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"Race" Travels in a Post-Genocidal Age: Witnessing and (Re)Counting Rwanda[1]

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Within the language system of myth, as described by Roland Barthes, "myth is constituted by the loss of the historical quality of things: in it, things lose the memory that they once were made" (142). It is to this archival loss that the texts on the Rwandan genocide seek to speak. Véronique Tadjo's meta-memoir *L'Ombre d'Imana*, Immaculée Ilibagiza's memoir *Left to Tell*, Clea Koff's *The Bone Woman*, and Raoul Peck's film, *Sometimes in April* are only four texts out of numerous others that attempt to give witness to the genocide; I will also cull from Philip Gourevitch's *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families*. Only one of these texts, Ilibagiza's, is by a Rwandan. The vast majority of texts on the Rwanda genocide are, in fact, by non-Rwandans; some are fictional while many others interview and retell the stories of remaining Rwandans on both sides of the national struggle. I have chosen these particular texts because they all have in common the theme or feature of mobility. Their authors explicitly transgress national boundaries in order to gather data and tell the stories of the slain as well as those surviving; furthermore, an examination of the authors' biographies reveal some startling continuities of heritage and politics which suggests that it is not so much the state of "blackness" (from which political identities have been derived) but "diaspora," broadly conceived, that brings together their voices. The "text" of diaspora, according to Avtah Brah, is constituted through "a confluence of narratives as it is lived and re-lived, produced, re-

produced and transformed through individual as well as collective memory and re-memory" (444).

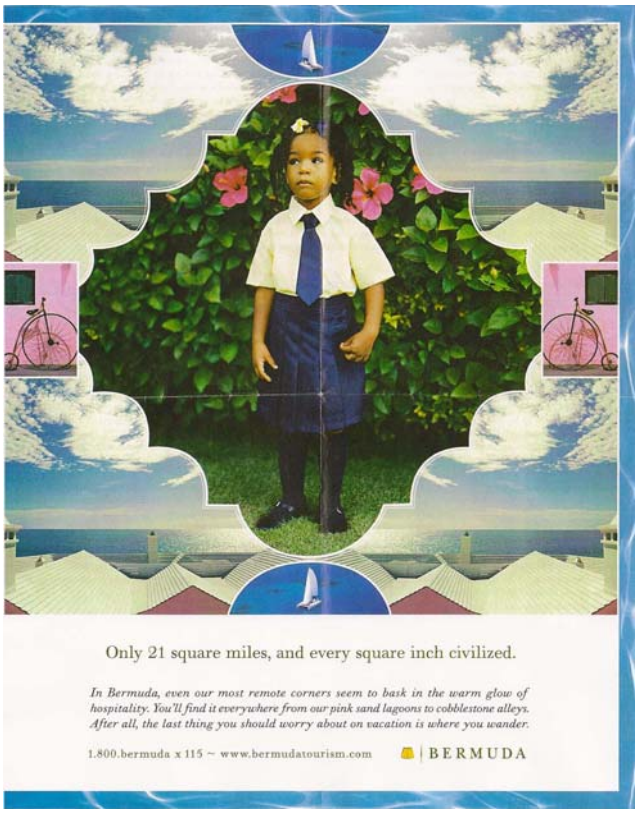
What also brings these texts together is a linguistic paradox. All but Véronique Tjado's text are written in English - Peck's film on Rwanda is, in fact, his first full-length film in English - even though Rwanda is a former Belgian colony; all the authors are Francophone or fluent in French and therefore capable of rendering their works in French, but they choose not to do so. Ilibagiza, in her memoir, recounts that she decides in her bathroom hideaway to learn English because "most soldiers in the RPF [Rwandan Patriotic Front] had grown up in exile in Uganda, which was colonized by Britain, so they spoke English" (114); she concludes that her rescuers will be English-speaking and has a "premonition that I'd be working at the United Nations, where practically everybody spoke English" (115). The text she ultimately comes to produce with the assistance of an American amanuensis is written in English. How does one account for what appears to be a wholesale rejection of the French language as a mode of communication, of liberation? On the one hand, one has to admit that English has become the language of global currency, cross-culturally; on the other hand, it is also a colonial language spread through imperialism. The root of this paradox of linguistic choice is to be found in the differences between modes of European imperialism. Hannah Arendt summarizes this difference well when she states that "the British tried to escape the dangerous inconsistency inherent in the nation's attempt at empire building by leaving the conquered peoples to their own devices as far as culture, religion, and law were concerned, by staying aloof and refraining from spreading British law and culture" (130). Though the extent of this "aloofness" is debatable, it does seem to mark a difference from the French brand of imperialism, "the result of which" says Arendt, "was a particularly brutal exploitation of overseas possessions for the sake of the nation" (129). That brutality remains fixed in the psyche of former French colonials who often reject the "mother tongue" of the imperialists in favor, today, of the English language, partly because British imperialism did not have the same weight of brutality and complete obliteration of the native's past, but, also, and perhaps more importantly, because it is a language that does not directly engage their memory.

In his *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* Michel-Rolph Trouillot writes: "If some events cannot be accepted even as they occur, how can they be assessed later? In other words, can historical narratives convey plots that are unthinkable in the world within which these narratives take place? How does one write a history of the impossible?" In today's talk, I will argue that the work of African Diasporic artists and writers, speaking transnationally, do just this: they write a history of the impossible. My test case is the re-imagining of the Rwandan genocide first by recourse to the politics of representation as they come to affect representations of African Diasporic peoples in the post-colonies

specifically, and then by recourse to situating discourses on the genocide within this schematic. Ultimately, through an analysis of Haitian filmmaker Raoul Peck's film *Sometimes in April*, I will show how the *after-effects* of imperialism, in the twentieth century, cross-diasporically, converge in his film in significant ways, demonstrating the need for a new discourse on Black identity which I will argue should return us to theoretical notions of indigeneity. Peck's work, taken with that of others writing on the genocide to which I will allude, also seeks to make central the voices and somatic memories of women, thus charting a new path not only out of Manichean discourses of self/other, colonial and colonized, but out of the discourses of nationalism post-independence which have often proven to be only mimetic reproductions of the imperial machines that, of necessity, produced them.

"Race" Travels and Representation

I cannot recall, exactly, in which plane I was sitting when I came upon the image. I recall only thumbing the pages of the Air Canada in-flight magazine, *enRoute*, looking for a momentary distraction from the drone of the flight attendant folding and unfolding the tripartite laminate emergency instructions. A little girl catches my eye[2] - a brown-skinned girl with her hair twisted in plaits, wearing



a schoolgirl uniform covering her from the soles of her feet to her neck: a pale yellow shirt with short sleeves to the elbows, a navy blue French seamed skirt stretching to below the knees met by even darker knee-high socks, woolen, and then buckled leather schoolgirl shoes. Strangely, a matching and masculinizing navy tie adorns the shirt, while the more customary feminine accoutrement of a ribbon matching the yellow of her shirt is perched in her hair. The photograph has been overlaid on two diptychs: a bifurcated, repeated photograph of modern zinc rooftops and an expanse of ocean met by a sky interspersed with plumes of clouds. Anchoring the three photographs are the repeated, stamp-size mirror images of a '30s-style bicycle at left and right (or re-read as east and west), while at top and bottom appear stamp-size mirror images of an expensive, racing-style sailboat (again re-read as north and south; read expensive as valued at a quarter of a million dollars or so). The girl is looking up and away from the viewer. Her left hand, as if feeling the precariousness of her altered subjectivity, fingers in hesitation the side of the sanctioning skirt. The caption reads: "Only 21 square miles, and every square inch civilized." I am not meant to ask why a nation should be so personified by a little girl, a little girl in a school uniform, a little girl unable to return the gaze of her viewer, unable to participate in the global dimension of the sign system in which she is imbedded and encircled. The colonial bicycles signal that she has been educated by the colonials while the racing sailboats signal her exchange value in a contemporary system of tourism on which the island's economy depends.

For me, this image uncomfortably recalls Barthes' concept of "myth," according to which a myth consists of any text with meaning wherein the signification of the visual text, in particular, presents itself as an alibi, a slippage between the surface, intended meaning, and the imbricated sign system of the visual imagery. Invoking a *Paris Match* cover photograph of a "Negro" in a French army uniform,[3] an image which appropriates the representation of the Black to support an anti-racist and anti-imperialist agenda which at the same time encodes the trace remnants of both racism and imperialism, Barthes demonstrates that such images carry a dual meaning: "What the concept distorts is of course what is full, the meaning: the lion and the Negro are deprived of their history, changed into gestures … what French imperiality obscures is also a primary language, a factual discourse which was telling me about the salute of a Negro in uniform. But this distortion is not an obliteration: the lion and the Negro remain here, the concept needs them; they are half amputated, they are deprived of memory, not of existence" (122). This conflation of the subaltern with the nation through military expansion has been utilized in the United States, most explicitly by the Navy in its recruitment advertisements for African-Americans in the early 1970s, the first of which pictures a defeminized African-American woman.[4] Here American neo-imperialism mirrors the traditional modes of French imperialism –

which may account for why France, of late, has been the repository of anti-American sentiment.

In 2005, as in 2008, it is presumed that the passenger in an Air Canada carrier is white and Canadian, American, or even European, a passenger who, through the disciplining power of indoctrination, will "read" the text as pleasurable rather than subordinating, as rightful rather than violating. We, well-disciplined readers, are meant to view the little girl of the advertisement for Bermuda as separate from a historical visual iconography in which the bodies of girls and women of color have come to signify, invisibly, hyper- and alter-sexuality, debauchery, and unbounded licentiousness (Gilman; McClintock), as in Edouard Manet's *Olympia* or Paul Gaugin's Tahitian paintings. We are meant to relegate that visual history to the backs of our minds though the latency of their residual effect is stirred by an image which both enlists viewers' desire for a vacation in which they will encounter "civilized natives" and eradicates any latent images of white colonial violence against black/native women and girls in the colonies. "Race … travels," suggests Hortense Spillers, elaborating: "it gains its power from what it signifies by this point, in what it allows to come to meaning" (137). Disturbingly, such images continue to proliferate, especially in the pernicious resurgence of images connoting "black savagery."

Take, for example, South African photographer, Pieter Hugo's "Motorbike Rider with Amitoo, Nigeria, 2005," which graces the cover of May 2008 issue of the San Francisco magazine, *Juxtapoz: Art and Culture Magazine*, without any explanation as to context.[5] That explanation is to be found on the photographer's website (www.pieterhugo.com) in a text Hugo calls "The Dog's Master." Note that both in the case of the explanatory note's title and that of the image, the African subject is secondary to the animal, which facilitates the conflation of human and animal. The series from which "Motorbike Rider with Amitoo" is taken depicts a fringe group that Hugo calls "itinerant minstrels," also known as "Gadawan Kura" in Hausa or "hyena handlers/guides." Though the photographer attempts a liberal analysis of the complexities of life for the group as they make a living as street performers and security guards in Lagos and at other sites in Western Africa, he resists any examination of the mythologies imbedded in his own juxtapositions. It is clear, however, from the portfolios posted on his website, that Hugo's primary interests lies in the fetishistic, in spectacle, in what might be termed "the perverse" in the European imagination's lexicon of psychoanalysis, from untreated deformities in portraits of blind South Africans to "black" albinos. Stripping it of context of any kind, the editors of *Juxtapoz* make clear that the image of a West African man with a monkey needs no explanation: the age-old equation of Africans with uncivilized nature is normalized and cemented.

The same can be said of Annie Leibovitz's cover photograph for the April 2008 issue of the American edition of *Vogue*, which features basketball player

Lebron James and model Gisele Bündchen in a photographic editorial entitled "Dream Team." The reproduction of the Black man/white woman coupling myths is inherent in the image although the magazine attempts to argue for the dissipation of history by insisting on Bündchen's non-single status as the girlfriend of (white) quarterback Tom Brady; hence she is a "sports insider," a sports fan, not a white woman in search of the mythic sexual prowess of the black male even though the cover shot positions her as James' prize. The volume is entitled the "Shape Issue" but the cover shows nothing of LeBron's "shape," either as an athlete or in terms of his economic class; he is here unreflexively depicted as an animalistic warrior: there is no beauty here, only myth. Interestingly, editor Anna Wintour in her "letter from the editor" makes no mention of James; for her, the basketball player is a prop. As a result, in an interesting reversal, we are meant to read Bündchen as "wearing" James and not the other way around. For the black male, as Frantz Fanon wrote more than a half century ago, the white woman remains a symbol of access and upward mobility despite, in our time, the presence of independent Black subjectivity and mobility.

This symbolism recalls, eerily, the opening pages of Philip Gourevitch's Rwanda memoir, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with our Families,* in which he recounts a meeting with a Twa soldier in a tavern. Inebriated, the Twa man tells the journalist that he believes in the reconciliation of mankind but that he believes that his only chance of accessing a place in humanity is to marry a white woman. "How am I to meet the white woman? How am I to I find the white wife?" laments the man. Gourevitch's contextualizes this utterance by telling us the following:

> So the pygmy spoke of *Homo Sapiens,* and I heard a subtext. Pygmies were Rwanda's first inhabitants, a forest people, who were generally looked down upon by Hutu and Tutsi alike as a vestigial, aboriginal lot. In the precolonial monarchy, pygmies served as court jesters, and because Rwanda's kings were Tutsis, the memory of this ancestral role meant that during the genocide pygmies were sometimes put to death as royalist tools, while elsewhere they were enlisted by Hutu militia as rapists – to add an extra dash of tribal mockery to the violation of Tutsi women. (8-9)

Indeed, in Ilibagiza's otherwise affecting memoir of her survival of the genocide in a small bathroom where she waited out the killings with seven other women for three months, the Twa people are a myth, an underclass of "bogeymen" to whom the women are threatened to be delivered by the Hutu pastor hiding them in his house instead of turned over to the Tutsi rebels attempting to squelch the genocide. Ilibagiza explains her horror: "Rwandan parents scared unruly children into behaving by threatening to send them to live with the Abashi …. Just about the worst thing you could tell a Rwandan lady was that she'd marry an Abashi man" (106). The term "Abashi" turns out to be code, in Ilibagiza's

description, for tree-dwelling people, for Twa, even though the "Abashi" in pre-colonial times, were actually a group that came to be classified as Hutus (Newbury 17-18); in the pre-colonial period, this group was deemed suspect by Tutsi kings because of their lack of proximity to central Rwanda, which was then considered the seat of power. Catharine Newbury notes that the differences embodied by a group then called the Kinyagans earned them "the epithet of 'Abashi,' a term applied … indiscriminately to people from Southwestern Rwanda, implying 'barbaric' or 'uncultured'" (51); indeed, in the language of the Rwandans, the suffix "bashi" means "foreigners from beyond the frontiers." Semiotically, then, Ilibagiza conflates myth with culture and readers are left uncertain as to who is designated by the term "Abashi"; nevertheless, in her description of the Abashi in terms that otherwise describe the Twa, one can better understand the pigmy's lament. The search for visibility in a white world appears to remain acute for those on the fringes of their own, post-colonial societies, and it is a visibility made all the more difficult to acquire by the sign system which makes visible minorities complicit actors in their own subjugation, as is clear in the images made by Leibovitz and Hugo for mass cultural consumption.

In Hugo's case, the image-making is perhaps more sinister since Hugo's post-genocide photographs of forensic remains at memorial sites in Rwanda have become emblematic of the detritus of that violence; one of these images, for instance, graces the cover of the translation of Senegalese writer, Boucabar Boris Diop's award-winning novel, *Murambi: The Book of Bones.*[6] Hugo's Rwanda series captures the pathos of the overwhelming forensic evidence still remaining on display in Rwanda, from the lime-covered bones of the dead preserved for visitors to the mass grave sites, to the unclaimed traces of pre-genocide life amongst the bones in these mass graves: shoes, pieces of cloth, a red rosary. But given Hugo's penchant for spectacle and perversity, it becomes difficult not to read these works as participants in the project of keeping up the image of Africa and its inhabitants as uncivilized, and of the genocide as an isolated aberrance resulting from vestiges of pre-colonial warfare rather than as the product of imbricated histories of *colonial* violence.

The image by Hugo on the cover of *Murambi* troubles me, produced as it is by a white South African; in it, I hear the words of Gourevitch, who echoes Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness* when he writes: "The horror, as horror, interests me only insofar as a precise memory of the offense is necessary to understand its legacy." Yet this claim is immediately undercut by the passage following:

> The dead at Nyarubuy were, I'm afraid, beautiful. There was no getting around it. The skeleton is a beautiful thing. The randomness of the fallen forms, the strange tranquility of their rude exposure, the skull here, the arm bent in some uninterpretable gesture there – these things were beautiful, and their beauty only added to the affront of the place. I couldn't settle on any meaningful response:

> revulsion, alarm, sorrow, grief, shame, incomprehension, sure, but nothing truly meaningful. I just looked, and took photographs, because I wondered whether I could really see what I was seeing while I await it, and I wanted also an excuse to look a bit more closely. (19)

Gourevitch spends the remaining pages of his text struggling to "make meaning" out of what he sees and though many of his inquiries and reminiscences are valuable in the project of recollecting and understanding the genocide, his book stands in sharp contrast to the works of artists of "black" African descent.[7]

Véronique Tadjo's description of human remains is singularly unromantic, unbeautiful. She writes, in 2000, of a woman named Mukandory exhumed in 1997 at the Nyamata church, where approximately 35,000 dead are counted in the mass graves:

> La femme ligotée.
> Mukandori. Vingt-cinq ans. Exhumée en 1997.
> Lieu d'habitation: Nyamata centre.
> Mariée.
> Enfant?
> On lui a ligoté les poignets, on les a attaché à ses chevilles. Elle a les jambes largement écartées. Son corps est penché sur le côté. On dirait un énorme foetus fossilisé …. Elle a été violée. Un pic fut enfoncé dans son vagin. Elle est morte d'un coup de machete à la nuque. On peut voir l'entaille que l'impact a laissée …. Exposée pour que personne n'oublie. Une momie du Genocide. Des bouts de cheveux sont encore collés sur son crâne. (11)

Tadjo's work, as a work of art in the form of textual testimonial, seeks to contribute to archives that have otherwise been wiped out; it may be more powerful than works in any other medium, even more powerful than the still frame of the photograph. In photography, we might be seduced into what Laura Wexler has termed "anekphrasis" – the antithesis of "ekphrasis," that is, "the virtuoso skill of putting words to images." "Anekphrasis," says Wexler, "would describe an active and selective refusal to read photography – its graphic labor, its social spaces – even while, at the same time, one is busy textualizing and contextualizing all other kinds of cultural documents" (163). In short, anekphrasis allows us *not to see* the wider frame beyond the camera lens: it allows us to shut down the imagination, and the imagination is the last space we have, I believe, in which to contain the unspeakable.

Not surprisingly, it is the bodies of the dead which have more to tell us, often, than the living. Or perhaps I should say that it is the dialectical relationship between the dead and the living that could yield new ways of seeing and understanding human frailty. Nowhere is this made more evident than in Clea Koff's *The Bone Woman*, a memoir instructing us on Koff's travels as a forensic anthropologist working in the field as a United Nations envoy in the aftermath of geno-

cides and ethnic cleansing in Rwanda, Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo. As a young, biracial, Euro-African-American woman from California, Koff finds that her biraciality, in certain circumstances, opens up a portal for discourse. In Ghana, for instance, she observes the importance of her middle name, her mother's Tanzanian name, Msindo, to a Ghanian captain: "It was as if I was viewed as more concrete, more real, than other members of the team because I had a name that was familiar and therefore *memorable*, a name that suggested I was connected to Africa in a meaningful way" (my emphasis). Koff feels compelled to give her personal best as a result, despite her own awareness that her name is only a *suggestion* of kinship rather than fact, "because there were people who might hold me personally accountable" (99). She sees forensic investigation as contributing to a foundation of progressive post-conflict communication. In a world in which war and economics are completely intertwined, the importance of *intervention* in the discourse of globalization is paramount. Globalization, in Koff's narrative, takes on a different guise.

> In my mind's eye, looking at the world from outer space I can see these great long silvery strands between me and my teammates and lots of points in Rwanda, Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo. I've developed this idea further, into the area of individual and collective memory, because forensic anthropologists affect people's memory of events through exhumation and identification: the existence of a body disallows a relative from maintaining that the person is being held in a prisoner-of-war camp or that the person survived but can't get in touch. Similarly, in places where government or military propaganda continually denies that certain people were killed, the exposure of graves and the analysis of remains refutes the "official story." (72)

Koff's work, as well as the passage of her multi-raced body through various post-war landscapes, serve as a powerful interventions in a semiological system that tends to valorize debunked myths of Manichean dualistics, of uncivilized Africans as opposed to well-meaning missionary Europeans, of "pretty deaths" as opposed to categorically unsentimental violence perpetrated in the name of an imperialism that no one appears to be able to recall.

Raoul Peck's Rwanda: Sometimes in April

Though the Rwandan genocide has naturally evoked comparisons with the Jewish Holocaust, I want to suggest here an alternate reading of the genocide as a result of both imperial and neo-colonial globalization. This reading, which brings together particular aspects of Haitian and Rwandan history, suggests itself through an analysis of the impetus behind Raul Peck's 2004 film, *Sometimes in April*. Admittedly, the Haiti-Rwanda connection is not one that Peck provides himself, but as the film follows closely on the heels of his earlier films on the

Congo, centering on Patrice Lumumba, the filmmaker's trajectory suggests an identification of Haitian and African nationals inasmuch as these films, taken together with his earlier films examining the effects of the Duvalier dictatorship, reflect a pronounced concern with totalitarianism and dictatorship. What I am offering, then, is an *exhumation of that evidence* which shows that what occurred in 1997, in Rwanda, and to which countless nations stood to witness then promptly discounted as fable or as the consequence of "uncivilized" African tribalism, because of their inaction, was, rather, a natural, even unavoidable, cataclysm born of unchecked imperial dogma. As Hannah Arendt notes of what she calls "the period of Imperialism," 1884-1914: "Some of the fundamental aspects of this time appear so close to totalitarian phenomena of the twentieth century that it may be justifiable to consider the whole period a preparatory stage for coming catastrophes" (123).

In fact, the similarities between Haitian and Rwandan histories are striking. Both countries share entwined legacies of French imperialism and, both, previous to efforts to render them perpetually dependent colonies of Europe, were composed of more or less homogeneous ethnic groups. This homogeneity is what made the Haitian Revolution, the only successful slave revolt in the Western hemisphere, possible. In Rwanda, before the Berlin conference in the 1880s, through which the African continent was carved up among European powers, Rwanda had been left untouched by the slave trade and unexplored by European expansionists. Gouveritch writes: "When the explorer Henry M. Stanley, intrigued by Rwanda's reputation for 'ferocious exclusiveness,' attempted to cross that frontier, he was repulsed by a hail of arrows" (54). At this time, like the inhabitants of Hispaniola, Rwandans had a deeply unified character; indeed, Kinyarwanda remains the unifying language of Rwandans and is second to Swahili in popularity in Africa (Gouveritch 55). Of the patois of the Caribbean, Haitian Kreyol is the only language to have been recognized as one, to become a codified and official national language. Furthermore, the twentieth-century ethnic division between Tutsis and Hutus in Rwanda is similar to the division between Haitian and Dominicans during this same time period. In Rwanda, the Belgians forcibly reified the Hamitic myth that held that certain "tribes" of differing ethnicities were descended from Ethiopians whose features were deemed "Asiatic" or more refined. The fact that this myth had little to no basis in fact was immaterial since the division of the population would serve the purpose of controlling the nation for colonial exploitation. The fact that the Belgians needed to utilize phrenology as a means of distinguishing between Hutus and Tutsis in order to issue "identity cards" demonstrates that ethnic divisions were not stable; on the contrary, relationships between the ethnic groups were porous, as they were between Haitians and Dominicans prior to the closing of the borders between Haiti and the Dominican Republic in the 1930s. Interestingly too, Tutsis, like

Dominicans, were cattle herders while Hutus and Haitians were traditionally agriculturists, divisions of labor that were class-based and which, in both geographical areas, have served to sustain an underclass of darker-skinned, more Negroid-appearing inhabitants. However, because of the porous nature of relations in both areas as well as intermarriage, it was common to find these roles inverted or shared so that the perception of an upper class due solely to ethnicity was often baseless. Indeed, in the border zones between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, as Lauren Derby has conclusively shown, Haitians were perceived as wealthy while Dominicans were not. Likewise, in Rwanda, with the assistance of the Belgians after 1959, the Hutu became increasingly wealthy in ways that belied the monopoly of Tutsi power which the Belgians had installed in the late 1890s when Tutsis, like Dominicans in the early 1800s, losing their class status, "collaborated with the colonial overlords in exchange for patronage" (Gourevitch 54). In the case of the Tutsis, such patronage lasted only for a time while, for the Dominicans, it has remained to this day. The Belgian's switch from supporting Tutsi eminence to Hutu power is explained only by their desire to maintain a neo-colonial hold on the country. When it became clear that the Hutu underclass was rising, the Belgians simply switched sides, for their role had been to impose a class difference in order to control Rwanda and they did so through a mechanism they only too well understood, ethnic division. Supporting the Hutu ascendance even at the cost of Tutsi lives allowed for the maintenance of the fracturing that made the Belgians, seemingly, the only power that could intervene (though they failed to do so when it most counted since their interest was never humanitarian but extractive). What the Belgians had cultivated in the Hutu masses, however, was a deep distrust of European aid, which can – beyond the fact of colonial oppression – also be understood in terms of the Belgian's use of forced labor against Hutus, which led many to flee to the Congo or Uganda in the 1920s; this is paralleled in the post-revolutionary period in Northern Haiti when the mulatto leader Christophe re-instated the French *corvée* in order to build monuments to his kingdom which still stand today and which led to his demise. In both areas, these episodes reinforced a sense of oppression and inferiority in the lower classes and a distrust of European and mixed-race elites.

It comes as no surprise, then, that after a hundred years or so of such exploitation and divisiveness, of the use of indigenous myth to turn otherwise kindred groups against themselves, those seeking to rein in the rage of the underclasses would turn to the peasant classes in order to legitimate their rise to power. As the Kigali lawyer François Xavier Nkurunziza observed, "In Rwandan history, everyone obeys authority. People revere power, and there isn't enough education. You take a poor, ignorant population, and give them arms, and say, 'It's yours. Kill.' They'll obey. The peasants, who were paid or forced to kill, were looking up to people of higher socio-economic standing to see how to behave. So the

people of influence, or the big financiers, are often the big men in the genocide. They may think that they didn't kill because they didn't take life with their own hands, but the people were looking to them for their orders" (qtd. in Gourevitch 23). These comments could just as easily describe the thirty-year regime of terror of the Duvaliers in Haiti, which began as the United States' gun-boat diplomacy in the region waned. That regime could only have taken hold through the co-optation of the male peasantry who were promised wages and goods, and more importantly, provided arms with which to "rule" their communities. It was also the means by which, in the 1930s, Trujillo sought to rid darker-skinned inhabitants of the Dominican Republic through "el corte," whereby peasants were given free-rein to cut down "Haitians" with machetes – though the evidence to date suggests that Haitians were not the primary target of the *blanquimento* movement.

Suffice it to say that this all too brief sketch of the similarities between the two countries suggests a malignant, post-imperialist legacy that in my view can only be countered by a continuous resurrection of a collective memory that insists on non-divisiveness, as does Raoul Peck's *Sometimes in April*, the story of two Hutu Rwandan men, two brothers, one a former army officer married to a Tutsi, whose wife and children are slain as his brother, a radio commentator inciting violence against the Tutsis, attempts to use his clout to get them past the barriers during the genocide. Years later, in 2004, the radio journalist stands accused at the UN tribunal and asks his brother to come to see him. The brother, now in a common-law marriage to the former teacher of one of his three slain children, goes, only to find commiseration with a secret witness, a Rwandan woman with two children born around the time of the genocide nine to ten years before; she, through her testimony, allows him to face his losses and to hear the desecration that his own wife must have suffered. Interestingly, in the scene in which the secret witness testifies, the final moments of her narration of her trials focus on the man who stands accused - a prisoner who did not wield the machete but the ideology which made the carnage actionable.

After hearing the woman's testimony, and in the final scenes of the film, the main character, Augustin, is able to face his brother and discovers that his wife endured the same horrors – in a church where she thought she had been rescued -- and also saved others when she detonated a grenade while other detained women fled. We are left to wonder if his wife in fact saved the witness who has unlocked Augustin's ability to forgive while providing him with the memory of his wife and countless other women's plight during the genocide. Peck, strikingly, gives the last frame of the film not to Augustin but to his common-law wife, who, while Augustin is at the international tribunal, also faces her memories by returning to the site of the school where she witnessed her pupils, all girls, being slain. She participates in a public tribunal where, in an open field, she offers testimony against a detained prisoner who participated in the killings.

As in his previous film, the documentary, *Lumumba: Voice of a Prophet*, where the narrator continually tells the history of Lumumba's rise and fall through his mother's memory with a refrain that begins "My mother tells the story…" Peck relinquishes his authorial voice to women. It is they who hold the archive, they who contain libraries, they who, most desecrated, have the more legitimate claims to truth-telling. In this respect, Peck's narrative moves away from phallo-centric nationalist discourses. Also notable is the fact that, aside from its multi-ethnic cast, *Sometimes in April* refuses to tell the story only of Tutsis or only of Hutus: it advances a vision of a shared loss, shared history. It testifies to a unified Rwanda desecrated from without.

To Conclude …

I am arguing for an evaluation of African diasporic subjectivity as multiple, syncretic, and, at its root, deeply invested in a transnational advocacy of indigenous cultural forms and affinities. What distinguishes this indigeneity from traditional concepts which define the indigenous along "tribal" lines or, as the Merriam-Webster dictionary does, as "produced, growing, or living naturally in a particular region," is its call to recognize African indigeneity as constituted post-imperialism, that is, after encroachments from invading, European nations, and after the vast displacement of African ethnics from their native ground. Such an appeal was made in the late 1920s by the Haitian anthropologist Jean Price-Mars in his *So Spoke the Uncle*, originally published in 1928, in which the influential intellectual advanced the concept of *indigénisme* to valorize Haiti and Haitian folk ways in the face of the United States' imperialism during the military occupation of Haiti in 1915-34. In response to those who might find the choice of Haiti as a theoretical starting point narrow or odd, one need only turn to the extensive foot-noting of Haiti and the Revolution by critics from C. L. R. James to Henry Louis Gates Jr, James Clifford, and the full-fledged analyses of the Haitian situation by Sibylle Fischer in her *Modernity Disavowed* (2004), by Susan Buck-Morss in her influential essay, "Hegel and Haiti" (2000), or by Paul Gilroy at the end of his *The Black Atlantic* (2003). In all of these works, Haiti has become singularly pre-scient and to echo Price-Mars: "We will take the liberty, however, of doubting that either the exiguity of our territory, or the small numbers of our people, problems which concern the behavior of one group of men, are sufficient grounds to warrant the indifference of the rest of humanity" (9). The latter claim of indif-ference, is, of course, what brings me to the ground of Rwanda, of which Véronique Tadjo has claimed: "Je partais avec une hypothèse: ce qui s'était passé nous concernait tous. Ce n'était pas uniquement l'affaire d'un people perdu dans le Coeur noir de l'Afrique. Oublier le Rwanda après le bruit et la fureur signifiait devenir borgne, aphone, handicapée. C'était marcher dans l'obscurité, en tendant

les bras pour ne pas entrer en collision avec le futur" (13). Tjado's desire to bear witness is an appeal to what Jennifer Wenzel has otherwise called "anti-imperialist nostalgia," which Wenzel claims "holds in mind hope for changes that are yet to be realized" (7). It is to this hope that the present essay is dedicated, but one wonders in the face of the evidence of genocide and the onslaught of misrepresentations of Black subjectivity how it is to be grasped, much less sustained. It may even be that this hope resides somewhere in the past, where our innocence seeks to rejoin us.

NOTES:

[1] This article is excerpted from a longer, book-length, work-in-progress entitled *Floating Islands: Postcoloniality & Racial Identity Formation in a Transnational Age*. As such, it remains largely speculative and exploratory in its arguments.

[2] This image appeared as a print advertisement produced by Bermuda Tourism for Air Canada's in-flight magazine, *enRoute* in 2005; the image is not otherwise available.

[3] See the cover of *Paris Match* 326, 25 June – 2 July 1955. The image can be viewed on various websites, including http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/elljwp/parismatch.htm.

[4] These posters, produced by the Navy to recruit African Americans after the progress of the civil rights movement, range from showing the masculinized Black woman and African American men in "traditional" African garb to showing enlisted African American men "making history"; the corresponding tag lines progress from "We'll take you as far as you can go" next to the image of the African woman, to "You can be Black and Navy too" next to the Africanized men, to "You can study black history and you can go out and make it" for the enlisted men. The images, with their tag lines, can be viewed at the website of the Department of the Navy's Naval Historical Center, http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/prs-tpic/af-amer/afa-pstr.htm.

[5] *Juxtapoz* is available at www.juxtapoz.com. For the original image, see Pieter Hugo Photography, www.pieterhugo.com, under "The Hyena & Other Men."

[6] The cover can be seen on Indiana University Press's website, http://www.iupress.indiana.edu/catalog; the original image appears on Pieter Hugo Photography, www.pieterhugo.com, under "Rwanda 2004."

[7] I bracket "Black" here because this work is part of a larger project in which I contest categorizations of "Blackness" according to post-imperialist dualist constructs; however, I am underscoring here the fact that those categorized as "Black" within such dualisms have sharply different takes on the genocide than their non-"Black" counterparts. Also note that I capitalize the term "Black" when denoting a political, self-defined class; when not capitalized, it denotes a category so named from without.

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