

## Traumatized Ecology: Ecocritical Study of Scholastique Mukasonga's Writing

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### ABSTRACT

Various researchers have offered critical opportunities for reading the Rwandan genocide literature in general and the testimony of Scholastique Mukasonga in particular through trauma and memory studies. And these anthropocentric and phenomenological approaches have paid insignificant attention to environmental issues consciously or unconsciously raised in the texts, providing a minimalist and myopic reading of African war texts and Mukasonga's Rwandan genocide accounts. My study intends to examine the "marginalized presences" of a traumatized ecology in the writing of Scholastique Mukasonga representing the Rwandan genocide and its impacts on the natural environment of the Rwandan society. My methodology involves critical and textual analysis of sampled texts drawn from Mukasonga's *Inyenzi ou les cafards* and *La Femme aux pieds nus*, using postcolonial ecocritical theory to assess the Rwandan ethnic conflict and its ecological implication. My findings are organized around issues of postcolonial ecocriticism such as tropes of animalization of enemy tribes, ecological trauma, nature and culture, among others. This shows that otherness, stereotypes and political hegemony give impetus to the concept of "animalized tribes" and "ethnic cleansing" and lead to "multiple forms of ecodegradation" represented in the literary texts under study.

**Keywords:** Ecological trauma, Ecocriticism, the *Inyenzi* metaphor, Rwandan genocide, Othering

### INTRODUCTION

Scholastique Mukasonga's writing can be perceived as products of postmemory and collective memory or secondary witness whose authorial intentions are to demonstrate, albeit fictionally, traumatizing effects of the Rwandan Civil war and conflicts. Studies<sup>1</sup> on these war texts and many others from African and Western writers have been necessarily anthropocentric and phenomenological because trauma and memory studies are used as theoretical framework. Other scholars and critics pay much attention to the question of language of the traumatized<sup>2</sup>. Dalhousie

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<sup>1</sup> V. Bonnet and E. Sevrain. "Témoignages de rescapées rwandaises: modalités et intentions." *IPOTESI\_Revista de Estud-os literarios*, 2008, 106; R. Kennedy "The Narrator as Witness. Testimony, Trauma and Narrative Form in *My Place*." *Meridan* 16, no.2 (1997) : 235-260; O. B. Laursen. "Telling her a Story": Remembering Trauma in Andrea Levy's Writing." *Enter Text*, "Special Issue on Andrea Levy" 9 (2012): 53-68.

<sup>2</sup> S. Gehrman Gehrman, Susanne. "The Child soldier's Soliloquy. Voices of a New Archetype in African Writing." *Etudes littéraires africaines*, 32 (2011): 31-43; M. O. Kikukama. "Les hardiesses langagières dans *Quand on refuse on dit non*

French Studies had consecrated a volume titled *Representation of Trauma in French and Francophone Literature*<sup>3</sup> without emphasis on environmental sensibilities of these studied texts. It is obvious that many critical scholarly works on African war texts appear to prioritize the human over the nonhuman trauma because of their anthropocentrism. My study agrees that such works could serve as postmemorial evidences for sympathizers and survivors of trauma; it however affirms that the trope of ecological disaster of the Rwandan genocide as represented by Scholastique Mukasonga's texts under study has not been elaborately treated.

In this work, I posit that aside the extermination of human lives or Rwandan genocide, African flora and fauna that constitute the biotic composition of African societies, suffered greatly from the consequences of these wars, as represented in our chosen corpus, thereby being a part of what Buell, Ursula and Thornber call "the multiple forms of ecodegradation that affect Planet Earth today"<sup>4</sup>. In relying on ecocriticism which primarily gives increased attention to literary representations of nature<sup>5</sup> with postcolonial studies, this study intends to "recuperate the alterity of both history and nature"<sup>6</sup> as African postcolonial civil wars are perceived to be offshoots of Prattian Eurocentric "planetary consciousness" and 1886's partition of Africa. This article is divided into different segments. The first section demonstrates the relationship between literature, environment and ecocriticism as a literary theory and the tropes that will be investigated. The second looks at how othering of humans and territorializing of space culminate into the animalization of enemy tribe, thereby constituting the artistic ideology of Mukasonga's texts. In the third section, I will analyse the violentisation of the Rwandan nature, the trauma of its pastoral ecology and the abiosis of its flora and fauna.

## LITERATURE, ENVIRONMENT AND ECOCRITISM

Environmental literature is concerned with the relationship between man and nature, the ecosystem and the eco-sphere<sup>7</sup>. Scholars<sup>8</sup> have underscored that the works on the relationship between literature and environment are really scarce in Africa, except few such as Cajetan Iheka's doctoral

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d'Ahmadou Kourouma." *Synergies Afrique des Grands Lacs* 1 (2012): 101-117. K. M. Kodah. "The language of a Child-Soldier-Narrator as the Voice of Truth: a Critical Study of Ahmadou Kourouma's *Allah n'est pas obligé*." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (IOSR-JHSS)* 15, no.2 (2013): 74-83.

<sup>3</sup> N. Simek & Z. Zalloua, Zahi. (Eds.) *Representations of Trauma in French and Francophone Literature*. Dalhousie French Studies, 81 (2007): 29-39.

<sup>4</sup> Buell, Laurence, Herse, Ursula and Thornber, Karen. "Literature and Environment." *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 36.2011, 417-440.

<sup>5</sup> C. Glyofelty and H. Fromm (Eds.). *The Ecocriticism Reader*, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> E. DeLoughrey and G. B. Handley.. *Postcolonial Ecologies*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 4.

<sup>7</sup> I. E. Asika. and B. N. Madu. "Ecocriticism and the African Flora and Fauna: an Ecocritical Discourse of Obinkaram Echewa's *The Land's Lord*." *European Journal of English Language, Linguistics and Literature* 2, no.1 (2015):32; U. Nwagbara. "Poetics of Resistance: Ecocritical Reading of Ojaide's *Delta Blues & Home Songs* and *Daydreams of Ants and other Poems*." *African Study Monographs* 31, no.1 (2010):17; K. Shkha. "Ecocriticism in Indian Fiction." *IRWLE* 7, no.1 (2011):1-2.

<sup>8</sup> See, T. M. Njanji. "Chenjerai Hove's Environmental Sensibilities: Ecocritical Readings of *Bones* (1988) and *Ancestors* (1996)" *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 4, no.10 (2014):125.

work<sup>9</sup>, Okuyade's *Ecocritical Literature: Regreening African Landscapes*<sup>10</sup>, and *Environment at the Margins*<sup>11</sup> which have given a deserving attention, through their insights, to environmental discourse in African writing. However, none of them, regrettably, discusses francophone African eco-literature. However, Gloyfelty and Fromm's *The Ecocriticism Reader*, DeLoughrey and Handley's *Postcolonial Ecologies* and Huggan and Tiffin's *Postcolonial Ecocriticism* could serve dialogically as guide to the question of possible theorization of nature in Francophone African war texts to which the above mentioned published research works have not provided insights. Most of the intertribal and intratribal wars and conflicts in francophone war texts are fought both in bushes, forests or cities; in essence, it is not only the human that gets wounded, but also the nonhuman feels the negative impact of these wars though it loses its voice in its nonhumanity and is subjected to anthropocentric subalternity. And it is the recuperation of the nonhuman's voicelessness that many nature writers intend to foreground and many ecocritics strive to unearth in literary works that overtly or covertly align with ecological sensibilities.

In Kourouma's *Allah n'est pas obligé*<sup>12</sup> and *Quand on refuse on dit non*<sup>13</sup>, the author portrays sufficiently the cities and forests as epicenters of warfare as Birahima narrates his escapades from one village, location or town to another. He traverses through the flora and fauna that constitute the ecosystem of the represented societies of Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Ivory Coast and which are represented as haven for the oppressors and the oppressed. Kourouma's *Quand on refuse on dit non* whose cover page depicts a child soldier with a spear in a bush where he is hidden by growing plants begins with a proverbial animal imagery of "singe" [monkey] and "chien" [dog] that predicts the evocation of the trope of animalization of enemy tribes. His text equally deploys olfactory images that emanate from different "charniers" [open cemetery] polluting the human and nonhuman environments. Aside Francophone war literature, travel works in French demonstrate some environmental concerns that are worthy of study in African literature of French expression. J. M. G. Le Clézio's *Onitsha*<sup>14</sup> and *L'Africain*<sup>15</sup> portray the Nigerian ecosystem and its exploitation by the Whites, thereby illustrating the ecological imperialism of the colonial project and showing that ecocriticism "affords new perspectives on fictional as well as nonfictional ecologies"<sup>16</sup>. It is important to note that all the writers referred to above do not intentionally write about ecology or environment but it is impossible to discuss man without his natural habitat; besides "ecological science holds that all life-forms are interconnected, but what are the philosophical and cultural implications of this interconnectedness"<sup>17</sup> is what literature intends to embody. African literature

<sup>9</sup> Iheka, Cajetan. "African Literature and the Environment: A Study in Postcolonial Ecocriticism." Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Michigan, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Okuyade, Ogaga. (Ed.) *Eco-critical Literature: Regreening African Landscapes*, (New York, Lagos & London: African Heritage Press, 2013)

<sup>11</sup> Caminero-Santangelo, Byron and Myer, Garth (Eds.) *Environment at the Margins: Literary and Environmental Studies in Africa*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> A. Kourouma. Amadou. *Allah n'est pas obligé*, (Paris: Edition du Seuil, 2000).

<sup>13</sup> A. Kourouma. *Quand on refuse on dit non*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> J.M.G Le Clézio. *Onitsha*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> J.M.G Le Clézio. *L'Africain*, (Paris: Gallimard, 2004.)

<sup>16</sup> M. Lehtimäki. "Natural Environments in Narrative Context: Cross-Pollinating Ecocriticism and Narrative Theory." *StoryWorlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 3 (2013):120.

<sup>17</sup> T. Morton. "The Mesh." In *Environmental Criticism of the Twenty-First Century*, Ed. S. LeManager, T. Shewry & K. Hiltner, (New York: Routledge. 2011):22.

is fond of making an allegorical and metaphorical use of nature but paratextually. Kourouma's *Les Soleils des indépendances*, Achebe's *Anhills of the Savannah*, Joe Ushie's *A Reign of Locusts*, Ben Jelloun's *L'Enfant de sable*, Bhêly-Quenun's *Chant du lac* among others are titles that reflect the environmental sensibilities of African writing and how the African writers engage in the production of ecological knowledge in a subtle way. However, my study problematizes the determinist notion of "ecological sensibilities" of literary works as used to ascertain the "environmentalness" of literary texts as conceived by many Western theorists and critics. Such a theoretical and canonical fixation reinforces the intentional fallacy of the author because works of writers such as Mukasonga, Kourouma and others cannot be subjected to ecocritical poetics since they are not environmental activists per se, though their writings show discursive possibilities and prospects in ecocriticism.

This study intends to be postcolonially ecological so as to speak for human and nonhuman alike<sup>18</sup> because "nature is thoroughly implicated in culture, and culture is thoroughly implicated in nature"<sup>19</sup>. With such ecological underpinnings, it is possible for me to exhume "the presence of the natural world in works which do not explicitly feature ecology or the ecological crisis as such"<sup>20</sup> because as Dana Mount<sup>21</sup> puts it, they are a part of the myriad voices that will decide which paths we take in terms of environmental (ir)responsibility. My work borrows from Mount's postcolonial use of "everyday environmentalism" as characteristic of postcolonial texts to read Mukasonga's writing, showing the colonial Rwandan pastoral and Rwandan relationship with nature while its framework of "postcolonial ecological trauma" will demonstrate how these war texts struggle with issues of identity, space, nationhood among others that culminate into the Rwandan genocide. These texts have some phenomenological keystones since they show how bodies are dis/connected to the sense of place, a mobility of human genocide to ecological genocide. This study contests minimalist cum anthropocentric reading of African war texts and its contemporary scholarship. It sustains the fact that environmentalism of studied literary works could describe conscious and unconscious sensibilities of African writers or what Ogaga Okuyade calls "eco-logical consciousness"<sup>22</sup>. It, therefore, challenges the boundaries of dogmatic and ontological categorization of environmentalist writers. The study complements other works as it ecocritically portrays natural resources as the root causes of African interethnic wars and demonstrates the trope of animals such as "les cafards", "cockroaches", "snake" and others, now used as ecological idioms to describe enemy tribes. That is, it discusses the use of nonhuman other to animalize the human other as we see in Mukasonga's *La femme aux pieds nus*<sup>23</sup> and *Inyenzi ou cafards*<sup>24</sup> that illustrate the Edenic pastoral ecology in pre-genocide Rwanda.

### **Pastoral Ecology, Environmental consciousness in pre-genocide Rwanda**

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<sup>18</sup> K. Hutchings. "Ecocriticism in British Romantic Studies." *Literature Compass* 4, no.1 (2007):174.

<sup>19</sup> D. Phillips. "Ecocriticism, Literary Theory, and the Truth of Ecology." *New Literary History* 30, no.3 (1999):577-578.

<sup>20</sup> Njanji, *Ibid*, 129.

<sup>21</sup> Mount, Dana. "Everyday Environmentalisms in Postcolonial Literature", PhD Thesis, McMaster University, Ontario-Canada, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Okuyade, *Ibid*.

<sup>23</sup> S. Mukasonga. *La femme aux pieds nus*, (Paris: Gallimard, 2008), 2015, Edition numérique.

<sup>24</sup> S. Mukasonga. *Inyenzi ou les cafards*, (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), 2014, Edition numérique.

Scholastique Mukasonga's *La femme aux pieds nus* and *Inyenzi ou les cafards*, though traumatic autobiographies that discuss the Rwandan genocide and its violent effects on her immediate family, show a heavy presence of ecological elements. Mukasonga's traumatic texts might not be classified as letters of nature writing, but they possess certain spirits of nature writing because as Mark Allister puts it, "metaphorically, the author life is written on the level and all its inhabitants, human, animal, plant and rock, and by turning terrain into text, geography into consciousness, these authors create a new and significant kind of life-writing. Ecology intertwines with culture."<sup>25</sup> *La femme aux pieds nus* provides a space for mourning and equally appears to be a tribute to the Rwandan womankind whose "aux pieds nus" [barefoot] is an allegory of agricultural activities and her romance with the African nature and wild. My position is justified in her mother's agrarian experience of "la houe à la main, retourner la terre, et semer, et sarcler, et récolter, que ce soit avant notre exil, à Gikongoro, à Magi..."<sup>26</sup> [hoe in hand, and cultivate the land, and sow, and weed, and harvest whatsoever before our exile to Gikongoro, to Magi...] which is representational of the Rwandan womanhood. Like Maathai's memoir *Unbowed*, Mukasonga appears to begin "her story with childhood memory of a beautiful, health-giving, and well managed natural environment which sustains the human community physically and spiritually and which is itself sustained by that community's care, reverence, and sacred ecological practice and knowledge."<sup>27</sup>

Without ambiguity, agriculture is the mainstay of the Rwandan people as "95% of the population resided in the countryside, and 90% relied on agriculture to sustain themselves"<sup>28</sup>. This factor is apparently responsible for Mukasonga's ideological engagement with environment and her discourse of pastoral ecology in her texts under study. *Inyenzi* traces the beginning of Mukasonga's life of internal exiles and multiple displacements from her south-west province of Gikongoro that prides itself as the "forêt de Nyungwe, la grande forêt d'altitude qui abrite...les derniers elephants de forêt"<sup>29</sup> [Nyungwe forest, the great high forest that shelters...the forest elephants] Her father, Cosma is described as a literate assistant to the Chief but not as "un aristocrate possesseur de grands troupeaux de vaches comme certains imaginent les Tutsi"<sup>30</sup> [an aristocrat, possessing large herds of cows as some think of the Tutsi] to concur with Percival and Homer-Dixon who affirm that "the greatest determinant of ethnicity was the possession of cattle; those who possessed cattle were Tutsi, and those who did not were Hutu"<sup>31</sup>. In short, the Tutsi are classified as pastoralists and the Hutu as farmers<sup>32</sup>. Mukasonga's autobiographies engage in an environmental and ecological discourse as she showcases the nation's rich environmental resources: water, land and air as the villages cohabit with the animal kingdom. The narrator confirms this animal-human relationship in her words:

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<sup>25</sup> M. Allister. *Refiguring the Map of Sorrow*, (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2001):3.

<sup>26</sup> S. Mukasonga. *La femme*, Ibid. 42.

<sup>27</sup> B. Caminero-Santangelo. "Shifting the Center: A Tradition of Environmental Literary Discourse from Africa." In *Environmental criticism for the Twenty-First Century*. Ed. Stephanie LeMenager, Teresa Shewry & Ken Hiltner, Ibid., 148.

<sup>28</sup> V. Percival and T. Homer-Dixon. "Environmental Scarcity and Violent Conflict: the Case of Rwanda." *Journal of Environment and Development* 5, no.3 (September 1996):270.

<sup>29</sup> S. Mukasonga. *Inyenzi*, 15.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>31</sup> Percival and Homer-Dixon, Ibid., 273.

<sup>32</sup> K. Boudreaux. "Land Conflict and Genocide in Rwanda." *The Electronic Journal of Sustainable Development* 1, no.3 (2009):86.

Souvent, en effet, des éléphants traversaient les villages pour aller d'une étendue de brousse encore sauvage à une autre. Parfois, l'un d'eux, on ne sait pourquoi, suivait la route. Les parents nous avaient dit: "surtout, restez derrière l'éléphant, ne dépassez jamais l'éléphant, ne vous mettez jamais devant lui." On suivait l'animal qui avançait majestueusement, comme en flânant. Les Rwandais ont toujours admiré la démarche de l'éléphant, qu'ils considèrent comme gracieuse et élégante...<sup>33</sup>

Truly, elephants often crossed the villages from one expanse of wild bush to another. Sometimes, one of them, we do not know why, followed the road. Our parents had told us: "Above all, stay behind the elephant, never pass the elephant, never put yourself in front of him." The animal was followed, moving majestically as if strolling. Rwandans have always admired the steps of the elephant, which they consider as graceful and elegant ... (Google-assisted translation)

If the elephants freely traverse the villages as narrated by the young Mukasonga, it means that there are no clear-cut boundaries between human and animal habitats, between homes and forests or bushes, and between the wild and the social space. The veracity of this testimony and the normality of the ecological experience are reinforced by "souvent" and "en effet"; besides the lives of these elephants are not endangered, at least, as at this moment before the genocide's ecological destruction and degradation. The elephants, on their own, do not constitute any danger to the human communities; both the human and nonhuman enjoy an unwritten mutual relationship that can be described as cordial and considerate, thereby showing the environmental sensibilities of the Rwandan locals. In the texts, indigenous dwelling is defined by the interconnection between culture and nature, humans and animals, and people and plants. It does not, however, mean that all animals, including elephants are free from human harm in the Rwandan ecosystem because they are constantly hunted by the Bagesera who are referred as "de grands chasseurs... avec leurs arcs et leurs lances"<sup>34</sup> [great hunters... with their bows and spears]. The hunting is premised on the people's "desire for sustainability" because this clan of hunters uses "des ubushya" [traps] to ward off the animals from destroying their farmlands and to equally trap them for meat. The pastoral practices of the Tutsi and the farming culture of the Hutu are "agro-ecosystem based on indigenous biodiversity, which enables healthy, fulfilling lives."<sup>35</sup>

Mukasonga's exploration of indigenous biodiversity is unveiled in her cultural and culinary discourse on the Rwandan fruits, food, beverages and their preparations which "builds up an (in many ways classical, pastoral) image of the wholesomeness of a way of life rooted in local nature"<sup>36</sup>. While in Gitwe as Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) where the children are left without enrolment in schools, little Mukasonga admits her discovery of the "richesse de la savane" [the riches of the savannah] and of "goûter aux délices sauvages de la brousse"<sup>37</sup> [tasting the raw

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<sup>33</sup> Mukagonga. *Inyenzi*, 37.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-26.

<sup>35</sup> Caminero-Santangelo, *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>37</sup> Mukasonga. *Inyenzi*, 27.

delicacies of the wild]. Her kit includes “des imisagara”, “les iminyonza”, “les amasarazi” and “les amabungo”, a collection of assorted local fruits with sweet juices some of which can only be harvested “dans les endroits où la brousse était très dense, loin des habitants, sur les hauteurs, à Gisunzu”<sup>38</sup> [in places where the bush was very dense, far from the inhabitants on the heights, in Gisunzi] The expedition for the harvest of these fruits and the succulent taste of their juice constitute Mukasonga’s Edenic experience of the wild whose boundary is not culturally constructed, but whose environmental impact leaves her with the only choice of preferring the wood to the school because of what she and her friends stand to gain. Aside the local production of juice, the farms provide resources for the fabrication of local beer. In Mukasonga’s traumatico-ecological texts, the exploitation of ecological resources remains an integral part of pastoral life of rural dwellers, unveiling what constitutes the nature of culture and the culture of nature in the Rwandan pastoral communities. For example, the local brewing of banana beer is a tradition that is sustained through the indoctrination of agro-cultural practice and its biodiversified epistemology.

The production of banana beer, also known locally as urwarwa, is culturally defined; it takes the communal efforts of families and neighbors and its methods of processing are well detailed for possible acculturation<sup>39</sup>. It shows that culture provides a platform for the social appropriation of environmental consciousness and sustainability of ecological preservation which is aligned to the domestic usefulness of natural resources. Urwarwa is produced from some bananas forcefully matured through some agro-cultural processes in banana plantations and it has “l’amaganura” as its secondary product, a drink that “ce sont surtout les femmes qui vont boire cela, avec les enfants, en signe d’amitié.”<sup>40</sup> [It is often women and children who are going to drink that as a mark of friendship]. I must confess that the brewing of urwarwa [banana beer] is incomparable to the procedures of local “bière du sorgho” as detailed in Mukasonga’s text<sup>41</sup>. The narrator chronicles different crops in the Rwandan agro-ecosystem such as “les colocases, les patates douces, le haricot, tous ces legumes...”<sup>42</sup> [cocoyam, sweet potatoes, beans, all these vegetables] which cannot be compared to “le sorgho”, referred to as “le roi de nos champs”<sup>43</sup> [the king of our farm] and whose planting and harvesting are marked with rites because of the mythicized existence of the crop.

The veneration and celebration of sorghum demonstrates its eco-cultural significance in the Rwandan biosphere; its local beer is used to celebrate l’umuganura which is a cultural festival in Rwanda, indirectly dedicated to sorghum. The idolization of crops is engraved in the African mythology as Rwanda’s Umuganura festival could be an equivalent of Ava time Amu (Brown rice) festival of Volta Region of Ghana<sup>44</sup> and that of Iri-ji Ohuru festival in southeastern part of Nigeria<sup>45</sup>. As a cultural signifier, the crop enjoys the assemblage of myths that reify and personify

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>39</sup> Mukasonga, *Inyenzij*, 40-42

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>41</sup> See Chapitre IV in Mukasonga, *La femme*, 42-58

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>44</sup> F. Bormann. “Cultural Tourism and Sustainable Development: A Case Study of *AvaTimeAmu*(Rice) Festival in Volta Region, Ghana.” *Global Journal of Human-Social Science* XV, no.1 (2015):15.

<sup>45</sup> C. M. Ukachukwu. “The Sacred Festival of Iri-Ji Ohuru in Igboland, Nigeria.” *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 16, no.2 (2007): 244.

its existence; it is seen as “un talisman contre la famine et les calamités, un signe de fertilité et d’abondance.”<sup>46</sup> [a charm against famine and calamities, a sign of fertility and abundance]. Conceived from its multifunctional fetishisms, the preservation and protection of sorghum crop constitutes the Rwandan people’s “everyday environmentalism” and their determination to perpetuate its existence. The secondary use of local beer production is traditionally enshrined in the collective memory of the rural communities as described in Mukasonga’s texts. The brewing of local sorghum beer called “ikigage” or “amarwa” follows a detailed systematic procedure which the writer’s traumatized memory does not struggle to illustrate vividly throughout the chapter; though François Lyumugabe et al have given a more technical procedure of its production, which entails steeping, germination, drying, grinding, mashing, cooling, decantation, among others<sup>47</sup>. Mukasonga, however, complains of the locals’ preference of “la Primus” and “Amstel” to her sorghum beer, thereby showing the effects of economic imperialism in Rwanda. This is aside the fact that both primary and secondary products of sorghum have some nutritional and medicinal values that contribute to the healthy lives of community dwellers.

Rwanda’s biodiversity includes its traditional-medical uses of plants and constitutes its pre-modern ecological “civilization” and the writer evokes this discourse to challenge Eurocentric paradigms and rhetoric of civilization. In the words of Richard Ajah<sup>48</sup>, as a ridicule of western civilization, Mukasonga’s *La femme aux pieds nus* illustrates the outbreak of dysentery at Nyamata Refugee camp where the nurse, Bitega works, and the hopelessness of Western medicine that cannot provide medical relief to victims of the epidemic. Stefania has no confidence “en l’efficacité des cachets et du sirop de Bitega”<sup>49</sup> [in the efficacy of pills and syrup from Bitega], but relies on her traditional herbal pharmacy for the wellbeing of her family and neighborhood. The text juxtaposes the inefficacy of European medicine with the potency of indigenous system of healthcare provision, despite the “primitiveness” of the inhabitants of Rwandan societies. For example, Stefania, as a symbol of traditional Rwandan woman with no formal education, knows how to diagnose sicknesses and to constitute traditional alternative health remedies from her “jardin médicinal” [medicinal garden], as confesses her daughter, Scholastique Mukasonga who says: “maman possédait toutes sortes de recettes pour faire face aux maladies et aux blessures”<sup>50</sup> [Mama possessed all sorts of recipes for treating diseases and injuries]. Ecological consciousness leads to the context of the environmentalism of the poor who must ensure the preservation of the herbal plants that could, if uncared for and if ecological imperialism is unchecked, go into extinction. Stefania’s environmentalism is seriously challenged by the war of supremacy between her Tutsi and the Hutu; animals, plants, plantations, lakes, forests suffer greatly from this intertribal conflict that culminates into a genocide.

## Territoriality and Politics of belonging: the Hutu versus the Tutsi

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<sup>46</sup> Mukasonga, *La femme*, 44

<sup>47</sup> Lyumugabe, François *et al.* “Characteristics of African Traditional Beers brewed with Sorghum Malt: A Review.” *Biotechnol. Agron. Soc. Environ.* 16, no. 4 (2012):517.

<sup>48</sup> R. Ajah. “Lilies in the Mires”: Contesting Eurocentric Paradigms and Rhetoric of Civilization in Scholastique Mukasonga’s War Narratives.” *Human and Social Studies* IV, no.1 (2015):53.

<sup>49</sup> Mukasonga, *La femme*, 60.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.



It is apparent that Mukasonga's *Inyenzi ou les cafards* and *La femme aux pieds nus* problematize the master-servant relationship of European colonial powers and indict the Belgian government for their role in the Rwandan Genocide or in what she calls "l'exclusion démocratique"<sup>51</sup> [democratic exclusion]. Being hyphenated, the writer is forced to "inquire into and to challenge [her] experiences"<sup>52</sup> during and after the Rwandan genocide. She becomes like Besio who "looks both landscape as text in which bodies' movements through the village spaces [or through the border spaces] continually 'rewrite' the landscape, asserting and inserting themselves into a dialogue with colonial discourse"<sup>53</sup> In essence, Mukasonga intends to admit that behind the shadows of interethnic war of Rwanda are colonial hands whose interior motive is the manipulation of or the control over natural resources and political dominance of the nation-state. Percival and Homer-Dixon agrees that "a tribal war between the Hutu and Tutsi, [is] rooted in centuries-long competition for control of land and power."<sup>54</sup>

The Rwandan tribal conflict is worsened by the European imperialism and colonization of Africa because "with the growth of precolonial state power, Tutsi and Hutu became important political categories. With the establishment of colonialism, the boundaries of ethnic categories were thickened."<sup>55</sup> The Rwandan born writer, Mukasonga challenges the actions and inactions of the West in the Rwandan Genocide as her autobiography, *La Femme aux pieds nus* opens with such accusatory fingers pointed to the Belgian empire in Africa and the Church in her first chapter. Her subtle confirmation of European guilt and the metaphorical suggestion of "Esau's hands but Jacob's voice" are captured by these words:

Peut-être les autorités hutu, placées par les Belges et l'Eglise à la tête du Rwanda nouvellement indépendant, espéraient-elles que les Tutsi de Nyamata seraient peu à peu décimées par la maladie du sommeil et la famine.<sup>56</sup>

Perhaps, the Hutu authorities, placed by the Belgians and the Church at the head of the newly independent Rwanda, hoped that the Tutsi of Nyamata would be gradually decimated by sleeping sickness and famine (Google-assisted translation).

Mukasonga's allegation is not speculative because historically speaking Rwandan Genocide could have been circumvented if African independent nations are not victims of European neocolonial tendencies. In his *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward W. Said<sup>57</sup> affirms correctly that although the Westerners may have physically left their old colonies in Africa and Asia, but they retained them not only as markets but as locales on the ideological map over which they continued

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<sup>51</sup> Mukasonga, *Inyenzi*, 29.

<sup>52</sup> C. Noy. "The Poetics of Tourist Experience: an Autoethnography of Family Trips to Eliat." *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Changes* 5, no.3 (2007):143.

<sup>53</sup> Besio, K. "Chutes and ladders: negotiating gender and privilege in a village in Northern Parkistan." *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 5.2 (2006): 258-278.

<sup>54</sup> Percival and Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Sarcity...", 217.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 273.

<sup>56</sup> Mukasonga, *La femme*, 15.

<sup>57</sup> E. W. Said. *Culture and Imperialism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994):25

to rule morally and intellectually. In her *Inyenzi*, written in 2006, Mukasonga collaborates Said's affirmation through her indictment of the West, except that the narrator precisely invokes the name of "le MDR-Parmehutu" who, with the help of Belgium and the Catholic Church, establishes a government that has been described since 1961 as "la dictature raciale d'un seul parti"<sup>58</sup> [the racial dictatorship of one -party system] whose politics is the maintenance of territoriality through the weapon of democratic exclusion and political persecution. So, "ethnic identity was one means that Hutu elites used to establish and maintain control over resources including environmental resources such as cropland."<sup>59</sup> ; it, therefore, influences "the ways in which land is imagined and the sense of national belonging produce."<sup>60</sup>

With the political dichotomy between the Hutu and the Tutsi, racial territoriality becomes the order of the day, giving rise to hegemonic conflicts because he who controls the government controls the ecosystem and its natural resources and the politics of belonging. Colonial discourse had justified the essence of empire and its aesthetics of civilization or what Patrick Brantlinger calls "the myth of the dark continent"<sup>61</sup> and the identity complex of the superiority of race has been inherent in the colonized psyche. After the departure of the colonizer, the colonized inherited the mentality of superiority and perpetuated the Eurocentric ideology of tribal dominance, especially when a tribe has control over government. In such a discourse, the dominating tribe (the Hutu) asserts its territoriality and uses the ideological mechanism of othering against the dominated tribe (the Tutsi), thus justifying the paratextuality of Mukasonga's *Inyenzi ou les cafards* where the minority race (Tutsi) is opposed to the majority race (Hutu) and the latter compares the former to the "animalized other", i.e. the non-human other, "les cafards" [cockroaches], a trope which I shall exploit in the next section of this work. As illustrated in Mukasonga's autobiographies, the Hutu's action against the Tutsi typifies a form of environmental racism which is "best understood as a sociological phenomenon, exemplified in the environmentally discriminatory treatment of socially marginalized or economically disadvantaged peoples, and in the transference of ecological problems..."<sup>62</sup> because "in assuming a natural prioritization of humans and human interests over those of other species on earth, we are both generating and repeating the racist ideologies of imperialism on a planetary scale"<sup>63</sup>. It is evident that the Rwandan (Hutu's and Tutsi's) freedom from the Belgian colonial stronghold triggers off a new process of recolonization of the Tutsi by the Hutu and a "disguised form of neocolonialism" by the West whose alter ego remains "le MDR-

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<sup>58</sup> Mukasonga, *Inyenzi*, 39.

<sup>59</sup> Percival and Homer-Dixon, "Environmental Scarcity", 285.

<sup>60</sup> H. Boast, "Planted over the Past: Ideology and Ecology in Israel's National Eco-Imaginary." *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism* 16 (2012):46,

<sup>61</sup> P. Brantlinger. "Victorians and Africans: the Myth of the Dark Continent." *Critical Inquiry* 12, no.1 (1985):168.

<sup>62</sup> G. Huggan and H. Tiffin. *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, (London & New York: Routledge, 2010):4.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

Parmehutu” of Rwanda. Othering becomes an instrument that enables the inferiorization of the othered tribe.

### **Othering and Trope of Animalization: the Tutsi as “les cafards” ou “Inyenzi”**

In colonial and postcolonial discourse, othering appears an analytical poetics that explains the cultural dynamics and différend in contact zones. Edward Said’s explication of its workings is instrumental to the understanding of Mukasonga’s trope of animalization or of animal order of the Tutsi and my position is acceptable because the Rwandan war is an offshoot of colonialism as I have argued above. Said argues that the colonized countries were described in ways which denigrated them, which represented them negatively, as an Other, in order to produce a positive, civilized image of British society<sup>64</sup>. Mukasonga does not intend to challenge but to describe othering as a stereotypical raw material for the construction of the Other in where tribes and cultures seek domination. Her discourse positions the Tutsi as the subaltern subject, who is defined in Gayatri Spivak’s term as “the non-elite colonized subject.”<sup>65</sup> and Mukasonga is determined to lend her voice to show how ideology and ecology interact in facilitating “environmental refugeeism”<sup>66</sup>.

With the pro-Hutu tribe in power, the pre-genocide Habyarinana government imposed “the pro-rural ideology” that facilitated land-related intertribal conflicts. People and environment suffer; society collapse often follows from environmental collapse<sup>67</sup>. Lauren Lydic admits that all genocides depend on “discourses of otherness,” such as the one shaped in the Rwandan context by metaleptic investments in the Inyenzi metaphor<sup>68</sup>. Mukasonga’s anthropocentrism does not foreclose the traumatization of the Rwandan ecosystem which the cockroach metaphor represents because RTLM (Radio TV Libre des mille Collines) and Kangura (Wake Up) had called for the “extermination” of Tutsi Inyenzi (cockroaches)<sup>69</sup>. The discursive choice of “cockroach” is well made owing to the bioclimatic nature of cockroaches and secondly the derogatory status of this animal is Hutu’s leverage of counter-discourse because of the discourse of Tutsi Ubuhake which is now being challenged and supplanted. Ubuhake is defined as “Tutsi institutions of pastoral servitude” and it is “a private contract between a male patron (Shebuja), who provides one or more cows (Ingabane) to a male client (Mugaragu), who in turn rendered his services by caring for cows and cultivating.”<sup>70</sup> In essence, Hutu’s Inyenzi contends with Tutsi’s Ubuhake; these discursive metaphors are deployed to describe tribal enemies and to create tribal sentiments.

The choice of cockroach as “an odious bestializing metaphor”<sup>71</sup> is premised on the imagined paradigmatic relationship between the signifier and the signified or between the nature of the animal described and its referent, the Tutsi. In *Cockroaches: Ecology, Behavior, and Natural*

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<sup>64</sup> S. Mills. *Discourse*, (London & New York: Routledge, 2014): 96

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>66</sup> G-E. “Post-NAFTA Ecologies, Mechanical Tortoises and Flower-Picking *Cholos* in Salvador Plascencia’s *The People of Paper Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism* 16 (2012):64.

<sup>67</sup> K. Boudreaux. “Land Conflict and Genocide in Rwanda.” *The Electronic Journal of Sustainable Development* 1, no.3 (2009):85

<sup>68</sup> J-L Lauren J-L. “Metaphor and Gender in Conflict: Discourse, the Bosnian War, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Chechen War.” Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Toronto, 2010.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 83

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 82

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 83

History, Bell, Roth and Nalepa present a detailed scientific study of cockroach as an animal and admit that “cockroaches are considered garbage collectors in terrestrial ecosystem”<sup>72</sup> and their “mass migrations and dispersals have been recorded”. The Tutsi as pastoralists are compared to cockroaches in migratory abilities. In this context, animals are used as “weapon of satire, ridicule and scorn”<sup>73</sup> in the process of othering. If “cockroaches are found in nearly all habitats: tropical and temperate forests, grasslands, heath, steppe, salt marshes, coastal communities and deserts”<sup>74</sup>, it is evident that their ecological adaptability describes the trajectory and wandering nature of the pastoral lives of Tutsi cattle farmers who are rich in “troupeaux de vaches”. The cockroaches are equally considered as “unhygienic scavengers in human settlement” and their “effective control is cleanliness”<sup>75</sup> which is transposed to “ethnic cleansing” because the Tutsi “n’étaient pas plus tout à fait des êtres humains mais des inyenzi, des cafards, qu’il était loisible et juste de persécuter et, en fin de compte, d’exterminer.”<sup>76</sup> [were not real human beings but inyenzi, cockroaches, so that it was permissible and justifiable to persecute them and, in due course, to exterminate them] and “c’étaient trois failles profondes, à la frontière du Burundi, c’est là qu’on devait jeter les Tutsi.”<sup>77</sup> [There were three deep faults on the border with Burundi, where the Tutsi were to be thrown into] From Mukasonga’s account, the “fortunate” killers of the human cockroaches deserve tribal accolades and this explains why over “75 per cent of the Tutsi ethnic minority population were killed.”<sup>78</sup>

Mukasonga presents the “ethnic cleansing” of the Tutsi as a strategically planned operation as “il n’y plus de villages. Les habitations sont dispersées sur les pentes des collines, cachées sous le couvert épais des bananiers.”<sup>79</sup> [there are no more villages. The houses are scattered on the slopes of the hills, hidden under the thick canopies of the banana trees] The discourse of cockroach metaphor criminalizes the essence and the existence of the Tutsi, and creates the rationality for the extermination of the enemy tribe; in essence, the life of the Hutu depends on the death of the Tutsi. The massacre appears genocidal and ethnocidal because young Tutsi children are not spared. They are treated as “de petits serpents”<sup>80</sup> [small snakes] who have chances of transforming into giant snakes. Othering is equally achieved through objectification of Tutsi girls and women who are raped. The narrator says: “Les viols. Personne ne voulait en parler.”<sup>81</sup> [Rapes. Nobody wanted to talk of them] because “le viol des jeunes filles tutsi est un acte révolutionnaire, un droit acquis par le peuple majoritaire”<sup>82</sup> [the rape of Tutsi girls is a revolutionary act, right acquired by the majority people]; besides, “Les jeunes filles tutsi fascinaient les Hutu. Les dirigeants donnaient l’exemple:

<sup>72</sup> W. J. Bell, L. M. Roth & C. A. Nalepa. *Cockroaches: Ecology, Behavior, and Natural History*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007):165.

<sup>73</sup> S. Mthatiwa. “The “Rhetoric of Animality”, Animal Imagery, and Dr. Kamuzu Banda’s Dictatorship in the Poetry of Jack Mapanje.” *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 22, no.2 (2012):110.

<sup>74</sup> Bell, Roth and Nalepa, *Cockroaches*, 37.

<sup>75</sup> See “Chapter 5: Cockroaches as Unhygienic Scavengers in human settlement.”, n.d, 288, 292.  
<[http://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/resources/vector288to301.pdf](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/resources/vector288to301.pdf)>

<sup>76</sup> Mukasonga, *La femme*, 6.

<sup>77</sup> Mukasonga, *Inyenzi*, 29.

<sup>78</sup> P Verwimp. “Death and Survival during the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda.” *Population Studies* 58, no.2 (2004):223

<sup>79</sup> Mukasonga, *La femme*, 32.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 15

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 152.

épouser une Tutsi faisait partie du droit du vainqueur.”<sup>83</sup> [Tutsi girls fascinated the Hutu. The leaders gave the example: to marry a Tutsi was part of conqueror’s booty] Gang rape and forced marriage of Tutsi girls are rhetorically established as a norm and “legalized” by political statement of the ruling party; both are intended to denigrate the personality of the animalized Other. With a passionate hatred, the full cycle of violence is accomplished by radicalized Hutu militias; its consequence is not only on the humans but also on the nonhuman ecology. Mukasonga’s texts portray the abuse of nature and the oppression of Tutsi women as “intimately bound up with notions of class, caste, race, colonialism and neo-colonialism.”<sup>84</sup>

### **Ecological Trauma and “violentization” of Waters, Animals & Forests**

Mukasonga’s discourse of ecological trauma is conceptualized and analyzed as ugly effects of human trauma in *Inyenzi ou les cafards* and *La femme aux pieds nus*, though animal’s (even plants as well) historically inferior ontological status and perceived voicelessness make a perspective of its trauma difficult to articulate.<sup>85</sup> However, it has been proven empirically that animals experience pain as nonhuman<sup>86</sup> unlike other nonhuman ecological elements such as water and plants whose traumatic experiences cannot be measured scientifically; yet forests are conceived as epicenter of all forms of violence.

The author’s intention is apparently to document the levels of harm visited on the aquatic and plant resources and to present an “apocalyptic imagery as a warning regarding the threat of actual human-induced environmental degradation.”<sup>87</sup> Some of these destructions appear to be premeditated and others unintentional. Animals such as livestock constitute the Tutsi’s mainstay as pastoralists and they are the Hutu’s major target for destruction due to the discourse of Ubugere which I have discussed above. The genocide makes it impossible for the pastoralists to take care of their livestock and consequently “les maigres troupeaux des Bagesera dépérissaient de maladies et de soif.”<sup>88</sup> [the scrawny flocks of the Bagesera were dying of diseases and thirst] The narrator reports that

On avait tué nos vaches et brûlé nos veaux dans les étables. Est-on encore un homme si l’on n’a plus son troupeau? Et que faire de ses jours si l’on ne mène plus ses vaches au pâturage, si l’on n’appelle plus chacune d’elles par son nom, si, l’une après l’autre, on ne lisse pas leur robe avec une touffe d’herbes tendres, si l’on n’examine pas les sabots pour enlever cailloux et épines...<sup>89</sup>

They had killed our cows and burned our calves in the stables. Are we still men if we no longer have our flock? And what can we do with our days if we no longer lead our cows to

<sup>83</sup> Mukasonga, *Inyenzi*, 52.

<sup>84</sup> G. Kaur. “Postcolonial Ecofeminism in Indian Novels in English.” *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity* 2, no. 5 (2012): 384.

<sup>85</sup> A. Andrianova. “Narrating Animal Trauma in Bulgakov and Tolstoy.” *Humanities* 5, no.84 (2016):2.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>87</sup> Caminero-Santagelo, *Ibid.*, 153

<sup>88</sup> Mukasonga, *La femme*, 72.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 72-73.

pasture, if we do not call each of them by his name, if, one after another, we do not smooth their dress with a tuft of tender grass, if we do not examine the hooves to remove pebbles and thorns... (Google-assisted translation)

The narrator's bitter lamentations concur with my proposition that livestock is targeted to vilify the Tutsi's source of capital resources and cultural pride. The relationship between the pastoralists and their animals is socially and culturally constructed as the owner calls each cattle "par son nom" and takes some extraordinary measures to ensure their general wellbeing. In acting so, like Phil Macnaghten put it, "the environment is being embodied, valued and experienced in an array of social practices."<sup>90</sup> Aside, the brutal massacre of animals, it is seemingly tough for Cosma and his family, as internally displaced persons, to maintain their livestock if they had any since the animals' wellbeing has to depend on their indigenous everyday life of environmental consciousness. In essence, the consequences of the Hutu's actions on livestock are well calculated as the young narrator goes on to say: "A Gitagata, nous n'avions plus de vaches et aucun moyen d'acheter un peu de beurre de beauté auprès des Bagesera, qui eux-mêmes en avaient si peu."<sup>91</sup> [In Gitagata, we had no more cows and no way of buying a little beauty butter from Bagesera people, because they themselves had so little] This is because the livestock is a source of milk and butter for the locals. Mukasonga bemoans her traumatic experience because her childhood memory reminds her how she was among "les petits bergers qui gardaient les vaches en bordure de la forêt"<sup>92</sup> [the young shepherds guarding their cows at the edge of the forest] and now she confesses: "nous n'avions plus de vaches et donc pas de lait."<sup>93</sup> [we no longer have cows and as a result no milk] The Tutsi's collective trauma incorporates the suffering, torture and death of their livestock, or in summary, their animals' trauma as some become slim and suffering out of thirst and hunger since the aquatic resources suffer equally from degradation.

Rwanda's waters such as Lac Cyohoha, "la rivière Rukarara, le lac Kivu, Kibuye, Ruhengeri, Gisenyi..." [Lake Cyohoha, Rukarara river, Kivu, Kibuye, Ruhengeri, Gisenyi lake...] which constitute the locals' places of romance with nature become fearful places to go. As Mukasonga put it, "la rivière Rukarara, avait-on dit à ma mère, était rouge de sang"<sup>94</sup> [Rukarara River, my mother was told, was red with blood] and "les militaires en grand nombre descendaient vers le lac Cyohoha et ils traînaient des corps qui ressemblaient à des pantins desarticulés..."<sup>95</sup> [the soldiers in large numbers were coming down to Lake Cyohoha and they were dragging bodies that looked like dislocated puppets] The reign of terror is painted as destructive to the aquatic life and its culture because for Mukasonga, "le rivage du lac, qui était comme le jardin de nos jeux innocents, devint bientôt le lieu de tous les cauchemars."<sup>96</sup> [the shore of the Lake which was like the ground for our innocent games soon became the place of all nightmares] All social practices with nature

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<sup>90</sup> P. Macnaghten. "Embodying the Environment in Everyday Life Practices." *The Sociological Review*, 2003:63.

<sup>91</sup> Mukasonga, *La femme*, 88.

<sup>92</sup> Mukasonga, *Inyenzí*, 8.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 49-50.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

are violently disrupted and their pleasure lost tragically. In Mukasonga's texts, social activities such as bathing in the river and lake, shepherding the cattle, being in the wood, going to harvest wild fruits, climbing trees are ways of "being in the environment", in proximity to nature, different from cosmopolitan modern society. And such practices enable "a more profound form of social intimacy and bonding born out of common experience."<sup>97</sup>

Stefania's social bonding with her plants and crops instigates her proclivity for the conversation of disappearing species of plants and the survival of agricultural indigenous knowledge. Rural "women-nature connection"<sup>98</sup> provides a strong background for the rural unorthodox environmentalism that is not spiced with modern activism. During the genocide, banana plantations, trees and forest generally are painted as haven for the hunted, homeless and dispossessed Tutsi, hence an allegory for nationalistic protection but a mockery of the Rwandan government. Stefania must prevent the disappearance of many species of plants; consequently, she "les cultivait non pour la consommation quotidienne mais en témoignage de ce qui était menacée de disparaître et qui, effectivement, dans le cataclysme du génocide a disparu."<sup>99</sup> [cultivated them not for daily consumption but as a testimony of what was threatened to disappear and which, indeed, in the cataclysm of the genocide, has disappeared] This is not strange as wars and role of the military are identified as direct causes of deforestation as in El Salvador war.<sup>100</sup> So, Stefania's crop planting is geared towards restituting the past and preparing for the volatile ecological future as Rob Nixon admits that "to plant trees is to work towards cultivating change."<sup>101</sup> I must say, albeit regrettably, her environmentalist efforts are not able to save the Rwandan nature.

## Conclusion

By my interpretation of Mukasonga's *Inyenzi ou les cafards* and *La femme aux pieds nus* as possibly environmental texts because of their ecological consciousness, I have shown that different anthropocentric studies so far, relying on memory and trauma studies in the analysis of the Rwandan Genocide's traumatic literature, have proven to be critically minimalist and theoretically parochial. Such critical views limit the polyvalence of African literary works as an embodiment of sociocultural signs. The writer uses the human trauma of her immediate family to generate another discourse which is ecological, though Mukasonga does not pretend to speak for nature. The ecocritical consciousness of her writing could be referred to, in postcolonial semiotic postulation, as second level signification whereby human traumatic experiences act as catalysts that inspire the pastoral discourse on ecological trauma of the nonhuman during the Rwandan genocide. The lives of the Tutsi pastoralists, mirrored in past and present perspectives, show the "different ways in which people encounter the values and benefits of nature and the environment in everyday life has been highlighted: nature as a source of pleasure and transcendence from the burdens and stresses of everyday life; nature as a setting for maintaining important social ties and bonds; and nature as a set of problems whose effects had to be tacked as part of people's evolving responsibilities as

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<sup>97</sup> Macnaghten, *Ibid.*, 75-76.

<sup>98</sup> Kaur, *Ibid.*, 385.

<sup>99</sup> Mukasonga, *La femme*, 44.

<sup>100</sup> S. Chakravarty, s. k. Ghosh, C. P. Suresh, A. N. Dey & G. Shukia. "Deforestation: Causes, Effects and Control Strategies." In C. A. Okia (Ed.) *Global Perspectives on Sustainable Forest Management*, In Tech, 2012, 10. [www.intechopen.com](http://www.intechopen.com)

<sup>101</sup> R. Nixon. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 2011):134.

mothers and parents.”<sup>102</sup> However, the Tutsi’s desire for pastoral sustainability is not sustained, their romance with nature through culture suffers a setback, and their everyday life becomes distorted, all because of the Rwandan Genocide.

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<sup>102</sup> Macnaghten, *Ibid.*, 77.



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