

Exploring the Therapeutic Effects of Testimonies in Yolande Mukagasana's *Not My Time To Die* and Scholastique Mukasonga's *Cockroaches*

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Abstract: *This paper explores possibilities through which writing can be perceived as a cure, a healing activity throwing out the evils of pain and affliction with a focus on Yolande Mukagasana's Not My Time to Die and Scholastique Mukasonga's Cockroaches'. It aims at showing the therapeutic effect of bearing witness after the traumatic experiences these two authoresses have gone through from the late 1950s to 1994, the fatidic year that has forever impacted Rwandan history. Conducted through psychobiographical, historical, and stylistic approaches, this study accounts for a genocide set into motion since 1959, whose warning signs are ethnic discrimination, intolerance, and demonization. It also highlights the trauma that has led to psychological flagellations such as death within, powerlessness, and long-lasting grief. From these dreadful elements will be grasped the urgency of bearing witness, that enables Yolande and Scholastique to offload their burden, or at least not to carry it alone. From self-empowerment to preservation of memory, always through remembrance, this research work ultimately scrutinises discursive strategies such as trivialisation of horror and humour that provide a way to approach and condemn the genocide.*

Keywords: *Testimony; catharsis; trauma; genocide; memory; horror, restless childhood.*

Résumé

L'intérêt de cet article est de montrer à quel point l'écriture peut être perçue comme une Catharsis des maux, peines et afflictions avec en toile de fond l'analyse de *Not My Time to Die* de Yolande Mukagasana et *Cockroaches* de Scholastique Mukasonga. Il vise à mettre en évidence l'effet thérapeutique du témoignage après les événements tragiques dont ces deux auteures ont été témoins, de la fin des années 1950 jusqu'à 1994, année fatidique qui aura à jamais noirci l'histoire du Rwanda. Cette étude, conduite à la lumière des approches psychoanalytique, historique et stylistique, rend compte d'un génocide en gestation depuis 1959, dont les signes avant-coureurs sont discrimination 'ethnique', intolérance et diabolisation. Aussi expose-t-il le traumatisme de l'horreur ayant induit chez les persécutés des flagellations psychologiques telles que la mort intérieure, l'impuissance et le deuil opiniâtre. C'est à partir de ces éléments dévastateurs que sera mieux saisie l'urgence du témoignage, qui permettra à Yolande et Scholastique de se décharger de leur fardeau, ou du moins de ne plus le porter seules. De l'auto-dynamisme des survivants à la préservation de la mémoire des victimes, en passant toujours par le souvenir, cette analyse se penche enfin sur les stratégies discursives comme la banalisation de l'horreur et l'humour qui permettent d'aborder et de condamner le génocide.

Mots-clés: Témoignage ; catharsis ; traumatisme ; génocide ; mémoire ; horreur, enfance difficile.

INTRODUCTION

It is a critically shared view that war atrocities have always had awful consequences and may last for a longtime and are transferable from an individual to another and even from a generation to another through some defined channels. (A.D. Makosso, 2020:163) For, when not healed out, traumatic experiences and negative vibes that arise from the latter are likely to unclench systematic anxiety and stress disorder. As a counterbalance to these

eventual disorders, literature has very often proved efficient, as it echoes out our personal state of mind and feelings, moreover making them accessible to a worldwide audience. Most of the time, therapy implies a collaborative treatment based on the relationship between a subject and a psychologist. In the context of the narratives under consideration, the reader substitutes the psychologist, as he/she offers an environment where Mukagasana and Mukasonga are allowed to talk openly, and unclench their healing process.

This research work explores the therapeutic effects of bearing testimonies in Yolande Mukagasana's *Not My Time to Die*¹ and Scholastique Mukasonga's *Cockroaches*. The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2005:799) formally defines 'testimony' as "an example of spoken or written statements that something is true, detailing, especially in law courts what the witness has seen or know about a case". As for the adjective 'therapeutic', it carries connotations of 'catharsis' that *Cambridge, Dictionary of Psychology* (2009:102) refers to as "the process of releasing strong emotions through a particular activity or experience, such as writing or theatre, in a way that helps you understand those emotions". As far as literature is concerned, a literary material is said to be testimonial when it presents evidence or first-person accounts of human rights abuses, violence and war, and living under social oppression. In the same sphere, catharsis is a device used to express a release of emotions as opines George Yüdice (1991:44):

Testimonial writing may be defined as an authentic narrative, told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of a situation (e.g., war, oppression, revolution, etc.). Emphasizing popular oral discourse, the witness portrays his or her own experiences as an agent (rather than as representative) of a collective memory and identity. Truth is summoned in the cause of denouncing a present situation of exploitation and oppression or in exorcising and setting aright official history.

Approaching a literary material on Rwandan genocide is not an easy task for its political sensitivity. Indeed, being a highly political issue, it is subsequently a controversial topic, since very few post-genocide literary materials set aside the genocide issue. This amounts to saying that most of narratives published after 1994 (by Rwandans) hold Tutsi slaughtering in Rwanda as a framework. For, this issue soon became a duty for authors to contextualize in their writings. In fact, the horror and violence perpetrated by and against Rwandans has become a haunting spectrum that intends to shape every single literary work written by people who have either witnessed or simply heard about genocide. Surprisingly, it is worth highlighting that second-hand or 'indirect witnesses' (Gilbert J. Garraghan and Jean Delanglez, 1947: 292), that is to say those who didn't witness but simply heard about genocide, seem to have the same awful testimony than their counterparts; it is as if they all transmit the same trauma in their writings.

Both Yolande Mukagasana's *Not my Time to Die* and Scholastique Mukasonga's *Cockroaches* stand as post-genocide literary material. And their background accordingly depicts the highlights of Rwandan darkest periods. The choice to examine Rwandan genocide in general, and particularly testimony and catharsis in the accounts mentioned above is motivated by its topicality, for, even 28 years afterwards, its echoes still sound as loudly as it did before. This decisive period has become the turning point that has shaped Rwandan history from then on. This means that this exploration, beyond examining the testimonial aspect, ultimately encompasses catharsis or therapy, smooth corollary resulting from testimony. The purpose of dealing with testimony as a catharsis is both to investigate the deep trauma experienced by those who survived the throes of machetes, as well as to highlight the therapeutic or cathartic effect of writing down their personal experience.

The choice of *Not My Time to Die* (translated by Zoe Norridge in 2019 from *La Mort ne Veut pas de Moi* initially published in 1997), and *Cockroaches* (translated by Jordan Stump in 2016 from *Inyenzi ou Les Cafards* published in 2006) as a template for this research work is significantly linked to the historical aspect of the stories told in the memoirs under consideration, namely the plight of men, women and children whose worst sin is not to be born Hutu. This is true for Mukagasana's narrative which is more autobiographic than fictitious as it entails the story, or history, of its authoress. As for *Cockroaches*, Scholastique Mukasonga refers to it as "a paper grave", meant to carry the legacy and the memory of her late relatives, as she couldn't give them a decent burial. She accordingly tells her own story along with her relatives as they are forced out of their home, chased and ultimately killed like animals.

Since the testimony these narratives bear leaves no doubt on an indescribable violence, and no credit to Rwandan genocide denial, the current study aims at answering the following central question: How does testimony work as a catharsis in Yolande Mukagasana's *Not My Time to Die* and Scholastique Mukasonga's *Cockroaches*? We hypothesize that writing down these 'testimonies' are a way-out, even the only one, for the two authoresses to decently mourn and perpetuate the memory of those prematurely sent *ad patres*. These stories would have on them a therapeutic effect, for they are the channels by which their distress and grief are heard and exorcised.

¹ Subsequent quotations from this memoir will be inserted in the text as *NMTD* followed by the page number.

As far as the review of literature is concerned, many studies have raised the issue of testimony in Rwandan writings, and many others have tackled that of therapy, yet very few have mingled testimony and therapy in a single analysis, which makes this study an original and singular one. Another particularity of this exploration to highlight is the choice of the authoresses and their respective works.

In his dissertation entitled “Ecrire l’indicible: Pour une Etude du Témoignage de Yolande Mukagasana”, Emmanuel Muligo (2012) examines the urgency to testify which prompts the witness (authoress) to use different discursive strategies to approach the horror and convince the reader of the truthiness of the story. His analysis confirms that the literary testimony uses an important set of literary devices. He explores the preservation of the memory of the genocide and its victims, and then provides a synoptic look on the cathartic function of the testimony. For a deeper analysis, this study distinguishes from the latter to the extent that it pays a more systematic attention to therapy, for the latter is the unexpected and probably greatest outcome of the very fact of testifying.

In her paper entitled “Rwandan Women Testimonial Literature: Une écriture du silence”, Catherine Gilbert (2018) analyses the responses to the trauma in the testimonial literature of Rwandan women; she particularly focuses on the testimonies by Esther Mujawayo, Annick Kayitesi, and Berthe Kayitesi.

Ewa Kalinowska’s “*Exorciser un Traumatisme Extrême. Le Génocide Rwandais dans la Langue et la littérature*” (2018) tackles Rwandan genocide represented in a whole range of publications issued from the commemorative project “Rwanda: écrire par devoir de mémoire”. She particularly concentrates on how writers are presenting in their literary works images of the tragic events and are using many language strategies. Yet, while she pays little attention to Yolande Mukagasana and Scholastique Mukasonga, we rather emphasize the latter, for, along with Esther Mujawayo, they are often referred to as ‘high profile survivors’.

This work will be conducted through the prism of Historical and Psychobiographical approaches. The historical approach which shows the intertwining between reality and fiction, story and history, proves helpful for it involves understanding the events and experiences surrounding the composition of the work, especially the life of the author, and using the findings to interpret that work of literature. It proves helpful to the extent that it enables scrutinizing the social structure (race, class, ethnic), culture (how people lived), politics (wars, conflict, oppression...), Wilfred L. Guerin *et al.* (2005:51) accordingly notice: “*Put simply, [the historical approach] sees a literary work chiefly, if not exclusively, as a reflection of its author’s life and times.*”

Furthermore, in order to immerse deep in the authoresses’ mindset to find out aspects of therapy this research work draws from the Psychobiographical approach which “*bridges Psychology to Literature and is referred to as a methodological pathway which assumes that every artistic artifact is somehow conditioned by the temperament peculiar with that of its creator*” (A.D. Makosso, 2018:63). The latter, in fact, will crucially be helpful to how, rather unconsciously than consciously, they perceive writing as a cure, a healing activity throwing out the evils of pain and affliction. This amounts to saying that this study focuses on the authoresses as they experience and respond to one of the cruellest pogroms Africa has known. Resorting to this approach, the purpose is to examine what shall be referred to as the “unconscious therapy”, for the stories are meant to preserve the memory of the deceased and reject as false the denial of the genocide.

Henceforth, exploring the therapeutic effects of testimonies in the selected narratives implies examining two main perspectives. The first one scrutinizes Mukagasana and Mukasonga’s unfortunate experiences during their childhood and adolescence, while the second focuses on the massacres of 1994, and the psychological and indelible scars they have left within the two authoresses.

I- Insight into Yolande Mukagasana’s and Scholastique Mukasonga’s Experience

From a general point of view, a literary material is an account by and about the writer. Even though it doesn’t immediately draw in the writer’s experience, it mostly sheds light on their feelings, opinions or ideologies. This proves even truer when the considered literary material is written in first person singular, and puts forward the writer as the narrator and the main character. The gist of this point is to shed light on the trauma they are both subjected to going from their tender age to their adulthood. Accordingly, the subsidiary question here can be stated as follows: to what extent is trauma viewed as a hindrance to Mukagasana’s and Mukasonga’s self-fulfilment? We will evidence that their trauma draws in the numerous political upheavals, which started with the pogroms in 1959, while they are respectively five and three years old. The rationale behind this question is that trauma jeopardises self-fulfilment as it results in psychological flagellations, such as powerlessness or death within. As an attempt answer to this interrogation, the following lines focus on their restless childhood and adolescence – and finally pays a particular attention to ethnic discrimination.

I.1- Mukagasana and Mukasonga: A Restless Childhood and Adolescence

Childhood pictures innocence at its most extreme. It is supposed to be a no-worry period during which a child is expected to pursue his/her full measure of happiness. According to the online *New World Encyclopaedia* (2021, February 23) Childhood is a broad term used to refer to

The phase of human development between infancy and adulthood. [It] is the time during which human beings develop their physical and mental abilities. It is a crucial time, for if development goes wrong or growth does not occur within a critical time period the damage is often difficult to repair if not irreversible. Yet, it is also a time of freedom from the responsibilities of adult life, a time in which parents, or other responsible adults, take care of the child, fulfilling his or her needs and keeping them safe.

This quotation couldn't define childhood in clearer terms. In fact, childhood is the very time when a human being needs the most to be taken care of, and to be kept safe, unfortunately, safe is what Mukagasana, Mukasonga and many other children were not, due to political upheavals they unwillingly found themselves at the core of.

It is axiomatic that children are sensitive and highly dependent on their immediate environment, which consists of their tutors, as well as the atmosphere in which they are raised. As such, they are psychologically subjected to reflect their milieu in the long run. This makes childhood a decisive period, as it generally determines children's future by paving the way straight to happiness or by taking rather a turn for the worse.

In 1959, as Yolande is only five, and Scholastique three years old, Hutu revolution, which was tacitly expected for quite a moment back then, exploded, causing a scale of brutality and a more stressed clash between Hutu and Tutsi. Both less than six years old, the future authoresses are offered the bitter swill of exile. This amounts to saying that trauma is part of their respective personal experience since their earliest childhood. Yet, despite this infantile trauma, the worst was still ahead. In this connection, Mukasonga relates:

The trucks started off. A crowd had gathered by the side of the road to watch the convoy go past. Everyone was shouting, "There go the Tutsis," and they spat at us, waving machetes. At first, I wasn't unhappy: a trip in a car was a novelty for me. But, the journey turned more and more unpleasant: it went on forever, we were so tightly packed in. We crashed together with every bump in the road, we had to struggle not to suffocate, we were thirsty, there was no water. The children were crying. Whenever we drove by a river or lake, the men beat on the roof of the driver's cab to ask him to stop. But the truck kept on going. Night had fallen. No one knew where we were headed. I saw despair in my mother's eyes. I was afraid. (*Cockroaches*, p.19)

Witnessing an event that threatens life or physical security of a loved person can also be traumatic. This is particularly important for young children as their sense of safety depends on the perceived safety of their attachment figures. From the quotation above, it is worth stressing that Mukasonga has been at the core of traumatic experience since she was still a child, forced out of her home, and compelled to find refuge in a land she otherwise might have never found herself in. One can easily notice that her innocence is overshadowed by the imminent danger her family is exposed to. She can already see despair in her mother's eye, which prematurely urges her to heavily arm herself with courage and strength for the sake of her survival. At this point of her life, she is left no other choice than to psychologically grow up regardless her age.

'Tutsi', a word that seems to carry all the evil and hatred of the world, is no longer an identity; it rather connotes death or a promise of a long agony. For, around this word revolves the idea of 'cockroach' and 'snake' as well as the disgust and aggressiveness these metaphorical bestial creatures inspire, as Mukasonga better puts it: "[*There go the Tutsi*], and they spat at us, waving machetes" (*Cockroaches*, p.19)

In his paper entitled *Métaphore du cafard ou discursivité du génocide dans le style de Scholastique Mukasonga*, Arsène Elongo (2014:46) observes:

L'image de cafard est saisie comme une figure de l'étranger et du barbare, puisque la relation habitation/permis n'est pas respectée par des insectes, du fait que les cafards occupent sauvagement un espace privé et civilisé. Les humains qui occupent par force un espace ont un sème identique avec le cafard: le sème de l'étranger/invasion.

Drawing from this quotation, Tutsis appear as invaders, pests to get rid of. They are nothing but dangerous strangers. This line of reasoning induces that Rwanda is exclusively home to Hutus, a position that justifies their impulse for slaughter, and comforts their allegedly righteous will to free their country. Their hatred for these 'strangers' leaves little room for tolerance in their consideration.

Mukasonga, though she is only three years, seems to be well-aware of the made-to-measure plight her persecutors have designed for her and her fellows. The violence is so shrill it lets no slightest doubt the apocalypse is knocking at the door of every man, woman, or child that Providence has mistakenly made Tutsi, or cockroach, or snake. She is already able to sense that she must be wiped away to free the country from her specie, as she relates:

My mother immediately lifted me onto her back: "Hurry up, we've got to go get the children so they don't try to come home." But just then a crowd appeared, bellowing, with machetes in their hands, and spears, bows, clubs, torches. We hurried to hide in the banana grove. Still roaring the men burst into our house. They set fire to the straw-roofed hut, the stables full of calves. They slashed the stores of beans and sorghum. They launched a frenzied attack on the brick house we would never live in. They didn't take anything, they only wanted to destroy, to wipe out all sign of us, annihilate us. (*Cockroaches*, p.15)

Tutsi annihilation appears, thus, as a liberation for Rwanda, which has been infested for too long by pests. By destroying every Tutsi belongings, the genocidaires send a crystal clear message that Rwanda will do much better without any sign of the devilish Tutsi.

In the same regard, Yolande Mukagasana relates similar horrors of the genocide in her memoir during the same year, where she finds herself powerlessly being tortured in order to urge her mother to betray her husband's hiding place. Mukagasana remembers:

I see bare-chested men with dried banana leaves on their back and armbands in red or green, brandishing spears and machetes. "Where is your husband" they ask my mother. She doesn't reply. They search the house. They break a clay pot of milk, and I begin to cry. I'm five years old; I sob into my mother's skirts. "Where is your husband" They ask again. One of them yanks me away from my mother, throws me to the ground, holds me down with a foot on my chest: bare and dirty, hardened from direct contact with the earth, and riven with cracks and nails. They shout at mama "So, you talk? You don't want to talk? Look!" One of them plunges the tip of his spear into my thigh. Blood spurts out. [...] That was in 1959. (*NMTD*, p.17)

At only five years old, Yolande can already sense inhumanity at its most extreme. By portraying such a barbaric treatment, regardless how little and innocent she is still, Yolande is to recall and caution humanity of its inhumanity. This inhumanity is all the more captured through an innocent child being tortured, as if that's what she is doomed to for being born the wrong side. At this point, the scenario doesn't just portray Yolande as herself but as the embodiment of every single Tutsi child, male or female, who 'should' never have seen the light of the day in a country already fragmented between Hutus and Tutsis, allegedly the 'blessed' and the 'cursed'.

Rwanda is said to be home to a diversified wildlife, including buffalos and elephants, which are, of course, part of the country's beauty, but circumstantially appear as a threat when there is a lack of control. In the 1960's, the first pogroms against the Tutsi are ravaging the social atmosphere, a considerable number of families are deported to Nyamata, where they lived as internal exiles. Later on, some had to set off for Gitagata. Amongst them is Scholastique Mukasonga, one of the very few ones who have had the chance to escape before the apocalypse fell down. This purpose-built village was almost a desert, and could neither welcome so many people, nor put them into liveable conditions.

Mukasonga relates her innocently happy days, though almost always within the reach of a bullet or a grenade. She had to avoid the main roads whenever she was heading to anywhere in Nyamata, so she was compelled to walk in the bush or coffee plants, in order not to be spotted by patrolling soldiers. This exercise was to let her remember that she is a snake, and that in the bush, she was exactly where she was supposed to be, an ordeal all the more excruciating because the way to school dropped by a military camp called 'Gako', which made her apprehend coming across militaries. The misadventure was thus a deprivation of liberty, a confiscation of a significant right. In fact, the refugees were subjected to a restriction of move, as their world was then the size of a village.

Mukasonga narrates that their exile land was actually a theatre of horror. Rumbles, house ransacking, and often executions rhythm the days, and were repeated over and over with impunity. The exiled even no longer lived those threats as a violation, because there was none: they were all Tutsis, and there was no scandal in harassing them. Powerless but not insensitive, the authoress redraws the dull scenes she eye-witnessed, but unlike then, today she is free to express her opinion. As we follow her throughout *Cockroaches*, we do not only make out her personal emotions, but we also get a soupcon of their collective state of mind by the time the genocide culminated. For instance, let's consider the following passage:

Things turned still worse in 1967. [...] I stayed alone with my little sisters, Julienne and Jeanne. It was raining. [...] My little sisters were outside in spite of the rain [...] But suddenly I made out another noise I knew well – *shuwafu! shuwafu!* – the sound of boots in the mud. I rushed outside and ran straight into two soldiers driving my two sisters along with blows from their rifle butts. The little girls collapsed at my feet. The soldiers walked into the house, ransacked it in the usual way, the disappeared. [...] we saw something that left us petrified with fear: a huge crowd of soldiers heading toward Lake Cyohola, dragging bodies that looked like broken marionettes, among which I recognized some neighbours of ours, Rwabukumba and his brother. They were young men, not yet twenty. The bodies being dragged along – not all of them corpses, some were still moving and groaning – belonged to young men, snakes cockroaches, inyenzi, who had to be eliminated before they could turn dangerous. (*Cockroaches*, pp. 67-68)

In a world where tension and fear are constantly rising, there is no rest for the purchased. Moreover, nobody is spared away. The passage above depicts how children were unconsidered and ill-treated. One of the most sickening aspects of this passage is that the protagonist and her two little sisters were spectators of this inhumane scene, where corpses were dragged along, and among them still-alive people. In front of this sad and dark picture, the three girls previewed what was planned for every single one of them. Yet, none of them dared discuss it, neither them nor anyone else, because there were no words to describe it. Everybody would rather hide themselves in a deafening silence, in order not to twist the knife in the wound. Silence then became a language that they shared among them, as she further observes: “*We spent the night waiting for our parents. They came back very early the next day. They never said a word*”. (*Cockroaches*, p.68)

This passage by Mukasonga is in tandem with Mukagasana's account. In the same year 1967, like Scholastique, Yolande was an eye-witness of scenes of horror, as evidenced in the following lines: “*I was thirteen in 1967 for the massacres in Bugesera. [...] my mind roams through my childhood memories at random and I see scenes of torture, assassination, corruption, blackmail*”. (*NMTD*, p.18)

To sum up this section, it is worth reminding that this chapter is meant to shed light on Mukasonga and Mukagasana's respective experiences before the genocide. Also is it opportune to stress that it has helped to a wider consideration and understanding of the authoresses' state of mind by the fatal year of 1994. This part has evidenced that their quest for truth and justice dates back to their earliest childhood, as they were implicitly ‘*gardiennes de la mémoire*’ of all those who were killed at their sight. From this perspective, it might be inferred that even though the genocide was avoided, they would still need a talking cure to cleanse themselves from affliction, or at least to clear their moral debt towards the victims.

Besides, Yolande and Scholastique are also victims of ethnic discrimination. They are viewed as cursed, and are demonized by their neighbours. In the following lines, this study scrutinizes how they are held responsible of the country's misfortune.

I.2- Ethnic Discrimination

An ethnic, or more precisely ethnicity is a multi-folded concept as it entails numerous characteristics, which do not always make unanimity among experts. As such, it is a notion not quite easy to grasp. However, we would agree that the following definition by James People *et al.* (2010:389) may be acceptable, though not universal:

An ethnic group or an ethnicity is a grouping of people who identify with each other on the basis of shared attributes that distinguish them from other groups. Those attributes can include common sets of traditions, ancestry, language, history, society, culture, nation, religion, or social treatment within their residing area. [It] may be construed as an inherited or as a societally imposed construct. Ethnic membership tends to be defined by a shared cultural heritage, ancestry, origin myth, history, homeland, language, or dialect, symbolic systems [citation needed] such as religion, mythology and ritual, cuisine, dressing style, art, or physical appearance.

Referred to as such, an ‘ethnic group’ may be approached as a set of people that have at least one characteristic in common that makes them identify with each other. Strengthened from this evidence, we might as well draw a syllogism: ethnic group has at least one common characteristic, Tutsis share Bantu languages among them, thus Tutsi constitute an ethnic group. Moreover, they share ‘*kyniarwanda*’, a Bantu language, with their Hutu neighbours, which welds a strong link between their respective lineages.

Yet, this link is not strong enough to prevent the Tutsis from been discriminated, victimized indeed by their neighbours; nor is it significant enough to dissuade the bloodthirsty machetes that have been awaiting in the shadow for a long moment.

The first point of Hutus discrimination towards Tutsis is their shape. They are said to be shaped to resemble limbs of the devil. Every single one of their physical traits is subjected to a bitter critic. From head to foot, every

inch of their body is said to carry a devilish connotation. As an illustration, while listening to the radio, which is calling out for Tutsi extermination for a free Rwanda, Yolande is shattered to know how her kind is depicted, as she writes:

A third partner-in-genocide adds with a serious voice and dry tone 'How can you tell the cockroach from a Hutu? In lots of ways:
The cockroach has gape between his front teeth.
The cockroach has narrow heels.
The cockroach has eight pairs of ribs.
The female cockroach has stretch marks on her thighs, near her buttocks.
The cockroach has a narrow nose.
The cockroach has less kinky hair.
The cockroach's skull is long at the back and his forehead is sloped.
The cockroach is tall and has a haughty look.
The male cockroach has a pronounced Adam's apple.' (NMTD, p.23)

From this description, one easily infers that Tutsis shape is the very first point of contention with their Hutu counterparts. The words above aren't meant to convey Tutsis physical description, they are rather a hate speech against them. The intolerance behind these words is quite evident, for they create a huge gap between the two groups. This speech leaves no slightest doubt that the 'cockroach' is everything but Hutu, he is everything but Rwandan, indeed he is everything but human, and might as well perish for the sake of the country.

Furthermore, drawing from Hutus' line of reasoning, discrimination towards Tutsis appears as a proof of patriotism. In fact, no patriot would stand seeing his country under siege. This allegation justifies the genocide, which is no longer viewed as a massacre, but as a noble raid against the invader, conducted out of patriotism. We thus understand that discriminated or victimized, the cause of the massacres is ironically noble.

Besides, the word 'cockroach', repeated nine (9) times over, fuels the impetus to get rid of these 'insects'. *The online Thesaurus* defines 'cockroach' as "any of numerous orthopterous insects of the family Blattidae, characterized by a flattened body, rapid movements, and nocturnal habits and including several common household pests." In some cultures, they are said to carry bad luck. Yet, the most negative connotation about cockroaches is cannibalism. In fact, in extreme conditions they find themselves eating each other. In this connection, Jack Andersen (2021) states:

Cockroaches are known for eating anything, including each other. Cannibalism may be a disturbing trait to many, but loyalty to their species has never stopped a roach from picking its own survival over others in its colony. [...] Nonetheless, cockroaches are resilient creatures that will not accept starvation. This can lead to them to biting humans, pets and eating each other.

This quotation enlightens the cannibalistic character of cockroaches. They are seen as obscure creatures, and harbingers of misfortune. By comparing Tutsis to cockroaches, Hutus picture them as cannibals as well. Thus, there is an urgent need to eradicate the 'pests' to prevent the reverse scenario from occurring.

In this connection, Mukasonga firmly condemns Tutsi victimization under all its form, with a tone of irony, as she deplors:

Those peaceful days were a rare thing in Nyamata. The soldiers of Gako camp were always there to remind us what we were: snakes, Inyenzi, cockroaches. Nothing human about us. One day, we'd have to be got rid of. In the meantime, the terror was systematic and organized. (*Cockroaches*, p.63)

These lines noticeably criticize the contempt her ethnic is looked down with. This caustic critic is a pleading for their right to live, and to pursue happiness in its full measure – their inalienable right to be considered with the same respect than any other human being. This amounts to saying that regrettable is the disregard towards the Tutsi, as she further ironizes:

The road to Nyamata was also the road to Gako camp. Military trucks often went by, and the soldiers fired or threw grenades to terrorize any child foolish enough to walk by the side of the road. Nothing the soldiers did on the Nyamata road was a scandal, since no one ever walked it but Tutsis. One day there were four of us on the way to school: Jacqueline, Kayisharaza, Candida, and me. A truck suddenly appeared behind us. We hadn't heard it coming. All we could do was dive into the coffee plants. Too late! The soldiers had seen us, and they'd thrown a grenade. Kayisharaza's leg was shredded. [...] She was the oldest girl in her family, and she became a burden for them, for her brothers and sisters. (*Cockroaches*, p.64)

This quotation sheds light on Tutsis victimization: they are viewed as useless not only for their Rwanda, assuming they are part of it, but for the entire human race. The less they will be seen the better. These lines purport that there is no scandal, no sin in taking a Tutsi life. Such a low consideration questions, even beyond Rwandan borders, unity among African people. In fact, the authoress definitely cautions Congo, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Libya, Liberia, South Africa, Namibia, Mauritania, and many other African countries that have been, and are still for the most part, under ethnic, tribal, or racial conflicts.

In Mukasonga's *Cockroaches*, ethnic discrimination is a school and a church affair, a factual observation that betrays the partition missionaries have played in the concert of Tutsis' discrimination and extermination. She explains that after six years of primary school, the admission to 'Notre-Dame-de-Citeaux' was conditioned to a national examination, and that the challenge was especially frightening for Tutsi, as there was a very low quota for them: 10% of the admissions, as she relates:

After six years of primary school, students found themselves facing a formidable barrier: the famous and dreaded national examination, the competitive test you had to pass at all costs if you wanted to be among the select few admitted to secondary school. The challenge was even more daunting for Tutsis, because the ethnic quotas put in place by the Hutu regime allowed them no more than ten percent of the admissions. That percentage had been grudgingly granted, and was often applied according to criteria that had nothing to do with the scores. We in Nyamata came close to the fateful quotas: most years, not a single candidate from Nyamata was named on the lists. (*Cockroaches*, p.74)

This excerpt implies that discrimination towards Tutsis is not only an adult affair; even Tutsi teens are considered as cursed as grown-ups. Most importantly, they cannot be allowed to gather or to exceed a certain number in the same space in fear the worst might happen. Tutsis are mostly referred to as rebels indeed. Even school, which is supposed to be a space of freedom and fulfilment, becomes an open-sky prison meant to silence Tutsi soul.

Scholastique is finally admitted to attend school at Notre-Dame-de-Citeaux. The enthusiasm she felt at first would soon turn into humiliation. At Nyamata, she had witnessed abuses and persecutions, but at least she was surrounded by her friends, and was somehow able to stand adversity. However, this wouldn't be the case in school, where she would barely have acquaintances. Her first day in school confirms her apprehension and augurs a long psychological agony, as she is welcomed with the coldest wariness by a sister; Scholastique writes:

Every student was issued an ID card marked with their so-called ethnic group, like a brand on a cow. When I was forced to show it to one of the sisters, her look and her attitude changed immediately: wariness, disdain, or hatred? I didn't want to know. They also discovered that I came from Nyamata. I wasn't only a Tutsi: I was an Inyenzi, one of those cockroaches they'd expelled from the liveable part of Rwanda, and perhaps from the human race. (*Cockroaches*, pp. 79-80)

This passage by Scholastique shows how heavy is the burden of the ethnic origin she is compelled to carry; she finds herself disgraced, and subjected to mockery and disdain. In fact, around the word 'Tutsi' has been implanted a pejorative imaginary, which makes the child she is ashamed of what should be her greatest pride: her origin. For, having an origin implies having a history and a culture to be proud of.

In addition to the same quotation, it is as if the Identity Cards (IDs) themselves constitute evidence of discrimination, a veiled way to easily identify the 'cockroaches', or at least to tell them apart from the human beings. To the authoress, it was like hanging around with her death sentence duly marked on her ID card.

Nevertheless, Scholastique shows resilience towards attacks against her, and rather chooses pride over shame for her ethnic, as she writes:

Among my schoolmates, I soon came to feel different. Or rather, it was they who made that difference cruelly clear to me. They made me ashamed of the colour my skin (not dark enough for their tastes), of my nose (too straight, they said), and of my hair (too much of it). It was my hair that caused me the most trouble. Evidently, it was Ethiopian hair, *irende*, the supposed mark of the Inyenzi. [...] Most often I resigned to shave it off. That hurt me: in spite of the mockery, I was fond of my hair. (*Cockroaches*, p.80)

In this passage, the authoress evidences that her hair is just a synecdoche for her whole body and her ethnic affiliation. She thus reaffirms herself, not only as a Tutsi but also as an advocate for discriminated people in Rwanda, and beyond its borders.

In tandem with Scholastique is Yolande's account. The latter has also wrongfully suffered arbitrary disadvantage and deprivation based on her 'cursed ethnicity'. In her memoir *Not My Time to Die*, Yolande does not really complain on ethnic discrimination, yet still deplors it all the same. Throughout her story, the reader

can easily sense how Tutsis are treated differently, inhumanly indeed. Nevertheless, just as does Scholastique, Yolande takes pride in her origin, and affirms herself as Tutsi, 'snake', 'cockroach', or whatever, as she proudly declares:

The radio exudes hatred. What hurts me most is that they never say the word 'Tutsi'. They talk about serpents, cockroaches, enemies, traitors, but they don't name us. I'd like an enemy who has the courage to say who I am: Tutsi. Muganga Tutsi. Muganga Yolande Mukagasana, Tutsi. It's because they don't announce my ethnicity that I feel so sad and alone. I am proud, proud to be Tutsi. (NMTD, p.25)

The burden put on Tutsis' shoulders because of their ethnicity recalls of the shame put on black people because of the colour of their skin. In both cases, the issue is perfectly the same, it is either the discriminated definitely resign or decide never to bend backwards, and to reaffirm their enduring spirit. This is to say that, as Rwandan high-profile women, it is their duty to fight back discrimination under all forms, in order to give strength and impetus to those who have already given up under the influence of racism. Time passes, but people are encapsulated in the same vicious cycle, almost doomed to repeat the same mistakes endlessly.

As fear and disregard have become an ordinary feeling for Scholastique and Yolande, they have armed themselves up with resilience, and pride as a response to mockery. Through these two authoresses, this section has brought evidence of Tutsis' demonization by their Hutu counterpart, but beyond it has showed that ethnicity, which has been presented to both of them as their weakness, has actually turned out to be their strength. It is out of this strength, and self-affirmation that they will be able not to give up even after having lost plenty of their relatives; it is out of this courage that they will bear witness and cleanse themselves from affliction.

All things considered, the exploration of Mukagasana and Mukasonga's lives preceding 1994 has brought evidence of their traumatic childhood and adolescence. Accordingly, this examination supposes that, while still young, they already needed a regenerating therapy. That they already had a story to tell, long before the genocide, turns out to be as clear as crystal. Hence, the genesis of the latter's trauma is obviously the ill-treatments they went through during their youth, ill-treatments that were the immediate consequences of Tutsis demonization.

After examining the pre-genocide period, it is worth tackling the genocide itself and all its dreadful consequences. In the following chapter, a particular attention will be paid to the psycho-analytic approach.

II- The Genocide: Trauma of a Long-Awaited Horror

With the death of Rwanda's Head of State on April 6th 1994, Mukagasana, Mukasonga and many other Tutsi are well-aware that their fate is sealed up. That very night had been expected for quite a moment back then; it was the accomplishment of the promise to eradicate the 'cockroaches'. For the authoresses, it is the climax of their traumatic experience.

By the time the genocide breaks up, Yolande Mukagasana and Scholastique Mukasonga are already weakened individuals, who have nevertheless found a meaningful yet circumstantial joie de vivre. The subsidiary question for this section can be put as follows: how do the massacres affect Yolande and Scholastique's psyche? The main concern here is to diagnose their psychological state when confronted to the genocide of 1994. This question finds an answer through the examination of psychological death, powerlessness, and long-lasting grief.

II.1- A Psychological Death

The Australian Psychologist Phyllis Butow (2017: 331) writes:

A Psychological Death occurs when the dying person begins to accept death and to withdraw from others and regress into the self. [...] In some cases, individuals can give up their will to live. This is often at least partially attributable to a lost sense of identity. The individual feels consumed by the reality of making final decisions, planning for loved ones —especially children, and coping with the process of his or her own physical death.

The worst sensation in life is the illusion of life. As we immerse deep into Mukasonga and Mukagasana accounts, we notice that the negative energy they were subjected to, left almost no life in them. This observation is more noticeable with Mukagasana, who stand as an eye-witness of the genocide. From her perspective, 'death' can be considered in a very singular way. The title of her account: *Not My Time to Die* is the first disturbing element with her story. In fact, as we go through it, we come to notice that it sometimes sounds like a sigh of regret for she sometimes felt guilty of surviving and sometimes as a promise to survive.

As a matter of fact, *Not My Time to Die* is an account of a double promise: a promise to survive in order to deliver the message of the victims, and a promise to die with a long agony. The first promise is made to Yolande by her brother Nepo, when the latter predicts:

- 'Do you see this flour, Yolande?' [...]
- 'This flour is your loved ones: Joseph, Christian, Sandrine, Nadine. It's me too, our sisters, and all your cousins'
- Nepo blows violently on my palm. The flour disappears. All that's left is a fine off-white film, more visible in the creases of my hand
- 'Where is the flour now?'
- 'Blown away! What a question!'
- 'Blown away. That's how your loved ones will disappear. You will lose us all and you will remain alone. Because it is not your time to die. You will soon lose everything except love. You will lose your faith, hope and confidence, but you will never lose love. And you will avenge us.' (NMTD, p.9)

The second promise is that of her aggressors, as illustrated in the following passage:

The young one assumes an understanding air. 'I know something too. They say she has long breasts shaped like bananas, like all Tutsi women'. The men laugh. But then a woman cries out 'I'd like to have the honour of cutting off her breasts while she's still alive. Promise me that if you find Muganga, you will call me before killing her'. A man swears to honour the request. The woman thanks him. Eh! I know this woman [...]. Cut off my breasts? What a strange desire! (NMTD, pp. 27-28)

The two passages above are evidences of Yolande's psychological torment. While on one hand she is the designated survivor of her family; on the other hand she's the head of the firing squad for being "*the most high-profile woman in the district*" (NMTD, p.26). Throughout her six-week escape, she has been exposed to traumatic events, which directly affected her psyche and caused a death within her.

A traumatic event is a frightening, dangerous, or violent event that poses a threat to an individual's life, bodily or psychological integrity. As we follow her throughout her story, we soon come to conclude that her psychological integrity has been indeed violated.

Not My Time to Die opens up with Yolande sitting at her clinic, planning a party for her wedding anniversary, when she is interrupted by a phone call from her husband Joseph, telling her to go back home without delay. That was the evening of 6 April 1994, the fateful day that forever darkened Rwandan history. When she gets back home, she discovers that the President's plane has been shot down; an assassination that triggered a bloody concert of machetes. She was then compelled to embark with her family on an escape for the sake of their lives. Worse than her apprehension of dying was her fear of losing her children.

Throughout her escape, we follow Yolande under three perspectives: a Tutsi chased after because of her ethnicity, a well-off woman targeted because of her success as a so called 'second class gender', and finally a mother shattered by the situation that is threatening the safety of her children. Under each of these angles of view, we follow a Yolande unjustly and cowardly sentenced to death, a human being whose humanity has been denied.

Many times during her escape, Yolande comes to consider herself as a dead woman, for there was apparently no way to escape the throes of the countless machetes especially sharpened for her neck. She was indeed dead, at least psychologically, when she was shattered to surprisingly hear her name when a presenter is announcing a list of people whom have been found dead; Yolande relates:

A voice I think I recognize but can't place announces a new list of names. In Gisenyi, two priests were killed by nurses. [...] In the Prefecture of the town of Kigali, commune of Nyarugenge, sector of Nyamirambo, dead: Kayijuka Theoneste, Rukera Stanislas, Mulindwa Epaphrodite, Mukaarwego Antoinette and her daughter Mukandoli Françoise, Muganga Mukagasana Yolande, dead from complications due to injuries, at Kigali Hospital. [...] Joseph turns to me.

- 'What's going on?'
- They've announced your death!'

I lower my head, almost ashamed not to be dead. (NMTD, p.24)

The news was like an explosion within her inner mental. This freezing passage, which sounds as the accomplishment of her death sentence, is perceived by the author as a foreseen future, a premonitory vision of how she was likely to end up. This quiproquo, if any (for it might have been deliberate), had on Yolande a destructive bomb effect. If before she heard the news, she already felt like a useless moving corpse, she was now sure of her burial.

Moreover, Yolande's torment comes from the apprehension of endangering her own children by keeping them too close to her. In fact, targeted as the most high-profile woman in the district, her name is the first on the blacklist. She is the most wanted of all the 'cockroaches', which makes her a threat for her own children. This

situation consists in a dilemma to Yolande; either she separates from her children so that they could have better chances of survival, or she stays along with them and tries her best to keep them safe. Of course, this choice is not easy to make, for she knows that no one would protect her children as fiercely as she would, yet, paradoxically, she also knows that no one is a worse threat to them than herself.

Captive of a constantly rising fear, Yolande at a certain point, was resigned to death. Her resignation became clearer when she found her children in a pitiful state, a state which no mother would like to see her offspring in, a state no human should never find himself in. As if the portrayal of her three children was not bleak enough, she is shattered to discover that her husband Joseph is no more; nevertheless, the saddest part of this news is that she heard it from her children's mouth, who were cowardly summoned to identify their own father's corpse, as the authoress painfully narrates:

I find my children wounded, but alive. Tortured and humiliated, but alive. I tremble as they come towards me. We hug each other and cry. [...] Then Nadine hugs me, I feel like I'm waking up from a nightmare. My children, so you're here, still alive? I feel a burst of joy.

'What happened to you?'

Christian solemnly explains that they were summoned to the roadblock and the Interahamwe showed them the body of a dead man. [...]

'They made us identify him. "Do you recognize this man? Do you?" shouted the Interahamwe. "He's a soldier from the Patriotic Front, isn't he?" It was Papa. His hand had been cut off and his face bruised. "That's not a soldier," I said, "that's my father." Then they started beating me. One of them struck me with his machete; I raised my arm to protect my neck and it broke under the blow'

I examine his arm: an open fracture of the humerus. It needs care.

'Leave it, Mama. What's the point? They said they'd come back tomorrow morning and kill us' (NMTD, pp. 60-61)

This was an appointment with death. That Christian was summoned to identify his father's corpse was relatively bearable for Yolande, that his arm broke under a machete blow was still bearable, but that he finds no point in letting her mother examine his fracture was a violent shock for her. This amounts to saying that her children joined her in her resignation to death, a death that was pointing closer and closer. Yolande, who was looking forward to saving their innocence or at least their hope to survive, could no longer make any promise, for they were aware that their mother could not save them. In a nutshell, there was no more assurance between the authoress and her children, the only certainty was that of an imminent death, all they were left with was their love for each other.

Furthermore, Yolande is demonized as a woman, as her children are forced to admit that their mother is a leader for the rebels, that she is disloyal to their father, and that she is a bad parent who prefers her lover over her offspring, as evidenced in the following passage:

'They were crazy, Mama. They hit Nadine on her legs for what they called her "long Tutsi legs". They mocked Sandrine, saying that she was trying to grow as tall as the trees. They made us repeat after them that you are a captain for the Patriotic Front, and a mistress of someone called Dallaire. That this Dallaire rescued you by helicopter and you abandoned your own children. [...]'. (NMTD, p.61)

Yolande's psychological death is also captured by her obligation to carry a dead's name twice during her escape. The name 'Yolande Mukagasana' or 'Muganga', as she used to be called, was on every lip at every roadblock. It felt like the genocide was partially planned for herself. She could no longer carry her name for her own security, yet to be summoned to depart from her name means to be summoned to depart from her identity, not just as civil status. Indeed, to assume a new name equals to assume a new personality. So, at a certain point of her story, Yolande Mukagasana was no more, at least psychologically. Accordingly, she writes:

Father Vanoverschelden gives me an identity card he found on a corpse. I'm now called Nyiramana Xaverina. I carry the name of a dead woman. Perhaps I'm dead and I don't even know it. I feel like a zombie: one of those souls of the dead that [...] are woken up by sorcerers to do their bidding. (NMTD, p.106)

And she furthers:

I've been given yet another name. Emmanuelle hands me a Hutu identity card. 'From now on you'll be called Nyiramani Alphonsine. And you'll be our aunt, mine and my sister's. As soon as we're outside, the game changes. Now we have to pretend that I'm Murielle's aunt [...] I make an effort to walk like an old woman, to shake and to stumble over my cloth. (NMTD, pp. 118-119)

Besides, although she was abroad when the genocide broke up in 1994, Mukasonga is not spared from psychological affliction, nor was she less affected than those like Mukagasana who underwent the massacres

from inside. This raises the issue of the 'direct and indirect witness' and the issue of 'how' these two categories of individuals bear witness.

It would opportune to reject as false the trend that intends to consider 'direct witnesses' as legitimate witnesses. Legitimate witnesses suppose illegitimate ones, what is quite certain is that there are no illegitimate witnesses, for even though 'indirect witnesses' like Mukasonga found themselves elsewhere in 1994, they all lost some if not plenty of their relatives, and can still legitimately bear witness on their behalf.

In *Cockroaches*, Mukasonga starts her chapter on the genocide with her guilty of being in France while her family was being chased like animals. Her incapacity to assist her relatives is the trigger of her psychological trauma. In this perspective, Mukasonga confesses:

Anguish overcomes me when I think of that spring of 1994. I still find myself wondering how I could have gone on tending to my house and children, taking courses for certification as a social worker in France, admiring the flowering trees of that French springtime. I sleepwalked my way through those months of April, May, and June. I knew there was no hope for Nyamata. As early as March 1992, there'd been a dress rehearsal in Bugesera: houses were burned, Tutsi were thrown into latrines. [...] I was not with my family when they were being hacked up with machetes. How could I have simply gone on living my life, as they were all dying? [...] I was burdened with the memory of all those dead: they would be with me for as long as I lived. (*Cockroaches*, p.119)

Guilty appears in Scholastique's account as a confession of abandon, but also as evidence of her love for her family and her country, which she would have been happy to save if she could. In both cases, guilty is the tangible proof of a profoundly hurt conscience. It is a mea-culpa by a powerless daughter and sister that the fate has unexpectedly decided to spare, and to whom has been assigned the duty of bearing witness on the behalf of those silenced forever.

As she thought of how savagely Tutsi were killed in Rwanda, Mukasonga was as well subjected to mirror herself as dead. This phenomenon is an unconscious mechanism for self-defence, empathy for the victims, as well as psychological assistance to her beloved ones.

As to tally Mukagasana's resignation to death, Mukasonga explains that this feeling was common to Tutsis. That the genocide could not be contained was a certainty, at least when they realized that the world had decided to keep their eyes shut over the ongoing massacres. In this connection, Mukasonga ironically observes.

I learned of the first massacres, immediately after Habyarimana's death, it was like a brief moment of deliverance: at last! Now we could stop living our lives waiting for death to come. It was there. There was no way to escape it. The Tutsis' fated destiny would be fulfilled. A morbid satisfaction flashed through my mind: we in Nyamata had long expected this. (*Cockroaches*, p.120)

Drawing from this quotation, the reader is given to understand that for Scholastique and her fellow Tutsis, their death was the most plausible denouement of such a scale of brutality.

Alongside the psychological death is the burden of powerlessness in front of the massacres perpetrated with alarming impunity. In the following lines, we are going to examine Yolande and Scholastique attitudes towards the killings.

II.2- Authoresses' Powerlessness towards Tutsi Extermination

Yolande Mukagasana's *Not My Time to Die* and Scholastique Mukasonga's *Cockroaches* are accusatory, and raw, but nevertheless they are quite reliable, as they almost fully tally each other. As testimonies, they provide an insight into the incredibly intimate experience of agonizing consciences, while demonstrating a remarkable capacity of lucidity.

Through these accounts, the reader is not confronted with the crimes perpetrated by a small group of people, but he is rather exposed to the alarming human's capacity for violence towards fellow humans. In this connection, Mukagasana ironized "*The world will not cease to be violent if it doesn't examine its need for violence*". (*NMTD*, p.71)

Throughout these testimonies, the reader is shattered by the bloody scenes of dehumanization, tortures, and massacres. Behind these scenes, a strong and allegedly legitimate feeling: a hatred for the invaders, incarnated by the Tutsis. No particular age-group is targeted: babies, teenagers, adolescents, adults and olds have to be exterminated to free Rwanda from its manacles.

On one hand, Mukagasana's account evidences a trivialized horror, not out of insensitivity but to reliably paint the bloody portraits she was given to contemplate, and to echo the victims' torments. In this regard, Catherine Gilbert (2019: 2) observes:

Mukagasana's language is accusatory, angry, and raw, but also lucid, poignant, and sensitive. She provides a valuable insight into the incredibly intimate experience of trauma, suffering, and mental anguish, capturing the reality of the horrific crimes of genocide all while demonstrating a remarkable capacity for humanity.

From the passage above, we understand that *Not My Time to Die* uses a reliable and lucid language; indeed, truthiness is the key to a testimony under its most agreed acceptance. It is in this perspective that Hutu's violence, lined with sadism, rhythms the accounts under consideration, as it rhythmically depicted Rwanda's days during the genocide in 1994.

This violence appears to be the accomplishment of Tutsis' fated destiny, the starting up of an apocalypse that has been awaiting in the shadow for more than thirty years back then. The immediate cause that unveiled the plan of an organized genocide is the President's death on 6 April 1994. Accordingly, with this assassination, there was then a valid reason to a scale of brutality; it was no longer an arbitrary extermination but a legitimate genocide conducted out of patriotism, as a soldier sadistically advocated:

'Let us revenge the appalling assassination of the much-loved Juvénal Habyarimana by these cockroaches, and let us revenge at the same time, that of Melchior Ndalaye, the late President of Burundi, on 21 October 1993. Track the snakes everywhere and kill them. May your magnificent work free the world from evil! [...] Therefore, every Hutu family, every single Hutu, has a duty to this country today. And this duty is simple; to exterminate the cockroaches. May your machetes serve you well! And may every Hutu who gets the chance to kill a serpent but does not, be killed in his turn. You must forget your political allegiances, you, children of the crop farmers, are all the same, and you have a sole common enemy: the cockroach.' (*NMTD*, pp. 23-24)

These lines by Hutu extremists exude hatred at its most extreme. They carry over their disregard towards the so-called 'snakes' and everything or everyone that has to do with them. Indeed, the genocide targeted Tutsis and those seen as 'moderate Hutus'. From rapes, tortures to killings, there was no treatment that was too violent or too inhumane for the invaders. In this regard, Yolande depicts:

The plantation is as crowded as the market in Kigali. There are so many Tutsis hiding here that we almost bump into each other. I pass by Théophile, whose pregnant wife was raped after the killings started. The assailants slashed her open to see what a Tutsi baby looks like in its mother's stomach. They also cut the tendons on her feet. She died, at last, when someone put a bullet in her head. (*NMTD*, p.55)

As evidenced in the passage above, extremists took a sadistic pleasure to watch their victims agonize, to suffer unbearable pains physically as well as psychologically. And each time they wanted the victims to know who their executioners were, what they looked like, what they wanted, and moreover what they were capable of. As to tally this passage by Mukagasana, Mukasonga also writes:

We in Nyamata had long since accepted that death would be our deliverance. We waited for it; watched for it, inventing and reinventing ways to escape it all the same – until the next time, when it would come even closer, when it would carry off neighbours, schoolmates, brothers, a son. And mothers trembled when they gave birth to a boy; because he would be an Inyenzi, and anyone who pleased could humiliate him, hunt him down, murder him, and they'd never be punished. [...] Sometimes we gave in to the longing to die. Yes, we were prepared to face death, [...]. We were Inyenzi, fit only to be crushed like cockroaches, with one stomp. But they preferred to watch us die slowly. They drew out the death throes with unspeakable tortures, purely for their own pleasure. They liked to cut up their victims while they were still living, they liked to disembowel the women and rip out their fetuses. (*Cockroaches*, p.121)

Rwandan, or at least Hutu's social imaginary that has designated Tutsis as invaders are comforted by the idea that the latter are not Rwandans, that they are shaped differently from others. This physical disparity vis-à-vis other ethnic-groups raised the Tutsi above Hutus and Twas, a decree that the colonizer adopted when he established these social classes as ethnic groups. As such, Tutsis' worst sin was not to be 'Tutsi' as considered then, but to be successful and wealthy. In this connection, Yolande confesses in an interview :

Journaliste : Aujourd'hui, comment voyez-vous la paix entre Tutsis et Hutus ?

Yolande Mukagasana: Précisons une chose : Tutsis et Hutus sont une construction tout à fait coloniale. Parce que ces mots existaient certes dans notre culture, mais ils ont changé de signification avec la colonisation en 1931, quand les colons ont créé une carte d'identité ethnique. Avant, cela signifiait la classe socio-économique. On pouvait être Hutu aujourd'hui, et être demain Tutsi, quand on a beaucoup de vaches. Ou l'inverse, parce qu'on n'en a plus assez.

Journaliste : Ce fut donc une ... vacherie !

Yolande Mukagasana: Quand la Belgique a créé la carte d'identité, tout s'est cristallisé. On est resté Tutsi ou Hutu à vie ! Ces cartes ont été faites en tenant compte du nombre de vaches que les uns et les autres avaient en ce moment-là. C'est pourquoi je dis que ce fut une guerre fratricide.

Drawing from this interview, it would be opportune to highlight that the clash between Hutus and Tutsis dates back to the arrival of the colonizers. It would be appropriate to infer that the lower socio-economic class nourished a feeling of jealousy towards the higher one. And, that this jealousy announced the dawn of what would later turn into a fratricide extermination. Understanding the remote causes of the genocide is helpful to understand the profound motivation of the conflict. It also explains and ironically justifies this horrible impetus to slaughter.

In *Not My Time to Die*, one of the saddest portraits of violence is the one the author's three children (eleven, twelve, and thirteen years old) unwillingly found themselves at the core of; Mukagasana depicts the scene in these terms:

I find my children wounded, but alive. Tortured and humiliated, but alive. I tremble as they come towards me. We hug each other and cry. [...] Then Nadine hugs me, I feel like I'm waking up from a nightmare. My children, so you're here, still alive? I feel a burst of joy.

'What happened to you?'

Christian solemnly explains that they were summoned to the roadblock and the Interahamwe showed them the body of a dead man. [...]

'They made us identify him. "Do you recognize this man? Do you?" shouted the Interahamwe. "He's a soldier from the Patriotic Front, isn't he?" It was Papa. His hand had been cut off and his face bruised. "That's not a soldier," I said, "that's my father." Then they started beating me. One of them struck me with his machete; I raised my arm to protect my neck and it broke under the blow'

I examine his arm: an open fracture of the humerus. It needs care.

'Leave it, Mama. What's the point? They said they'd come back tomorrow morning and kill us'

He continues. [...] 'They were crazy, Mama. They hit Nadine on her legs for what they called her "long Tutsi legs". They mocked Sandrine, saying that she was trying to grow as tall as the trees. They made us repeat after them that you are a captain for the Patriotic Front, and a mistress of someone called Dallaire. That this Dallaire rescued you by helicopter and you abandoned your own children. [...]' (NMTD, pp. 60-61)

Summoned to identify their own father's corpse, Yolande's children stand as the embodiment of all Tutsi children who were given to see their parents savagely killed, and who found themselves lost and left with no certainty to watch the next sunrise. Christian, Sandrine, and Nadine stand for all children whose dreams have been broken, whose innocence has been taken away, and whom have been silenced forever with terror as the last emotion they felt before a machete blow struck their neck.

Furthermore, in the same account, extremists' sadism is captured with the following desire by an adolescent, whose words betrays a profoundly engraved indoctrination to considering his neighbour as his worst enemy: "*The adolescent apologizes, acquiesces. Then goes even further: 'If I find Muganga, I'll cut her in two, like in the Bible.'* [...] '*I'd like to tie Muganga to a tree and have her watch as I cut off her children's arms before killing them.*'" (NMTD, p.71)

These lines are the tangible evidence that Tutsis' demonization constitutes a transgenerational heritage among Hutus' community, for adolescents seem ignorantly captives of a profound indoctrination. The latter might be brainwashed, but they are no less guilty of the crimes they are responsible of, though they only comply and execute orders from their elders. In this connection, the genocide is a double-edged sword, as it jeopardizes Hutu adolescent's innocence as well as it exterminates the Tutsi.

Besides, out of sadism, it is strongly believed among Hutu's community that Tutsi's extermination, more than a patriotic obligation, is an allegedly pious duty. A belief that does not just justify the massacres but also encourages them. According to this 'divine' recommendation, Tutsis' blood is to avenge Habyarimana's death, he who was sacred to his fellows, as Mukagasana relates:

'You know what happened in Kibeho, little one? [...] 'Yes! Imana sent his mother there and she appeared to a student. [...] And you know what she said to the student? She said that President Habyarimana is in heaven, that he's been assassinated by the Tutsis, and that, to revenge his murder, all the Tutsis must die. That's what the Virgin said. [...] Nobody can hear her voice except the student. That's the sacred mystery. But we can hear the student, that's how we know what the Virgin says. (NMTD, p.131)

The fervour of accomplishing this pious duty is at the core of the extremists' show of force. In this line of reasoning, throughout *Not My Time to Die* and *Cockroaches*, the reader is not given to follow a genocide but the zealous execution of a celestial task, delivered by the Virgin.

The dull, obituary and ironically pious scenes that Mukagasana depicts in her account are sometimes extracted from her own memory, and sometimes from people she has been in contact with during the genocide. As such, she bears witness on their behalf, because their voice will be heard no more. In this connection, the authoress provides a voice to Emmanuelle, who relates her journey to Kigali to find some help for Yolande in these words:

'I've never seen such horror' [...] 'There were bodies everywhere' [...] 'They've made roadblocks with corpses. There's an unbearable throughout Kigali' [...] 'I walked along the tarmacked road for two kilometres and saw nothing but corpses' [...] 'I saw a woman dying in agony, with headwound, moaning, begging for someone to finish her off' [...] 'They have dug pits and bulldozers are pushing the bodies in, all jumbled up. I even saw a dog making off with an arm in its mouth.' [...] She tells me about the thousands of horrors she saw on the road. (*NMTD*, p.94)

Surprisingly, Emmanuelle's adventure is similar to Yolande's one. As she's listening to Emmanuelle, the author's imagination takes her on a journey on the land of dead, as she narrates:

I see passing before my eyes corpses that I've never seen, as if I myself am moving, retracing Emmanuelle's long road to Calvary, seeing what she describes. I see roads strewn with men, their skulls smashed in. I see a five-year-old child hanging from the branch of a cedar tree, one foot still wearing a shoe. I see the roadblock of burning tyres. I see a woman writhing in pain on the bare ground. [...] I see houses in flames, the bush in flames running in every direction. I see the MINUAR jeeps driving around the corpses. I see queues of Tutsis waiting to be tortured. I see a man whose feet have been cut off crawling along the tarmac. I see half-filled graves of corpses, some, against all logic, still calling for help. I see detached arms and legs, left for the dogs. I see Kigali, one evening during the genocide. I see it without seeing it, as described by Emmanuelle. And I hear again, RTLM calling for genocide ten days ago. Where is my Rwanda? (*NMTD*, p.95)

One of the most astonishing observations about Mukagasana's gripping memoir is that the authoress does not feel animosity towards her executioners. Yet, this does not mean she is insensitive to the affliction she is forced to. She actually suffers as she is indescribably wounded. All she hopes is to make them feel her grief, to know what a death from inside actually is, as she desperately observes: "*No, I don't find any hatred in me; I'd only like them to see the harm they've done me*" (*NMTD*, p.109). Their hatred turned their hearts into stones. It is in fact out of this indoctrination that most of them act. In the same time, she doubts she can have them feel any empathy: they are indoctrinated. She prefers to think they are, for if they are not, then they are worse than animals.

Nevertheless, the most painful portrayal of death is that of Yolande's children. The picture of their slaughter is unbearable for both the authoress and her reader. The following passage is the description of their killing she hears from Spérance:

'Do you remember the day you fled to Déo's house? [...] They order us to get completely undressed. [...] They push us to a ditch that has been dug two hundred meters away. [...] A machete falls heavily on the nape of Christian's neck, his head is cut three-quarters off, and he falls into the ditch. [...] Sandrine's head is cut off in the same way as Christian's. When Nadine reaches the edge of the ditch, she throws herself in before they can strike her. While the other bodies are falling into the ditch one by one, we hear Nadine's muffled voice: "Goodbye, Spérance goodbye. Tell Mama, if you see her, that we are all dead. [...] Tell her that I'm afraid of machetes and prefer to die of suffocation. But tell her I'm so afraid of dying. [...] Mama, Mama where are you? Mama, I'm scared. I'm afraid, Mama." Little by little Nadine's words come less often. She begins to suffocate under the weight of the bodies. I remain there, dazed, until I can't hear anything else. [...] There, Yolande, that's what happened.' (*NMTD*, pp. 174-175)

On the other hand, Mukagasana's account is tallied by Mukasonga's. The latter's absence in Rwanda during the massacres of 1994 does not prevent her from describing, out of imagination or from gathered testimonies, how her family was exterminated. Scholastique Mukasonga lost thirty-seven (37) parents in total between April and July of that fatal year. She can't help but recall their names over and over again so that the world can hear her grief, as she stresses:

André and I could only call the roll of our dead:
My father Cosma, 79 years old;

My mother Stefania, maybe 74;
My older sister Judith, her four children, and I'm no longer sure how many grandchildren;
My brother Antoine and his wife, with nine children, the oldest twenty, the youngest five;
Alexia and her husband Pierre Ntereye, and four of their children, between two and ten years of age;
Jeanne, my younger sister, her four children, Douce, eight, Nella, seven, Christian, five, Nénette, one, and the baby she was eight months pregnant with.
I counted them up over and over again. There were thirty-seven. (*Cockroaches*, pp. 121-122)

Yet, lined with their loss is the 'how' of their loss that the authoress cannot run roughshod over. In this connection, she observes:

I already knew their remains would never be found. Now there's no doubt. Were they picked up by the schoolchildren who spent and still spend their vacations gathering bones on the hills and in the fields, to be deposited in the crypt beneath the church of Nyamata? Bones and skulls that will be nameless forever, piled behind the glass walls of the ossuary. Or were their corpses devoured and scattered by the packs of masterless dogs that roamed Bugesera in the months after the genocide? Are they still buried deep in one of those mass graves that are forever being discovered? Where are they? Somewhere deep in the anonymous crowd of the genocide's victims. (*Cockroaches*, p.122)

The genocidal machine ostentatiously set into motion by 1994 was meant not only to eradicate an ethnic-group but also to wipe away all their traces, so that it would be felt that they never existed, that they were never killed, that there was no genocide. With regard to this, Mukasonga's account is accurate when the authoress painfully and ironically depicts her family as 'nameless bones and skulls': that was indeed what was expected by the executioners.

From the testimony she collected from Emmanuel, her younger sister's husband, the authoress was told how the latter died during the massacres. Mukasonga was unable to carry that unthinkable horror upon her sole shoulders, which urges her to write it down:

Now I have to talk about Jeanne. [...] Her husband Emmanuel told me how she died. [...] I recorded his words. What he wanted to tell me he would probably never say again. It was very hard for both of us. I thought of telling him to stop, to put an end to the pain his story was reawakening. [...] I wish I could write this page with my tears. [...] Jeanne is eight months pregnant and in no condition to flee with the terrified crowd. [...] she decides to start back down for Nyamata. She will be killed in front of the town hall. How? [...] Her belly is sliced open. The foetus is ripped out. They beat her with the foetus. (*Cockroaches*, pp. 128-130)

In the same time, the authoress remembers the treatment inflicted to her brother-in-law Pierre Ntereye, a University Professor. Tutsi, the latter was used as the embodiment of an alleged Hutu-Tutsi fellowship, the living evidence that ethnic discrimination was unknown in Rwanda. He had been helped by the Hutu government to study in Belgium and in the United States, and enjoyed a couple of advantages throughout his career. Instead, he was intended to sorely pay back those advantages the regime granted him. In fact, behind those ambiguous favours was a veiled and sophisticated plan of slow death. As to evidence it, the authoress retells:

They came to arrest him, and Pierre gravely injured himself as he was trying to flee. Rather than let him die, his tormentors gave him medical treatment so they could torture him at their leisure. They kept him prisoner in the town hall. For the next several days, they cut pieces off of him one by one with a machete. Jeanne-Françoise saw her father being slowly dismembered. [...] and every day she saw him with another piece gone: fingers, a hand, an arm, a leg. She had to stand before the blood-spattered shreds that were once her father, [...] the unspeakable image of a rag of bleeding flesh. (*Cockroaches*, pp. 126-127)

These pictures profoundly engraved in the authoress psyche are evidences of a communicated trauma, from her relatives and fellow survivors to her, and from her to her readers. As such *Cockroaches* embarks everyone who gets in contact with its story, or somehow identify themselves to the characters, on a journey to the memorialization of the genocide. In this sense, Mukasonga's account is universal, as it definitely concerns her family, but also all those who have unwillingly found themselves at the core of the genocide, and this implies those who died and those, like herself, who had the 'sorrow of surviving'.

In a nutshell, this section has evidenced that the genocide is grounded on a stressed and transgenerational hatred towards the Tutsi. It has especially shed light on the trauma that the survivors have gone or might still be going through up to this day. For, this hardship has left no one indifferent, neither the survivors nor the executioners

themselves. After so much horrors and sadness of the genocide, forgiveness seems to be the only possibility of redemption for the victims and perpetrators to reconstruct their nation through non-violence and tolerance. Yet, to help themselves overcome this dark historical parenthesis and emerge from it stronger and more resilient, Yolande Mukagasana and Scholastique Mukasonga have chosen the 'therapy of testimony'.

Lastly, it would also opportune to examine 'grief', which appears as loud outcry for justice.

II.3- Grief: A long-lasting Feeling

Grief is a multi-faceted concept but is broadly accepted as the response to loss, particularly to the loss of someone or some living thing that has died, to which a bond or affection was formed. The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2005:655) defines it as "a feeling of great sadness, especially at the death of someone".

Throughout Yolande and Scholastique's accounts grief is the most alarming of all raised issues; it is the core of these two memoirs, and the bedrock for a therapeutic narrative. The authoresses intended their testimonies to be as poignant as possible, and wanted each word to vehicle the sorrow of their journey. Mukasonga even "wished [she] could write with [her] tears" (*Cockroaches*, p.128) to better express her emotions and to raise awareness upon the evil of fratricide wars that have too often jeopardised peace in Africa, and ultimately over the world.

Throughout Yolande's *Not My Time to Die*, we follow a woman, wife, and mother that the situation dooms to an ever-lasting sensation of emptiness. Yolande will be the only survivor of her small and loving family, and will be summoned to learn to live without the husband and children she so much loved. All she will be left with is the grief of her family loss. Her grief is all the more expressed through these words: "Where are my children?" a question she frenetically repeats over twenty times in her account.

Throughout Yolande's story grief and apprehension are portrayed alongside, and in such a way that they can barely depart from one another. In the last chapter of her account, in 1997, Mukagasana clarifies that she still does not have the courage to return in Rwanda, even though the genocide is over since three long years. She is still prisoner of her sorrow. The massacres' scenes seem to be still fresh in her memory like a jealous possessor. The authoress has the sensation that "machetes await in the shadow to slice [her] neck, to quiet [her] voice forever" (*NMTD*, p.179). Through a process of identification, the death of her family is the death of self within her. It is in this regard that her grief is the best perceived.

To communicate her emotions, the authoress keeps on counting and recounting her dead, so that their memories do not disappear as their bodies did. In psychology, this phenomenon is viewed as a self-defence process the psyche triggers as a response to an intense trauma:

When I think of my loved ones, I'm overwhelmed with sorrow. I feel like a mother gorilla who, when her infant dies, carries it for three or four days. You know the game where you have to name as many towns as possible of a particular country? I try to name as many of my loved ones as possible who died during the genocide, a new game created for the survivors: Christian, Sandrine, Nadine, Joseph, Hilde, Consolata, Nepo. And so many more. (*NMTD*, pp. 179-180)

The metaphor of the 'mother gorilla' in this passage has a heavy significance. In fact, it is observed with that particular specie a denial of death, out of self-preservation. It is a critical phase of mourning. This amounts to saying the authoress too walls herself up in a denial of her children's death, because parents are naturally not supposed to bury their offspring, and would rather consider them as still alive, far and close at the same time.

Moreover, Yolande's maternal instinct enabled her to feel the very moment their children passed away. She was still struggling to flee Rwanda and seek refuge elsewhere. At the very moment she felt it, her first reaction was to rebuke and conjure it, as if that would have had any influence on the course of events. She confesses to Spérancie that she could sense her children's death as they were being beheaded like animals.

At last, Mukagasana avows that she has nothing left within apart from her grief, the memories of the genocide and her love for her dead. It is in this connection that bearing witness will be her cure, and will exempt her from the burden of affliction, as she declares:

I hope that this testimony will give me back my lost dignity: my dignity as a woman, a mother, a nurse. [...] There's nothing left in my mind apart from the genocide I've forgotten everything except the genocide. [...] And now I need to talk about the genocide all of the time. [...] I need to talk, talk, talk, like the flow of the river Nyabarongo, where I saw so many bodies floating. (*NMTD*, p.180)

As for Mukasonga, the idea that she will live forever with her dead is obvious. Indeed, she dedicates her book to her late relatives in a way that expresses her eternal grief:

For everyone who died at Nyamata in the genocide,
For Cosma, my father,
For Stefania, my mother, for Antoine, my brother and his nine children,
For Alexia, my sister, and her husband Pierre Ntereye, and their children,
For Jeanne, my youngest sister, and her children,
For Judith and Julienne, my sisters and their children,
For all those of Nyamata who are named in this book and all the many more who are not,
For the few who have the sorrow of surviving. (*Cockroaches*, p.8)

Drawing from the quotation above, Scholastique evidences that the unbearable pain of loss never dulls, nor does her love for her dead. She keeps on repeating frenetically their names throughout her account, which forms a deliberate stylistic choice for communicating intense emotions.

Furthermore, the author's grief shouts itself hoarse and relentless when she explains that the memories of genocide leave her in prey to nightmares. She has the inalterable sensation of being chased in her dreams by people with machetes. Quite certain that the genocide is not yet over, at least as long as she is still alive, the authoress endlessly relives the massacres she thought she had escaped. This time they are closer, worse, and more dreadful. In this connection, Scholastique observes:

Every night the same nightmare interrupts my sleep. I'm being chased, I hear a sort of hum coming toward me, a roar, more menacing with every moment. I don't look back. There's no need. I know they have machetes. I'm not sure how, but even without looking back I know they have machetes... Sometimes the other girls from school are there too. I hear their cries as they fall. As they... Now I'm the only one running. I know I'm going to fall, I'm going to be trampled, I don't want to feel the cold blade on my neck, I... I wake up. I'm in France. (*Cockroaches*, p.9)

The constant remembrance of the 1994 massacres gives birth to a feeling of immediacy. It is felt that the genocide did not take place yesterday but is occurring today, that it is over and that it has just started. The point of such immediacy aspect is to establish the genocide as a never-ending crime against Tutsis, and ultimately against humanity. Beyond the killings, the genocide intimated a death of the self within the survivors, which have found themselves alive but paradoxically left for dead. In this connection, Mukasonga introduces the concept of *sub-vivors* (*Cockroaches*, p.124) to specify that the survivors survived but were not alive and "*were outside themselves, oblivious to their own existence*" (*Cockroaches*, p.124). Accordingly, the authoress, weakened by her own memories, becomes a shadow of herself, an empty human being whose only aids are a pen and notebook.

In 2004, that is ten years after the genocide, Mukasonga embarks on a journey back to Rwanda, now "*the land of the dead*" (*Cockroaches*, p.133). While other survivors, though very few, were hurrying to hold a surviving father, mother, brother or sister in their arms, Mukasonga questions herself on the reason that urged her to return where once her home was. This significant interrogation raises the issue survivors' conscious or unconscious need to draw consolation from source. In fact, their homecoming unveils a twofold significance: the first is the message that no genocide is perfect, that no hatred can definitely obliterate love, the second is that survivors' return was the last and worthiest farewell ceremony and the sepulchre of all those who would be seen no more. Also was it the last phase of the genocide: the ascertainment of an event that will have impacted Rwandan's history forever.

Through the authoress' perspective, returning in Rwanda is viewed as a deliverance, as a renewal of her love for her family. It is as well an assurance within Mukasonga's psyche that the genocide is indeed over. She realizes that Rwanda is recovering its beauty and charm, as she observes: "*I wish the minibus would stop at every bend in the road to let the hills and mountaintops all the way to the horizon come and fill my eyes [...] – I say 'Rwanda nziza, Rwanda nziza: My country is beautiful'.*" (*Cockroaches*, p.136)

Nevertheless, this healing journey back to Rwanda does not help her recover totally from her profound grief. Two years later, Mukasonga will publish her first memoir and unclench a process of self and collective reconstruction. She will bear witness and give back their voice to her dead, and she will survive as they will live forever.

As can be seen, the analysis has evidenced that the massacres of 1994 induced three main psychological consequences on Mukagasana and Mukasonga: the first is a death from inside, the second is the feeling of powerlessness towards arbitrary executions, and the last one is the almost ever-lasting grief. Apart from these, when she realized there was no more life left in her, Yolande, for instance, more than twice thought of committing a suicide, to put an end to her unbearable trauma. As for Scholastique, she felt guilty and ultimately responsible for the death of her relatives, whom she could not assist when they were being chased after like beasts.

CONCLUSION

The gist of this study has been to examine 'therapeutic effects of testimonies'. Drawing from historical and psychobiographical approaches, it has substantially aimed at highlighting the urgency of bearing witness in order to heal the psychological scars the genocide has left wide open as dramatized in Yolande Mukagasana's *Not My Time to Die* and Scholastique Mukasonga's *Cockroaches*. The authoresses' testimonies have enabled them overcome their grief in the extent that they have sincerely forgiven the executioners. The analysis has shown how strengthened they have come out of their intense talking therapy. After having hold their promises to bear witness on the behalf of the victims, Mukagasana and Mukasonga have freed themselves from the manacles of the past, and ostensibly regained a minimum of joie de vivre, as initially expected. As a final assessment, these 'testimonies' are effectively a way-out for the two authoresses to decently mourn and perpetuate the memory of those prematurely silenced. They can now be acknowledged as therapeutic narratives, to the extent that they are the channels through which distress and grief are healed and exorcised. Mukagasana's *Not My Time to Die* and Mukasonga's *Cockroaches* offer poignant, raw yet lucid and precious testimonies from inside a freshly independent country, already torn by fratricide conflicts. Against oblivion and indifference, Mukagasana and Mukasonga's voices raise up to spare their families from a second death. Keepers of the memory, their testimonies, moreover, are the worthy sepulchres the victims have flagrantly been denied. Furthermore, another major finding in this study is the authoresses' longing for a new era of mutual tolerance, respect, and love. As such, these stories can be viewed as a sort of public amnesty for the benefit of the killers. This spirit of forgiveness betrays Mukagasana and Mukasonga's maternal regards towards the country, as they motherly assume their role of conciliators. The narratives under scrutiny are far from doing justice to the loss and grief of the survivors but are clearly a step towards a reconstruction of Rwanda as a single society. All things considered, it can be asserted that testimony works as catharsis in the sense that it enables a release of emotions through the therapeutic talking cure. This research has come to conclude that remembering and talking about the past help withstand trauma and its dreadful consequences.

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