western countries. The stereotype that *Sometimes in April* promotes is of an 'international community' when only referring to the west. One would have liked to see more exploration in the film, of the kind of contribution of the soldiers from the Third World countries who were also present in Rwanda during the genocide. The spectacle here is that a film focusing on Rwanda, an African country does not bother to explore where the Organization of African Unity and the member countries were during the genocide. African countries that watched the genocide happen, and did very little to avert it are guilty. This dimension is not explored in the film, and it is a monumental or spectacular depiction of the absence of Africans. The film is compromised for forgetting to show the conduct of other African countries.

5.7 Gacaca System and the Pitfalls of Enforced Democracy

Sometimes in April (2005) depicts the post 1994 period of national reconstruction. In the film one aspect of that reconstruction is the establishment of the local court system called *gacaca* tribunal sessions where those Hutus who killed in the genocide testify on their crimes during the genocide. At the *gacaca* tribunals the Tutsis who survived also testify and act as witnesses during the trial of the killers. *Sometimes in April* (2005) is an optimistic film since it portrays an image of the *gacaca* system of justice. This depiction of the local system of justice can be interpreted to mean that in post 1994 genocide period that the film constructs, justice prevails. Since the *gacaca* is a local institution in both the rural and the urban environment of Rwanda, the *gacaca* can be said to be a mode of justice system owned and administered by the locals. In other words, for true reconciliation of the Tutsis and the Hutus to become real, it is the community that must be centrally involved in trying the criminal cases of the killers. This interpretation of the *gacaca* system in the film is liberal and gives credit to both the government of Paul Kagame that created the *gacacas*, and to the film director for mimetically reproducing some cut-up pictures of the *gacaca* proceedings.

However, critics of the *gacaca* system have drawn attention to the negative elements of the spectacular depiction of a system of justice based on selective application of law. The spectacle

of excess here is that there are so many people – almost all the Hutus in the country – are suspects and therefore are on trial. The spectacle of excess depiction is also that so many of the Tutsis – almost all the Tutsis in Rwanda are the aggrieved. There are not any Tutsis on trial even when recent research has shown that some RPF soldiers also massacred innocent Hutus in Rwanda in revenge killings. In the film, no single RPF soldier is prosecuted at the *gacaca* for killing innocent civilians in the forests of Eastern Congo nor at Kibeho refugee camp, although in real life, Rwanda has proceeded with arresting some soldiers from the RPF for killing innocent Hutus.

Nkiko Nsengimana has argued that the *gacaca* system is therefore biased against all the Hutus in the country. According to Nkiko Nsengimana (a Hutu) in Martin (2002:13), ‘the confession lacks a sense of balance. The death of a large number of Hutu populations goes far beyond the framework of ‘vengeance’ and blind repression ... what we’re dealing with here are crimes against humanity.’ Other critics have noted the spectacular absence of moderate Hutus in the rank and file of the presiding officers at the *gacaca* courts of justice in Rwanda and also in the ministerial posts in the new Tutsi dominated government. And yet, *Sometimes in April* also downplays the feelings of the Hutus who are being tried and who continue to confess that if they had another chance, they would repeat the killing of the Tutsis in another round of genocide. This point matters because *Sometimes in April* does not extend its narrative in time and space to depict the destabilizing effects of the hardliner *Interahamwe* militias that are still holed up in Eastern Congo. These elements from the Hutu extremists continue to hetch some plans to come back to Rwanda and re-impose a Hutu dominated government. Mamdani (1996:4) suggests that the residual memories of hard feelings in some Hutus ‘exemplifies the pursuit of justice without reconciliation’ in post 1994 Rwanda.

When *Sometimes in April* brings the *gacaca* system into its screen-space, the film automatically re-defines itself from being a piece of fiction to a weapon of political propaganda that the present government can use to enforce democracy in Rwanda. This shows that film and fiction can render visible the ideology of the ruling class in modern Rwanda. Here, the spectacular is revealed in the capacity of official post 1994 Rwanda ideology of reconciliation to infiltrate the director’s understanding of the post genocide Rwanda. The implications are that the film, *Sometimes in April*’s is then prevented from analyzing the contradictions within the *gacaca*. The

spectacle of excess signification here is that the film's optimism forces it to imagine a peaceful Rwanda. That, some substantial peace has returned to Rwanda is beyond contestation. But it has been at a great price; the suppression of dissentious narratives in favour of the construction of narrative of singular memories.

5.8 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to critically explore the aspect of the spectacle of excess in *Sometimes in April*. It was argued that the spectacle in film representation is a mode of stereotype created on the basis of recognizing monolithic values. The chapter defined the spectacle of excess and used some film theories to help explore and reveal how the spectacle of excess signification operated in *Sometimes in April*. It was shown in the film's genocide narrative that *Sometimes in April* concentrate on describing the details of the dying Tutsis. It was also revealed that *Sometimes in April* explored the way in which language is used spectacularly, to camouflage reality and to name Tutsis as enemies of the state. The political and cultural stereotypes authorized in the incendiary negative language became the grammar of values that came to be used in the actual mass killings of the Tutsis, and moderate Hutus in 1994.

The chapter then explored the spectacular silence of both the African countries and the western world regarding intervening in the killings during the genocide. Here, it was argued that the film, manipulates a variety of techniques to construct a plausible picture of the Rwandan genocide, and its aftermath. The film painted the *gacaca* system as a suitable communal system of justice to try thousands of Hutus implicated in the genocide. The spectacle of excess signification was that the film implied that all Hutus are guilty of murder. No ordinary Tutsis were tried in the *gacaca* system despite the fact that some Tutsis massacred Hutus in revenge. *Sometimes in April* (2005) succeeded in using factual history to give a believable background to the genocide. The film also succeeded in exploiting the verbal, and visual languages to portray the genocide as ugly. However, in the film, the dead body of Africans carried ambivalent meanings. The dead bodies were used as deterrent, to warn future generations never again to follow the path of genocide. And yet in that process of representing the dead African bodies, the film gave the impression that all who died were Tutsis. The film also ran the danger of investing the African dead bodies with negative connotations such as that the Africans are abject objects.

In film, power relations can operate as expressions of ‘preferred readings’ and contradictions that form the discourse of the image. Image here does not only refer to the visual film but also to the mental picture (signified) that is created by verbal and sound narratives. African corpses are not only struggling against the dominance of their ‘excessive’ portrayal in *Sometimes in April* but that corpses are also struggling against the way a film medium can focalize on certain aspects of the corpses at the expense of other aspects. In this power struggle of dominance, the corpse in *Sometimes in April* (2005) can resist and oppose a homogeneous social positioning that seeks to totalize their identities by viewing them as ‘only’ belonging to Tutsi.

The last section of the chapter showed that in *Sometimes in April* the *gacaca* tribunals can absolve Kagame’s government from crimes of genocide it perpetrated on the Hutus in Rwanda and in Eastern Congo. Chapter six contests how skulls and bones of Africans are displayed or ‘museum-ized’ as commodities of affect worthy of attracting Western tourists in *Keepers of memory* (2004). The analysis will also focus on how female characters are used to construct narratives of memories that agree with official understanding of the genocide.

Chapter 6

Challenging the Gendered Silences in the stories of Rwandan women in *Keepers of Memory*(2004)

6.0 Introduction

The previous chapter argued that although *Sometimes In April* (2004) provides a plausible way of understanding the reality of Rwanda genocide, its emphasis on the technique of the ‘spectacle of excess’ to put across a moral lesson depicts the minority Tutsi as ‘weak’ and perpetual victims during the Rwandan genocide. The ‘spectacle of excess’ was also used as a mode of conveying the tragedy of the Hutu middle class which was made to suffer the consequences of a genocide in which they were actively involved in organizing. This chapter is a departure from the class dimension emphasized in *Sometimes In April*(2005), the racial factor that dominates Dallaire’s documentary *A Good Man In Hell*(2002) and the ethnic contradictions that are depicted in *Hotel Rwanda*(2004). In doing so, this chapter situates the subject of the Rwandan genocide within the context of gender struggles as depicted in the documentary film *Keepers of Memory*(2004). It is argued that although *Keepers of Memory*(2004)allows some space for women survivors of genocide to narrate their experiences, the way women are expected to behave in front of the camera, their limited numbers and portrayal as sex objects smacks of gender stereotyped images. To bring out gender stereotypes, it is argued that while memories stories/narratives invite people to remember, the stories can be far from being neutral since the stories are constructed and narrated from subject positions which embody the ideals of those who produced *Keepers of Memory* (Tadjo 2002).

The assumption is that since *Keepers of Memory* (2004) was scripted and produced by Eric Kabera—a male, this act re-enforces gender stereotypes and social inequalities between men and women in which men command a bigger stake in terms of cultural control and meaning production. It is also argued that although *Keepers of Memory*(2004) include male and female characters in its narrative the documentary’s act of including limited numbers of women characters promotes gender stereotyped images in which the memories of women are underrepresented at the expense of memories from male characters. This is despite the fact that women are considered as worthy victims since they suffered doubly during the genocide because

of their ethnic identity and also because of the stereotypes associated with their sexuality as females. This chapter goes on to argue that although in *Keepers of Memory*(2004) displays of human skulls and bones are meant to arouse sympathy in people and remind them about the dreadful nature of the Rwanda genocide, this very act of displaying skulls and bones cheapens and trivializes the cultural significance of male and female victims in Rwanda. Skulls and bones can be stereotyped as ‘commodities of affect’ (Harting 2008: 72) worth of attracting western sympathy so that Rwanda receives foreign aid through international donors. Here, women suffer more because of their perceived vulnerability and their socially predetermined condition of helplessness.

6.1 The Plot of *Keepers of Memory* (2004)

Keepers of Memory (2004) is a documentary film produced ten years after the Rwandan genocide which occurred in 1994. According to its director Eric Kabera, the documentary features, ‘... stories of men and women who became the custodians of the dead. It (documentary) is an extraordinary journey of a people’s bravery to live and love again’ (2004). Apart from stories of the living, the documentary shows visual images of human skulls and bones excavated from mass graves and memorial sites scattered in Rwanda. Produced in the same style as *Voices of Rwanda*—a documentary narrative by Krauss (2009) *Keepers of Memory* (2004) has all its cast Rwandan and the setting is also Rwandan. The fact that *Keepers of Memory* (2004)uses real places and characters narrating eye-witness accounts can lend credibility to the documentary’s claims to authenticity when it says that it is, ‘...the custodian of the dead’ (2004). But the following sections shall reveal that the documentary’s selection and organization of its stories, characters, images of skulls and bones has actually contributed to the creation of gender stereotypes that critics can use to question the veracity of the genocide narratives in *Keepers of Memory*(2004).

6.2 Defining ‘silences’ in the gender discourses of *Keepers of Memory* (2004)

Ideological silence in which women’s voice is censored by the director manifest in their stories on the screen, and also by the way some women fail to choose words and use gestures that try to capture the gravity of their genocide experiences. Bhabha (1992) contends that silencing is depicted on the screen when women are shown being killed so that they are totally robbed of the

chance to represent their stories. Bruno(1992)collaborates with Bhabha's (1992) viewpoint when he says that silencing women on the screen-space occurs when images show the dismemberment of female body parts as if to re-enforce the idea that women's social status is fragmented. Scarry (1985) points out that another form of silencing women involves images of women who have been raped. Although such images are important for reminding people about the evil nature of perpetrators of those crimes, the images can confirm the fixed ideas that women are physically weak and therefore subordinated to men. According to Malleus silencing women can also manifest itself through the underrepresentation or 'symbolic annihilation' (2000:30) in which women's voices are excluded completely or given little space to speak about their genocide experiences. Commenting on the concept of 'voices' occupying screen-space, Giroux (1992: 199) asserts that to have '...a voice is to address the issue of how people articulate their struggles in the process of making history'. But the process of making history can be undermined through the 'suppression of social space' (Soja, 1989:78) in which the space inhabited by women on the screen is outlined and territorialised by patriarchal norms ,values and attitudes. The suppression of women's voices can also manifest itself through 'structured polysemy or directive closures' (Corner 1991:29) in cases where directors of film can engage actors to play out specific roles that predetermine a range of meanings likely to be reached at by the audiences watching the film. It is these directive closures that can produce absolutist genocide memorials so that patriarchical influences are intrinsically reproduced within film text(s) without questioning the basis of their ideology. Curti (1992) writes that while male characters can be allowed to speak, women's voices can be de-territorialised or drowned out so that women are not allowed to own meaning of their narratives through cultural productions such as film. Technical silencing (Soja 1989) involve aspects of camera motion and editing of film images in which a director can choose to focalize on specific areas of the body of female characters and its expressions at the expense of other areas. But Bhabha (1992) emphasizes the spatio-temporality in the 'voice' of women and their body movements which can bring out various meanings and possibilities for change in the process of articulating socio-cultural experiences. Another form of silencing is 'self-silencing' which, according to Bhabha (1992), comes about when women fail to speak out their feelings about how they were treated during the genocide for fear of being stigmatized as weak or for lacking of confidence about the worthiness of their experiences. Berland (1992) says that self-silencing can manifest in women through their inability to master appropriate language forms

(verbal and visual) that can best describe their experiences during the genocide. The following section interrogates the genocide narratives in *Keepers of Memory* (2004) emphasizing how verbal language and images are used to reproduce gender stereotypes/silences described above.

6.3 Verbalizing and Audio-visualizing the gendered ‘Other’ in *Keepers of Memory* (2004)

Keepers of Memory(2004) begins with a dark screen. Sonorous music with staccato beats is issued out as if to confirm the spiritual jerkiness and social imperfections caused by the Rwandan genocide. A narrator appears on the screen. The woman speaks in the local *Kinyarwanda* language, which when translated into English subtitles shows that the woman has lost all her children and family members. Tearfully, the woman says that, ‘I had a large family. They were all killed. They forced us into the house and opened fire. I escaped by pretending to be dead. The memory is still heavy in my heart’. The woman opens an album with photos of her children and family members who were killed by Hutu extremists during the Rwanda genocide. The story given by the female narrator can represent all other women who lost their relatives during the Rwandan genocide. Although the true identity of the woman is omitted, from the tonality of her speech, one can assume that the woman is either a Tutsi or moderate Hutu. In this shot, the album of photos is given as a piece of evidence to authenticate the story of the woman. The director, Eric Kabera uses close-up shots to capture the emotions of this woman narrator. Although this action is important to show how grieved the woman is in losing all family members, focalising on the emotional landscape of this narrator can reinforce one of the silences in which women can be stereotyped as being emotionally weak. Moreso, the true identity of this woman is omitted to give the impression of impartiality, and yet this can be a conscious act in which power in the post-genocide era conceals identity, records and reproduces itself(power) in the process of creating confusing images(Bhabha 1996). While this voice of the Tutsi woman is allowed to speak for the dead that of Hutu women survivors is suppressed. The voice of Hutu women is suppressed or ‘symbolically annihilated’ (Malleus 2000:30) as it cannot be allowed to speak about the mass graves and bones of fellow Hutu women refugees who were killed by RFP soldiers during the Rwandan genocide. Apart from being stereotyped as useless on the basis of ethnicity, the exclusion of Hutu women can be read as a form of silence in which their stories are stereotyped as the ‘undeserving ones’(Umutesi 2004:79) as their stories are put off-screen. Lemarchand (1998:14) warns that, ‘...unless a concerted effort is made to get closer to the facts

and move out of the fantasy-land of official mythologies, the collective memory of Hutu and Tutsi will continue to enshrine the same myths, with little hope in sight that the killings may stop'. These warnings should be taken seriously in view of the fact that in 2008, an insurrection by Laurent Nkunda—himself a Tutsi, killed, raped and looted Hutu civilians under the guise of protecting Tutsi populations in DR Congo(Des Forges 2008).

The raping of women is a dehumanising act that vulgarises women's bodies. In *Keepers of Memory* (2004) the female characters do not refer to the crimes that were committed on the bodies of some women during the genocide. When the film excludes this critical area in the narrative, this re-enforces another silence in which female voices are technically excluded by not focalising on rape but other aspects of crime that were meted out on their bodies. For example, the female narrator shows a big scar on her head that was inflicted by a *machete* blow. In *The Shadow of Imana* (2002) Tadjo erects a fictional memorial that speaks for the genocide victims but is also a counter narrative for the fallen Hutus silenced within the national Tutsi genocide narrative. Tadjo's (2002) attempts to create a balanced picture between individual and official narratives can be a step towards a right direction of presenting an objective analysis of the genocide events.

In *Keepers of Memory*, the camera moves and focuses on Francois Ngarambe. Francois cleans skulls and bones intended for preservation in national museums. Francois is shown laying out skulls and bones on a polythene sheet. Francois says that bones are selected according to the damage inflicted on them. Pieces of bones are put in crates to be buried at local cemeteries while large bones are kept at national museums. According to Chiwengo (2008) the stories of the dead and the indifference of the western world are narrated by the memorial of skulls and bones on the polythene sheet. But the bones are voiceless, yet their pain, objectified by their wounds and cracked skulls, narrate their ordeal. In other words, the cracked skulls present tangible evidence of the pain that was subjected to their flesh while they were still living. When *Keepers of Memory* (2004) focalizes on cracked bones it wants to prove that the authenticity of its factual information cannot be denied. Unfortunately, only a male character is depicted arranging bones and not also a woman. It does seem the job of cleaning and arranging bones is specifically allocated to men not women which is a form of gender discrimination. It is this discrimination which can reflect how women are sidelined in the post-genocide period on the basis of their

sexuality. The very act of displaying cracked skulls and bones may also help to create racial stereotypes in regard to the African way of life. That is, if western audiences view such visual images they can be led to believe that Africa is a centre of evil, a part of the world possessed by a demonic darkness that is beyond spiritual redemption (Magubane 2007).

Furthermore, the idea of putting African skulls and bones in a museum conjures up an image of Saartjie Bartman, a South African Khoisan woman whose body was put in a museum to be converted to an object of European study. According to Nkanga (2009: 18), 'Bartman's body was dissected in death to study the enlargement of her buttocks stereotypically referred to as 'Hottentot Venus'. A plaster cast of her nude body remained on display at Musee de l'Homme in Paris until 1974'. In *Keepers of Memory* (2004) the fact that African bones are put in museums by fellow Africans can suggest the presence of an underlying ideology divorced from the idea of promoting racism. This ideology may be focused on giving Paul Kagame's government a 'genocide credit' (Reyntjens 2002:35) in which skulls and bones are used to fix into permanency a Tutsi history in Rwanda. In turn, this history can be used as reference point to silence dissenting voices under the slogan *Never again!*

From a visual image depicting Ngarambe at work, the camera traces a physical and spiritual journey to a burial site littered with mass graves. At this burial site men are busy excavating human bones for reburial. A spokesperson says that, '... we are reburying people in decent graves. Mass graves are everywhere here. If a mass grave is excavated, we start another one'. Credit is due to the director Eric Kabera in showing that the dead are respected in Rwanda by providing them a decent burial. But the absence of female characters at the site is a form of silence that attempts to define genocide in masculine terms. It could have been a good idea for Kabera to show men and women working together at this site to confirm that the national tragedy of genocide in Rwanda had a consequence that went beyond the identity of single sex. Instead, women are put off-screen during the re-burial of bones as if to re-enforce gender stereotyped images in which women are excluded from participating in important cultural activities. It is also conceivable that Kabera has other ideas when he provides an image of men reburying bones. In this case, the words 'mass graves' can be synonymous with 'disorder' while 'decent graves' can symbolise 'order' (Nkunzimana 2009). This can be a way of telling people that the former Hutu

government stood for disorder and death while the present ruling government of Paul Kagame stands for peace, order and respect for the dead.

In reality, it is the government of Paul Kagame that brought peace in Rwanda. But Hall (1997) argues that power must not only be understood in terms of economic and physical coercion, but also in the broader cultural and symbolic mis/representation. Words and visual images become a 'regime of regimenting' (Hall 1997: 259) people's ideas and opinions towards preferred goals set by the government. But the same words and visual images in *Keepers of Memory* (2004) cannot tell that off-screen, there are voices of Hutu men and women victims contesting to be heard from their silenced position. The concepts of voices and discourses help the critic to get past the lure of the visual image to look beyond the epidermic surface of a film text (Shohat and Stam 1994). This is because while an image evokes the issue of mimetic realism, a voice evokes a realism of delegation and interluction, a situated utterance of 'speaking from'(individualized experience)and 'speaking to'(genocide audiences)(1994). Bakhtin(1981)uses the term 'heteroglossia' to refer to socially generated contradictions that constitute the subject(of Rwanda genocide) as a site of conflicting discourses and competing voices. Bakhtin's (1981) observations can unsettle any attempt to univocalize the genocide narrative in *Keepers of Memory* (2004) in which the voice of men is given prominence at the expense of the voice of women.

As the documentary narrative continues to unfold, it shows Rwandans fighting desperately to be accommodated in the United Nation trucks evacuating foreigners. A hacking sound is introduced here to signify the impending horror. Rwandans have been left out to face excruciating pain and death. This is confirmed by a visual image showing corpses scattered in the streets of Kigali. The camera lingers briefly around the bloodied corpse of a woman. From a side view and slightly tilted angle, one can see a long stick looming high in-between the legs of the dead woman. The camera shifts rapidly to focus on events in Washington DC. President Bill Clinton is addressing Congress and the world over that, 'The international Community must bear responsibility. We did not call these crimes by their rightful name—that is, 'genocide' . Here, the documentary can be commended for including such cut-up pictures of actual events which happened during the genocide or soon after the genocide. In other words, *Keepers of Memory* (2004) should be credited for depicting satisfactorily the hypocritical nature of USA, UN and the International Community. In his speech, Bill Clinton uses the collective noun 'we' to mask or avoid

particularizing blame on America. ‘We’ refers to humanity. It is aimed to create a collective guilt consciousness in all people around the world for letting a genocide to happen in Rwanda. But the collective ‘we’ does not show that women suffered most during the genocide because apart from being physically eliminated some women were sexually violated. Furthermore, the sweeping statement given by Bill Clinton conceals the specific forces that helped to define the Rwandan genocide. In other words, Clinton does not show through his speech that the superpower status of America and her overriding influence on UN’ Security Council made it possible for UN to turn down suggestions for a possible military intervention in Rwanda (Rothchild, 2001). What was being played were also gender stereotypes and as well as racial stereotypes in which the African black body is viewed as ‘worthless and the dispensible other’ (Magubane 2007). This cultural stereotype facilitates the ‘binding’ or bonding together of ‘US’(Europeans) who are ‘normal’ into one ‘imagined community’(Hall 1997: 258) On the other hand, the same cultural stereotype can send into symbolic exile all of ‘them-the others’(Africans)who are in some way different—‘beyond the pale’(1997: 258) of humanity.

The dehumanization of the black body is captured through visual images at Ntarama memorial site. Ntarama memorial site is a Catholic Church building where scenes of massacre took place. A female narrator, also a survivor at this site of massacre, explains and demonstrates how she escaped being killed by the *Interahamwe* militia. The woman expresses anger as she points at long bones and skulls laid out in rows on raised wooden platforms. The woman rhetorically asks, ‘what is the purpose of putting them (killers) in jail? It’s very difficult to explain in words what I saw’. The woman sobs uncontrollably as she moves out of the building. There is self-silencing in the act of not finding suitable words to explain what the woman narrator experienced during the Rwandan genocide. Self silence is a gender stereotype in which women are viewed as having too much emotions that can overwhelm reasoning or the idea of articulating social experiences. Yet, on other hand, by quoting the expression that, ‘...It’s difficult to explain in words what I saw’, *Keepers of Memory*(2004) is trying to show the difficulties of translating visual memories into words. Such difficulties are the ones which cause slippages of meanings from a narrative that may want to present itself as the objective truth.

The camera in *Keepers of Memory* shifts again to beam on the *gacaca* tribunal session at *Nyanza*. People are being tried for the crimes against humanity committed during the genocide. There are

several silences that are imposed on women through a shot about the *gacaca* tribunal session. The first silence involves ‘symbolic annihilation’ (Malleus 2000:30) in which women voices are completely eliminated as they are not part and parcel of panellists of judges and juries who try people at *Nyanza*. Not to include women as decision makers is a cultural stereotype in which women are relegated to the domestic sphere instead of being encouraged to take up intellectually challenging roles such as being a judge. This cultural stereotype is translated to a political one where women can be given less challenging roles in the ruling government of Paul Kagame. The second silence manifest itself from a point at which women are given space to narrate stories but some of them are discriminated against on the basis of ethnicity. For example, all women who are brought to testify at *Nyanza* incriminate the *Interahamwe* and Hutu soldiers but there are no Hutu women who testify against the atrocities that were perpetrated on them by Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) in Congo and Kibeho refugee camp in Rwanda. Also there is no single RPF soldier that stands for trial at *Nyanza* for committing crimes against humanity during the genocide. The third silence involves the representation of women during the trials. That is ,while male victims narrate their stories clearly without showing overriding emotions, women are depicted as people who cannot control their emotions. This tends to affect the content and consistence of their stories as women occasionally stop in the midst of narrating their experiences to release tension and anger through crying.

The idea of displaying cracked human skulls and bones on a wooden platform is done with the intended effect of creating horror. According to Tadjó (2002: 81), ‘ skulls and bones compel, remind and challenge viewers to say *Never again!* so that, ‘ the fruits of peace’, can ‘be gathered from the tree of suffering’. Nkunzimana (2009:83) echoes Tadjó’s (2002) point by asserting that, ‘...documentaries should bear witness and spur us (audiences) into action’ that should yield positive results focused on improving social relations. But, while the display of skulls and bones can be an innocent way of telling people that a genocide should never be repeated in Rwanda, an audience –driven perspective can read otherwise. Pottier asserts that it is easy for the ruling government to convert skulls and bones into ‘commodities of affect’ (2002: 45).The result is the construction of a Rwandan death market–the trade in humanitarian sentiment which can invite stereotypical images that can bear witness to the ‘so-called topographies of African cruelty’ (Harting 2008: 72). The political implications are that African people can be killed with impunity. On the other hand, the same skulls and bones can lead into admissions that only

Kagame's government deserve the monopoly of knowledge construction in Rwanda. Also this monopoly of knowledge is done from the perspective of male characters in the documentary as they are more male characters as compared to female characters. From this level, women are silenced in terms of their numbers. It is imperative to point out that it is the same knowledge/power system which can make one to question the Tutsi history outside its 'classical episteme' (Jenks 1993: 230) and its totalizing narrative(s) of Tutsi purity. From another angle, displaying skulls and bones can re-enforce racial stereotypes that view the African skeleton as an object of anthropological study. This point is critical because in the documentary narrative, there are several snap shots depicting European visitors with some academic bags on their backs as if they are poised to study and bear witness to what the western world calls 'African barbarism'(Mayer 2002:56). In fact, Magubane (2007) says that western 'pseudo-scientific' studies on the African skeleton justified a falsified way of constructing racial and cultural stereotypes that likened what they call the, 'sloped skulls of Negroes to those of Chimpanzees and Orang-taung gorillas'(2007:66). Through such racial stereotypes women suffer on several levels of discrimination. They are sidelined on the basis of colour as black people and also on the basis of gender and their sexuality as females.

In the documentary, one of the female narrators is furious about the idea of killers being put into the jail. At one level, it can be suggested that the woman expects the killers to be hanged so that the spilt blood of genocide victims is vindicated. By using the voice of this female narrator, *Keepers of Memory (2004)* could be representing the sentiments of those people who think that putting perpetrators of violence in jail instead of hanging them is a travesty of justice. Here, women are used as mouth-pieces of the film director who is a male to offer opinions that contradict official decisions regarding the ruling on perpetrators of violence. Yet, this statement may have been included to show that women are not always sympathetic as society and culture expect them to behave. In other words, the statement implies that women can make decisions that can result in the death of other people based on what women think is right. But on another level, the statement issued out by the female narrator may have been strategically selected by the film director to show that the present government of Kagame respects freedom of expression, impartiality of law, and that the government does not kill people. But off the screen-space of *Keepers of Memory (2004)*, Marysse and Reyntjents (2002) depict incidents of Hutu massacre, detention of dissenters and suppression of information in the post-genocide Rwanda. To build a

memorial at *Ntarama* is an acknowledgment that the church was not a passive on-looker of events during Rwanda genocide. Unlike the film *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), *Sometimes In April* (2005) and *Keepers of Memory* (2004) shows that some church priests and nuns actually conspired with murder squads to kill church members who were identified either as Tutsi or moderate Hutus. Here, the documentary should be commended for showing that women were involved in the genocide not only as victims but also as perpetrators of violence. This serves to invalidate the perception that women are weak people who wait sheepishly for violence to be inflicted upon their bodies.



Fig.4 Shot depicting a female surviving victim at *Ntarama* memorial site in *Keepers of Memory* (2004)Source: 350 x 353 - 35k – jpg international.ucla.ed(2009).

The above shot captures an image of a female surviving victim at *Ntarama* scene of massacre. This shot was particularly selected to show that in *Keepers of Memory* women are given some space to narrate their experiences about the Rwandan genocide. The shot was also selected in order to bring out the point that although *Ntarama* Catholic Church was considered a place of pristine innocence, the church experienced one of the most devastating fatalities of civilian deaths during the genocide. Of the five thousand deaths recorded at *Ntarama* memorial site, women and children constitute a greater number than that of men (Melvern, 2000). A high incidence of death was also registered at *Nyamata* memorial site which was a Roman Catholic Church building.

At *Nyamata* memorial site, the narrator is an old man. The old man narrates his ordeal when he says that, ‘...talking about the genocide helps me internally. My escape must have been God’s will. This is proof that people were let down by the church’. The old man says the last statement pointing at a heap of broken pieces of bones and skulls. The camera shifts momentarily to linger on the statue of Virgin Mary outside the church building. Back into the church, the old man suddenly changed his mood and starts to speak with a sense of regret when he says that, ‘I feel discussing what happened is useless. I’m just like a log with no feelings’. A timbre music sound is introduced here to capture the sombre mood of the old man. The speech from the old man reflects that it can be possible to have contradictory feelings about the effects of the Rwandan genocide. To some surviving victims talking about genocide is a self cleansing process. It purifies the soul. But to other people, the genocide narrative is like opening up old wounds. The story repels. The repulsion usually comes when one is confronted by glaring evidence showing a heap of bones like the one found at *Nyamata* and other memorial sites. But Tadjó (2002) argues that while Tutsi bones mixed with ‘other’ bones (heap of bones at *Nyamata*) can articulate their pain through official narratives, the cries of Hutu bones are silenced. The cries of the bones of Hutu women are silenced on the basis of ethnicity as well as on the basis of gender. When the camera lingers on the statue of Virgin Mary it is as if the camera is attempting to build contrasting images of good versus evil. The ideals of purity a church upholds can be subverted by pragmatic and evil events of genocide. The focalization on the statue of Virgin Mary can also conjure up gender stereotyped images in which women can only be respected in their iconographic representation than when they are still living. During the genocide, women,s bodies were not respected but instead, the bodies were violated sexually and killed as well.



Fig.5 Shot depicting a male surviving victim at Nyamata memorial site in *Keepers of Memory*(2004) Source: 225 x 169 - 11k – jpg eyeforfilm.co.uk(2009)

The above shot depicts an image of an old man who survived slaughter at *Nyamata* Catholic building during the Rwandan genocide. The bitterness of this old man is betrayed by the serious expression written on his face. The old man's attention appears to be drawn towards something that is very far away. It appears his mind could thinking about all those people who perished at *Nyamata* as well as trying to figure out reasons why a genocide of such magnitude happened in Rwanda.

In the documentary, the old man says that, '...I'm just like a log with no feelings'. This statement can be interpreted to mean that the old male narrator is drained of all feelings and trust towards public institutions like churches, schools and hospitals which are positively stereotyped as 'saviours of the people'(Melvern 2000: 175). To be reduced to a log with no feelings also means that the genocide has succeeded in creating zombies or human cyborgs in Rwanda that are just cold and dehumanised. But, during the genocide women suffered double dehumanisation as some of them were raped and killed as well. And none of the surviving female victims in *Keepers of Memory* (2004) allude to sexual violence that was subjected to some women during the genocide. Here, the documentary can be criticised for imposing the silence of exclusion where the director did not include female victims of rape even when written literature testifies that they are a lot of Tutsi and Hutu women and girls who were raped during the genocide.

Although *Keepers of Memory* (2004) is a serious account of live events which happened during the Rwandan genocide, the narrative is not without its lighter moments. Tension is briefly disturbed by hip-hop music entertainment from Rutabana. The stadium is fully packed and Rwandans are dancing their sorrows out. Rutabana sings in the local *Kinyarwanda* but the way he raises his clasped hands can suggest that he is singing about messages of peace, love and unity. Such messages befit Rwanda—a country that has experienced a devastating genocide along an ethnic divide of Tutsi and Hutus. Theorizing on music, Attali (1985) says that music is therapeutic; it has a purifying effect because it is rooted in a comprehensive knowledge of one's emotional feelings and the politics of remembering. Music is also a means of expressing power

and exercising social control. But when the documentary includes the voice of Rutabana through music it is as if its narrative is re-enforcing gender stereotyped images in which women are shown as not in charge of cultural productions such as music. What this amounts to is that women are only recipients of information not producers of that information. While the hip-hop music of Rutabana encourages unity among Rwandans, Reyntjents (2005) mourns about the post-genocide Rwanda characterized by ‘Tutsization’ and ‘RFP-ization’ (2005: 22) of all institutions including the music industry. This ‘Tutsization’ has given birth to what Reyntjents (2005:22) calls the *Akazu system* in which Tutsis unduly accumulate material resources, jobs and privileges. This accumulation of privileges is also defined by patriarchal influences in which men get a bigger stake in the political and economic control of material resources.

In *Keepers of Memory* the genocide narrative at *Murambi* memorial site singles out Hutu extremists as the major culprits. *Murambi* memorial site is littered with graves. The site had once been a village compound. A man who survived the massacre narrates his story:

‘One day, the *Interahamwe* came with soldiers and rounded up people. Men, women and children were slashed with *machetes* while others were clobbered to death using knobkerries. Hutu soldiers used guns to shoot at those who attempted to escape. An *Interahamwe* militia struck me on the head with a knobkerrie. I fell down and pretended as if I was dead. I was lucky to escape’.

The above story shows that victims of murder must have experienced gruesome deaths. A reference to weapons like *machete* and knobkerrie can induce in audiences a strong feeling of revulsion. This is because the repeated act of slashing with a *machete* and clobbering with a knobkerrie means death was a slow process with pain applied systematically on body parts. When *Keepers of Memory*(2004) mentions traditional weapons such as *machete* and knobkerrie, the act is an indictment to the weaknesses of United Nations and the International Community. Despite the presence of sophisticated weaponry the world can boast of possessing, this so-called modern world failed to stop a genocide in Rwanda which was mainly carried out using traditional weapons. Also the weapons such as a *machete* and knobkerrie have got a masculine character in them. One may be curious to find out the type of weapons that those women who killed during the genocide used. *Keepers of Memory*(2004) fails to provide a genocide narrative in which women are shown as perpetrators of violence. Mamdani (2004) argues that some women actually killed or worked in support roles by finishing off victims of murder. Although

scholars like Uvin (1997) deny that the Rwandan genocide happened in the context of a civil war, Mamdani (2001) and French (2005) think otherwise. According to French (2005) this civil war was triggered by a protracted Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) invasion of Rwanda from 1990 to 1994. However, the ruling government in the Rwanda refutes the fact that Rwanda genocide occurred in the context of a civil war. These refutations are done strategically to give, 'an exceptionalist' (Mamdani 2001) dimension to Rwanda genocide in which a single factor of Hutu extremist is used to explain genocide in which women's voices were ostensibly silenced physically through death, and culturally through enforced absence on the film screen.

In *Keepers of Memory*, Nyamkomo Hill is a memorial site on which patchy vegetation cover shows that there has been much human interference over the years. A figure of a man is caught in a long shot approaching this memorial site. Gradually, the figure is zoomed-in to reveal a pensive old man holding a spear in his right hand. The old man speaks with a sense of regret when he says that, 'There was much beauty around here. The only beauty left now is of skeletons lying around. I was saved by my spear and God. The United Nations and the International Community left people to be slaughtered at *Bisesero* village down there'. The old man points towards the direction where *Bisesero* village once thrived. Nyamkomo area has been reduced to the biblical Golgotha where human skeletons dominate. The statement that, 'The only beauty left now is of skeletons lying around,' betrays the paranoia of destruction engineered by Hutu extremists. But from another angle, the statement can re-enforce negative stereotypes in which Africa can be viewed as the '*Heart of Darkness*' (Conrad 1994) where natives, '...lobber each other on the head to assuage their ancestral bloodlust' (Prunier in Chiwengo, 2008: 81). But when the old man says that, 'I was saved by my spear and God,' he seems to be challenging official myths that would want to represent Tutsi and moderate Hutus as passive victims of Hutu extremist violence. Here, the words 'spear' and 'God' reflect that some victims did not wait sheepily to be killed. The victims had some power to use physical means as well as invoke supernatural powers to protect themselves from harm. *Keepers of Memory* (2004) can also be credited for showing the creativity of some of the female characters who escaped death by pretending to be dead. Other women survived and defied death by drinking their own blood for almost a week. The quoted words also work as counter narratives to *Hotel Rwanda's* (2004)

simplistic portrayal of Tutsi and Hutus as weak people waiting to face their nemesis in death. Furthermore, Dallaire's *Shake Hands with the Devil* (2004) make reference to an incident in which Hutu extremists were held at bay by well organized Tutsi villagers until the extremists lost hope of attacking the Tutsi villagers. In the context of the documentary narrative, the topographical location of *Nyamkomo* memorial site *vis-a-vis* *Bisesero* village site can suggest that those people who were killed on the hill may have tried to escape after their village below the hill was destroyed.

As *Keepers of Memory*(2004) comes to an end, it shows on the screen an image of a hill in semi-darkness. The staccato beats grace the ending as if to symbolize the continuity of struggle and uncertainty of hope in post-genocide Rwanda. Finally, the screen writes that, 'I remember them...Film dedicated to victims of genocide.'

6.4 Sexual violence on women in *Keepers of Memory*(2004)

Previously, a reference was made to an image of a dead woman with a long stick looming high in-between her legs. Scarry (1985:213) refers to such an image as, 'the facticity of another power'. The facticity of another power is a gender stereotype that 'essentializes' and 'normalizes' (Hall 1997: 258) masculine power to conquer and destroy women and their genitalia . In the context of the documentary narrative, the woman depicted with a long stick in-between her legs suffers different levels of silencing/destruction. First, the woman is destroyed because she is a Tutsi or moderate Hutu, and therefore she is a 'cockroach' or *Inyenzi*. Second, the woman is destroyed because she possesses an 'object'—her genitalia, which reproduces 'cockroaches' as Hutu extremists stereotypically referred to all Tutsi and moderate Hutus. Third, the woman is killed as an expression of anger because her genitalia is an ' inaccessible object of desire' (Chiwengo 2008: 86) which cannot be penetrated by Hutu man because of their perceived social positions as the under-privileged ones. Thus, raping a Tutsi woman during the genocide was equated with 'tasting' and 'knowing' an inaccessible object of desire—Tutsi vagina (Chiwengo 2008). The Tutsi women, who because of their attraction and beauty were called '*ibizungerezi*' (beautiful and sexy) and stereotyped within the newspaper *Kangura's* ten commandments of what defines a Tutsi woman. In the article '*Profanation des Vagins*' (Profanation of vaginas) Bolya (2008) explains how Tutsi woman were raped and killed. Furthermore, to objectify the pain of rape and death, pick-axes and sharpened sticks were forced

into their vaginas. By selecting a visual image of a dead woman whose genitalia has been vulgarised, the director—Eric Kabera should be credited for constructing a narrative of our ‘imaginary selves’ (Gazetas 1985: 67). In the narrative of the imaginary self, the ‘hyperreal’ of images and representations can easily stand in for the ‘actual reality’ (1985: 67) of women who were killed and whose genitals were disfigured during the Rwandan genocide. But, in spite of Kabera’s skill in manipulating visual images to tell the story of how women suffered during the Rwandan genocide, through his selection of characters, the director can be criticized for reproducing the same gender stereotypes he is trying to discourage in his narrative.

In *Keepers of Memory* (2004) the number of women who appear on the screen is very limited as compared to that of men. This act of diminishing the number of female narrators is a gender stereotype which re-enforces the idea that women cannot stand on their own. They need male figure-heads to narrate stories on their (women) behalf. But the irony is that almost all stories in *Keepers of Memory* (2004) are presented as personalised experiences or eye-witness accounts. This means, women as surviving victims would not need anyone to narrate stories on their behalf since it is their bodies which suffered the pain. Sontag (2003) says that individualized pain is irreproducible. It dies with those who were subjected to pain or lives within the bodies of those people who suffered it. Furthermore, Nkunzimana (2009) warns that if filmmakers are not careful, they are likely to make a show out of other people’s pain which is a serious blow to human dignity. The superficiality behind forcing pain out of people is caused by the ideology of the entertainment industry bent on producing maximum profits from cultural products such as film. An example of how the entertainment industry can create superficial pain is when *Keepers of Memory* (2004) depicts women who are struggling to make tears come out so that they meet with the director’s objectives of recreating painful memories. It was argued earlier on that while in itself crying can be a health exercise that helps to shed off tension and anger, on the other hand, crying can confirm and re-enforce negative stereotypes constructed by society that views women as weak and emotional.

In the documentary film, Kabera has not given his female characters a chance to narrate their stories outside the ‘framed’ and ‘fixed’ (Hall 1997: 258) notions of how women should behave in society and culture. Ultimately, Kabera has failed to move out of the confines of gender stereotyped images he is trying to discourage through his act of including female characters to

his documentary narrative. But despite the weaknesses alluded to, Eric Kabera should be commended for constructing an emotionally touching documentary that captures the horror of death and gruesome experiences as well as giving voice to women who are featured narrating their genocide experiences. Off-screen, Kabera should also be applauded for establishing a *Rwanda Cinema Centre* (RCC) that promotes the production of feature films as well as documentary narratives (Nkunzimana 2009). The indigenous ownership of cultural productions is crucial because it can discourage a condition reflected in the white owned documentary *A Good Man In Hell*(2002) in which the Canado-American sponsors turned down the idea of including surviving victims of Rwanda genocide. But whether a documentary is foreign or locally produced, its narrative(s) cannot be free from ideological contestation. The following section challenges how cultural memory is re/constructed in *keepers of Memory* (2004).

6.5 Cultural Memory and the politics of dis/remembers gender in *Keepers of Memory* (2004).

Cultural memory is an important way of remembering past experiences. Human experiences are repositories of norms, values and attitudes which people can use as ‘mirror images’ (Cohen& Kennedy,2007)to judge their behaviour in their bid to restore human dignity. But the same cultural memory can be used by privileged groups to construct absolute values that can be viewed as true and unassailable. In this line of thinking, Muchemwa (2005:195) asserts that:

‘If there is an insistence on cultural memory as a sacred set of absolute meanings owned by a privileged group, memory becomes a set of instruments used to exclude and expel the ‘undeserving’ from the ancestral house’

Cultural memory is a complex body of knowledge system with ambiguities and contradictions. According to Vambe (2004: 7), ‘...the complexity of cultural memory is that it is selective and consciously or unconsciously privileges certain forms of knowledge as the only valid ones’. What is implied in Vambe’s (2004) statement is that cultural memory is not neutral as it can be subjected to different forms of manipulation. The manipulation can be focused on denying others the right to speak on the basis of gender as well as on the basis of ethnicity. In this case, the dominant voice can adopt strategies of aural and symbolic mis/representation. These strategies of aural and symbolic mis/representation are evident in the genocide narrative of *Keepers of Memory*(2004). For example, speaking from their privileged position, none of the narrators in the documentary can totally challenge the Rwandan official history by alluding to the atrocities that

were carried out by Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) forces on Hutu refugees in the equatorial forests of Eastern Congo and Kibeho refugee camp in Rwanda (Umutesi, 2004). Women suffered doubly because they were killed as Hutu and also because they were accused of having given birth to the youths who constituted the *Interahamwe* militia that played a crucial role in executing the genocide. But considering that truth often comes out of the unsaid in official discourse, as Chomsky(2001) argues in his essay of propaganda, it may not be easy for one to wish away the gravity of the atrocities perpetrated on Hutu refugees. Also, the selective nature of *Keepers of Memory (2004)* is betrayed by the documentary's failure to put balanced numbers between its male and female characters. Male characters dominate the screen space of *Keepers of Memory (2004)*. Consequently, male characters dominate in the reproduction of cultural memory. The inequality depicted through the presentation of unbalanced numbers between male and female characters can symbolize how women are sidelined from taking part in important cultural, political and economic matters in the Rwandan society. Also, the fact that criticism of the new government in Kigali seems to be voiced by human rights organisations and individuals opposed to government policies but not through filmic images like those found in *Keepers of Memory (2004)* can show the extent to which information production and dissemination is stifled by the ruling government in Rwanda (Nkunzimana 2009). While the Tutsi voice is given prominence in Kabera's documentary film, the voice of Hutu survivors is put off-screen or drowned out. The result is a situation in which the Tutsi Community is sentimentalized and 'haloed' as victims while all Hutus are 'villainized' (Shohat and Stam 1994: 208) and negatively stereotyped as the 'undeserving others'(Muchemwa 2005: 195) who should not participate in the cultural activity of constructing national history. But what is ironic about cultural memory is that in its desire to destabilize other memories and other histories, cultural memory necessitates a preliminary critique of its claims to be able to represent uncontested truths (Vambe 2004). The implication is that cultural memory which dominates the screen-space of *Keepers of Memory (2004)* is capable of creating instabilities in its narrative structures which can begin to contest the basis on which that memory is constructed. These internal instabilities in cultural memory can be caused by a factor explained by Derrida's theory on 'intentionality'(Lucy 2004: 57)which states that, 'having an intention is one thing: being understood to mean what you say is another'. Derrida's theory suggests that cultural memories on the screen of *Keepers of Memory (2004)* can be doubted, confirmed or incorporated in the cultural practice of watching films.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter problematized the commodification of culture in *Keepers of Memory* (2004). It was argued that if the documentary displays skulls and bones with the intention of attracting foreign aid, the cultural significance and dignity of the dead in Rwanda is trivialized and undermined. The chapter has also examined how cultural and political stereotypes are created in *Keepers of Memory* (2004) because of the nature of its characterization and behavioural exposition of characters. It was argued that by its act of selecting a limited number of female characters the documentary narrative helps in undermining the voice of women who also suffered during the Rwandan genocide. Another weakness is that the documentary presents most female characters as emotionally weak thereby re-enforcing the 'fixed' notions that women cannot face up to difficult challenges in life. Still on characterization, the documentary fails to give a balanced picture of the reality of the Rwandan genocide by giving chance to the surviving Hutus who also witnessed the atrocities committed by RPF forces of the present government. It is argued that although oral stories and visual images can make people to remember past injustices, the same stories and visual images can be used as instruments of political propaganda to gag divergent ideas which can contradict official narratives. The next chapter is the conclusion of the whole study. It summarises the arguments advanced in the chapters that focused on *A Good Man In Hell*(2002), *Hotel Rwanda*(2004), *Sometimes In April* (2005)and *Keepers of Memory*(2004). The concluding chapter also suggest recommendations on how the genocide narrative/film can improve its ways of telling the stories of the Rwandan genocide without constructing damaging cultural and political stereotypes through its verbal and audio-visual language formations.

Chapter 7

Whither the genocide film in Rwanda?

7.0 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to contest the political and cultural stereotypes in *A Good Man in Hell*, *Hotel Rwanda*, *Sometimes in April* and *Keepers of Memory*. The study was motivated by the need to demonstrate that the films initially subverted the stereotypes found in the Rwandan genocide. The study then sought to explain why the same films reproduced some of the harmful political and cultural stereotypes in the film narratives. The study also was motivated by the academic imperative to respond convincingly to the questions upon which the study is based. For example, the first question was:

- What are the specific manifestations of language stereotyped depictions of genocide in the Rwandan films under study?

In responding to this question the study first analyzed Dallaire's documentary film *A Good Man In Hell* (2004). This film describes how ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutu were abandoned by United Nations and the International community to be killed by Hutu extremists. The analysis showed that Dallaire believes that Rwandans were abandoned because they are blacks. To substantiate this argument, Dallaire gave an example of Yugoslavia which also experienced a genocide in 1994 but received European assistance in order to ensure peace and stability. Dallaire further argues that if enough weapons and soldiers were availed to him he could have stopped the genocide. Dallaire gave credible arguments in the film and revealed the hypocritical nature of the western world. In short, Dallaire's film exposed the language of racism that was used to disregard the plight of the Rwandans during the genocide. The use of the eye witness account makes Dallaire's film approximate the language of an autobiography that he uses to subvert European racism.

However, it was argued that Dallaire's choice of a European audience and setting for his documentary fails to rise above the master narrative of whiteness he sought to expose for scrutiny. Dallaire speaks to the Europeans as if Africans do not matter at all. In his visual language there are no genocide survivors who testify and who might have lent more credibility to his narrative. His visual image of himself as the only source of the stories of the genocide told to

a European audience showed how language can annihilate the very people whose stories he is supposed to tell. In short, Dallaire's film failed to move out of the very language of racism that he sought to subvert. His film unwittingly promotes the grand narrative of whiteness.

Chapter 4 focused on *Hotel Rwanda (2004)* a feature film produced by Terry George. It was argued that the film depicted ethnicity as the main factor that motivated the Rwandan genocide. The film also uses visual pictures of Paul who is the main character and a moderate Hutu to subvert the idea that all Hutus were killers. *Hotel Rwanda* gave the correct impression that Tutsis mainly suffered from the genocide. However, *Hotel Rwanda's (2004)* language of characterization failed to bring out many Hutus who assisted in preventing the death of Tutsis. Poor command of the film language and techniques of characterization and the views of the Tutsis gave a picture of them as an undifferentiated social group. It was argued that this Hollywood format undermines the popular or mass character of Rwanda genocide. In short, *Hotel Rwanda's* verbal and visual language that insists on ethnicizing the genocide underestimates the importance of other factors such as class differentiations in promoting ideological divisions in the Rwandan society.

Sometimes In April(2005) showed that ethnicity was a key factor in deciding who died and who lived during the genocide. But the film goes a step further and also explains the genocide using the language of class struggle. In the film, there are class struggles between Tutsi elites and Hutu elites, and intra class conflicts among the Hutu people. The film was also credited for having Rwandans as its actors and extras because this enabled the Rwandans to own the narratives of their experiences of the genocide.

Despite the strong points of *Sometimes In April (2005)* it was argued that the film's reliance on the language of 'spectacle of excess'. This image was meant to put across the film's didactic lessons about the pernicious nature of the genocide. But the spectacle of excess hides from view other aspects of life of the killers and the survivors of the genocide. The spectacle focuses on a single value and as such cannot differentiate the enthusiastic, the reluctant and the coerced among the killers. The spectacle of excess depicts all Tutsis as weak and therefore underestimates individual Tutsi resistance that found fuller expression in the RPF that stopped the genocide.

Chapter 6 analyzed *Keepers of Memory* (2004) scripted and produced by Eric Kabera. The documentary uses live characters and places to prove that its narratives are authentic. It was argued that the film creates gender stereotyped images. Through gender stereotypes women are silenced as their number is diminished on the screen. When female characters are given space to narrate their experiences, they are depicted as a crying lot, and this re-reinforce gender stereotypes that view women as emotionally weak. *Keepers of Memory* (2004) fails to generate film language through which it is possible to give voice to some women and girls who were raped during the genocide. Although pain can be untranslatable some women in the film failed to command words to express their pain. This failure to create new film techniques that can handle pain suffered by women reproduce the myth that women cannot speak for themselves in a coherent manner.

The second question that the study sought to provide answers to is;

- Why have the international films encouraged a re-production of language stereotypes representations of the genocide images after 1994?

Here, the study provided several reasons why initially the film directors subverted the racial, ethnic, class and gender stereotypes through which the genocide is controversially understood and then in the same films the directors failed to rise above their own biases. For example, with the exception of Kabera who directed *Keepers of memory*, Dallaire, Peck and Goerge are foreigners to Rwanda. Their outsider status does now provide them with adequate ideological conviction to grapple with questions of responsibility, complicity, inaction and guilt. The filmmakers did not sufficiently foreground the socio-economic and historical factors responsible for the build up of tension in Rwanda that made genocide inevitable. The foreign directors failed to provide individuated motivations for the killers, and also individuated characterisation to the Tutsi and Hutu moderates. The result of this omission is that the binary of Tutsi versus Hutu has been sustained in the verbal and visual languages of the film. The use of foreign characters/actors and setting by the foreign directors of *A Good Man in Hell*, *Hotel Rwanda* and *Sometimes In April* undermined the authentic identities of the actors and created a barrier between actors and the Rwandans.

The third question that the study posed at the beginning is

- What are the forms of political discriminations these film stereotypes generate and promote among the Rwandans, and with what implications to the understanding of genocide in Rwanda, and Africa?

If there were no studies in genocide and literature, radio and sculptor that are dealing with the same theme of genocide, one could mistakenly conclude that the four films can promote perceptions that suggest that it was only the Tutsi who bore the brunt of the genocide. A further perception is that there are no contradictions in the social group of the Tutsis whose opposite is that almost all Hutus are guilty. The possible political consequences of such essentializing on identities is that the Hutus can always be viewed as murders and the Tutsis can then justify their rule in the post 1994 period on the grounds that they are the victims. Political discriminations can lead to another cycle of genocide. On a cultural level, the silencing of women in the films can also promote discrimination of women based on gender.

7.1 Recommendations of the study

This study proposes several recommendations:

The first recommendation is that film directors should develop and use film techniques that will help foreground the social, economic, cultural and historical factors that led to the 1994 genocide. This could go a long way to helping the audience to have a broader perspective in understanding the cause, course and consequences of the Rwanda genocide.

The second recommendation is that Film directors can use in their films a more dialectical approach that brings out the racial, ethnic, class, generation, gender, age to add diversity of identities to their characters. This would go a long way towards bringing out the contradictory ways in which the Rwandan genocide was conceived and executed.

The third recommendation is that film directors should use Rwandan actors and shoot the film on location. This allows the Rwandan people to feel that they own the stories of their experiences in the genocide.

The fourth recommendation is that future film projects on the Rwandan genocide could explore the fate of Rwandan refugees lost in the forests of Eastern Congo. This can help audiences have a

broader understanding of the regional dimension of the genocide. The move can help the present government forge a true spirit of reconciliation among the ethnic groups in Rwanda.

The fifth recommendation is that future research on film production on the theme of genocide should focus on films produced by women and also talking about the role of women during the genocide. It is hoped that such a research can make audiences have a clearer picture about the dynamic roles women played as both victims and perpetrators of violence.

The sixth recommendation is that future research could compare films authorized by the Rwandan government through the project of the *The Rwanda Forum* with those films created by independent producers. That can help determine the ways in which film directors can deal with censorship from the officials.

The seventh recommendation is that young filmmakers from Rwanda can also be trained, and film directors should constantly sharpen their linguistic skills to deal with the contradictions of representing the Rwandan genocide.

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