HISTORICIZING TRAUMA AND TRAUMATIZING HISTORY IN FRANCOPHONE AFRICAN WAR NARRATIVES: POSTMEMORY AND TESTIMONY OF SCOLASTIQUE MUKASONGA AND AHMADOU KOUROUMA

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Abstract
Many civil wars have been fought on the African soil after the European decolonization of African colonies, witnessed and experienced also by some African writers. Among a coterie of Francophone African writers who have taken the pain and pen to write down their experiences or experiences of others, Scolastique Mukasonga’s and Ahmadou Kourouma’s writing, as a product of postmemory and collective memory or secondary witness, articulates and disarticulates History, constructs and deconstructs historical discourse, and historicizes and dehistoricizes trauma. This paper adopts trauma and postcolonial studies as the theoretical basis for the interpretation of Scolastique Mukasonga’s La femme aux pieds nus and Inyenzi ou les cafards and Ahmadou Kourouma’s Allah n’est pas obligé and Quand on refuse, on dit non as postcolonial testimonio and autobiography. While Kourouma writes as a sympathizer and victim by his deployment of factographies that legitimates his claim to realist narrative mode, Mukasonga transmits her “autobiographical” experiences as a victim and experiencer. The paper concludes that these works, like all war narratives, historicize collective trauma of African peoples, but end up traumatizing the history they attempt to construct. The contents and forms of these war narratives are traumatized.

Key Words: Trauma, History, Postmemory, Collective memory, War narratives, heterolinguisitcs, Creative and Symbolic Immortality

Introduction
Aside the major World Wars that have left their footprints on the collective memory of their major victims and sympathizers, history has it that different wars, have been fought in different continents of the world due to various reasons. In his The Economic Causes of War, Robbins (1968, p.60) identified “national power and economic factors” as one of these causes of war. It has been Clausewitz’s argument that war is fundamentally political, therefore it is a “continuation of politics by other means” (cited in Levy, 2011, p.131). Such politics has motivated intratribal civil wars and conflicts in African nations after European colonization, provoked by “greed and grievance” in which rebels conduct civil wars for loot-seeking” and “justice-seeking” reasons (Anyawu, 2002, p.3). Consequently, Africa has suffered immensely because the devastating physical and psychological effects of wars are not short-lived. It is possible for nations and societies to engage in postwar reconstructions of disjointed infrastructures but the reconstruction of collective memory, where live traumatizing experiences of victims or their descendants, appears difficult. This is because “memory is not a unity, but is considered to be composed of several systems” (Staniou & Markowitsch, 2012, p.103), its traumatized state means “the shattering of a life narrative” of sufferers (van der Merwe & Gobodo-Madikizela, 2008, p.103) which can only be reconstructed or overcome through “the words of their testimony”.

The Nigerian Civil War, the Rwandan Genocide and Liberian-Sierra-Leonean wars have enriched immensely, contemporary scholarship on African war literature because most of these wars were witnessed and experienced also by some African writers or others made writers through the wars. Among a coterie of Francophone African writers who have taken the pain and pen to write down their experiences or experiences of others, Scolastique Mukasonga’s and Ahmadou Kourouma’s writing is worthy of note. The two authors are chosen because their narratives, as products of postmemory and collective memory or secondary witness, articulate and disarticulate History, construct and deconstruct historical discourse, and historicize and dehistoricize trauma. To interpret Scolastique Mukasonga’s La femme aux pieds nus and Inyenzi ou les cafards, and Ahmadou Kourouma’s Allah n’est pas obligé and Quand on refuse, on dit non as postcolonial testimonio and autobiography, this paper relies on trauma and postcolonial studies because of the interconnectedness of the two studies. If The Empire Writes Back, it means that the empire’s silence, or subalternity, reinforced through the colonial trauma and tragedy, has been broken. While Kourouma writes as a sympathizer and victim by his deployment of factographies that legitimates his claim to realist
narrative mode, Mukasa transmits her "autobiographical" experiences as a victim and experiencer. The contents and forms of these war narratives are traumatized because the authors' rapprochement to the dynamics of interlanguage and heterolingualism enables them to "traumatize" French language thereby traumatizing the readers of their war narratives.

Trauma and Postcolonial Studies

Kennedy (2011, p.237) asserts that "to date, there has been little work on trauma in the context of colonization and forced assimilation". However, slavery and colonialism are African experiences that can be perceived as harrowing "Siamese twins" whose historical existence left indelible marks on the memory of Africa and its history; in essence, they can be seen as traumas which Bombay et al. (2009, p.6) agree "can occur on collective level". However, no past experience shattered the "life narrative" of Africans like colonialism and likewise attracted several attempts towards the reconstruction of collective memory of Africans through written African literature. African literature's admittance into the "geography of postcolonial studies" is premised on its emergence from the bitter experience of colonization and its assertion by "foregrounding the tension with the imperative power, and by emphasizing [its] differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre." (Ashcroft et al., 2002, p.2). The word "tension" defines the trauma of Africa's postcoloniality or the postcoloniality of its trauma; therefore, African literature becomes a place of encounters of historical and intergenerational traumas where the memory of heroes past are now honored through the "passing of narratives from one generation to the next in a sharing fashion" (Fast & Collin-Vézna, 2010, p.130). Patracu (2013, p.383) admits that postcolonialism in literature is concerned among other things with the role of memory in representing history; the commodification of memory, the fictionalization of representation, dehumanizing the concept of History, fragmentarily, the politics of identity, the dynamics centre-periphery, all indicating connections between memory and trauma.

De Mey (2011) affirms that narration and testimony are central to overcoming the stifling effects of traumas. So, African literature engages in the process of "uncovering the history of oppression" while its subgenre of testimonio "challenges official history" (Kennedy, 2011, p.235). Lack of literature on trauma in the context of colonization does not mean that African writers have not written sufficiently about European colonialism in Africa because it is possible to read Achebe's Things Fall Apart, Ngugi's Weep Not Child, Sembene's Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu, Ferdinand Oyono's Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille among others through the lenses of trauma studies as they represent "the margins of empire [that] are now 'writing back' in an overdue attempt to correct the Western canon and its versions of truth." (Kennedy, 2011, p.235). Some of these writers write as rewriters of received traumatizing histories (Adiche Chimanda, etc.) while others write as témoins oculaires (eye witness) of these ugly events, "effectively communicating the horrors that [they] saw and lived" (Zaloua, 2007, p.29). For Scheler (2007, p.72), the above examples are two stages of trauma; while the second is at the moment of pure experience, the first is located at the level of memory, which consists in a symbolic representation of the initial moment.

The common denominator of the two stages relates to act of writing (l'écrit) which "conserve les événements du passé résidu de sombrer dans l'oubli" (which preserves past events that could be easily forgotten) (Bonnet & Sevrain, 2011, p.105) and which, equally, demands the deployment of cultural memory, entailing remembering and forgetting (Eri, 2011). It is these issues related to cultural memory that make up some of the core concerns of postcolonial studies (Rothberg, 2014, p.360) since it involves the recuperation of those "ignored histories" and "marginalized events" (Patracu, 2013, p.384), giving rise to what Brown (2008) calls "traumatic postcolonialism" in her study on trauma and testimony of Anglophone African literature. It is the use of cultural and collective memory that underlines Mukasa's and KeKonouma's narratives. We shall argue, like Laursen's (2012:54) categorization of Andrea Levy's writing as postmemorial, that Mukasa's genocide writing constitutes itself a form of postmemory, not just a product of postmemory since the author recounts the Rwandan genocide as a témoins oculaire.

Scolastique Mukasa's Genocide Memory to Postmemory through Traumatic Realist Autobiographies

Memory has been reasonably likened to dreams which operates largely by means of the kind of visualizations that Mitchell calls mental images (Bal, 2014, p.1291) because traumatic experiences have the potency of creating gothic spaces where the "repressed or denied past intrudes into the present in an unwanted, fear-inducing guise" (Brinks, 2004, p.293). In this respect, it can be said that Mukasa's autobiographies, La femme
The writer's nightmares are metaphorically motivated to enable her break her long silence that can be best described as "the gothic of the uncanny" in which certain recurrent quasi-hallucinogenic, non-narrative images stage the seemingly insurmountable life-in-death affect of trauma (Brinks, 2004, p.293). In essence, Inyenzi becomes her "working", to use Spivak's concept which is defined as the "creation of a narrative that bears the strife of its creation. This strife is the tension between the sufferer's competing drives toward creation (narration/testimony) and concealment (silence/melancholic attachment to the lost object)" (Brown, 2008, p.15). It is in this capacity that Inyenzi develops into a form of post-memory that intends to reclaim a realistic event of gruesome murder of Mukasonga's family members that might soon become a myth; she desires to "prouver qu'ils ont bien existé" [to prove that they really existed] (p.10) instead of pouring unending tears. She ends the prologue with this statement: "J'ai tant de morts à veiller" [I have too many dead to mourn] (p.10). Mourning of her dead family members appeared to be a debt that Mukasonga must pay but whose means remained a mystery until she decided to fulfill it through her narrative; it is what broke her silence in France. The motif of mourning is further justified by the Preface of La Femme aux pieds nus (2008) whose paratextual information attributes "la femme" to Stefania Mukasonga's slain mother.

In La Femme aux pieds nus (2008), the writer paints a realistic but brutal and violent picture of the woes suffered by the Hutu during the Rwandan inter-tribal hostilities, including the young and innocent protagonist, Scholastique Mukasonga and her immediate family who are displaced and also suffer the tragedy of untimely deaths of some neighbors and relatives. The text attempts to give a sequential account of inter-tribal violence between the Hutu and the Tutsi and further demonstrates that the outbreak of violence in this text which dates pre-independence era of the Rwandan people.
prepares enough ground for mega violence in Inyenzi ou les cafards (2006) where she engages in war discourses that center on the Rwandan genocide of 1994, though the latter was published after the former. This chronology of events is organized through the agency of memory since Mukasonga’s La femme aux pieds nus (2008) is a form of narrativized mourning, used to accomplish the dead mother, Stéphanie’s last wishes:

*Maman, je n’étais pas là pour recouvrir ton corps et je n’ai plus que des mots – des mots d’une langue que tu ne comprenais pas – pour accomplir ce que tu avais demandé. Et je suis seule avec mes pauvres mots et mes phrases, sur la page du cahier, tissent et retissent le linçeu de ton corps absent (Mukasonga, 2008, p.13)*

*Mama, I was not there to cover up your body and I have nothing but words – words in a language you do not understand – to do what you had asked of me. And I am alone with my poor words and sentences on the notebook page, weaving and reweaving the shroud of your body absent.*

In African mythology, the last wishes of a dead relative must be fulfilled to avoid certain unforeseen circumstances on the living and those repercussions are the author’s unabated nightmares in her apartment in France in Inyenzi. However, the chief mourner who happens to be Mukasonga is handicapped by the avalanche of nostalgia that shows the duality of presence and absence. Residing in France, she cannot carry out the Rwandan traditional rite for the dead since her mother’s body was not cremated or located. Her loneliness unveiled through the traumatized emotion of “Je suis seule” [I am alone] disqualifies her from carrying out the burial rite because she, alone, cannot form a community of mourners. The writer makes a covert allusion to the massacre of her entire family in the Rwandan genocide of 1994. Hopeless and helpless, Mukasonga decides to immortalize the history of her mother or rather to histonize the immortality of her mother through her narrative which provides her a new and uncommon space for mourning. Scheiber (2007) admits that “words are ultimately inadequate for communicating [an] experience of trauma”, however, Mukasonga only deploys words (mots), her unfortunate words (pauvres mots), as her last resort. The writer’s recourse to words is a recourse to Viktor Frankl’s logotherapy which is a “therapy based on the necessity of finding meaning in order to survive physically and mentally in the midst of severe suffering” (Quoted in van der Merwe & Gobodo-Madikizela, 2008, p.13).

The Texts as Mukasonga’s Space of Mourning: Acquiring Symbolic Immortality

The prologues of Inyenzi and La femme aux pieds nus unanimously highlight the ontology of Mukasonga’s traumatic autobiographies as a bizarre space for her mourning of the dead of Rwandan genocide, perpetrated by the Hutu who facilitated the massacre of over one million people with their machetes, axes, hammers, pistols and rifles (Fricke, 2014, p.35). The writer’s nightmares are linked to her inability to gather the mother’s remains for the final burial due to her sojourn in a foreign land because she is not ignorant of her Rwandan traditions. Rwandan burial rites are captured as thus:

> At the public ceremony, the head of the family relates the life history of the deceased person...A family member (usually the eldest child) is chosen to place the first bit of dirt in the grave. After the burial, mourners share a drink. A memorial fire remains lit in the deceased’s residence during an eight-day mourning period... (Culture Grams, 2014, p.6)

Through her autobiographic writing which “relates the life history of the deceased person” or deceased persons, Mukasonga attempts to fulfill the burial rites though she only assumed the headship of her extended family after the Rwandan genocide of 1994 as a survivor. She could not “place the first bit of dirt in the grave” of her relative, but her narrative becomes a memorial fire though not “lit in the deceased’s residence” whose lifespan surpasses the traditionally prescribed eight-day mourning period while attracting a transcultural and transnational sea of readers-mourners. Mukasonga’s brutal description of her personal and collective tragedy has some cathartic effects and baptizes her readers with emotions, transforming them to perpetual postmourners of Rwandan genocide and sympathizers of her collective trauma. Mukasonga’s narrative becomes a drage which provides “opportunities for individuals to express grief over their own impending deaths” and “to pay tribute to the dead” (Aborampah, 1999, p.260). Mukasonga’s traumatic autobiography not only provides a space for mourning by its creation of a community of mourners, but it also enables a performance of the funeral rites.
The performance of funeral rituals for the dead is meant to "ensure his or her comfort in the afterlife", (Aborampah, 1999, p.280), thereby highlighting the African belief in the immortality of human souls. In her text, Mukasonga regrets her incapacitation in fulfilling the mother’s funeral rites due to the non availability of the corpse; her words are set to accomplish this singular task by immortalizing Stefania's persona and facilitating the connectivity of the living to the dead through her narrative. The author achieves what Lifton & Olson (197, p.34) call "symbolic immortality". In historicizing the genocide memory of her Rwandan people through autobiographic mode of writing that discloses her family tragedy, Mukasonga ends up creating bonds of interpersonal relationship between the living and the dead, the Rwandans and Non Rwandans, and the genocidal victims and the public sympathizers that embody the potential for "creative mode of immortality". In essence, she not only immortalizes her mother and other family members who died during the genocide but ends up achieving, for herself, a sort of creative immortality that has "lasting influences of any kind on other human beings" (Lifton & Olson, 1874, p.36). While Mukasonga's text opens up a novel space for her community of mourners, it constitutes itself a tombstone where verbal "funeral rituals" of "readers" [for example, May their soul rest in peace] take place. The author categorically affirms that the femme aux pieds nus is her mother; it can be added that the novel's title appears to be the "headstone" of her burial ground. Why Mukasonga owes her slain mother and siblings the last respect, Ahmadou Kourouma can be said to be part of that community of mourners whose trauma emanates from public conscience and responsibility.

Kourouma's War Narratives as Postcolonial Testimonial
The Ivorian-born writer Kourouma's attempt in writing a war narrative is not born out of contemporary traumatic experience like Mukasonga; however he deploys his remote experience of Indo-Chinese war under the French Army as a volunteer in the 1950s. It can rather be said that his war texts illustrate him as a self appointed custodian of public conscience and justify Osundare's (2007) thesis of Writer as Righter. Allah n'est pas obligé (2000) presents the child-soldier phenomenon in the African history of civil wars where Bihrama, the twelve-year child soldier and narrator, narrates the Liberian and Sierra Leonean Wars. His frequent displacements and relocations, with the help of the fetishist and igri'man Yacouba, are premised on the ultimate search for his aunt, Mahan, who is supposed to play the role of a new mother after the death of her mother, Bafinti. Bihrama discusses, with acerbic humor and obscenity, the organized atrocities of war: ethnic cleansing, looting, sabotage and rape that marked the Liberian and Sierra Leonean wars (Ajan, 2010, p.80). Compared to Homer's Odyssey and Voltaire's Candide, Bihrama's trajectories of different villages, forests and military camps only serve as rites of passage into the culture of violence, promoted by historical figures such as Doe, in Allah n'est pas obligé and Houphouët-Boigny, Laurent Gbagbo, Konan Bédié, and Robert Guer in Quand on refuse on dit non.

Kourouma relies on factographies that emanates from local and international media in his writing of his war text Allah n'est pas obligé, so it is not surprising if Lux (2010, p.62) accuses him of "narrative ostentation" of historical digressions. However, the writer's Quand on refuse on dit non, which was published posthumously in 2004, still confines the narration of traumatizing events to Bihrama, but now it domesticates the autocracy of violence that installs the obsession for destruction on the Ivoirian soil. His histography on African conflicts shows a coexistence of fiction and history; in essence history feeds his fiction or vice versa. Kourouma's evocation of history is meant to create an official history on wars and conflicts in Africa, which will serve as a Postmemory and testimonio for succeeding generation of Africans.

Unlike autobiography or Bildungsroman, Kourouma's testimonio is not concerned with the development of the individual self, but with a problematic collective social situation" (Kennedy, 1977, p.235) because Bihrama's traumatic testimony is representative of his social class of child-soldiers whose psychology has been altered through radicalizing trainings in the African forests by their adult benefactors. The writer uses the narrative to express his disillusionment with history, questions its mode of representation and decides to fictionalize the history he has witnessed for posterity. The writer's choice of a child narrator and testifier has been problematized by critics (Sendrail, 2014), yet Kourouma is not unaware of the autocractic tendencies of African society. His decision favors the dependence on the narrative prowess, cultural innocence and unparalleled visibility of the child who he arms with "quatre dictionnaires. Primo, le dictionnaire Larousse et le Petit Robert, Secundo ..." (Kourouma, 2000, p.11) as a means of overcoming some linguistic challenges. We shall come back to Kourouma's heterolinguistics. More so, the author's portrayal of a child narrator and predator who narrates vividly
his gothic experiences from Liberia, Sierra Leone to Ivory Coast, shows his indiction of the African adult world, his perception of the “child-societal narrator as the voice of truth” (Koudah, 2013, p.74), and his reliance on a form of enunciation that Gehmann (2011, p.32) calls “the child soldier’s soliloquy”. His soliloquy can be seen in his words:

Donc, quand j’étais enfant gênant au centre de mon enfance, il avait l’ulcère qui mangerait et pourrirait la jambe droite de ma mère. L’ulcère pilotait ma mère [..] L’ulcère pilotait ma mère et nous touts. Et autour de ma mère et de son ulcère. Il y avait le foyer. Le foyer qui m’a brisé le bras. Le foyer fendait ou tisonnait [..] Autour du foyer, des canaries [..] Encore des canaries, toujours des canaries pleins de decoctions... (Kourouma, 2000, p.15).

So when I was a cute kid, at the center of my childhood my mother had an ulcer that was eating up her right leg. The ulcer was dominating my mother [..] The ulcer was dominating my mother and all of us. And around my mother and her ulcer, there was home. The home that brised my arm. The home smoked or poked [..] Around the fireplace, the canaries [..] Still canaries, always canaries full of decoctions...

Kourouma’s intradiegetic narrator, Birahima has lived a traumatic life; he lost his father at a tender age, witnessed the sight of his hand-capped mother whose cancer has denied him maternal love and care. The above passage opens every reader’s eyes to the narrator’s traumatic childhood. His childid repetition of “ulcère”, “ma mere”, “ces canaries” and “foyer” are instructive since these elements constitute the primary and secondary causes of his traumatized life and future. After the death of his mother, he loses his “foyer” and remains homeless; rather he now roves in his “républiques bananiers”, a milieu Mengue-Ngouema (2009) describes as “inhospitalier, agressif et isolant” in his endless search for identity. His trauma can be ontologically divided into home and exile trauma; the first necessitates the second.

After his escapades in Liberia and Siera Leone, Birahima’s hope of family reunion and better life is once again aborted due to the outbreak of war in Ivory Coast; as narrated in Quand on refuse on dit non because he confirms that “J’ai déjà dit que mon cousin Mamadou Doumbia m’a mis comme apprenti chauffeur [..] Il m’a place à l’école coranique.” (Kourouma, 2004, p.17). It is Mamadou who facilitated his departure from the troubled countries in Allah n’est pas oblige because of his desire to rehabilitate him in his native country. Ivory Coast’s dilemma is what occupies Kourouma’s Quand on refuse on dit non which is an eye-witness account of the writer, personified in his narrator, Bbrahima. It is now Fanta, Birahima’s friend and the daughter of Hacara, who is implicated in internal displacements that demonstrate the height of violence in Ivory Coast. Her dream of advancing her higher education at Université franco-arabe in Morocco is endangered by the korean war. After the death of her father, the location of her uncle becomes her immediate priority and it is this ultimate search that binds Birahima and Fanta who doubles as his teacher and caregiver. At this point, Birahima’s “quatre dictionnaires” as source of knowledge are replaced by Fanta. These dictionnaires could be a metaphor of heterolingualism that shows how Kourouma and Mukasonga personalize French language and present a language that is rather traumatized.

**Traumatizing History through a Traumatized Language**

Sengrail (2014, p.251) categorizes Birahima’s language as “un français fautif” [faulty french] through which he “décide de se faire comprendre par un public aussi hétérogène [wants to be understood by public which is also heterogenous]. He starts with long self introduction which prepares the reader to accept his sayings and which is because he engages in dialogue with the “other”” (Adhikari, 2015, p.14). Kourouma’s and Mukasonga’s heterolingual language is part of Faye’s (2011, 149)’s “tropicalisation de la langue française” or “vernacularisation pour livrer une communication efficace.” As a concept developed to illustrate linguistic dynamics in literary works, Gutman (2006, p.18) explains that heterolingualism relates the world of text while bilingualism or diglossia describes the world of people. He defines it as “toute textualisation d’idiomes etrangers aussi bien que de variedés sociales, regionales, historiques... de la langue autonome. Le bilinguisme textuel et la diglossie textuelle en eraient des modalités spécifiques.” [All textualisation of foreign idiom as well as social, regional and historical...varieties of authonl language, Textual bilingualism and diglossia are its specific modalities] (Gutman, 1996, p.40) As a means of representing the African worldview, African writers are forced to adopt a heterolingualistic approach in their narratives because European
In their war texts, Kourouma and Mukasonga traumaize French as colonial language which is made to lose its original linguistic and hegemonic "purity" through its fusion with indigenous dialects that serve as its corruptive and catalyzing agents. Heterolinguisitc strategies such as code mixing, lexical borrowings, neologisms, syntactic deviations, etc. are adopted and employed to violate the set rules of French language and to create decolonized French that results from what Kikukama (2012) calls "grappes expressives". Ngomayé (2012, p.68) detects this "loss of purity" of French language in Kourouma's texts:

Laissant les mots africains sous la même forme d'écriture que celle du français, crée une langue qui n'est ni africaine ni française pure et tient des deux à la fois. Cette hétérogénéité désorganise le français et désorganise aussi le lecteur qui bute tout le temps contre les mots africains désormais constitutifs des phrases françaises.

Leaving the African words in the same form of writing like the French, creating a language that is neither African nor pure French but holds both at a time. This heterogeneity disorganizes French and also destabilizes the reader that stumbles all the time into African words now constituting part of French sentences.

What Ngomayé (2012) calls heterogeneity proves itself as an element of heterolinguisitcism that disorganizes (deconstructs) and destabilizes (traumatizes) both the language and its readers in Kourouma's and Mukasonga's writing.

Conclusion

By historicizing traumatic events of their life, Kourouma and Mukasonga deploy the agency of narrative. Though memory cannot be trusted, Mukasonga's texts show an unparalleled historicity of Rwandan genocide which can be verified by historical texts, thereby demonstrating the validity of personal and collective memory. In his narratives, Kourouma's use of history as a springboard for fiction cannot be overemphasized and it also gives birth to his traumatized realism. As postcolonial Testimonio, Mukasonga's and Kourouma's war texts play the tripartite roles of postmemory, symbolic immortality and colonial discourse. The last is activated through the abuse of colonial language. The heterolinguisitc nature of their texts undermindos colonial linguistic heritage inherent in French language whose hegemony is now challenged.
Kourouma has passed the baton to contemporary French language to produce, à la Frank Fanon, a graphic novels indigenize and deconstruct France's.

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