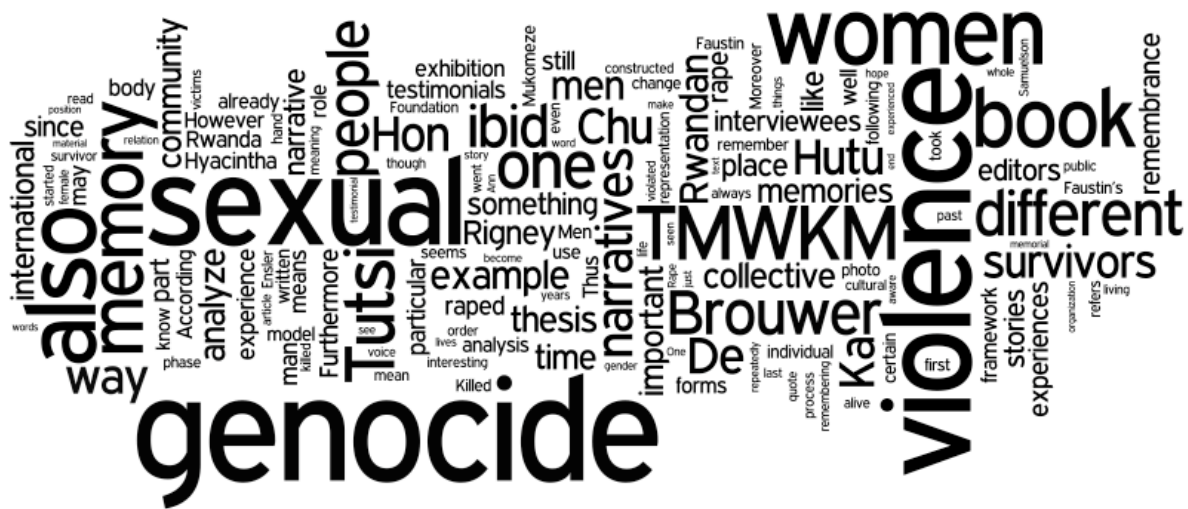


# Keeping Memories Alive: Collective and Individual Narratives about Sexual Violence

*Master's Thesis*



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## PREFACE

*The word rape or sexual violence cannot fully translate the horror that hundreds of thousands of women are living in this part of the world.*

- quoted in United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary, 2008<sup>1</sup>

The idea for my thesis sprung from an internship I did one year ago at the *Mukomeze* Foundation, an organization aimed at helping Rwandan women and girls who went through sexual violence during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Anne-Marie de Brouwer, chair of this organization, featured with her organization in Dutch women's magazine *Flair*, and after reading the article I contacted her for an internship. Because of this internship I came to know the book *The Men Who Killed Me*, the subject of my thesis. In this book fifteen women and one man tell their story about sexual violence and having read this book a couple of times it still touches me deeply. The direct incentive to study Gender Studies was an autobiographical narrative by Waris Dirie, *Desert Flower* (2001), and therefore the theme of personal stories has always been a frequent topic of research during my studies. This also translated itself into a passion for feminist theories like the politics of location and standpoint theory. Moreover, in some way or another I have been interested in sexual violence. Fortunately, I have not experienced it but I see sexual violence as a grave violation of human's rights. The title of the book I will analyze in my thesis, *The Men Who Killed Me*, expresses my own view of violence as something that deeply affects people and as something that can change people.

I would like to thank Babs Boter, my thesis supervisor, for helping and supporting me with sharp critique while writing my thesis. Her insights helped me to further deepen my analysis and she motivated me when I felt I was lacking motivation to write. I also would like to thank my family and friends for supporting me during the process of writing, but also for supporting me throughout my studies and for letting me follow my heart and pursue my passion. Last, I would like to thank Anne-Marie de Brouwer, one of the editors of *The Men Who Killed Me*, for answering my questions about the book.

Last, I would like to dedicate this thesis to all people who went through sexual violence. I may not know what it is like to experience sexual violence, but I do know that

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Sarah Chatellier, who used this quote in her master's thesis "We Have Suffered in Silence Too Long...' Women's Narratives and Peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of Congo" (2010).

I have and always will feel immensely sad and outraged for such horrible things to happen. You are one of the reasons why I started studying Gender Studies and for wanting to make the world a little bit better.

Sanne Meijer

## INTRODUCTION

During the Rwandan genocide in 1994 approximately 1,000,000 people (mostly Tutsi and ‘moderate’ Hutu<sup>2 3</sup>) were killed within three months. Not only the speed with which people were killed, but also the widespread sexual violence were just two of this genocide’s defining features: the Organization of African Unity estimated that between 250,000 and 500,000 women and girls were raped during the genocide (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009). According to De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu

[r]ape and other forms of sexual violence during conflict have historically been viewed as a private matter, seen as collateral damage inconsequential to the larger considerations of wartime politics or justified as an inevitable consequence of war, a necessary bounty for fighting men. (ibid.: 18)

Furthermore, according to Diken & Bagge Laustsen rape has been perceived as an integral part of wars (2005: 111). However, since 20 years there has been an increased interest in sexual violence occurring during conflict situations and its aftermath (Diken & Bagge Laustsen 2005; De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009). The sexual violence that came about during the Rwandan genocide in 1994 will be the central topic of my thesis. The book *The Men Who Killed Me* (TMWKM<sup>4</sup>) will be the subject of my research. This is a book composed of testimonials by sixteen women and one man who all went through sexual violence during the genocide, and as a consequence became infected with HIV/AIDS. I am particularly interested in the way these collective as well as individual narratives are constructed and how these constructions influence the way the Rwandan genocide is remembered. Therefore my research question will be as following: *In what way do individual as well as collective narratives of sexual violence contribute to remembrance practices of the Rwandan genocide?* The individual narratives I will analyze are testimonials from TMWKM, accompanied by photos of the survivors. With collective

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<sup>2</sup> I am aware of the problematical feature of using ethnicity to denote certain groups of people and in this particular case it is even more painful since these so-called ‘ethnic identities’ of Tutsi and Hutu were used to murder a vast amount of people. However, I will still use these terms since all literature I consulted concerning the Rwandan genocide used these terms.

<sup>3</sup> I will use the words ‘Tutsi’ and ‘Hutu’ to denote the singular as well as the plural since De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu also use this in *The Men Who Killed Me* (2009).

<sup>4</sup> In the remainder of my thesis I will use this abbreviation.

narratives I mean the book *TMWKM* as a whole, the photo exhibition of the book, but also the different commemorations that took place in the Netherlands these last few years and the *TMWKM*-website<sup>5</sup>. With ‘remembrance practices’ I mean remembrance practices of the Rwandan genocide in general, because I want to look at what these particular narratives can contribute to remembrance practices in general. I would like to see ‘remembrance’ as Ann Rigney argues: “an activity, a performance, taking place in the here and now of those doing the recalling” (2005: 17). Thus, ‘remembrance’ is a continuous process that does not stop. (Collective) remembrance needs to be seen as an agenda or project, “rather than as something that is always fully achieved in practice” (ibid.: 22). By analyzing these different forms of remembering I acknowledge the importance of an intersectional analysis in the sense that “it is equally important to recognize the intersections between different memorial forms” (ibid.: 20). Furthermore, because of analyzing individual as well as collective narratives I hope to give a comprehensive view of the influence *TMWKM* has on remembrance practices.

As I already mentioned, gender was of particular importance during the genocide. With ‘gender’ I mean masculinity and femininity as social constructs. It can be separated from ‘sex’, which refers to biological sex differences (Pilcher & Whelehan 2004: 56). Furthermore, ethnicity also played a key role during the genocide. Not only in relation to the killings, but also vis-à-vis the sexual violence that was committed during the genocide. Especially women were targeted and even before the genocide the sexuality of Tutsi women was often a subject in Hutu media<sup>6</sup>. Sexual violence was also aimed at Hutu women considered moderates, Hutu women and girls (due to the chaos during the conflict) and men and boys (mainly Tutsi). Thus, the ‘genderedness’ of the genocide plays a key role in my analysis and this mainly pertains to the intersection<sup>7</sup> of gender and ethnicity. During my analysis I will be aware of these different factors.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.menwhokilledme.com>.

<sup>6</sup> I will explore this more thoroughly in another part of this chapter, when I give a short overview of the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

<sup>7</sup> Intersectionality means to “be aware that gender, in isolation from other important axes of signification, does not adequately explain the world. We should work from the insight that gender, ‘race’/ethnicity, class, sexuality and nation co-construct each other and perhaps there are other significant factors at play” (Wekker 2004: 496).

## **Overview**

I will start my thesis with describing my position as a researcher in relation to this thesis. Subsequently, I will explain some of the terms I will use in my thesis, the material I will analyze (collective as well as individual narratives) and the texts I will use to analyze the different narratives. The main text I will use for my analysis will be “Plenitude, scarcity and the circulation of cultural memory” by Ann Rigney in which the subject of construction of memories take central stage. Other texts I will use, focus on subjects like narrative and the witness, trauma and affect, the female body and memory and representation. Last, I will shortly sketch an outline of the genocide.

In the first part of my analysis I will analyze collective narratives with a main focus on the book *The Men Who Killed Me (TMWKM)*. I will start with a description of the context in which this book came about and how it is tied to other forms of remembering like a photo exhibition and a foundation. Subsequently, I will discuss the role of memory in constructing a framework for remembering the genocide. The ‘gendered’ body will be the next part of my analysis in which the body takes an important role as something that is gendered. However, there is also a ‘middle voice’ of ‘survivor’, a term which is used by the editors of *TMWKM* to signify the interviewees in the book. The last part of my research of collective narratives contains an analysis of affect and empathy, which is mainly about the feelings this book produces.

The second part of my research consists of analyzing two individual narratives about sexual violence, after which I will also reflect on limitations I experienced while analyzing these stories.

## ***My own position as a researcher***

Throughout my studies I have learned that it is not possible to be objective, but that every researcher has a standpoint and thus comes from somewhere. Pilcher & Whelehan argue that the notion of a standpoint “expresses the idea that our view of something (...) is influenced by where we stand in relation to it” (2004: 163). I have thus made it a habit to explain my own position as a researcher and to be clear about where I am coming from.

I am a Dutch, white, middle-class, Christian woman, and I have lived in the Netherlands my whole life. My internship last year at the *Mukomeze* Foundation enabled me to become acquainted with *TMWKM*, the book that I will analyze in this thesis. The

fact that I know this organization well and that I have tremendous admiration for the sixteen women and one man in the book will influence the way I will do research and how I will look and analyze the testimonials.

### ***Methodology***

There are a couple of terms that will be important in my thesis. The most important term is memory. According to Ann Rigney, a vast amount of discussions on memory have been based on the 'plenitude and loss' model. According to this model,

memory is conceptualized on the one hand in terms of an original 'storehouse' and, on the other hand, as something that is always imperfect and diminishing, a matter of chronic frustration because always falling short of total recall. (2005: 12).

This model was taken up by a vast amount of scholars and has resulted in new insights about dealings with memory. It has also brought to light marginal traditions. Here Rigney recognizes a crucial link between collective memories and identity politics and even though she argues that this remains an important issue, she states that

understanding this link may be better served by a different model of memory: a social-constructivist model that takes as its starting point the idea that memories of a shared past are collectively constructed and reconstructed in the present rather than resurrected from the past. (ibid.: 14)

In relation to the subject of this thesis I will mainly use the term 'communicative memory' or 'living memory'. This 'type' of memory is the first phase of collective memory and corresponds "to the earliest phase when multiple narratives by participants and eyewitnesses circulate and compete with each other" (ibid.). The second phase is "*cultural* memory proper, corresponding to the much longer phase when all eyewitnesses and participants have died out, and a society has only relics and stories left as a reminder of past experience" (ibid.). Thus, memory is something that is unfixed and continually changing and being changed. I will use these concepts (the 'plenitude and loss' model, a social-constructivist model and communicative/living



memory) to show how the different narratives I will analyze are constructed and non-fixed, but that these stories are fluid and changing even though they have already been written down. One example is *TMWKM*'s translation into Dutch.

'The body' will also be an important term in my analysis and I will take Meg Samuelson's article<sup>8</sup> as an example of this. According to Samuelson,

[i]n the war zone, women's bodies are simultaneously saturated with and stripped of meaning; in the process, they are rendered invisible. The raped female body suffers a similar fate: figured as a rhetorical sign, its disfigurements slip from view. (2007: 833).

This quote by Samuelson is the basis for how I see 'the body' in relation to this thesis: 'the body' is not just a body, but connected to meaning and meaning making and conflated with different associations. Gender also plays a major role here since rape is perceived as something that is committed by men to women. Thus, rape is gendered and consequently "produces women as victims of a special kind" (ibid.: 845). *TMWKM* focuses on women, but also features a man and in my analysis I want to pay particular attention to 'the body' and on how this concept plays a role in their testimonies.

The material I will analyze consists of different forms of narratives. Narratives can be found in a lot of different forms and contexts. In my thesis I will not only analyze testimonials, but I will also analyze the introduction of the book these testimonials come from. The introduction of the book is important since the editors shed light on how they collected the stories and how they interviewed the women. Furthermore, I will also analyze the portraits accompanying the testimonials. Some of these portraits have also been shown in a photo exhibition on different venues<sup>9</sup>. The testimonials, photos and the exhibit are all linked to the *Mukomeze* Foundation.

In my thesis I will analyze two testimonials from *The Men Who Killed Me*. I have chosen to analyze the testimonials of one Tutsi man and one Tutsi woman. The largest

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<sup>8</sup> "The Disfigured Body of the Female Guerrilla: (De)Militarization, Sexual Violence and Redomestication in Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story*" (2007).

<sup>9</sup> In 2009 the photo exhibition *The Men Who Killed Me* travelled for 100 days and was shown on different venues in the Netherlands: Tilburg University, Huis van de Wereld (House of the World) in Tilburg, public library in Wageningen, Avans Hogeschool in Breda, Cinemariënborg in Nijmegen en the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague ("Nieuws en activiteiten overzicht 2009" 2009). After this tour the photo exhibition was shown at Cordaid (The Hague), the International Criminal Court (ICC; The Hague) ("Nieuws en activiteiten overzicht 2010" 2010) and the exhibition was just recently shown at Camp Vught National Memorial ("Nieuws" 2011).

group of sexual violence victims consists of Tutsi women, but I will also analyze the testimonial of the only Tutsi man in this book since their voices are not heard very often. I have not read other books consisting of testimonials, but in academic literature mainly Tutsi women are seen as the victims of sexual violence during the genocide (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009). Sexual violence among Hutu women and among men is not something I have read a lot about since I could not find books that had a focus on sexual violence – apart from *TMWKM*.

The primary text I will use to analyze these collective as well as individual narratives is Ann Rigney's text "Plenitude, scarcity and the circulation of cultural memory". In this text Rigney shows how cultural memory is a 'working memory' and how memories are circulated. Her theory can allow people to "see how collective identities may be (re)defined through memorial practices, and not merely reflected in them" (Rigney 2005: 11). I have always been very much interested in how memory works. Memory is something of past, present and future, and throughout this thesis I hope I can show how memory works in relation to the testimonials I will analyze. Together with four secondary texts I intend to offer a complex analysis of these interesting testimonials. The secondary literature I will use surrounds themes such as narrative and the witness (Laub 1992), trauma and affect (Cvetkovich 2007), the female body (Samuelson 2007) and memory and representation (Van Alphen 1998).

### ***Short overview of the 1994 Rwandan genocide (Meijer 2010a<sup>10</sup>)***

The genocide that took place in Rwanda in 1994 lasted for approximately a hundred days (from April until July 1994). During this time period about one million people were killed, and an estimated 250,000 to 500,000 women were raped (Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009: 11). There are various reasons why this genocide happened; it was an interplay between different factors (Buss 2009: 157). For example, different sources mention the influence of German and Belgian colonialism (Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009; Dallaire 2003; Gourevitch 2000; Prunier 1995). The Belgian colonialists, who arrived in 1916, favored the Tutsi minority over the Hutu majority because they saw the Tutsi as more similar to Europeans and therefore as more intelligent. Physical features also played a

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<sup>10</sup> Part of this overview of the Rwandan genocide has been taken over from a paper I've written in 2010 (Meijer, Sanne. "The Men Who Killed Me: Frameworks of Testifying about the Rwandan genocide." Paper Utrecht University, 2010a).

role: “they [the Belgians] considered Tutsi to be tall, thin and light skinned and Hutu to be short, stout and darker skinned” (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009). To fix this categorization of Tutsi and Hutu, identity cards were introduced in the 1930s. As a consequence of this classification, there was inequality based on ethnicity, since for example Tutsi were given better jobs than Hutu. Therefore, Mukimbiri refers to Lecomte who states that “a decisive pre-requisite to genocide is to define this other category of persons who were so radically different that they had to be exterminated” (2005: 824). The identity cards played a major role in the genocide: they were still in use in the 1990s and served as a means to determine people’s ethnicity<sup>11</sup>.

The special treatment of Tutsi produced resentment among Hutu and this led to a series of killings which between 1959 and 1973 in more than 700,000 exiled Rwandan Tutsi (ibid.). The genocide in 1994 was a planned operation (Des Forges 1999; Dallaire 2003). People categorized as Tutsi were dehumanized through for example the media which named them ‘cockroaches’ and ‘snakes’. Mukimbiri (2005) sees this in the larger context of designating certain people (in this case Tutsi) to be victims. With designation he means “the attachment of physical symbols to enable the population to easily identify the victims” (Mukimbiri 2005: 828). For example, during World War II Jews were required to wear an identifying mark like the Star of David. This sign was also placed on shops and other public places owned by Jews. According to Mukimbiri this phase operated on two levels in Rwanda: language and identity cards, and markings on houses. One particular aspect of portrayals of (Tutsi) women is the gendered nature of them. According to Christopher Taylor<sup>12</sup>, “[t]he Rwandan genocide was not simply a battle for political supremacy between groups of men, it was also about re-configuring gender” (1999: 43). One particular example of how Hutu media portrayed Tutsi women (before the genocide) was their sexuality. For instance, the December 1990 issue of *Kangura*, a Rwandan newspaper, featured the Hutu ‘Ten Commandments’ in which there was, among other things, a focus on Tutsi women. In four of the ‘commandments’<sup>13</sup>,

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<sup>11</sup> Some of the narratives in *TMWKM* prove that this was not always the case: sometimes physical features alone were the basis on which somebody’s ethnicity was determined. Furthermore, some people threw away their identity cards to avoid being killed (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009).

<sup>12</sup> Christopher C. Taylor is an associate professor of anthropology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, specialized in symbolic and medical anthropology and experienced in conducting fieldwork in Rwanda, Kenya, and the Ivory Coast.

<sup>13</sup> According to Taylor the Hutu “Ten Commandments” have been quoted and discussed often, but “no one to [his] knowledge has pointed out that gender preoccupations were clearly very much on the minds of the extremists” (1999: 49). The four commandments concerning Tutsi women are: “1. Every Muhutu [Hutu male] should know that wherever

Tutsi women were portrayed as tools of the Tutsi community and as sexual weapons who would be used to weaken and ultimately destroy Hutu men. newspapers also featured cartoons that portrayed Tutsi women, including the moderate Hutu Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana, as sexual objects. (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009: 15)

During the genocide the

perpetrators often referred in the midst of the rape to the supposed beauty and arrogance of Tutsi women; hate propaganda alleged that Tutsi women looked down on Hutu men and thought they were 'too good' for them. Rape thus served as a means to degrade and subjugate Tutsi women. (ibid.)

Thus, this example shows how such a portrayal in media degraded Tutsi women. A representation like this served as a means to make Hutu men<sup>14</sup> believe that Tutsi women should be raped. Eventually, the situation that served as a pretext for the genocide<sup>15</sup> was when President Habyarimana's plane was shot down on April 6, 1994. He was returning to Rwanda from peace negotiations with the RPF<sup>16</sup> in Tanzania.

Subsequently, Tutsi were stripped of their possessions by different political measures (Mukimbiri 2005: 829-31) and of their (social) rights (ibid.: 831-3). Moreover, Hutu excluded Tutsi from public life and gave them only subordinate positions in public

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he finds Umututsikazi (a female Tutsi), she is working for het Tutsi ethnic group. As a result every Muhutu who marries a Mututsikazi, or who takes a Mututsikazi for a mistress, or employs her as a secretary or a protegee is a traitor. 2. Every Muhutu should know that our Bahutukazi (female Hutu) are more worthy of, and conscious of their role as woman, spouse, and mother. Are they not pretty, good secretaries, and more honest! 3. Bahutukazi [Hutu women], be vigilant and bring your husbands, brothers and sons back to the path of reason" (Taylor 1999: 49); "[4.] The Rwandese Armed Forces should be exclusively Hutu. The experience of the October [1990] war has taught us a lesson. No member of the military shall marry a Tutsi" (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009: 21).

<sup>14</sup> Members of the Hutu militia, the *Interahamwe* (Rwandan term which means 'those who attack together' and consisting mostly of Hutu youth), were not the only ones to execute sexual violence. Other perpetrators were Presidential Guards, military soldiers of the Rwandan Armed Forces (RAF), the Rwandan police and civilians and international (mostly French) soldiers (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Of course, the reasons for why this genocide took place are much more complex. For a more thorough study of the history of the Rwandan genocide: Des Forges 1999; Melvern 2000, Prunier 2002.

<sup>16</sup> "Rwandan Patriotic Front, a political and military movement formed in 1987 by the Tutsi refugee diaspora in Uganda. Beginning in 1959, Tutsi refugees fled to Uganda to escape ethnic purges. In 1994, the RPF invaded Rwanda and halted the genocide. The RPF, led by President Paul Kagame, is the current ruling political party in Rwanda" (Brouwer & Ka Hon Cha 2009: 172).

functions. This phase also included deportation and forced emigration. From the 1950s onward, different measures were taken to exclude Tutsi through deportation and forced emigration. All of these measures led to systematic isolation and eventually to extermination through genocide (Mukimbiri 2005). In contrast to World War II, where Jews were systematically isolated for years, the Tutsi people were isolated from Hutu at the last possible moment. According to Des Forges, this was so as “to mislead the foreigners in order to avoid any type of criticism and even possibly receive support, lure the Tutsi in order to kill them more easily and manipulate the Hutu so that they would energetically participate in the carefully planned genocide” (1999: 297). Moreover, Mukimbiri argues that another reason for this swift development may be that the Hutu regime could not afford the means that the Germans had to their disposal before and during World War II (2005: 834). This systematic isolation took on the form of Hutu officials recommending Tutsi to gather in public places, and by radio stations recommending people to stay home for their own protection. This technique served as a way to easily slaughter a lot of Tutsi at one place at one time (ibid.; Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009).

As I have already mentioned, sexual violence played an important role. Mostly Tutsi women and girls were raped, and age did not play a role in this. Rape was often meant as a means to infect women with HIV and eventually to infect her future. The best summary of the sexual violence that occurred during the genocide is the following quote from *TMWKM*:

[c]ompared with conflicts in other places, the sexual violence in Rwanda is notorious because of the organized propaganda, which contributed significantly to fuelling sexual violence against Tutsi women, the very public nature of the rapes and the level of ruthlessness directed towards women. (Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009: 17)

The Hutu ‘Ten Commandments’ I have already mentioned is just one example of the organized propaganda that took place before and during the genocide. In Charles C. Taylor’s article “A Gendered Genocide: Tutsi Women and Hutu Extremists in the 1994 Rwanda Genocide”, different images are shown in which Tutsi women are shown engaging in sexual acts with international soldiers. Images like these and a text like the

Hutu ‘Ten Commandments’ all contributed to the organized propaganda, which eventually served as a ‘justification’ to rape Tutsi women. Sexual violence prevailed at a vast number of different places and mostly in public (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009). Reasons for this may be that raping someone in public is degrading and shaming the victim. It stigmatizes the victim and in the case of Rwanda socially isolates the victims. Rape is also about border-crossing: “it invades our innermost intimacy” (Diken & Bagge Laustsen 2005: 120) and this private realm is laid bare by being raped in public.

Eventually, the genocide ended in July 1994 when RPF troops took over Rwanda<sup>17</sup>. After the genocide a genocide law has been put in place. This law “recognizes rape and sexual torture as acts of genocide” (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009: 150). In 2008, the *gacaca* courts<sup>18</sup> “began to try the alleged perpetrators of rapes committed during the 1994 genocide” (ibid.: 151). As the different testimonies of the survivors from *TMWKM* show the *gacaca* courts are far from perfect. One example of this is that the justice system fails to provide for the survivors’ physical security. Between 1995 and 2008, approximately 167 genocide survivors were murdered (ibid.: 151). Subsequently, a vast number of survivors does not testify at the *gacaca* courts for fear of being murdered. Next to dealing with the judicial aspects of the genocide, survivors still have to deal with the aftermath of the genocide, which translates itself in physical as well as emotional problems.

The role of the international community cannot be underestimated, because the West has been criticized for abandoning Rwanda when the genocide took place. Roméo Dallaire, at the time Force Commander of UNAMIR<sup>19</sup>, already saw signs during 1993 and at the beginning of 1994 that a mass slaughter was being planned. Even though he repeatedly pointed this out to the UN, he had to work with only a few hundred soldiers in order to maintain order. Furthermore, his mandate was limited to defending people and he could not take up arms. At the beginning of the genocide, ten Belgian UN paracommandos were murdered which led to the exodus of ‘foreigners’ living in

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<sup>17</sup> One cannot play down the effects of the aftermath of the genocide: by the end of August 1994 approximately 2,000,000 Rwandan people had fled to neighboring countries and in refugee camps tens of thousands of people died, due to diseases like cholera and dysentery (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2000).

<sup>18</sup> *Gacaca* is Kinyarwanda (the local Rwandan language) for ‘on the grass’ and refers to traditional courts of Rwanda (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009: 171).

<sup>19</sup> United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda.

Rwanda. During the genocide, only Dallaire and a few hundred soldiers were available to protect Rwandan people from being murdered (Dallaire 2003).

# 1. COLLECTIVE NARRATIVES

## 1.1 Context

The testimonies central to my thesis come from the book *The Men Who Killed Me*, edited by Anne-Marie de Brouwer and Sandra Ka Hon Chu and including photographs of the survivors. These survivors (sixteen women and one man) were all sexually violated during the genocide and as a consequence of this became infected with HIV/AIDS<sup>20</sup>. The book consists of the following parts:

- Foreword (by Stephen Lewis)
- Introduction (by the editors)
- Chapter 1: The Roots of Sexual Violence in Rwanda
- Chapter 2: Testimonials
- Chapter 3: Life after “Death”
- Afterword (by Eve Ensler)
- What You Can Do
- Glossary
- Acknowledgements

The idea for the book sprung from the friendship between De Brouwer and Ka Hon Chu in which Rwanda became a frequent topic of conversation. In 2007 they visited Solace Ministries, “a survivor-run grassroots organization in Kigali that works with widows and orphans of the genocide, offering food, housing, HIV medication, counseling, income-generating projects and spiritual care” (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009: 3). De Brouwer and Ka Hon Chu, were taken aback by the women, how they coped with their traumas and how they supported each other. Together with Samer Muscati (a photographer) they decided to do something to help these women (ibid.: 3-4). *TMWKM* is a platform through which the interviewees could voice their experiences (ibid.: 3). I also asked Anne-Marie de Brouwer, one of the editors, what the aim of the book was. She answered that they wanted to raise awareness about the sexual violence that took place during the genocide. According to her, people did not know about this. At the same time, there has

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<sup>20</sup> Two women have passed away after the book’s release: Françoise Kayitesi (Ka Hon Chu 2010a) and Immaculée Makumi (Ka Hon Chu 2010c).



not been a great deal of attention for survivors' stories about sexual violence. Furthermore, they hoped this collection of narratives would urge people to do something (lobby, prevention) and that it encourages people to the survivors through different mechanisms. At the same time it is also a means through which people get to know more about sexual violence in general. In sum, what they want to achieve with *TMWKM* is recognition and to urge people to listen to the survivors and/or to do something. The aimed at public is the whole world. De Brouwer relates to one of the survivors who said that she wanted the whole world to know (De Brouwer 2011a).

In 2008 they (De Brouwer, Ka Hon Chu and Muscati) started interviewing each survivor on three or four occasions. This approach "worked well, since it lessened the trauma for survivors and gave [them] time to review the testimonials and ask follow-up questions" (ibid.: 4). At each stage of the process, consent was asked from the survivors in order to make sure they understood that they could withdraw from the project whenever they wanted. At the last session with each person, "[they] read the entire testimonial aloud for their approval. All but one survivor [they] interviewed decided to continue with the project, but three requested that their faces not be recognizable in their photographs" (ibid.). During the whole process, the staff of Solace Ministries was available to assist with for example translations as well as counseling.

As I already mentioned in the introduction, I also wanted to analyze collective narratives about sexual violence during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. The book *TMWKM* is in itself already a collective narrative since the stories, together with the other chapters in the book, make it a collective work. The proceeds of the book have been going and still are going to the *Mukomeze* Foundation (chaired by De Brouwer). This organization works with a local organization called Solace Ministries and the aim of *Mukomeze* is

to positively impact the lives of women and girls who survived rape and other forms of sexual violence arising from the 1994 genocide in Rwanda by attending to their physical, psychological, material, social and spiritual needs and fostering their empowerment. (website *Mukomeze* 2011)

The proceeds are given to Solace Ministries, who in turn takes care of different projects (for example: medical assistance, antiretroviral treatment, trauma counseling, income

generating activities, material assistance and anti-stigmatization projects). There is also a sponsorship program.<sup>21</sup> Other sources of income for the *Mukomeze* Foundation are: direct money for sponsorships, the sale of handicrafts and photos, and donations (ibid.).

With collective narratives I mean the book *TMWKM* as a whole, but also the photo exhibition (featuring photographs from the book) and the different memorials that have taken place these last few years. The sum of all of these products are collective narratives about sexual violence during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. *TMWKM* does not produce just one collective narrative but multiple narratives and these narratives are products of construction. In the following part of my analysis I will analyze the collective narratives through different angles. The umbrella of my analysis will be Ann Rigney's article "Plenitude, scarcity and the circulation of cultural memory".

### **1.2 What's in a name?**

*How is rape a murder of the soul? Rape can destroy bodily integrity. Rape can destroy a sense of self-worth. Rape can destroy the desire to live. Rape can destroy trust. Rape can destroy people and families and communities. Rape hurts everyone.*

- Bridget Crawford (2007)

I asked one of the editors, Anne-Marie de Brouwer, why they chose *The Men Who Killed Me* as a title for this book and she answered that this title was chosen due to what some interviewees said. For example, Pascasie said "[t]he men who killed me should be better trained on how to treat survivors after they return to society" (77) and Clementine said the following:

[w]hen I reflect on my lost childhood, I have a feeling of such extreme sadness. I lament whenever I remember all the dreams that I once cherished and that are now forever lost. I lament when I remember all those men who repeatedly raped me during the genocide, those same men who broke and destroyed me and every single aspect of my life. Those same men who killed me, slowly but very effectively. (111)

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<sup>21</sup> Through this sponsorship program, one can support a Rwandan woman who has been through sexual violence during the 1994 genocide. Sponsors receive background information about and a photo of the woman they sponsor. Twice a year a progress statement is sent out to the sponsor to inform her/him on how the woman is doing. It is also possible to correspond.

According to De Brouwer, there were more interviewees who said similar things (2011b). In *TMWKM* sexual violence is equaled to death and this is not only characteristic for this specific collection. For example, Sarah Chatellier refers in her master's thesis to a rape narrative by Antoinette in *O, The Oprah Magazine* (2005). Antoinette states the following:

[I]t was painful. It was like they were piercing a knife to my heart and the pain would go from my heart to my head and to my body. I just wanted to die. In fact, I think I did die that day. *Being raped is like dying. They kill you. You become numb. You are breathing, but you are not alive. They kill you by taking away your self-worth, your dignity.* (qtd. in Chatellier 2010: 19; my emphasis)

This citation reminds me of a claim I once heard: killing takes somebody's life, raping takes somebody's soul<sup>22</sup>. Thus, *TMWKM* refers to the act of sexual violence itself: the way the victim feels while it is happening. This does not mean that the victim does not have a life anymore: the name of a chapter from *TMWKM*, "Life after 'Death'", proves this. This chapter focuses not only on the emotional and traumatic aftereffects of sexual violence, but also on more material aftereffects: these women also have to bear the physical consequences of for example HIV/AIDS (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009) and being infertile and developing traumatic gynecological fistulas (Chatellier 2010). During the genocide, infecting women with HIV/AIDS was one of the tools the perpetrators used in order to slowly kill women (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009). Moreover, women and girls who were sexually violated during the genocide are stigmatized in Rwandan society. This social isolation equals a social death since because of this stigmatization these women and girls often live on the edges of society. One particular consequence of this is that they are "easy prey for retaliation by perpetrators hoping to silence truth and prevent their victims from implicating them for their past horrific deeds" (ibid.: 145). Thus, women are turned into social objects and this, in turn, destroys communities (Diken & Bagge Laustsen 2005: 117<sup>23</sup>).

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<sup>22</sup> I have tried to look up the exact quotation and the person who said it, but I did not find it.

<sup>23</sup> To read more about the politics of abjection, I would like to refer to Diken & Bagge Laustsen's article "Becoming Abject: Rape as a Weapon of War" (2005).

*TMWKM* also points to the interconnectedness of gender and power. Men are often denoted as the killers of a female 'me'. The male could be seen as the perpetrator and the female as victim. A vast amount of academic literature addresses the widespread view of men as aggressive perpetrators and women as passive victims (Grant de Pauw 1998; Smith 2000; Ness 2007<sup>24</sup>). One could argue that this dichotomy and presupposition underlies the title of this book, but the title could also be seen as an enormous source of strength. The editors chose the title, but only because multiple interviewees mentioned this. Maybe these men did kill the interviewees' souls, but these survivors managed to overcome their 'death' and the power of their words is closeted in the title *The Men Who Killed Me*.

### **1.3 Memory**

*At a certain point, the only way for the memory to survive is for it to be written down.*

- Ann Rigney (2005: 12)

Throughout *TMWKM* different motivations and aims have been written down for this book. As I already mentioned earlier, the idea for the book was a consequence of the friendship between De Brouwer and Ka Hon Chu, and the repeated conversations they had about Rwanda. However, this is how it started and it is interesting to look at other motivations and aims for wanting to write and publish this book, because this is a part of how this book is constructed. The quotes I will utilize and analyze here were not put down in a list, but I filtered them out of the text. The concerning quotes come from the introduction (written by De Brouwer, Ka Hon Chu and Muscati), chapter 3 ("Life after 'Death'"; written by De Brouwer and Ka Hon Chu) and the afterword (written by Eve Ensler).

Different 'themes' can be found in the motivations and aims I found. The first theme is 'memory' which is closely tied to the theme of 'remembrance'. According to Ann Rigney, 'remembrance' is an activity and performance, "taking place in the here and now of those doing the recalling" (2005: 17). This differs to 'memory' in the sense that 'memories' are more stable and fixed. This does not mean that memories cannot change: terms like 'living memory' and 'communicative memory' (which I will explain later), prove that memories can change throughout time. It does mean that 'remembrance' can

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<sup>24</sup> These are only a few examples of literature on the different gendered roles in conflict situations.

be perceived as a process, whether 'memories' can be seen as a status. This connection between 'remembrance' and 'memory' becomes apparent in the following example: the afterword of *TMWKM* starts with the following sentence: "[f]ragments, rape shrapnel, images, sensations that lodge forever in the body, in the soul" (Ensler 2009: 165). According to the Oxford American Dictionary (a digital dictionary on my computer) the verb 'to lodge' means among other things to "make or become firmly fixed or embedded in a particular place". One could also say that to 'lodge' also means to 'live'. Furthermore, this quote symbolizes the 'plenitude and loss' model Rigney mentions in her article. The "[f]ragments, rape shrapnel, images, [and] sensations" (ibid.) that Ensler mentions symbolize the 'imperfection' of memory and the "matter of chronic frustration because always falling short of total recall" (Rigney 2005: 12). However, the words "lodge forever" (165) symbolizes memory as "an original storehouse" (Rigney 2005: 12) in which memories have to be retained. Rigney also refers to Maurice Halbwachs' work on 'lived memory' (*mémoire vécue*) as memories that are "carried and hence kept alive by the participants in some original experience" (ibid.). What this 'original experience' is, is unknown but in case of *TMWKM* may refer to the following sentence: "[b]y sharing these testimonials, these survivors – sixteen women and one man – strive to keep the memory of the genocide alive. (...) They have taught us how important it is to remember our common humanity" (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009: 5). The first part of the sentence, "[b]y sharing these testimonials" (ibid.), may refer to Halbwachs' term 'original experience'. The other part of the sentence that refers to keeping the memory of the genocide alive and remembering our common humanity refers to Halbwachs' argument that

[t]his 'lived memory' is constantly on the brink of extinction or erosion with the passage of time as the richness of experience fades and those who did the experiencing die out. At a certain point, the only way for the memory to survive is for it to be written down. (Rigney 2005: 12)

Therefore, writing down the experiences of survivors is crucial in order to keep memories alive in some way. As De Brouwer and Ka Hon Chu argue in the last chapter of *TMWKM*: "[s]urvivors of sexual violence are a living testament to our collective

abandonment of them, but they also represent the promise of transformative change. We cannot afford to turn our backs on them again” (158).

Even though I have indicated that I will use the notion of ‘communicative memory’ or ‘living memory’ to describe the phase the memories as described in *TMWKM* are in, I will use Rigney’s model of ‘the principle of scarcity’ and how it affects the workings of *cultural memory*. Assmann distinguishes between ‘communicative memory’ or ‘living memory’, and ‘cultural memory’ by seeing ‘cultural memory’ as “corresponding to the much longer phase when all eyewitnesses and participants have died out, and a society has only relics and stories left as a reminder of the past experience” (Rigney 2005: 14). However, I do think that even now it is interesting to analyze *TMWKM* and the other ‘remembrance expressions’ (the photo exhibition, and the memorials) according to this model. This is interesting, because it is important to have a more thorough understanding of how the ‘principle of scarcity’ works. This ‘principle of scarcity’ evokes Michel Foucault’s idea that “[c]ulture is always in limited supply, and necessarily so, since it involves producing meaning in an ongoing way through selection, representation and interpretation” (ibid.: 16). Therefore, the experiences that were written down in *TMWKM* are scarce and much has to be done in order to retain these experiences and to keep these memories alive. This is important, because making and keeping people aware of sexual violence in conflict areas and how it affects people’s lives is key (De Brouwer 2011a). Rigney claims that the ‘principle of scarcity’ affects the workings of cultural memory in at least five ways: “the selectivity of recall, the convergence of memories, the recursivity in remembrance, the recycling of models of remembrance and memory transfers” (2005: 16). In the following section of my thesis I will analyze *TMWKM* in relation to these manners.

When it comes to *selection*, according to Rigney this phase begins in the absence of memories being recalled. However, I would like to argue that this phase begins much earlier, namely after the experience itself took place. As Rigney herself claims, “the point is that memories are always ‘scarce’ in relation to everything that theoretically might have been remembered, but is now forgotten” (2005: 17). This becomes painfully clear through the striking sentence by Eve Ensler about “fragments” and “rape shrapnel” (2009: 165). Through producing the book *TMWKM* a selection already took place because of its focus on sexual violence. However, the importance of performances of remembrance as for example the photo exhibition and the memorials cannot be

underestimated. In its totality it provides a framework for mainly Western<sup>25</sup> people to remember the genocide. Even though the book is meant for everyone to read (De Brouwer 2011a), it is mainly sold in Western countries<sup>26</sup>. Furthermore, different memorials relating the 1994 Rwandan genocide have been held throughout the years in which *TMWKM* and/or the *Mukomeze* Foundation played a role. Moreover, the photo exhibition tied to *TMWKM* has been traveling since 2009 and thus also worked as a way to keep the memories alive. As Rigney claims,

[c]ultural memory can thus be described as a ‘working memory’ which is continuously performed by individuals and groups as they recollect the past selectively through various media and become involved in various forms of memorial activity, from narrating and reading to attending commemorative ceremonies or going on pilgrimages. (ibid.)

Relating *TMWKM*, I would argue that this book, but also the photo exhibition, yearly memorials and the *Mukomeze* Foundation all work together to create and sustain a certain ‘working memory’. This is not a fixed memory, but merely a process in which there is space for change. Furthermore, in the act of recollecting in public “we consciously or unconsciously select those things, from the totality of everything which might have been said, that are somehow relevant to the present” (ibid.: 17-8). When it comes to *TMWKM* sexual violence is emphasized as one of the defining features of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. This is stressed repeatedly by the editors in the book, as well as in the photo exhibition, the memorials and the *Mukomeze* Foundation itself. The interviewees of *TMWKM* as well as the authors and photographer of the book, the people who wrote the foreword and afterword, and the people who wrote a short testimonial for the back of the book<sup>27</sup> forge a certain narrative.

In the introduction of this thesis I already spoke about the intersectionality of different memorial forms. Rigney agrees on this by arguing that cultural memories tend

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<sup>25</sup> I am aware of the problematical feature of the word ‘Western’, but I will use this term mainly to refer to people living in (Western) Europe and North America.

<sup>26</sup> The English version of *TMWKM* for sale at the website of Amazon. Since 2011 there is also a Dutch translation of this book, called *De mannen die mij hebben vermoord* (Wolf Legal Publishers), which is available at the website of the publisher.

<sup>27</sup> Testimonials have been written by Patrick Cammaert, Roméo A. Dallaire and James Orbinski (former international president of Doctors without Borders/MSF and author of *An Imperfect Offering*).

to *converge* and coalesce. To coalesce means that the different memorial forms coming from *TMWKM* all come together and form one whole. They “become the focus of collective remembrance” (Rigney 2005: 18), and all serve as Pierre Nora’s concept of ‘sites of memory’ (*lieux de mémoire*). It does not matter if such an object takes a material (actual places and objects) or immaterial (stories and pieces of music) form. They are defined by the fact that “they elicit intense attention on the part of those doing the remembering and thereby become a self-perpetuating vortex of symbolic investment” (ibid.). These sites of memory therefore provide a podium for “appropriating the past” (ibid.) and also aim to reduce the proliferation of fragmented memories. *TMWKM* therefore provides a common framework to talk about sexual violence in the 1994 Rwandan genocide and a framework to remember it. This framework finds its way through the book, the photo exhibition, the memorials and through the *Mukomeze* Foundation.

The phase of *recursivity* means that the repetition of remembering is important, whatever form that may be. Repetition is the reason why cultural memory is constructed as such. Here again it is important to mention that shared frameworks are constructed through the act of repeating (Rigney 2005: 20). Text and images “play a particularly important role in this process, both because they themselves are infinitely reproducible and because they are tied down neither to any particular time nor to any particular place” (ibid.).

In the Netherlands there is no monument to remember the Rwandan genocide. The photo exhibition of *TMWKM* featured at several places and is therefore hard to tie down to any particular place. This exhibition is thus literally a ‘mobile’ monument and its meaning depends partly on the place where these photos are featured. The last exhibition took place at National Monument Kamp Vught, a museum and place of remembrance of World War II. In one of the exhibition rooms a display of the photos from *TMWKM* was set up and by situating this exhibition at this particular monument, the framework of remembering sexual violence during the genocide is repeated as well as changed. Every site has its own meaning and different factors (for example the particular space where the exhibition takes place, the lighting) contribute to changing this meaning. According to Rigney, a monument is “the outcome of a whole series of other acts of remembrance using other media” (ibid.: 21). However, Reinhard Koselleck warned that



building a monument may seem like the ultimate expression of a desire to remember, but it may also mark the first stage in the forgetting of an event if other forms of remembrance are not subsequently brought into play in an ongoing symbolic reinvestment of the site in question. (ibid.)

Therefore, the intersection of different memorial forms may work better to keep remembering a certain event than fixating remembrance in one particular place. Furthermore, *modeling* these different forms into one or more models “can stimulate comparable acts in other situations and within different social frameworks” (ibid.: 23). Thus, the framework of TMWK and its intersection with other memorial forms, can encourage remembering sexual violence.

The last phase Rigney mentions in her article is *translation and transfer*. *TMWKM* is written and constructed in such a way that it speaks to Western people. However, the question is whether the interviewees themselves have the same tradition of narrating as Western people. Rigney argues that copying and imitating each other has not received enough attention in studies of collective memory. The means through which the experiences of these women and men are communicated, is through means we as Western people know and at the same time it possibly changes the way Rwandan people narrate and write down their stories. Just the translation of language alone, from Kinyarwanda<sup>28</sup> to English, shows the influence of frameworks for remembering. It is, in my opinion, important to be aware of how different memorial forms are translated and transferred to different groups of people and how these forms of narrating also change each other’s ways of narrating.

#### ***1.4 Gendered bodies and representations***

*Women are the primary resource of our planet. If they are destroyed, with them so is our future. If they are violated and desecrated anywhere on this earth, we are all violated and desecrated.*

- Eve Ensler (2009: 166)

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<sup>28</sup> Local Rwandan language.

The implicated female body and its representations are of particular importance in *TMWKM*. Through sexual violence the body is affected in a physical way, but it also has an intended symbolical meaning: especially in the war zone, “women’s bodies are simultaneously saturated with and stripped of meaning; in the process, they are rendered invisible” (Samuelson 2007: 834). The raped female body “suffers a similar fate: figured as a rhetorical sign, its disfigurements slip from view” (ibid.). Thus, whereas rape has serious and various consequences (symbolic as well as material), rape and sexual violence in general during conflicts have been and maybe still are viewed as belonging to the private sphere (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009: 18). According to the editors of *TMWKM*, the genocide in Rwanda and the wars in the former Yugoslavia (1991-2001) brought sexual violence to the public sphere. Raping Tutsi women was a way to kill them slowly (through infection with HIV/AIDS) and also to beget Hutu children<sup>29</sup> (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009). What is interesting about *TMWKM* is the way the interviewees and their bodies are represented, since the body is not also physically but also symbolically important in sexual violence. I agree with Samuelson’s argument that to write about women in the war zone and its aftermath is difficult. The novel Samuelson refers to, *David’s Story* (2000) by Zoë Wicomb,

is keenly aware of the powers and dangers of representation and of what is risked in writing about [this topic]: a representational minefield in which women are cast as idealized warriors, silenced victims, and emblems of the domestic world toward which the male warrior ostensibly directs his efforts. (Samuelson 2007: 835)

These difficulties in representing women through writing and collecting narratives as those in *TMWKM*, make it interesting to analyze *TMWKM* and how the interviewees of this book are represented. In the introduction De Brouwer, Ka Hon Chu and Muscati say the following: “the violence they [the interviewees] suffered battered their bodies and extinguished their dreams. Incredibly, however, these *survivors* stand defiant” (5; my emphasis). This quote shows what role the survivor’s body has in this book. This body is not only battered, but it is also able to show its strength of overcoming the trauma that happened to it. The use of the word *survivor* is key here. Reading the book and especially

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<sup>29</sup> The child’s ethnicity is determined by his/her father’s ethnicity (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009).

reading the non-testimonial chapters the word 'survivor' struck me as an important word to signify the interviewees, because "Western discourses tend to label women who have been raped as passive victims while *they* may self-identify as survivors, which limits our ability to see them as potential political or social actors" (Chatellier 2010: 26). Moreover, Chatellier, just like the editors of *TMWKM*, used the term 'rape survivor' in order to avoid reifying a word like 'victim' (ibid.). De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu do not mention the reason for using 'survivor', but it may be for the same reason as Chatellier. Utilizing 'survivor' slightly resembles the 'middle voice' Samuelson mentions in her article in Wicomb's *David's Story*. In this novel "the narrator recognizes that her story may be rendered best in the 'middle voice' (...), that is, between active and passive voices" (2007: 840). Moreover, Samuelson refers to Dominick LaCapra who claims that writing in the middle voice entails engaging with an "anxiety-ridden area of undecidability and the unavailability or radical ambivalence of clear-cut positions" (qtd. in Samuelson 2007: 840). In *TMWKM*, the interviewees are positioned and represented as survivors. This position of survivor could be seen as the 'middle voice': the 'active voice' is often represented as the perpetrator, whereas the 'passive' voice is ascribed to the victim. At the same time, values are often attributed to 'active' and 'passive': 'active' is 'higher' than 'passive'. Survivors cannot be put in either role, since they are neither perpetrator nor victim. Moreover, the interviewees did experience sexual violence and the editors do not claim that they were not hurt by it, but at the same time they 'stand defiant' through telling their stories: "[i]n the face of all odds, they have opted to bring to light the crimes that rape survivors have historically endured in silence" (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009: 5). Again this refers back to forging a podium for narrating about sexual violence. According to De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu, "[m]uch has been written about the use of rape and sexual violence during the Rwandan genocide, but survivors themselves have been notably absent from the discussion" (ibid.: 19). With this book they contribute to a framework of telling about sexual violence; usage of the word 'survivor' is also instrumental for this framework. Being a survivor, in this context, means that as "agents of change" (ibid.: 158), "[s]urvivors of sexual violence are a *living testament* to our collective abandonment of them, but they also *represent* the promise of transformative change. We cannot afford to turn our backs on them again" (ibid.). Here the editors speak on the one hand about 'our collective abandonment' and our responsibility to help them, but on the other hand also about the survivors' strength to

represent 'transformative change'. In my opinion, the editors mean with 'transformative change' the strength they show through narrating their experiences<sup>30</sup>, but also how they cope with the sexual violence they went through (resilience).

Lastly, I would like to argue that *TMWKM* is a 'disorienting space'. Meg Samuelson relates this term to *David's Story*:

[t]he disorienting space in which *David's Story*, and the story of Dulcie, unfolds shatters conventional distinctions – between male and female, war and peace, torture and rape, consensual intercourse and rape, military and domestic roles – by cracking open the gendered myths and constructions, the figurations, that underpin them. (2007: 840)

In this disorienting space there is room for women as well as men to talk about sexual violence even though there seems to be a taboo on sexual violence, especially for men (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009: 91). Moreover, by explaining more about the sexual violence that occurred during the Rwandan genocide 'gendered myths and constructions' about (Tutsi) women are cracked open. Furthermore, the different interviewees also show through their testimonies that things are not as black-and-white as they may seem. For example, Marie Mukabatsinda is Hutu, but because her husband was Tutsi she was in the same situation as he. Furthermore, Faustin Kayihura also experienced sexual violence as a male. Therefore, a variety of survivors told their stories. This diversity also contributes to cracking open certain myths: men are also subjected to sexual violence and not only Tutsi women were raped during the Rwandan genocide. In the next part of my thesis I will analyze how the narratives from *TMWKM* affect people how the international community is urged to do something.

### **1.5 An Embodied 'Ouch'<sup>31</sup>: Affect**

*The international community abandoned us in 1994. If the international community is still denying the realities and atrocities of the genocide, then they are still killing us. Maybe our*

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<sup>30</sup> I want to add that choosing to remain silent about the sexual violence is also a form of agency.

<sup>31</sup> I am indebted to Kathy Davis, who mentioned "embodied ouch" in her article (Davis 2004: 308). I also used it as a title for one of my papers last year (Meijer 2010.).

*testimonials will help them open their eyes. Maybe. We are still hurting, and we wish someone would notice.*

- Hyacintha Nirere (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009: 123)

The testimonies from *TMWKM* were written down for a reason. As I have already pointed out, the book as well as the other 'media' (the photo exhibition, the *Mukomeze* Foundation, etc.), are constructed in such a way that they serve as a narrative framework. In my opinion, the engendering of affect is one of the pursued aims of this book. The above quote by Eve Ensler, featured in the afterword of *TMWKM*, is indicative of affect. Affect in this particular context is about emotional dynamics. One of the questions Ann Cvetkovich asks in her article is for example: "[w]hat makes it possible for people to vote for Bush or to assent to war, and how do these political decisions operate within the context of daily lives that are pervaded by a combination of anxiety and numbness?" (2007: 464). In the context of *TMWKM* it is interesting to look at affect as a way to move people. The different individual narratives are all instrumental in forging certain affective feelings. This becomes clear throughout the book when the editors as well as Eve Ensler reflect on the individual narratives. When reading some of these quotes, certain power dynamics come to light. The following example is representative of this:

[t]hey [the interviewees] urge the international community to refuse to permit such atrocities again. (...) We feel privileged to have witnessed their immense courage, their hope and their will to continue. They have taught us how important it is to remember our common humanity. (...) The women and young man featured in this book have profoundly changed our lives. We hope that their stories will do the same for you. (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009: 5)

There are some thought-provoking things that occur here. First, the editors express how these women and man have "changed their lives" (ibid.). In this way they reflect on their own feelings and what these stories mean for them. Thus, the power of these stories affected the editors themselves. Furthermore, the testimonials on the back of the book by different people partly resonate this. Second, the editors speak as representatives of the interviewees since they say that "[t]hey [the interviewees] urge the international

community to refuse to permit such atrocities again” (ibid.). Furthermore, they also argue that “[e]nabling survivors to speak without fear or shame about their experiences is imperative” (ibid.: 158). An extensive part of *TMWKM* consists of the different narratives where the fifteen women and one man told about their experiences with sexual violence.

One should remain aware of the power relations underlying this book, which means that it is important to be aware of one’s own position and location. For the editors this means to be aware of their privileged position to record the survivors’ stories and their power to disseminate it to a more wider audience. At the same time, publishing this book also means receiving proceeds to invest in, among other things, survivors of the Rwandan genocide. This relates to my third point, namely affecting people with this book and project. The intended audience is everyone (De Brouwer 2011a), but especially the international community is repeatedly addressed throughout the book (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009: 5, 40, 56, 123, 158, 166). The international community seems to be held accountable for permitting the genocide. Roméo Dallaire, Force Commander of UNAMIR, lead a mission in Rwanda with very few help and ‘foreigners’ were pulled out from Rwanda as soon as the genocide started and therefore ‘abandoned’ Rwanda (Dallaire 2003). Through this collection the international community is made aware of this and speaks to its responsibility to not abandon them again. The following quote symbolizes how the international community is held accountable and is given a chance to change the faults that were made in the past:

[t]he international community can contribute by raising awareness of sexual violence, mobilizing national governments into action and contributing to reparation initiatives and justice projects. Survivors of sexual violence are a living testament to our collective abandonment of them, but they also represent the promise of transformative change. We cannot afford to turn our backs on them again. (158)

Thus, through *TMWKM* the editors try to remind the international community of what happened through their own personal experiences with the individual narratives. At the same time they are also critical towards the role the international community had during the genocide.

Lastly, when it comes to speaking for these interviewees, one has to be aware of the tension between on the one hand colonialism and the other hand relativism. As an editor of a book like this one could easily fall into the trap of judging rapists and maybe even judge Rwandans for the genocide and the sexual violence. However, in my opinion this book is written in such a way that it claims a 'middle' position. It does not claim a colonialist position, meaning that the editors do not judge Rwandan or African people for the genocide and the sexual violence that occurred in 1994. On the contrary, they are critical vis-à-vis the international community. At the same time, it does not relativize either. Relativism could be most easily explained by using Donna Haraway's definition. According to her, relativism is "a way of being nowhere while claiming to be everywhere equally" (1991: 191). Though the editors are critical they are mostly critical towards the international community. Furthermore, they use empathy to yield certain affects. For example, the editors claim in the introduction of the book that "[t]hey [the interviewees] have taught us how important it is to remember our common humanity" (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009: 5).

Moreover, Eve Ensler also speaks to this by representing women as "the primary resource of our planet. If they are destroyed, with them so is our future. If they are violated and desecrated anywhere on this earth, *we are all violated and desecrated*" (Ensler 2009: 166; my emphasis). Both the editors and Ensler aim to bring these women and men closer to us and in this way "create an approach to trauma that focuses on the everyday and the insidious" (Cvetkovich 2007: 464). Their stories and especially how they deal with the aftermath of what happened points to this aspect of affect. People are not just one homogeneous group with the same interests, but it points to the use of a 'politics of engagement', "which weds efforts to learn about mutual histories with the search for coalitions across differences" (Davis 2004: 309). Even though we are all human we also differ and try to find a balance between the similarities and differences. Showing the reading audience this, stimulates empathy. Kathy Davis, a senior researcher at the Institute of History and Culture at Utrecht University in the Netherlands with a long-standing interest in feminist scholarship on women's bodies and health, wrote an article about female genital cutting in which she expressed her own sense of an "embodied ouch" (Davis 2004: 308). This term means that she imagines the consequences genital cutting has on women. Eve Ensler's call to be "disturbed by what you have read, really disturbed" (166) can be connected to this sense of empathy.

Imagination is key here since it is important to “enter imaginatively into the worlds of others without stretching these Others on the Procrustean bed of my own experience” (Bartky qtd. in Davis 2004: 308). Thus, one cannot equal the experiences of Others to one’s own, but one can imagine the effect Others’s experiences has on them.



## 2. INDIVIDUAL NARRATIVES

### 2.1 Faustin Kayihura

*Faustin, wearing dark jeans and a white shirt, stands next to a house and looks at something I cannot see. The sky seems to be cloudy but bright, and so seems Faustin. It seems as if he has his hands folded behind his back and his facial expression cannot be easily read. He frowns and his mouth is slightly opened. He looks as if he wants to say something, but hesitates... Maybe he is thinking about the past and what happened to him during the genocide. Maybe he wants to say something to the woman who sexually violated him. This image sticks to my mind, but I cannot fully comprehend the meaning of this image...<sup>32</sup>*

Faustin Kayihura is the only man who testified in *The Men Who Killed Me*. Faustin was thirteen years old when the genocide took place and even though he changed hiding places every day, he was found by a Hutu woman who raped him repeatedly every day and saw him as her 'husband'.

Faustin's testimony starts with addressing the fact that he is a man and that it is considered shameful to be raped by a woman:

[i]t was a very difficult experience, and not all men are brave enough to talk about it. (...) I don't want Hutu to hear about this, because I don't want to give them the satisfaction. They may ridicule me. I can only share this with other survivors of the genocide<sup>33</sup>. (91)

To me, being a man is significant here and named as part of the narrative. This testimonial stands out for its explicit naming of gender. Normally male seems to be "our society's default gender. Men are the norm, while women are the 'marked' gender, representing otherness. Or, simply put, men are people, but women are women" (Poirier 2011). As the only man in this book testifying about sexual violence, Faustin points out that there is a stigma on sexual violence vis-à-vis men (De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu 2009:

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<sup>32</sup> This short text is my own encounter with Faustin through a photo that featured in *TMWKM*. Unfortunately, I could not include the photo in my thesis.

<sup>33</sup> Whenever I cite from one of the testimonials I will only use the page numbers.

91). He does not know of other men who also experienced sexual violence. Therefore, sexual violence experienced by men is hard to represent. For example, I once had a discussion on Facebook because of an article on the increase of female rapists in Zimbabwe. We discussed how men can be raped and how that is possible to begin with. This discussion does not prove anything, but does show that a lot of people are unaware of the existence of male victims of sexual violence. In “Testimonies and the Limits of Representation” (1998), Ernst van Alphen discusses the conviction that the Holocaust is unrepresentable. He also considers the different forms of representing an event and asks himself whether one could prefer a historical account over an imaginative discourse (1998). Dori Laub claims that historically ‘correct’ accounts of an event like for example World War II are favored; it seems to be more important to have an ‘accurate’ historical account of the World War II (1992). Van Alphen claims that “[t]he extreme horror of the historical reality causes language to fall short” (1998: 43). When it comes to the wider context of sexual violence vis-à-vis men then this claim could point to the more general notion of unrepresentability, even unrepresentability when it comes to sexual violence done to men *and* women. What is interesting about Van Alphen’s text is how he sees experiences:

[r]eality is, rather, a discontinuous chaos. However, we experience and represent events in such a way – generally speaking in terms of a narrative framework – as to make a continuous sequence out of these events. This allows them to be understood as meaningful. (1998: 50-1)

Van Alphen’s main subject in his text is World War II and when it comes to frameworks after the war he contends that “the problem Holocaust survivors encounter is precisely that the lived events could not be experienced because language did not provide the terms with which to experience them” (ibid.: 50). The testimonies in *TMWKM* all have a similar structure: before, during and after the genocide. However, Faustin’s testimony starts with his personal lack of a framework for Faustin to express his experiences with sexual violence. Every experience of sexual violence is of course different, but here gender and the lack of a framework is explicitly named. Still, one should be critical of seeing him as a representative for all Rwandan men who were sexually violated. As Van Alphen states: “the experience of an event is already a representation; it is not the event

itself" (ibid.: 44). Thus, his experience is already a representation and the way his story is written down contributes to that. However, his narrative could serve as a framework for future narratives on sexual violence against men.

In the first part of my analysis I discussed representation and I referred to a quote by Van Alphen that experiencing an event is already a representation. Personally, I am ambivalent to this observation. On the one hand, a representation evolves out of a certain experience. On the other hand, experiencing something is a representation since for example, a certain selection takes place in someone's mind whether something is meaningful to remember. To put this experience into words results in another representation. For example, Faustin mostly uses the personal pronouns "I" and "we". Before the genocide, when he still had a family (of eight family members, the only one that survived was Faustin's brother) he mostly used "we". Furthermore, he also used "we" when he talked about how Tutsi were treated before the genocide. However, when the genocide starts during his narration he mostly uses "I". This seems logical since during the genocide he was mostly alone, but at the same time this change symbolizes a transition from before the genocide to during and after the genocide: before the genocide he did not feel alone, whereas during and after the genocide he felt alone. Furthermore, he does not know of any man who also went through sexual violence (91) and by the end of his story, he says that he lives alone and finds this difficult (97). Furthermore, words that are put in quotation marks can also be interesting. In Faustin's testimony the only word that is put between quotation marks is 'work'. This word is part of the following sentences: "[w]hen the Presidential Guards came to Butare, my family overheard them asking the Interahamwe why the militia had not started their "work" yet. Soon after, the prefect was killed, and then killings started to happen in Butare" (93). The fact that Faustin puts this word between quotation marks, may point to the unrepresentability of his experiences and again to a lacking of a podium to express himself.

The first time Faustin spoke about being sexually violated was in 2007, and he does not talk to Hutu about what happened to him during the genocide. He only shares his experiences with other survivors of the genocide (91). The language that he used to describe his experiences in relation to memory can be analyzed in terms of verb senses. There is one particular passage that stands out:

[i]t seems unbelievable, but it is *true*. *I don't have the words* to describe what I was living in those days, but I know that I don't wish it for anyone else, not even my worst enemy. I cried and screamed the entire time. I felt empty. I did not feel anything: no pain, no fear, nothing. I don't *recall* her saying much to me, but my senses were no longer working. I *remember* hearing cries and people yelling outside. Somehow I was still alive, and I was thankful for that. (94; my emphasis)

This particular quote refers to the 'plenitude and loss' model, referred to by Ann Rigney. Following this model, "memory is conceptualized on the one hand in terms of an original 'storehouse' and, on the other hand, as something that is always imperfect and diminishing, a matter of chronic frustration because always falling short of total recall" (2005: 12). Analyzing the passage from Faustin's testimonial, one could claim that this quote symbolizes the 'plenitude and loss' model. On the one hand, the present tense is used: *it is true, I don't have the words, I know, I don't recall, I remember*. This refers to the first part of the 'plenitude and loss' model: memory as a storehouse in which things 'just' are what they are. Especially *it is true* is striking since this seems to be positioned as something fixed.

At the same time, some of these words also refer to the 'imperfection' of memory and thus to the second part of the 'plenitude and loss' model. This 'lived memory' "is constantly on the brink of extinction or erosion with the passage of time as the richness of experience fades and those who did the experiencing die out. At a certain point, the only way for the memory to survive is for it to be written down" (ibid.). In this sense, Faustin's testimony is a way to fix his memories (*I cried and screamed, I felt, I did not feel, my senses were no longer working, I was still alive, I was thankful*) and to write down his memories. Halbwachs argues that "whereas words and thoughts die out, writings remain" (Halbwachs qtd. in Rigney 2005: 21) and thus, it is important to fix Faustin's memories. The story as it is in the book seems to be constructed in a way that fits the rest of the narratives. Though every narrative differs in content, each narrative more or less uses the same framework (Meijer 2010a). Thus, the narrative is constructed according to a framework and it weaves together the material that came out from the different interviews. Faustin's memories are in this way constructed in a way that is understandable to the readers. At the same time, this way of framing a narrative also serves to 'preserving' memories.

Faustin's narrative ends with how he is doing after the genocide: he stopped going to school, because of worries about his house; he hated himself for a long time, but in the end he did find people who care for him now. He learned about the 'good' side of women, but at the same time he has a hard time dealing with what he hears at the *gacaca* court. Testifying for unity and reconciliation purposes is hard for him and other genocide survivors, even though the government pushes them to do so. However, things also seem to be better for him since *TMWKM* was released. According to the website of *TMWKM* Faustin

feels comforted by the support given to him. He feels that others care about him and this alleviates his fears in life. He would like to further renovate his house, but more importantly, he strives to invest in a future career as he realizes that the sponsorship will eventually end. Faustin's dream is to become a medical assistant after he finishes secondary school next year. (Ka Hon Chu 2010)

Thus, even though Faustin's testimony shows his struggles after the genocide, participating in this project of *TMWKM* allowed him to voice his experiences with sexual violence. His story may mean something for other men who were sexually violated during the genocide or experienced sexual violence in general. His narrative provides a framework and language to voice men's experiences. This does not mean that this narrative has to be utilized for this and that men's experiences are homogeneous. It does mean that it is helpful for men who do not know how to narrate about their experiences.

## **2.2 Hyacintha Nirere**

*Hyacintha sits on the ground with her hands folded around her knees. The light from the supposed window falls fragmentedly on Hyacintha. She wears a colorful shirt and she light falls on her face. She seems young, but on the other hand I can tell she has been through much in her life. She does not look happy, but I also see hope in her face<sup>34</sup>.*

Hyacintha Nirere, born in 1981, was repeatedly raped by different men during the 1994 Rwandan genocide, was forced to stay in a 'marriage' with one of her rapists, bore a daughter as a result and became infected with HIV because of the sexual violence she endured during the genocide. She "was only twelve years old when [she] was brutally raped during the genocide, at different times by different men" (117). Because of these events, she "never got the chance to live [her] life as [she] had wished" (ibid.). The most striking example of missing chances is that according to Hyacintha herself, she did not develop naturally from a girl to a woman: when she was raped she did not know anything about sex and she was not ready to become a mother (ibid.).

Before the genocide, Hyacintha already experienced the stigmatization and discrimination Tutsi went through: in 1991 her father, employed as a policeman, was fired because the mayor of their commune told the police's inspector that he was too old; and Hyacintha's brother was arrested when he was listening to a radio station promoting unity and reconciliation for all Rwandans. Moreover, since 1990 (because of the RPF invasion) Hyacintha sensed distrust between Hutu and Tutsi. For example, Hyacintha says that "Hutu stopped their conversations whenever a Tutsi passed by. In schools, Hutu and Tutsi were made to identify themselves. The Hutu majority would then ridicule the Tutsi minority" (118). Thus, throughout the years, power relations became visible between Hutu and Tutsi and this had an effect on Hyacintha's life.

Approximately a week after the genocide started, fleeing Tutsi came to Hyacintha's area. Her father was one of the first people to be killed in the community Hyacintha lived in. He went there because a Hutu neighbor told him that he had to go to the nearest roadblock to fight the invading RPF (ibid.). During the genocide, roadblocks were set up in order to identify people and depending from their ethnicity Hutu killed

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<sup>34</sup> This short text is my own encounter with Hyacintha through a photo that featured in *TMWKM*.

them or not. According to Taylor, Rwandan refugees who talked to him, persistently mentioned roadblocks. Furthermore, he argues that “[l]ike Nazi shower rooms in the concentration camps, these were the most frequent loci of execution for Rwanda’s Tutsi and Hutu opponents of the regime” (2001: 130).

After her father was murdered, Hyacintha and one of her sisters hid at a house of one of her sister’s Hutu friends. There she, as well as her sister, were repeatedly raped. Eventually they were able to flee, but Hyacintha ran into a group of FAR soldiers who took her to a camp. At that camp she was repeatedly raped again, and after the genocide ended she stayed in a ‘marriage’ with one of her rapists for another two years. Only after “he had become more and more afraid [she] would tell the RPF about his true identity” (122) did he flee to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

There are two specific aspects of this testimonial that interested me: fear and anger. First, one of the main emotions Hyacintha felt during the genocide, but also after the genocide, is fear. After she was raped for the first time, she was afraid she would be killed soon and this interconnection between fear and killing also proved to be important at the end of her narrative. For example, Hyacintha is afraid to testify at the *gacaca* courts, because others who did were intimidated or killed. Furthermore, she narrates to De Brouwer & Ka Hon Chu: “I wonder why I should give my testimony, because the Interahamwe are being released. It seems that our testimonies in *gacaca* courts are more formalities than truly helpful” (123). Last, Hyacintha blames the international community for abandoning the Rwandans while the genocide took place. She argues that

[i]f the international community is still denying the realities and atrocities of the genocide, then they are still killing us. Maybe our testimonies will help them open their eyes. Maybe. We are still hurting, and we wish someone would notice. (ibid.)

In Hyacintha’s case, killing is still a process that is apparent in her life. That the international community abandoned her and other survivors was an act of killing, but if the international community keeps on doing that the process of killing is still in place. However, it is unclear whether she thinks the international community is still in denial. Through this particular quote it is clear that she and other survivors are still hurting, and this could relate to the denial of the international community. In this way, not only

the perpetrators are seen as guilty for executing sexual violence, but denial by the international community is seen as a continuance of the sexual violence that occurred during the genocide.

As I already mentioned before, one of the aims of this book was awareness-raising. What is significant about the last part of Hyacintha's testimonial is that it reflects the individual and different elements of the testimonials. Even though the stories are framed in a similar manner, every narrative shows its different character and especially these individual aspects make it interesting, because all of these individual aspects together form a collective narrative. Especially the end of every testimonial shows that. It shows how the different women and man cope with their traumas, but also how they see the perpetrators, the way the genocide is dealt with through justice, how they live their daily lives but in this case also how they see the role of the international community. Hyacintha wants people to care about what happened in 1994 and to make people realize their part in this world and how important the help is of others. Her story, as well as Faustin's, show that the interviews have different meanings for the interviewees. While Hyacintha urged the international community not to deny sexual violence, Faustin's narrative ends with the expression of a wish to improve his life conditions. Another example is that they both deal differently with forgiveness: for a while, Faustin hated all women, but after he started to get to know women, he saw another side of women and now he is healing (97). Hyacintha cannot forgive her rapists or the perpetrators who killed her father (123). Thus, the narratives in *The Men Who Killed Me* form a broad range of stories which all contribute to knowledge concerning sexual violence during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.



### **2.3 Limits to my analyses**

Analyzing *TMWKM* has been an interesting journey. My original plan for this master's thesis was to analyze a total of five testimonials. However, while I started with my first analysis I realized the difficulties of analyzing narratives of sexual violence. Throughout the different processes of reading and writing I struggled to analyze these stories. Different reasons underlie pitfalls: first, I struggled with how to examine the different narratives, because I did not want to critique the narratives itself. These stories are difficult and painful to read and I did not want to judge them. That would not do justice to the survivors who went through these painful experiences. I hope that my thesis will be a reason for people to read *TMWKM*, to be "disturbed by what [they] have read here, really disturbed" (Enslar 2009: 166) and to act on this (new) awareness. Reading this book is just one thing people can do (since the proceeds of the book goes to the *Mukomeze* Foundation it helps women who went through sexual violence), but I hope people will be interested in reading more on this topic, in getting involved in an organization that is dealing with sexual violence or other related activities.

Second, as I have repeatedly argued in this thesis, the varying narratives are framed in a certain way. Each story begins and ends differently. The beginning and the end are mostly about reflections on the past and the future: how their lives have changed because of the genocide, what they think of the way the genocide is dealt with in a legal way, how they deal with the sexual violence they went through, et cetera. Between the beginning and the end, the interviewees describe how their lives were before the genocide, how the genocide started, the course of the genocide, the sexual violence they went through and how the genocide came to an end. Moreover, the way the narratives were written down did not give me enough space to actually analyze these stories with the literature I chose. Subsequently, I focused more on the collective part of my analysis and combined with the literature I chose, I was able to analyze the book as a whole.

## CONCLUSION

Through my thesis, I hope I have shown how collective and individual narratives of sexual violence contribute to remembrance practices of the Rwandan genocide. The various expressions of remembrance, through the book *The Men Who Killed Me*, the photo exhibition, the memorials, the website and the *Mukomeze* Foundation, all contribute to the creation and maintenance of frameworks to remember the Rwandan genocide. Sexual violence is an important feature of the genocide and, through the various narratives, the memories of sexual violence are kept alive in order to remind people how horrible sexual violence is. Moreover, the topic of sexual violence is as present-day as ever since unfortunately, sexual violence still happens every day. It does not only occur in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but also in Western countries. I hope I have proved through this thesis that the construction of narratives is still on going. A direct example of this occurred two days ago, when I watched the news on Dutch television. There was a news item on Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, during the genocide the Rwandan Minister for Family Welfare and the Advancement of Women, and the first woman to be convicted for rape: she encouraged Hutu men to rape Tutsi women. Subsequently, some parts of the *TMWKM*-narratives were read aloud by the news anchor, accompanied by their photos. At that particular moment I realized how the circle is closing: almost four years ago, I started studying Gender Studies after reading a narrative on sexual violence and at this particular moment in time I am finishing my master's thesis on sexual violence. At the same time, my engagement with sexual violence will never be a finished project. *The Men Who Killed Me* is a collection of narratives that touched me deeply and keeping the memories alive of its survivors is something I think is necessary and something I will keep pursuing.

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