

# *Un translatable Death, Evidentiary Bodies: After–Auschwitz and Murambi–in Translation*

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In our world of technological change and translational practices, we are observing multiple and widespread access to the violence of “the past”. In this paper, I focus on how translation is the condition of possibility for “genocidal violence” to inhabit the world and live on. Translation, I argue, entangles hospitality, opens up the past, and put us in touch with the *un* translatable death that gives way to an undeterminable future. Against this backdrop, I assess how science and technology, politics and law, photographs, people, language, modernity’s infrastructure of annihilation, and evidentiary institutions institute and conserve tele-evidence that becomes central to political, national and global memory of genocide.

## The open gate of Auschwitz–Birkenau

On the morning of December 16, 2017, we<sup>2</sup> were walking the distance that separated Museum Auschwitz (former Nazi extermination camp I) from Auschwitz–Birkenau Memorial and Museum (former Nazi extermination camp II). I ended up being the last person to cross the gate of the Auschwitz–Birkenau Memorial and Museum without noticing it. Suddenly I realized that I was standing in front of the final stop of all arriving trains. The tour guides would take the visitors to this final stop before starting the tour, telling them all about the selection process performed by Nazi doctors.<sup>3</sup> The doctors, as one said, determined “on this very spot who was capable of working and staying alive and who had to be sent to the gas chambers”. Listening to this vivid and embodied narrative, I looked back to the entrance gate. It was open, but the other one for the train tracks was closed. People were crossing it all the time, some arriving, others departing. I saw my two friends touching the fence on the right-hand side of the gate next to reconstructed blocks of barracks. Without thinking, I walked immediately towards them. Before entering the first barrack with an open door, a photograph strategically positioned next to the fence and portraying human beings digging a drainage ditch got our attention and imagination. They were among those who had been subjected to death by working. One after the other, we entered the wooden barrack. There were two enlarged photographs that transformed the entire barrack by evidencing how human beings had been forced to survive or witness each other’s death there. Some of the people in the photographs were looking right at the camera – and thus at all the three of us. Standing in the presence of these photographs that were placed before our eyes, and radically

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2017 [1986]).

interrupted, our bodies were also standing before or in the presence of the future. They are still in the world, share the space with us, and open up an untranslatable past to the here and yet there. As visual or demonstrative evidence,<sup>4</sup> the photographs, together with all other material and architectural evidence such as the crematorium were supposed to be destroyed in early 1945.<sup>5</sup> The exhibited photographs in the barracks, and others found among the ruins in front of gas chambers II and III, were printed copies of the Auschwitz Album.<sup>6</sup> Lilly Jacob-Zelmanovi Meier, a survivor of Auschwitz, had found and preserved the album, containing, amongst many others, her own and her family's photographs. It would later be used as visual evidence at the *Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial*.<sup>7</sup> When Simon Wiesenthal – who convinces Lilly to archive the album at Yad Vashem Archives in Israel – asks, *how can you live with something like that?* Lilly responds, *I could not live without it*.<sup>8</sup> Today both the album, which Lilly saw as “my own album, our album, everybody's album”<sup>9</sup> and which has also survived her death, and its computerized database are preserved at Yad Vashem.<sup>10</sup> The album is by now at once historical and visual evidence, and national, transnational and global memory, recording what otherwise would be impossible to *see*. The advanced tele-technology has already disseminated copies of the photographs in the Auschwitz album worldwide.

Stepping in, stepping out, touching the barracks, the fence, the very act of seeing the copies of these photographs shot between May and June 1944, walking between them, and then the attempt to imagine and understand Auschwitz–Birkenau were as much a chain of interruptions as “embodiments-in-motion”.<sup>11</sup> Our bodies became inseparable from the visibility of what is now named Auschwitz–Birkenau *Memorial and Museum*, an evidentiary institution. “The visible,” writes Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “is what is seized upon with the eyes”.<sup>12</sup> Seeing as *body sign*<sup>13</sup> was how we got shivers down *our* spines, and how the

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<sup>4</sup> Jennifer L. Mnookin, “The Image of Truth: Photographic Evidence and the Power of Analogy,” *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities* 10 (1998) 1: 1-13.

<sup>5</sup> See Eyal Weizman, “The Architecture of Negation: An Interview with Robert Jan van Pelt,” *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*, ed. Forensic Architecture, Goldsmith, University of London (Berlin: Sternberg Press and Forensic Architecture, 2014), 149-156.

<sup>6</sup> Ein Fotoalbum als Vermächtnis, available at <<http://webstory.zdf.de/auschwitz/>>, accessed April 10, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> See Devin O. Pendas, *The Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial, 1963-1965: Genocide, History, and the Limits of the Law* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); See also Gideon Greif, “The ‘Auschwitz Album’ – The Story of Lilli Jacob,” *The Auschwitz Album: The Story of a Transport*, ed. I. Gutman et al., (Yad Vashem/Auschwitz- Birkenau State Museum, Jerusalem/Oswiecim, 2002), 76-77.

<sup>8</sup> See Jewish Survivor Lili Meier Testimony, USC Shoah Foundation, available at <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QnEHHXyE\\_2Q&t=4348s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QnEHHXyE_2Q&t=4348s)>, accessed March 7, 2018. 1:41:20.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 1:39:18-21.

<sup>10</sup> The Auschwitz Album, available at, <[http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/album\\_auschwitz/index.asp](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/album_auschwitz/index.asp)>, accessed January 8, 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Frank Schulze-Engler, Pavan Kumar Malreddy and John Njenga Karugia, ““Even the Dead have Human Rights”: A Conversation with Homi Bhabha,” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* (2018):1-15.

<sup>12</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, transl. C. Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2002 [1945]), 7.

<sup>13</sup> Byung-Chul Han, *The Expulsion of the Other: Society, Perception and Communication Today*, transl. W. Hoban (Cambridge and Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2018), 53.

photographs and the ruins entered our memories without invitation. Walking along, Thomas would occasionally take out his smartphone to get online in Auschwitz, travel between different websites, and retrieve and read information in both German and English to inform us about certain instants and places. These practices of getting online and offline, gathering and reading or sharing Auschwitz as information in that particular space and time would have been impossible without Wi-Fi, a global infrastructure, and the technologies of the Internet.<sup>14</sup> We would combine this online information with what we remembered from stories that we had heard and our individual readings, visits to other concentration camps in Germany, and works of art, memorials, and documentary films that we had seen. Auschwitz as something readable embedded in the Internet and digital media technologies<sup>15</sup> changes meaning, is trans-*formed*, and changed our ways of seeing, knowing and remembering.

The city of Oświęcim (Auschwitz in German) has undergone profound changes since 1945. Step by step, it has once again become a civic space with restaurants facing the entrance to the Auschwitz Museum, and recently-built houses and playgrounds facing the open gate of Auschwitz–Birkenau. Auschwitz III-Monowitz, the forced labor sub-camp of the *IG Farbenindustrie A.G.*, is no longer on the visitor’s list. The name “Auschwitz–Birkenau” has come to exclusively refer to one of several tourist sites to be visited from the city of Kraków in Poland. While the tourist office of the city and some of the kiosks promise daily tours for 99 Polish zloty, the Kraków App or mobile application provides several options ranging from six to nine hours of touring places. The nine-hour tour is entitled “Auschwitz-Birkenau Tour from Krakow and Evening Klezmer Music Concert with Dinner” for USD 77. According to the Auschwitz-Birkenau website, “2.1 million” people visited the Museum in 2017, “50 thousand more than in 2016”.<sup>16</sup> By the hundreds the visitors walk among the physical evidence – decaying barracks and other buildings, ruins of the gas chambers, photographs, monuments, de-electrified barbed wire fences, and the very geographical space wherein the camp as an infrastructure of annihilation was once constructed – which they never cease to embody and turn into digital images that they can circulate and to which they can return anytime and anywhere.

Auschwitz as a paradigmatic part of the Holocaust becomes a site of scientific inquiries, filmic translation such as “Holocaust,” and the politics of the Holocaust in late 1960s and 1970s connected with the history and future of Palestine.<sup>17</sup> This historic shift embodied

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<sup>14</sup> See Christine Hine, “From Virtual Ethnography to the Embedded, Embodied, Everyday Internet,” *The Routledge Companion to Digital Ethnography*, ed. L. Hjorth et. al. (New York and London: Routledge, 2017), 21-28.

<sup>15</sup> Ralph Buchenhorst, “Field, Forum, and Vilified Art: Recent Developments in the Representation of Mass Violence and its Remembrance,” *Memory and Genocide: On What Remains and the Possibility of Representation*, ed. F. Moradi, et. al., (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 152-164.

<sup>16</sup> “2.1 million visitors at the Memorial in 2017,” available at <http://auschwitz.org/en/museum/news/2-1-million-visitors-at-the-memorial-in-2017,1292.html>, accessed January 5, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> See Weizman *op. cit.*, 151-152; Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage books, 1980); Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Alexander L. Hinton, “Violence,” *A Companion to Moral Anthropology*, ed. D. Fassin (Malden, MA and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell), 500-518.

Auschwitz in words and images. The mass of globally circulating publications and images in turn continues to constantly write and shape how we attend to, experience/embody, remember, and perceive what remains ethnographically inaccessible. The workings and inescapable effects of scientific practices, technologies, and global media have given birth to an Auschwitz to be *looked at* by any visitor from anywhere as something *Other* or foreign to the visitor's everyday life or to be examined, among others, by scholars, artists, filmmakers, and journalists from anywhere. Auschwitz, to paraphrase Lilly Meier, has become my Auschwitz, our Auschwitz, everybody's Auschwitz.

As extermination camps, Auschwitz itself presents a radical shift as modernity's<sup>18</sup> infrastructure<sup>19</sup> of annihilation and irredeemable destructions. In other words, Auschwitz was originally designed to be annihilatory. It involved advanced science and tele-technologies, modern state, bureaucracy, economy, politics, rule of law, and both disciplined and organized human beings as killing units. By contrast, Auschwitz as populated barracks, gas chambers, crematory, Zyklon B, furnaces, electrified fences illuminated with lights at night, watch towers, machine guns, commandants, adjutants, SS dogs, *Schutzstaffel (SS)-Totenkopfverbände*, *Sonderkommandos*, *Erkennungsdienst*, daily torture, medical experimentation, starvation, forced labor, forced abortion, sterilization, brothel,<sup>20</sup> and public hangings and executions is nowhere to be *seen* today. Yet, this radical absence does not govern the ways in which we experience and embody Auschwitz as translations. The concern here is that Auschwitz as original genocidal violence is neither accessible nor available to words, art or aesthetics and will, therefore, remain untranslatable. Thus my application of translation follows that genocidal violence leaves nothing "original" to go back to, which would, as Walter Benjamin writes, "... contain the law governing the translation: its translatability".<sup>21</sup> For Benjamin translation involves *überleben*, survival, and *fortleben*,

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<sup>18</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 88. See also Alexander L. Hinton, "The Dark Side of Modernity: Toward an Anthropology of Genocide," *Annihilating Difference: The Anthropology of Genocide*, ed. A. L. Hinton (Berkeley: University of California Press 2002), 1–40; Uli Linke, "Archives of Violence: The Holocaust and the German Politics of Memory," *Annihilating Difference: The Anthropology of Genocide*, ed. A. L. Hinton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 229–271; Philippe Bourgois, "Foreword: Anthropology in the Global State of Emergency," *Engaged Observer: Anthropology, Advocacy, and Activism*, ed. V. Sanford and A. Angel-Ajani (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), ix–xii, (xi); Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'," *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, ed. D. Cornell, et al., (New York: Routledge, 1992), 3–67; Victoria Sanford, *Buried Secrets: Truth and Human Rights in Guatemala* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan University Press, 2004), 16.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Bruce O'Neill, "Of Camps, Gulags and Extraordinary Renditions: Infrastructural Violence in Romania," *Ethnography* 13 (2012) 4, 466–486.

<sup>20</sup> Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel, ed. *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust* (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2010); Éva Kovács, "Parallel Readings: Narratives of Violence," *Memory and Genocide: On What Remains and the Possibility of Representation*, ed. F. Moradi, et. al., (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 42–56.

<sup>21</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. H. Arendt, transl. H. Zohn (Schocken Books, New York, 2007 [1968]), 69–82, (70).

continuing to live or living on of the original.<sup>22</sup> He writes, “... a translation issues from the original – not so much from its life as from its afterlife.”<sup>23</sup> By contrast, translation of genocidal violence does not relate to an original the way translation from one language to another language may do. It points to the commonality of human concern with memory that is an existential condition to human life and collectivity,<sup>24</sup> and highlights the weight of evidence, legal and otherwise, as productive writing<sup>25</sup> and living on of national and global memory of Auschwitz and Murambi that I engage in this paper-translation.

What I have already started with, and will continue in what follows, is rather the concern with how translation writes and is fundamental to the living on of what it puts us in touch with, i.e. genocidal violence, how human relation to it is never bilateral, how it only takes place in the *after* and travels across time and space and is as much about the past as the future, how it globalizes or denationalizes memory, and how it is always marked by *un* translatability.

This paper is thus not a return to the demand for pure description, analytical reflection or scientific explanation that would prescribe a fixed understanding of what is called Auschwitz, Murambi or genocide. The term or the name genocide is Raphael Lemkin’s translation for what he called the “civilized” world,<sup>26</sup> and is by now a recognized international legal definition that possesses an irreducible evidence of systematic violence, produces fixed meaning, and shapes experiences and memories worldwide. In today’s global setting the term/name institutes the particularity of “race, ethnicity, religion, and nationality,” and at the same time disseminates the knowledge that the world cannot afford genocide many more times.<sup>27</sup> Thus, as tele-evidence, it travels as it is deemed to have the capacity to capture what the modern nation-state has proven to be capable of, and is as such repeated across time and space. Since this repetition involves a juridical discourse that “... includes a whole set of rules and applications of rules, that is to say, a technology,”<sup>28</sup> genocide as tele-evidence is also a tele-technology that is produced at a certain moment but travels in time and space and is fundamental to the living on of politics as well as memories of genocidal violence.<sup>29</sup>

My concern in this paper is that translation is a turn to language, traveling narratives, tele-technologies, science, politics and law, testimony and evidence, evidentiary institutions,

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<sup>22</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Learning to Live Finally: The Last Interview*, transl. P-A. Brault and M. Naas (Hoboken: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 26.

<sup>23</sup> Benjamin, *op. cit.*, 2007, 71.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Arthur Kelinman, “The Search for Wisdom: Why William James Still Matters,” *The Ground Between: Anthropologists Engage Philosophy*, ed. V. Das, et al. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014) 119-137.

<sup>25</sup> Jacques Derrida, “Des Tours De Babel,” *Difference in Translation*, ed. Joseph F. Graham, 165–207 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 147, 153.

<sup>26</sup> Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (Clark, NJ: The Lawbook Exchange, [1944] 2008).

<sup>27</sup> See the Introduction to this Special Issue; Alexander L. Hinton, “Critical Genocide Studies,” *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* 7 (2012), 1, 4–15.

<sup>28</sup> Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of Television: Filmed Interviews*, transl. J. Bajorek (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2002), 62.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Ibid.* 38-39, 56-67.

and exhibition of human remains and photographs. As such translation is *not* genocidal violence, but the condition of possibility for state sanctioned violence to inhabit the world, rendering it readable, knowable, seeable, and memorable.<sup>30</sup> As I outline above and in the main body of this paper, my concern is not comparison of violence but translation that institutes and circulates tele-evidence in various forms. I understand translation to also introduce hospitality *as* hosting and at the same time being held hostage by translation of that which is radically absent or *as* instant interruption that is both “inconceivable and incomprehensible”.<sup>31</sup>

### “Auschwitz and After”

Auschwitz became the “paradigm”<sup>32</sup> of annihilatory violence and the articulation of all Nazi extermination camps only *after* Auschwitz, in the late 1960s. *After* is the time and space of translation from which Auschwitz arrives as the name and reading of untranslatable acts of annihilation. Theodor W. Adorno writes, “I have no wish to soften the saying that to write lyric poetry *after* Auschwitz is barbaric” (emphasis mine).<sup>33</sup> He reads and engages Jean-Paul Sartre by quoting a character in his play *Morts Sans Sépulture*, “Is there any meaning in life when men exist who beat people until the bones break in their bodies?” and writes that this “... is also the question whether any art now has a right to exist”.<sup>34</sup> His analytical reflection and reference to Sartre’s literary work marks his avowal of the enigma at the heart of translatability of/*after* Auschwitz, and not *after* the colonial genocides or the transatlantic human/slave trade.<sup>35</sup> Adorno considers work of art as *the other* of reality<sup>36</sup> and thus cultural translation to be a commitment to aesthetic objectification and as such *transformative*, making Auschwitz appear as or disappear with literature or artwork altogether. He writes, “When even genocide becomes cultural property in committed literature, it becomes easier to continue complying with the culture that gave rise to the murder”.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Fazil Moradi, *Hosting Femicide-Genocide: On the Living On of the Un Translatable in Kurdistan, Iraq*, (Forthcoming); Fazil Moradi, R. Buchenhorst and M. Six-Hohenbalken, eds. *Memory and Genocide: On What Remains and the Possibility of Representation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017).

<sup>31</sup> Jacques Derrida, “Hostipitality,” *Jacques Derrida: Acts of Religion*, ed. and transl. G. Anidjar (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 385-420, (362).

<sup>32</sup> Paul Gilroy, *Between Camps: Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 246.

<sup>33</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, “Commitment,” *Aesthetics and Politics*, ed. T. Adorno *et al.*, (London: Verso, 1980 [1977]), 188.

<sup>34</sup> Adorno, *op. cit.*, 188.

<sup>35</sup> See, Walter D. Mignolo, “Colonial/Imperial Differences: Classifying and Inventing Global Orders of Lands, Seas, and Living Organisms,” ed. W. D. Mignolo and C. E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018), 177-193; Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (New York: Verso, 1993); See also Racy and Amaral, this Special Issue.

<sup>36</sup> See, Edward Said, “Traveling Theory Reconsidered,” *Reflections in Exile and Other Essays*, ed. E. Said (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002), 436-473 [443-4].

<sup>37</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Can One Live After Auschwitz?: A Philosophical Reader*, ed. R. Tiedemann, transl. R. Livingstone (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2003), 252–253.

Adorno’s critique of how “... the traditions of philosophy, of art, and of the enlightening sciences”<sup>38</sup> could allow Auschwitz to happen is directly connected to an unequivocal explanation that without modernity or the *individual indifference* or *coldness* of *bourgeois subjectivity*, “... there could have been no Auschwitz”.<sup>39</sup> Artworks as cultural artefacts and bourgeois society are inseparably entwined. Yet, Adorno’s account of “... the dialectic of culture and barbarism. To write poetry *after* Auschwitz is barbaric”<sup>40</sup> does not totally negate the inescapability of aesthetic and artistic translatability. He was already immersed in translational practices and rather concerned that the aesthetic and artistic translation produces an “echo of suffering” and “diminishes it”<sup>41</sup> at the same time. In other words, Auschwitz is at once open to translation and “forbids” it<sup>42</sup> – it is as much untranslatable as it disappears with translation.

Writing against Adorno’s “expression,” Jacques Rancière argues “... *after* Auschwitz, to *show* Auschwitz, art is the only thing possible, because art always entails the *presence* of *absence*; because it is the very job of art to reveal something that is invisible, through the controlled power of *words* and *images*”.<sup>43</sup> Such position proceeds through the transformation of Auschwitz into words and images, which then preserve and institute Auschwitz, going back and forth between unrepeatable and distant acts of annihilation on the one hand and art and aesthetic practices on the other. The ethical dimension of words and images is the possibility of future memory and of linking or *putting us in touch with*<sup>44</sup> the radically absent violence. It interrupts us as it puts us in touch with the violence that it writes, opens up, and changes into traveling words or images that act independently of Auschwitz as original violence.<sup>45</sup>

Yet, Adorno’s return to the expression in *Negative Dialectics* is marked by the urgency of ethics of translation as well as the fact that the question of *untranslatability* has not made

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<sup>38</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (London and New York, Routledge, 2004 [1966]), 366. See also Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. G. Schmid Noerr, transl. E. Jephcott (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002), 94–136.

<sup>39</sup> Adorno, *op. cit.*, 2004, 363.

<sup>40</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, “Cultural Criticism and Society,” *Prisms*, transl. S. and S. Weber (Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1986 [1981]). (emphasis mine).

<sup>41</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, transl. R. Hullot-Kentor (London, The Athlone Press, 1997), 39.

<sup>42</sup> Adorno, *op. cit.*, 2003, 252.

<sup>43</sup> Jacques Rancière, *Figures of History*, transl. J. Rose (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2014), 49–50. (emphasis mine).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Souleymane Bachir Diagne, *The Ink of the Scholars: Reflections on Philosophy in Africa*, transl. J. Adjemian (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2016 [2013]), 16–17; Heidi Grunebaum, “Between Nakba, Shoah, and Apartheid: Notes on a Film from the Interstices,” *Memory and Genocide: On What Remains and the Possibility of Representation*, ed. F. Moradi, et. al., (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 122–137; Fazil Moradi, “Genocide in Translation: On Memory, Remembrance, and Politics of the Future,” *Memory and Genocide: On What Remains and the Possibility of Representation*, ed. F. Moradi, et. al., (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 57–74.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Alexander L. Hinton, “Afterword: Wonder Woman, the Gutter, and Critical Genocide Studies,” *Memory and Genocide: On What Remains and the Possibility of Representation*, ed. F. Moradi, et. al., (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 165–174; Matthias Kaufmann – Richard Rottenburg, “Translation and Cultural Identity,” *Civiltà del Mediterraneo XII* (2013), 329–347.

him stop thinking about Auschwitz. He writes, “Perennial suffering has as much right to *expression* as a tortured man has to *scream*; hence it *may* have been wrong to say that *after* Auschwitz you could no longer write *poems*”.<sup>46</sup> Adorno continues his seemingly speculative phenomenology, “... it is not wrong to raise the *less cultural* question whether *after* Auschwitz you can go on living – especially whether one who escaped by accident, one who by rights should have been killed, *may go on living*”.<sup>47</sup> If work of art as fully cultural is capable of turning Auschwitz into knowledge and aesthetic object, the possibility of living on in the *after* as “less cultural” also underlines translational practices – e.g., the survivor’s right to language, *expression*, that is fundamental to testimony and to proof. Adorno’s speculation pays little attention to how those who, *unlike him*, were living with, and seeing what was happening to them and their individual bodies in Auschwitz experience questions of translatability, e.g. writing poetry. Auschwitz and the *after* take yet other turns as we attend to survivors and the extermination camps in Auschwitz, and to other writers. In fact, Maurice Blanchot writes that the survival of the survivor “is no longer life,” but “... the attestation that the good that is life ... has undergone the decisive blow that leaves nothing intact”.<sup>48</sup> Auschwitz did not rest on universal humanity but on annihilation, “dying together,”<sup>49</sup> and complete disappearance of human lives and bodies.<sup>50</sup> It was the manifestation of a systematic annihilation of a “common political space,”<sup>51</sup> or offering hospitality that rests outside of right, law and duty, welcoming and hosting “the Other” without imposing any conditions.<sup>52</sup>

Bodies were evidence subjected to endless disappearance and came to be read as evidence in the *after*. Except for “non-Jewish German prisoners,” Primo Levi, who physically survived Auschwitz, writes,<sup>53</sup> all prisoners had a number tattooed onto their arm. An “indelible mark,” Levi continues, the tattoo was an “autochthonous Auschwitzian invention” and, as such, the “sentence written on the flesh”.<sup>54</sup> In the *after*, however, the invention of the tattooed arm becomes the survivor’s evidence and at the same time proof of being in the presence of Auschwitz and a witness of the impossible.<sup>55</sup> This, in turn, makes the survivor’s body the impossible proof and turns their testimony into evidence of having survived the impossible. For the survivors of Auschwitz to show the indelible mark – tattooed number –

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<sup>46</sup> Adorno, *op. cit.*, 2004, 362. (emphasis mine).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 363. (emphasis mine).

<sup>48</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *Vicious Circles: Two Fictions and “After the Fact,”* transl. P. Auster (New York: Station Hill Press, 1985), 65.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Vivre “ensemble” – Living “together,”* available at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ekZKZ0Ya134>>, accessed November 2, 2018. 34:20–40.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Paul Celan, *Selected Poems*, transl. M. Hamburger and C. Middleton (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1972), 33-34.

<sup>51</sup> See, Darius Rejali, *Torture and Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 31.

<sup>52</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, transl. R. Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 25

<sup>53</sup> Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, transl. R. Rosenthal (London: Abacus, 1991), 94-95.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>55</sup> Blanchot, *op. cit.*, 1985, 68. See also Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 13.



on their bodies and to testify meant to be alive,<sup>56</sup> but also to confide in language and thus engage translation.

How language is called upon to put the memories of the everyday in Auschwitz to work is manifest in, amongst many others, Charlotte Delbo’s memories, plays, and poetry<sup>57</sup> as well as Primo Levi’s memories.<sup>58</sup> *Auschwitz et après (Auschwitz and After)*, as the title of Delbo’s trilogy, takes place in Delbo and Levi’s respective autobiographical writings in ways that produce the survivor as someone here and yet there, in the interstices between but also beyond the ones annihilated and those living. Their particular narrative technique does not only make them visible as writers and poets, but also bears the commitment to *expressing* or turning the “unthinkable” and the “inexplicable,” as Delbo puts it, into the thinkable and explicable only in the *after*. Delbo explains, “... if the women who died had required those who returned to account for what had taken place, they would be unable to do so”.<sup>59</sup> She insists, “Actually I did not say anything to myself ... I thought of nothing. I felt nothing. I was a skeleton of cold ... *everything there [Auschwitz] is inexplicable*”.<sup>60</sup> According to Delbo, thinking, speaking, or writing about Auschwitz *cannot* be Auschwitz, and one is not able to imagine oneself as *the women who died there*. Auschwitz are instants that we *here* can never translate and, as such, remains both foreign and heterogeneous to what language allows in the *after*. Yet, we are given over to the experience of “dying a living death,”<sup>61</sup> as we read, imag(in)ing and seeing ourselves already dead while reading *Auschwitz and After* – after *the women who died there*.

Therefore, the reflections and memories of mass death mobilized by language, which in turn mobilizes Auschwitz, are passed on with “the mark of *un* translatability on it, in the bound book”<sup>62</sup> *Auschwitz and After* that we can touch, read and see with our eyes and hold in our hands. The book of poems and memoirs takes place as an ethical translation or hospitality, hosting testimonies and/or memories of unthinkable death. What happens is that the act of reading the book, in turn, interrupts as it holds hostage the reader, across time and space. As translation *Auschwitz and After* writes as it renders the past readable which marks its living on in the infinite *after*, while at the same time evidencing the linguistic act of hosting and sharing the *Otherness* or foreignness of Auschwitz as *unthinkable* and *inexplicable* – *un* translatable.

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Sovereignties in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy*, ed. T. Dutoit, and O. Pasanen (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 74.

<sup>57</sup> Charlotte Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, transl. R. C. Lamont (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014 [1965-1971]).

<sup>58</sup> Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity*, transl. S. Woolf (New York: Touchstone, 1996 [1958]).

<sup>59</sup> Delbo, *op. cit.*, 65.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 65, 276. (my emphasis).

<sup>61</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Beast & the Sovereign. Vol. II, Seminar of 2002–2003*, ed. G. Bennington and Kamuf, transl. G. Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 129.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge Classics, 2009 [1993]), 219.

### An *un* translatable secret

The narrator-witness in Maurice Blanchot's *The Instant of My Death*, a literary fiction set in 1944, tells of a dead end that the Nazis are faced with, to which they, in turn, expose "a young man" and his entire family. A "Nazi lieutenant" convoyed by a liquidating force knocks the door of a château. The château is located in Nazi-occupied France. Believing the one knocking to be a guest in need of help, a young man opens the door.

"Everyone outside."

A Nazi lieutenant . . . made the oldest people exit first, and then two young women.

"Outside, outside."<sup>63</sup>

The unexpected arrival turns into an outside trial to judge whether the occupant of the château should cohabit the earth. The lieutenant's translation of the casings and bullets found around the house in a war-torn area as evidence in a trial<sup>64</sup> renders the "less" young man an accused without the possibility to prove himself innocent.

The lieutenant choked in a bizarre language. And putting the casings, the bullets, a grenade under the nose of the man already less young... he distinctly shouted: "This is what you have come to."<sup>65</sup>

"This is what you have come to," is a verdict that places the young man before a firing squad, awaiting but *the* instant of the order to shoot. Knowing that this is the dead end of his life on earth, the young man does not want his family to witness what is about to happen, and begs the Nazi lieutenant:

At least have my family go inside.<sup>66</sup>

He is the only man left, and the family of all women – aunt, mother, sister, and sister-in-law – is about to witness his execution. This instant is interrupted. The lieutenant's attention is drawn to a nearby battle which makes him disappear from the scene. One of the executioners approaches the young man to tell him who they are and tells him without speaking "to disappear". The young man wanes with a "feeling of extraordinary lightness," only to find himself in a faraway and dense forest where the trees become his host and ultimate shield. Death, we read, is prevented by "death itself – and perhaps the error of

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<sup>63</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Instant of My Death*, transl. by E. Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000 [1994]), 3.

<sup>64</sup> See, Jacques Derrida, *Demeure: Fiction and Testimony*, transl. E. Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000 [1998]), 60.

<sup>65</sup> Blanchot, *op. cit.*, 5.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

*injustice*".<sup>67</sup>

Suddenly he witnesses the compound set on fire, descending into *ash*, and three young men – *sons of farmers* – slaughtered. Although the château is left undisturbed, the world transforms into an unlivable world, evidencing a long devastating war. Yet the instant of lightness – "... at the moment when the shooting was no longer but to come" – obfuscates the descent into the everyday. It never leaves his survival – no longer life anymore – and remains untranslatable: "There remained, ... the feeling of lightness that I would not know how to translate: freed from life?"<sup>68</sup> Not only is the instant unavailable to words and thus nothing to be captured in language, it is untranslatable. This questioning of the epistemological foundation of knowing and a strict claim to truth is also unfolded in the act of remembering and testifying.

Narrator-witness: "In his place, I will not try to analyze".<sup>69</sup>

According to Jacques Derrida, the title *The Instant of My Death* "... promises us a narrative or a testimony – signed by someone who tells us in many ways and according to every possible tense: *I am* dead, or *I will be* dead in an instant, or an instant ago *I was* going to be dead".<sup>70</sup> Death is a common human condition to which one cannot return or testify. In this context, therefore, there is neither a post-death instant where one can testify to one's own experience of death, nor a shred of evidence to prove the existence of life *after* death. It is what Derrida reads as an "unexperienced experience"<sup>71</sup> – i.e., death can neither be experienced nor happen twice. The narrator-witness takes the reader beyond the collection of incontestable evidence to prove what is about to unfurl in an instant, "a death without death and thus a life without life".<sup>72</sup> This *neither/nor* evolves as an insistence on untranslatability of a death that is not death and thus the limit of literature and autobiographical fiction but also phenomenology.<sup>73</sup> In other words, *The Instant of My Death* narrates how certain death cannot fully arrive in the here and now, how it cannot be rendered knowable and completely comprehended, how it does not end with survival, and how it cannot be undone by evidence or any testimony of fiction.

In *Vicious Circles*, Blanchot writes, "... in my opinion – and in a way different from the one that led Adorno to decide with absolute correctness – I will say there can be no fiction-story about Auschwitz."<sup>74</sup> This conclusion falls in line with the thought that as annihilation leaves nothing intact, "all narration, even all poetry" becomes a thing without "foundation".<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 8–9.

<sup>69</sup> Blanchot, *op. cit.*, 5.

<sup>70</sup> Derrida, *op. cit.*, 2000, 45.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>72</sup> Derrida, *op. cit.*, 2000, 89.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Blanchot, *op. cit.*, 1985, 68.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

Like Adorno, this does not stop him from writing literary fiction, which changes with Derrida's testimony. On July 20, 1994, Derrida receives a letter from Maurice Blanchot in which Blanchot enunciates, "July 20. Fifty years ago, I knew the happiness of nearly being shot to death".<sup>76</sup> Derrida asserts, "Like this sentence, this letter does not belong to what we call literature. It testifies ... to the reality of the event that seems to form the referent of this literary narrative entitled *The Instant of My Death* and published as literary fiction".<sup>77</sup>

The fiction as a traveling translation as an "intimate act of reading, surrendering," and seeing,<sup>78</sup> embeds the reader in "real human experiences," violence, and an "interruption of time and history"<sup>79</sup> that unfolds in the course of reading, even though it does not take place in the everyday reality of the reader. The instant is a secret reserved to the one who testifies, and from which fiction develops as translation.<sup>80</sup> Herein, experience starts from translation of a secret instant that goes back *fifty years*, to a specific historical context that is distinct from that written and narrated experience, without which there would be no *The Instant of My Death*. The literary fiction is not the *instant* that it creates as much as *death* is not a word or an object in Blanchot's possession. Blanchot, suggests that fiction and, in effect, language cannot claim the ability of reaching some universal truth about death within a particular historical context that profoundly displaces the common binary understanding of life/death as it leaves nothing intact.

Furthermore, echoing Omar Khayyām<sup>81</sup> (1048-1124), while offering an intimate reading of "genocide against the Tutsi" in 1994, Véronique Tadjo writes, "None among us" has ever returned from death to testify to how the dead are.<sup>82</sup>

## Evidentiary bodies

In order to survive absolute physical extermination, around fifty thousand Tutsi people try to hide in churches and whatever places they think will host and protect them. As Rwanda's churches<sup>83</sup> are entangled in all the violence, many have become sites of massacres. People resort to seeking refuge in the classrooms of the Murambi technical school in Gikongoro Province in southern Rwanda. While "Hutu" is made a body radically distinct from "Tutsi," as organized killing units, the mobilized Hutus hunt and kill the Tutsi wherever they find them in Rwanda. The political inscription of difference is constantly communicated through the

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<sup>76</sup> Derrida, *op. cit.*, 2000, 52.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Spivak, *op. cit.* 201.

<sup>79</sup> Derrida, *op. cit.*, 2000, 45, 92.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>81</sup> Omar Khayyām, *Rubáiyát of Omay Khayyám*, transl. E. FitzGerlad (Oxford University Press, 2010 [1859]).

<sup>82</sup> Véronique Tadjo, *The Shadow of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda*, transl. V. Wakerley (Oxford and Portsmouth: Heinmann, 2002 [2000]), 47.

<sup>83</sup> See Timothy Longman, *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press); Jean-Pierre Karegeye, "Religion, Politics, and Genocide in Rwanda," *After Violence: Religion, Trauma and Reconciliation*, ed. A. Bieler et al., (Evangelische Verlagsanstalt: Leipzig), 82-102; Alison des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999), 39.

Rwandan radio station *Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines*, which mobilizes and integrates Hutu civilians. “The French military would protect you in Murambi,” they keep hearing from officials, the police, and priests in the area. Instead the secret plan appears to gather the Tutsi at the school to conclude their collective annihilation once and for all. A coordinated plan to cleanse the whole area of the Tutsi, leaving no one to testify,<sup>84</sup> is already underway. Like the rest of the country, the whole area is enmeshed in such violence as the population could never have imagined before.

The everyday reality of collective lives is unexpectedly interrupted. Being human and certain neighborly ethics that once formed the foundations of life and neighborhood relations no longer ensure either coexistence or the life of the Tutsi population. Killing the Tutsi has become an everyday reality. Although the technical school is under construction, it turns into a space that incarcerates everybody within its walls. This means that those inside the few separate rooms with tiny walls are made homeless and robbed of everything in the world. They are left without food and drinking water for days. Death begins inscribing itself and has already interrupted the history of the country, converting Rwanda into a foreign land that does not welcome the Tutsi and Hutu opponents.

The inescapable fear of death, sleep deprivation, and suffering from hunger have transformed them into weak and exhausted bodies. The initial waves of the massacre are answered with collective resistance. By now it has become clear that Murambi is a place where the collective life of the Tutsi is at stake. The arrival of the armed Interahamwe – a Hutu paramilitary organization for killing Tutsi – on April 21, 1994, between 3 a.m. and 12 p.m., marks the actual beginning of the massacre. It is a day unlike any other. Interahamwe do not care about whether the human target is a pregnant woman or a child. They kill with bullets whenever necessary and hack people to death with machetes. The massacre would have been a difficult feat without the *Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines*, weapons and machetes – the technologies of killing. The dead corpses are later buried in shallow mass graves. This attempt of deliberately destroying any trace of evidence and testimony of what happened fails as some manage to escape and others among those massacred survive and escape. Thirty-four people survive. Some of the survivors’ testimonies are now digitized and can be accessed at the Murambi Genocide Memorial Center as well as the website of the Genocide Archive of Rwanda.<sup>85</sup>

Spread all over Rwanda and different parts of the world by now, I heard this narrative mainly during my first visit on September 26, 2012, but also when I returned in 2013, 2016, and September 2018. In this paper it also includes references that point us to other articulations that have multiplied and set the narrative into motion in the world. The woman working at the memorial center and in charge of guiding the visitors, who had already embodied the narrative explains what had come to pass between April 18-22, 1994. It is September 26, 2012, we are engaged in conversation as we walk towards the blocks of classrooms where people had once sought refuge.

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<sup>84</sup> des Forges, *op. cit.*

<sup>85</sup> Genocide Archive of Rwanda, available at

<[http://genocidearchiverwanda.org.rw/index.php?title=Murambi\\_Memorial](http://genocidearchiverwanda.org.rw/index.php?title=Murambi_Memorial)> accessed April 21, 2018.

What happened in Murambi is at this moment – eighteen years *after* – made “fictional” in ethnographic manner.<sup>86</sup> The massacre is embodied in a narrative that fictionalizes the massacre, making it knowable and understandable in a broader sense. Like Delbo and Blanchot, Richard Rechtman asserts that the instant of exterminatory violence, when both the past and the future disappear and the present become timeless, is fictionalized as embodied in a narrative created “after the fact”.<sup>87</sup> The narrative conserves and, at the same time, institutes what happened. The narrative, as Toni Morrison writes, “... is radical, creating us at the very moment it is being created”.<sup>88</sup> Against this backdrop, narrating or testifying in order to tell a story also means creating a space of memory that involves what is legally inscribed as “material evidence” of genocide in Rwanda.<sup>89</sup> The narration creates a public and political space,<sup>90</sup> making it understandable by assimilating the past in the everyday. In doing so, it transforms the past to the extent that it “will never be the same”.<sup>91</sup>

Eighteen years *after* the massacre, my visit marks a descent into the Murambi massacre as an embodied narrative and as embodied in a narrative and material/physical evidence that persistently makes it congruent with the here and yet there. The website<sup>92</sup> of the Murambi Genocide Memorial refers to April 21, 1995 as the date the memorial center was established. She, the guide, tells me that survivors exhumed the bodies, thousands were buried, and that the government of Rwanda opened the doors of the halls filled with exhumed human bodies to the public on April 7, 1996. The Murambi technical school that was turned into a site of extermination and mass grave is now preserved as a national memorial based on physical evidence or, what I call, evidentiary bodies. Evidentiary bodies include mummified bodies, human remains, bloodstained clothes, archival photographs, digitized survivor testimonies, and Murambi as a site of both modern massacre and museum. The conservation effort is constitutive of new practices and relations that not only render the ethnographic evidence of genocide public but also produce knowledge about it. Article 52 of Rwanda’s Constitution inscribes the preservation of the memorial sites of the “genocide against the Tutsi,” as penned in the Preamble, as the duty of the state and “everyone”.<sup>93</sup>

We are walking towards what had once been ground-level buildings for classrooms that now host evidentiary bodies from the genocidal massacre. I would not know this, as it is my first visit. As a guide, she wants me to bear witness to the massacre in such a way that it

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<sup>86</sup> Richard Rechtman, “From an Ethnography of the Everyday to Writing Echoes of Suffering,” *Medicine Anthropology Theory* 4 (2017) 3: 130-142.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* See also, Delbo, *op. cit.*, 65, 276; Blanchot, *op. cit.*, 1985, 65.

<sup>88</sup> Toni Morrison, 1993. “Nobel Lecture,” (1993), available at [http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/laureates/1993/morrison.lecture.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1993/morrison.lecture.html) >, accessed November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

<sup>89</sup> H el ene Dumas and R emi Korman, “Memorials Spaces for the Tutsi Genocide in Rwanda,” *Afrique Contemporaine* 2 (2011) 238: I-XV (XI).

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Sanford, *op. cit.*, 17-18.

<sup>91</sup> Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), 275.

<sup>92</sup> Genocide Archive of Rwanda, *op. cit.*

<sup>93</sup> Rwandan Constitution, available at [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Rwanda\\_2015.pdf?lang=en](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Rwanda_2015.pdf?lang=en) >, accessed April 7, 2018.

structures the visit and entangles it in a repeatable and understandable narration. Suddenly we stop before an open door to an old classroom:

They are here to tell you and the rest of the world that what happened in Murambi is real. Do not photograph or touch them.

The door is open, so I step in. She stays behind, outside. At this moment, I am cut off from the world. I stand face to face with what evades words or linguistic naming and artistic imagination. All I can see are white mummified bodies captivating my eyes and my whole body. I stand before actual yet dead bodies laid out on wooden panels and inhale the invisible and unimpeachable particles or dust moving in the air. The room itself is a world of infinite silence, but with the capacity for confirming, repeating, and conveying the embodied narrative. The modified and preserved white bodies neither ask, “What is your name? Where are you from? What brought you here?” nor do they make the massacre of April 21, 1994 accessible in any way. I am expected to stand before physical evidence, seeing how *death can no longer happen*<sup>94</sup> to the bodies that interrupted my world, and would remain in me as images. I also bear witness to what happens *after* the massacre, especially to those who are “... absolutely without defense, disarmed,” and in the hands, of the post-genocide state and the global politics of memory, dead.<sup>95</sup> Although I had already carried out six months of anthropological inquiry on al-Anfāl genocide (1987-1991) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, I leave the room without having a single thought of whether there is something to be interpreted, heard, or whether the unassimilable white bodies need to be exposed or to remain unknown. I am completely empty and unable to imagine myself as any of the bodies without names or faces. The white bodies have disappeared in the politics of numerical evidence, “50,000 Tutsis were murdered in Murambi.” Their existence as individual human beings, identities, and family and collective memory are completely erased. They are conserved with powdered lime which has transformed them into white bodies as never before witnessed in human history. Stepping into the room means crossing an unmarked border between the everyday and the worldliness of the white bodies that would not leave one uninterrupted.

There are six single-story classroom buildings, each with six classrooms, and each of them turned into an indefinite home for white mummified bodies and human skeletons. We walk into two other rooms, one hosting human skeletons and the other white mummified bodies. They are there to be seen and continue their existence with the established and guiding narrative that produces them as physical evidence, which in turn confines their past and future existence to the *genocide against the Tutsi*. We pass the other rooms, just looking inside from the door, and arrive at what had once been turned into a mass grave. “This is where the French soldiers built a volleyball court and played. They tried to hide the mass

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<sup>94</sup> Cf. Derrida, *op. cit.*, 2000, 67-68.

<sup>95</sup> Derrida, *op. cit.*, 2010, 126.

grave,”<sup>96</sup> she tells me. The embodied narrative produces an ontological difference between the massacre as a thing of the past, Hutu/Tutsi, and the here and now. It ethnicizes genocide and overlooks Rwanda’s colonial history of racialization that produced ethnically divided memories among the Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa, and the role of the modern state and global politics.<sup>97</sup>

The visible and immobile mummified bodies and the open mass graves of human remains no longer belong to themselves or their families and are not granted burial. Emmanuel Murangira, with a scar of shrapnel from a hand grenade on the left side of his forehead, is one of the four impossible survivors.<sup>98</sup> According to his testimony that has survived his death in 2011, the lack of identification, the complete annihilation of some families, and financial conditions are among the reasons why the families who had survived could not exhume the bodies, transport them to their villages, and bury them.<sup>99</sup> He is also convinced that the number of those massacred ranges from “50,000 to 60,000” people. Although Emmanuel’s position cannot be easily explained, being a survivor also means being with multiple losses and sharing the everyday with the dead.<sup>100</sup> His entire family had been exterminated during the genocidal violence. According to Véronique Tadjo, in Rwanda the survivors talk to their lost loved ones and carry them within themselves.<sup>101</sup> The relationship is not empirical and its meaning in the world of the one who has survived is irreducible to language or the linear time – past, present, future. It helps people who have survived to work through the everyday difficulties in their lives, and it is a social life in which they participate. The relationships with the dead involve an “exchange for assistance or protection,” in the everyday life.<sup>102</sup> The obligation to think of the dead occupies an integral space within Rwandan cosmology as well as the ordinary world of the survivors.

As a place where unidentified bodies and remains of the dead are conserved as the foundation of national memory, Murambi represents a legal and political turn as well as

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<sup>96</sup> See also Boubacar Boris Diop, *Murambi: The Book of Bones*, transl. F. McLaughlin (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 177; Tadjo, *op. cit.*, 21.

<sup>97</sup> See Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Assumpta Mugiraneza, “The Genocide of the Tutsi in Rwanda: The European Roots of the Rwandan Story,” *Memory and Responsibility. The Legacy of Jan Karski*, ed. E. Smolar (Warsaw: Semper, 2015), 270-279; Johan Pottier, *Re-Imagining Rwanda: Conflict, Survival and Disinformation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 9-52.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Genocide Archive of Rwanda, website, *op. cit.*; Samuel Totten and Rafiki Ubaldo, ed. *We Cannot Forget: Interviews with Survivors of the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 81-97.

<sup>99</sup> Susan E. Cook, “The Politics of Preservation in Rwanda,” *Genocide in Cambodia and Rwanda: New Perspectives*, ed. S. E. Cook (London and New York: Routledge, 2017 [2006]), 281-299, (288). Susan writes that even though Emmanuel guides her and the other four visitors, including her two-year old son, through the classrooms of the Murambi, he is unwilling to provide her with the information she needs.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Moradi, *op. cit.*

<sup>101</sup> Tadjo, *op. cit.*, 51-58.

<sup>102</sup> Laura Eramian, *Peaceful Selves: Personhood, Nationhood, and the Post-Conflict Moment in Rwanda* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2018), 91-96.



translation of the global infrastructure of memory *after* the genocide in Rwanda. “Remains of genocide victims which were formerly buried shall be transferred to genocide memorial sites and cemeteries as provided for by ... Law ..., upon the initiative of the relatives or upon consultation with the District administration”.<sup>103</sup> Some of the mummified bodies have been found elsewhere and are now on display in Murambi which is encircled with a fence, separating it from the population that inhabit the land around it. While the former Rwandan state transformed these bodies into sites of *difference*<sup>104</sup> and rendered them killable, the post-genocide legal and political translations defer this very difference into an unknown future while rendering the bodies and Murambi as *genosites*. Murambi takes place as a modern evidentiary institution<sup>105</sup> that stages the genocide against the Tutsi for the nation to imagine both its descent and its future. At the same time, it becomes the place where the massacre is received as an international crime, and where the post-genocide nation and *everyone* should return to learn about how, where and what “actually happened”. Similar genos-sites and/or evidentiary institutions are established throughout the country: e.g. Kigali Genocide Memorial (Gisozi); Nyamata Church Genocide Memorial; Nyarubuye Church Memorial; Ntarama Church Genocide Memorial; and Bisesero Genocide Memorial.

### Tele-evidence

In Rwanda, the question of conservation is linked to the narrative of living together again and/or reconciliation, re-making the nation,<sup>106</sup> remembering together, and the prevention of future genocides, or “Never Again” as first articulated *after* the Holocaust. The conservation of evidentiary bodies is, therefore, as much a question of traveling translation as it is of the past and future of the nation in Rwanda. Moreover, it has become the concern of the Rwandan state and its politics of difference, forensic science, and digital technology. The Kigali Genocide Memorial (KGM) has a “world-class digital archive preserving memory for generations”.<sup>107</sup> It provides a collection of documents, archival photographs, audiovisual survivor and perpetrator testimonies, audio cassette tapes, an interactive map, the human remains of “250,000”<sup>108</sup> people, Gardens of Reflection, human skulls on display, the Wall of Names, mass graves, a website that contracts time and space, and a library as well as an education center. It has also an amphitheater where theatrical plays about the genocide are

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<sup>103</sup> Rémi Korman, “Bury or Display? The Politics of Exhumation in Post-Genocide Rwanda,” *Human Remains and Identification: Mass Violence, Genocide, and the ‘Forensic Turn’*, ed. É. Anstett and J-M. Dreyfus (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 203-220, (206).

<sup>104</sup> See Arjun Appadurai, “Dead Certainty: Ethnic Violence in an Era of Globalization,” *Public Culture* 10 (1998) 2, 225-247.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Donald Preziosi, “Modernity Again: The Museum as Trompe L’oeil,” *Deconstruction and the Visual Arts: Art, Media, Architecture*, ed. P. Brunette and D. Wills (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 141-150.

<sup>106</sup> Stefanie Bognitz, “Mistrusting as Mode of Engagement in Mediation: Insights from Socio-Legal Practice in Rwanda,” *Mistrust: Ethnographic Approximations*, ed. F. Mülfrid (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2018) 147-167.

<sup>107</sup> See the KMC website, available at <<http://www.kgm.rw>>, accessed April 10, 2018.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* The number appears each time one visits the website, which multiplies the dead.

performed during the annual commemoration. The website of the KGM enfolds the genocide against the Tutsi as well as all memorials and museums, and participates in the image flows that uphold and disseminate the memory of genocide in full view of the global/local public eye. As a result, genocide moves into the realm of the visual and virtual. The KGM's infrastructure of memory includes providing everyday tours through the three permanent exhibitions, including photographic exhibitions of genocides, Namibian, Armenian, Cambodian, Bosnian, and the Holocaust. Just as with the museums mentioned above and the website, KGM as an actual place also institutes certain modes of remembering that produces Tutsi as victim and Hutu as perpetrator, and internationalizes the memory while conserving and circulating multiplied evidence of the genocide against Tutsi worldwide.<sup>109</sup>

The legal, political, and tele-technological translation is unprecedented in Rwandan history, bringing all evidentiary institutions, the archive and its digitalization, the websites, and the annual commemoration under state jurisdiction. This evolving politics, which is essentially global, has transformed the national government into an "archontic power," embroiling the "power of consignation".<sup>110</sup> As such, the government is entrenched in practices of gathering evidentiary bodies, classifying and assigning residence, and centralizing memory as well as acting in public.<sup>111</sup> It is concerned with the use of forensic science in the conservation of exhibited evidentiary bodies that in turn expose the political translation, and shows how the national memory of the genocide is dependent on unidentified human remains, and how it is made empirically knowable. This turn towards the past as a turn towards the future of political, national and global memory involves an international network.

Aegis Trust, an international organization for the prevention of crimes against humanity and genocide,<sup>112</sup> has taken the question of preservation and national memory in Rwanda to a global level that has in turn turned Aegis Trust global. It operates the UK Holocaust Centre in Nottinghamshire, which a delegation from Rwanda visited before the KGM was built and opened in 2004. Aegis Trust has been involved in the construction of monuments and museums, including KGM, the preservation of sites of annihilation and evidentiary bodies, the digitization of evidence of genocide, and education since early 2000. Moreover, it has been engaged in translation practices linking the infrastructure of memory in Rwanda to that of the Holocaust and beyond.<sup>113</sup>

The CEO of Aegis, James Smith, has argued that science and technology has key role to play in halting the mummified bodies' natural disappearance into dust.<sup>114</sup> This is where law

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<sup>109</sup> Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, transl. E. Prenowitz (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press), 7.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>111</sup> Timothy Longman, *Memory and Justice in Post-Genocide Rwanda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Susan Thomson, *Rwanda: From Genocide to Precarious Peace* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018).

<sup>112</sup> See <<https://www.aegistrust.org>>, accessed May 5, 2018.

<sup>113</sup> See Dumas and Korman, *op. cit.*, I – XV.

<sup>114</sup> Nicki Hitchcott, "Writing on Bones: Commemorating Genocide in Boubacar Boris Diop's "Murambi," *Research in African Literatures*, 40 (2009) 3, 48-61, (49).

and the court, which Cornelia Vismann calls a “translation machine,”<sup>115</sup> are no longer necessary to confirm and produce evidence and preside over public and historical truth.<sup>116</sup> The collaboration between Aegis Trust, the National Commission for the Fight Against Genocide in Rwanda, the International Forensic Centre of Excellence, and Cranfield University and its department of forensic sciences was expected to result in the establishment of a mobile laboratory in the UK to be stationed in Murambi. It is to preserve evidence, the unidentified bodies “... by placing them in hermetically sealed compartments which should ‘last more than 150 years without any deterioration’”.<sup>117</sup> This radical change also suggests how the future memory of a nation is designed with traveling translation of global memory, how it becomes a work of science, technology, and politics, and how it descends into the everyday as both actual and virtual, and here and yet there all at once.

When I arrived once more in an afternoon of January 2016, I found that all the rooms with mummified bodies were closed and the windows covered. The doors of the rooms filled with bloodstained clothes of those massacred were also closed to the world. A group of people were renovating a building at the heart of the memorial. While looking at the workers, a young boy, standing next to me, told me, “a conference hall”. There was no sign of the mobile laboratory. “It remains to arrive,” I thought. Again, in late September 2018, I saw that the renovation of the building had come to an end. The name “Conservation Hall” followed by “genocide victims’ bodies and their cloths at the time of killing,” was inscribed on a “tombstone” and placed close to the entrance. The Hall is now waiting, as I was told by the male guide, for the “conservation technology” to rather arrive from Germany’s Institute of Legal Medicine in Hamburg in collaboration with the State Office for Preservation of Historic Monuments in Hannover.<sup>118</sup> The conservation hall is expected to open to the public in 2019, during the *Kwibuka 25* – 25 annual remembrance of the genocide.<sup>119</sup>

Back in 2016, together with the young boy, we walked to the main museum building, to embodiments-in-motion without asking each other questions. It has four exhibitions, starting with a visualized chronology of genocidal violence against the Tutsi, the organization of the 1994 genocide, involving the silence of the United Nations, and a big picture of the current president of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, in his military dress, representing the resistance

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<sup>115</sup> Cited in Susan Schuppli, “Entering Evidence: Cross-Examining the Court Records of the ICTY,” *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*, ed. Forensic Architecture, Goldsmith, University of London (Berlin: Sternberg Press and Forensic Architecture, 2014), 279-316, (295).

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Schuppli, *op. cit.*

<sup>117</sup> Korman, *op. cit.*, 213.

<sup>118</sup> See Besuch des ruandischen Botschafters im Institut für Rechtsmedizin in Hamburg am 07. 11. 2017, available at <<https://t2m.io/CK38FCcc>>, accessed November 10, 2018.

<sup>119</sup> On March 9, 2019, flying with RwandAir from Johannesburg, South Africa, to Kigali the capital of Rwanda I could see a picture of the “flames of remembrance” with “Rwanda: 25th Commemoration of the Genocide against the Tutsi. Remembering the past, rebuilding the future,” on the cover of the RwandAir Inzoki Magazine. The fragments that follows under that title in the magazine (pp. 24-26) are both in English and French, writing 1957 as the date of the “ideology of genocide against the Tutsi,” the genocide committed by “Hutu extremists” against Tutsi as an “ethnic group,” and that the genocide happened under the UN watch. The magazine *travels* both with RwandAir and online, see <[https://issuu.com/inzoki/docs/inzoki\\_march\\_may\\_2019\\_online](https://issuu.com/inzoki/docs/inzoki_march_may_2019_online)>, accessed on March 15, 2019.

of the Rwandan Patriotic Front, followed by archival photographs of both perpetrators and victims and burial chambers.<sup>120</sup> Although they cannot lend a face to the unidentified bodies on display, the photographs are there to “furnish [visual] evidence”<sup>121</sup> and to be seen together with other evidentiary bodies. In Murambi, they claim the visual capacity to translate the lost human lives and worlds, to present the “truth” to what *happened*, and to actually be in the world and intervene ethically, legally, and politically.<sup>122</sup> On its website the museum offers a virtual tour, explanation, and various digitized survivor testimonies that like the photographs break with context as they roam the Internet.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> See the website of Genocide Archive of Rwanda, *op. cit.*

<sup>121</sup> Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin Books 1977), 5.

<sup>122</sup> See Martin Jay, “Can Photographs Lie? Reflections on a Perennial Anxiety,” *Critical Studies* 2 (2016):6-19; Sinan Antoon, *The Baghdad Eucharist*, transl. M. Tabet (Cairo and New York: Hoopoe); Jacques Derrida, *Copy, Archive, Signature: A Conversation on Photography*, ed. G. Richter, transl. J. Fort (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London and New York: Verso, 2009), 11.