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### Melodrama Voice and the Narration of Traumatic Experiences

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*Melodrama Voice,  
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Triple Encounters.*

This paper interrogates the critical role melodrama voice played in the narration of traumatic experiences in the Gacaca Trilogy: Living Together Again in Rwanda (Aghion, 2003), In Rwanda We Say: The Family that Does Not Speak Dies (Aghion, 2005), and The Notebooks of Memory (Aghion, 2009). Borrowing from structural approaches to literary trauma and narrative theories, the paper examined modes of and melodramatic voice that are depicted through dialogue, voice-over narrations, emotive language and repetition of specific phrases that reinforce echoes of traumatic suffering. An exploratory research design was adopted to examine how melodrama played a role in the narration, while a multi-modal transcription style was used to collect primary data from the selected texts. Primarily, the paper analysed expressions of self-pity and helplessness that denote narrators' vulnerability and pain. The paper noted that through melodrama modes, characters are in a position to express and externalise their suffering, and identify themselves primarily as trauma victims. In addition, the paper affirmed that melodramatic voice empowers characters to express their pain, granting them a platform to communicate their suffering. As they narrate their experiences, their voices lay bare instances of trauma, seeking acknowledgement and validation for what they have endured. This act of speaking facilitates individual exploration and cultivates a deeper comprehension of traumatic experiences.

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## INTRODUCTION

The paper interrogates melodrama voice as that narrates traumatic suffering in the selected trilogy. Mostly, it describes physical and psychological torture, embodies traumatic scars and thus, acts as a repertoire of traumatic suffering. Further, it interrogates how the melodramatic voice created a traumatic world and developed a narrative causality for the trilogy.

In the process, it examined how melodrama voice maps narrations of traumatic experiences in three major categories. In the beginning, this study probed how melodramatic voice represents trauma speaking positions that depict different perspectives in which characters express their traumatic suffering. Secondly, it investigated how melodrama voice builds practices of trauma situatedness, especially narration of trauma contexts such as social, political and cultural. Lastly, it examined how melodramatic voice depicts a triple encounter type of narrations that seem to be real, imagined or symbolic leitmotif representations of trauma (Thrift and Pile, 1995).

## Melodrama Voice and Trauma Speaking Positions

To start with, melodrama voice anchors a trauma speaking position design that the trilogy employs as a platform for survivors, perpetrators and witnesses to unravel several traumatic experiences. In mapping narrative trauma speaking positions, melodrama voice provides a platform for self-assessment of various characters in the narration of traumatic experiences in the trilogy. Zora (2014) argued that documentary films created conditions necessary for the "sayability" of repressed thought. It is through this technique of characters speaking that their voices trace and articulate trauma as they seek an acknowledgement of their suffering.

For example, in *Living Together Again in Rwanda* (Aghion, 2003), this study suggested that melodrama voice reflects on justice, memory and collective trauma. The voice created a sense of hopelessness and despair as expressed by several genocide victims, such as Welars Munyango.

**Figure 1: Welars Munyango, One of the Genocide Witnesses, Gives His Perspectives on What Should be Done to Perpetrators**



**Source:** *Living Together Again in Rwanda*, 2003

Moreover, this study considered his speaking position as a witness, revealing contours of traumatic experiences that he seeks recognition and validation. Therefore, this study notes that his pathetic speech acts as a reminder of atrocities that happened during genocide and argues that those who committed murder should be punished in an exemplary way to prevent a repeat of similar events in the future. He asserted:

*What I think of Gacaca, those who killed, whose crimes catch up with them, must be punished in an exemplary way. But to release them so they return to live among us, for me, that's impossible. They must be made an example so that my children and those of others understand that killing is a bad and reprehensible thing. That's how we'll stop this culture of killing. Seeing someone close to you punished for killing, for having shed blood, people will say: "Killing is bad. I kill, I'll be killed in turn." That's when the truth will come out.*

This study asserts that his narration depicted traumatic scars evident on survivors and the community at large. Since his observation reflects on traumatic experiences in a post-genocide reconciliation period, it can be cited as an example of the unresolved conflict during that time. His desire that perpetrators be punished as an example reveals his agitations for retributive justice, which depicts the nature of the unassimilated event that demands recognition (Caruth, 1996). Furthermore, this study argues that his rejection of the idea that perpetrators should be allowed to reintegrate into society demonstrates that traumatic memory resists closure. (LaCapra, 2001). Furthermore, this study postulates that emphasis on teaching future generations that killing is reprehensible reflects a broader societal effort to transform trauma as a cautionary measure. According to Alexander (2012), cultural trauma can be reshaped to prevent future atrocities. Consequently, this study emphasises that his assertions signal a collective

trauma experienced by survivors as he describes past wounds that continue haunting them.

Secondly, Welars' speech expressed disbelief in releasing prisoners who committed heinous crimes as they returned and mingled with other members of the community. This study suggests that his observations express a character engulfed with trauma over Rwanda's reconciliation policies, particularly regarding the reintegration of convicted perpetrators into local communities. Drawing on Caruth (1996) and LaCapra (2001), this study interprets his reaction as one that demonstrates how forced coexistence with perpetrators functions as a traumatic trigger, continually reopening wounds rather than facilitating healing.

Similarly, this study contends that those in power framed forms of reconciliation, but were experienced by survivors as a form of re-traumatisation. Every day, they encountered former perpetrators in communal spaces that constantly reminded them of unresolved grief and injustice (Clark, 2010). As a result, this study postulates that his assertions consist of regrets and, in the process, convey forms of acting out trauma whereby painful memories are relived (LaCapra, 2001).

Consequently, citing his articulations as an example, this study asserts that melodramatic voice sets a firm foundation for characters to open up and express their wounds. In addition, his speeches denoted the presence of perpetrators in the community, reigniting feelings of fear and insecurity. Thus, this study contends that melodramatic voices presented memories of loss and suffering through their speaking positions as they express their hopelessness and alienation.

Secondly, the trilogy employs voice-over narration as a cinematic strategy to establish distinct speaking positions. This study views the use of voice-over narration as a narrative strategy that represents a disturbing testimony. Caruth (1996) argued that traumatic events resist straightforward narration,

often emerging through fragmented or mediated forms of expression.

For example, the voice of Annonciata Mukanyonga, in *Living Together Again in Rwanda* (Aghion, 2003), captures feelings of anxiety and hopelessness as she waits for the Gacaca tribunals to start, perhaps providing an opportunity to shed light on what happened during the genocide. Her speech depicts her grappling with the trauma of having witnessed violence and loss. This study argues that her experiences seemed to resonate with those of many others who endured similar horrors. Thus, she was articulating her anguish and the shared suffering of a community recovering from the aftermath of genocide. She laments:

*People were killed by their own. People died, killed by their own. Some at home, others as*

*they tried to flee. ... When you cut a banana tree, you feel no pity. They piled up the bodies by the roadsides. As for what went through on this hillside... No, it's too complicated...But what can I do about it now? Just seeing them sickens me! Anyway, people died. Before, the entire hill was inhabited. Today, there is neither man, woman, nor child...Everyone was fleeing and dying alone. When I had nowhere left to turn, I returned here to perish. They killed my children—even the baby on my back. And they said: "Leave her, she is sadness incarnate. She will die of sorrow."*

This study notes that she describes a world where trusted neighbours turned into killers, recounting how her neighbours were murdered.

**Figure 2: A Victim of Genocide, Mukanyonga, Explaining How the Perpetrators Committed Heinous Crimes**



**Source:** *Living Together Again in Rwanda*, 2003

This study considers her observations of the hillside, once thriving with families, now lying empty. Benyakar et al. (1989) conceptualise trauma as the collapse of an individual's or community's psychological and social structures, leading to disorientation and fragmentation. The speaker's

account exemplifies this collapse. Based on their argument, this study suggests that she describes the destruction of various bonds in phrases that depict people being killed by their underlying betrayal within the community. The interpretation posits a disintegrated society as the hillside, which was once



fully inhabited, is now desolate, symbolising the annihilation of a stable living structure. Thus, this study asserts that her account of their children being murdered, including even the baby she was carrying, represents the ultimate breakdown of familial and generational continuity.

Similarly, this study notes her furious expressions towards those responsible, yet they refuse to acknowledge their crimes. This denial, this study suggests, leaves survivors in a state of unresolved anguish. Additionally, she explained that the release of prisoners, especially the one she denounced, had heightened her feelings of vulnerability and fear. Thus, her expressions reflected the collective trauma within the community, where the past atrocities continue to resonate in the present. The uncertainty surrounding their safety created a pervasive atmosphere of dread not just for her but for others who shared similar experiences. The trauma they had endured does not simply fade. Instead, it was continually being reignited by the actions and presence of those who inflicted harm.

In addition, in her speaking position, she noted that the Gacaca tribunals represent a chance to review a tormenting past. She believed that when the truth came out, it could validate the experiences of survivors and acknowledge their suffering. Her speech acknowledged the aftermath of violence as she expressed how she was confronting trauma and had a journey towards recovery.

Furthermore, the analysis considers her speech as one that denotes the pain of living in isolation as she recalls the death of her close relatives. She acknowledges the shocking reality of the violence, recognising a dissonance between her memories of her community and the atrocities that occurred. She conveys her understanding by stating that such horrors did indeed happen.

Thus, her choice of words depicts her trauma. Through her speech, the trilogy depicts a community inflicted with genocide wounds that

required attention. This study notes that her speech acknowledged the shocking reality of their circumstances. Besides, the isolation she felt is both physical and emotional. She vividly recounts memories of shared lives, now tainted by violence and loss. Consequently, her speaking position depicts individuals who were betrayed by close people they knew as relatives and the trauma that accompanies such experiences. The notion that individuals who once shared a life, a community, and perhaps even familial bonds could turn against one another is a harrowing reality that leaves deep psychological scars. She depicts a scenario of betrayal that shatters the very fabric of trust within a community. She seemed to emphasise the shared grief and disbelief experienced by survivors who must navigate the aftermath of violence while haunted by memories of those they lost. In articulating these feelings, this study notes that she not only validates her suffering but also gives voice to the collective anguish of a community that has been irrevocably altered and dismantled.

Consequently, this study argues that melodramatic voice serves as an anchor for traumatised characters to express their feelings. The very individuals who were once sources of support and trust become potential threats, distorting the survivors' social fabric. Further, she elaborated on how these experiences led to a relentless cycle of doubt and fear where memories of violence replay in their minds, altering their perceptions of reality.

Moreover, her speech denoted intergenerational trauma. She emphasised that the pain of these experiences is often passed down, affecting not only immediate survivors but also their children, who end up inheriting a culture of mistrust. 'When people are killed by their own,' it creates a rift that can take generations to heal. Dawson (1999) contended that this type of trauma embedded in life stories not only probes individual memories but also opens avenues for telling and witnessing. It is through such kinds of narratives that unheard voices are given a platform to articulate experiences.

Through her, the trilogy depicts the harsh realities of betrayal and violence that had engulfed her community. As a survivor, her speech focuses on a journey of confronting the root causes of her traumatic pain. In doing this act of vocalising her experiences, the trilogy depicts her traumatic suffering and, in general, the entire community at large. On the same note, her willingness to confront the sources of her trauma illustrates the transformative power of storytelling that melodrama introduces to the trilogy. In articulating her pain, she begins to reclaim her identity, challenging the stigma associated with victimhood and asserting herself as a victim who endured adversity.

Additionally, through her speaking position, the analysis highlights pain that resonates with those of others in her community, creating a shared understanding of the impact of violence and betrayal. Furthermore, the analysis notes that her speech describes characters in a state of being "sick inside", indicating a deep psychological struggle that has engulfed most of them. Based on that, this study suggests that her internal sickness symbolises the emotions that have characterised their lives, rooted in past experiences of violence, loss, or betrayal. From that, the findings demonstrate how traumatic events left lasting scars on individuals' minds. Her speech denotes the characters' internal struggles, indicating invisible wounds that trauma inflicts, often going unnoticed. Citing her experiences as an example, this study underscores the notion that trauma is not always visible. BenEzer (1999) trauma is an event that happened in the external world, and how it was subjectively experienced. Thus, the way she recalls and narrates her traumatic experiences shaped her understanding of herself and the traumatic world she was in.

Moreover, her speech recounted the tragic reality, stating that 'anyway, people died'. She described how some were murdered in their homes while others were killed as they attempted to flee. She reflected on the scene, saying that from a distance,

one might think that they were simply cutting banana trees. 'When you cut a banana tree, you feel no pity,' she remarked. This study interprets the analogy of cutting banana trees and serves to illustrate how perpetrators may have become numb to the reality of their actions, viewing their victims as mere objects rather than human beings deserving of life and dignity. By likening their violent actions to the mundane task of cutting banana trunks, she highlights how these individuals may have become emotionally numb to the reality of their deeds. This metaphor serves to emphasise that, for some, the act of violence is stripped of its moral weight, reducing victims to mere objects rather than recognising them as human beings deserving of life and dignity. In this context, the perpetrators' detachment from their actions reflects the painful experiences they had to endure in a society that had normalised brutality. Fiona (2018) argued that some individuals may develop dissociative symptoms whereby they detach from their thoughts, feelings or sense of self as a coping mechanism. Hence, the perpetrators made it difficult for them to process their traumatic experiences, which can be equated to a collapsed structure for them and the victims.

Besides, through her speaking position, this study posits the dehumanisation of genocide victims. Her speech describes horrific scenes in whereby dead bodies were piled up on the roadside. The act of piling up bodies by the roadside signifies the loss of life. Her description depicts the horror of a society where violence is incentivised, leading to an environment steeped in fear and trauma. She explained that survivors who witnessed such atrocities lived a life of distress. The sight of bodies discarded without dignity haunted, creating lasting nightmares and flashbacks. These actions, the killings, were often motivated by rewards, instilling a deep sense of betrayal and hopelessness, as it depicted the treatment of human lives as commodities. Neighbours become potential enemies, and the bonds that once held the community together are destroyed; hence, survivors have to deal with fear, death and solitude.

Further, her speech reflected on the experiences she went through on the hillside and asserted that they were too complicated to explain. Particularly, she emphasised that the guilty have refused to acknowledge their actions. She expressed a desire for confrontation, contemplating what she could do if she were face to face with them again. This study notes that the experiences she endured on the hillside represent not just physical events but a trauma scar that she finds difficult to articulate. The phrase 'it's too complicated' reflects a tangled web of emotions, such as anger, disappointment, and sorrow, that survivors navigated as they were trying to recount their experiences. She emphasised that the refusal of the guilty to acknowledge their actions aggravates their situation. This study asserts that her denial described their pain that went unrecognised and unaddressed. Her struggle for acknowledgement makes her feel trapped in her experiences and unable to focus on her future, as she feels haunted by her past.

Indeed, the speaking position played a crucial role in depicting genocide traumatic experiences. This study argues that it paved the way for characters to speak for themselves, narrating several painful, traumatic memories. Thus, this study found that melodramatic voice created a structured framework for trauma speaking positions, which the trilogy employs to allow survivors, perpetrators, and witnesses to delve into and articulate a variety of traumatic experiences. By setting forth these narrative trauma speaking positions, the melodramatic voice fosters an environment where characters can engage in self-reflection as they share their personal trauma stories throughout the trilogy.

### **Melodrama Voice and Situatedness of Traumatic Events**

Melodrama's voice depicts the situatedness of trauma by revealing how characters' experiences are linked to broader social, cultural and historical contexts. This narrative style tends to amplify and dramatise characters' suffering in the trilogy. Through various contexts, melodramatic voice denotes trauma by situating characters within their specific environments, shaping their identity and resilience as they face adversity. Therefore, this study investigated how melodramatic voice serves as a tool that contextualises traumatic experiences in the selected trilogy.

To begin with, melodrama voice juxtaposes traumatic experiences in historical and social contexts, shedding light on the root causes, growth, and continuity of genocide trauma in the trilogy. For example, in *Living Together Again in Rwanda* (Aghion, 2003), the Government Prosecutor reminds female prisoners how they abandoned their traditional motherhood roles and became agents of violence and murder. His speech delivered to female prisoners describes traditionally viewed passive victims in war narratives as catalysts of violence and atrocity. He reminded them:

*In prison, many women massacred people. They wore the militia uniform like the men and looted like the men. They also killed children, young girls... You know it's true. You are old enough - you saw it with your own eyes. Whether you approved or not, you saw it. If you are innocent, we ask you to say: 'This is what I saw, here are the guilty ones.' Even your husbands."*

He observed that numerous women had participated in massacres, even if none had been condemned publicly. He reminded them that women donned militia uniforms similar to those worn by men and engaged in looting activities alongside men.

**Figure 3: A Government Prosecutor, Explaining to Female Inmates the Role They Seem to Have Played during the Genocide**



**Source:** *Living Together Again in Rwanda*, 2003

He further noted that young girls and children were also involved in the killings. He asserted that the female prisoners (who were listening to him at that time) were mature enough to have witnessed these events first-hand, regardless of their assimilation perspectives.

This study notes that his speech is quite authoritative, positioning him as a witness to the traumatic events. This creates a dichotomy between him (the speaker's experience as a prosecutor) and the prisoners perceived as innocent, yet they were agents in traumatic situations. He directly asserts: "You saw it", contrasting with their past reflections and hence, emphasising the immediacy of a traumatising episode he was recalling. Therefore, the female prisoners are depicted not only as victims but also as active agents in the scenes of trauma. However, by including phrases like 'even your husbands' in his directives, he urges them to reveal the haunting truth in the past despite its impact on their families. Despite that, he tends to suggest that family bonds can be broken, particularly in contexts of testifying about violence and traumatic events. In other words, a reference to husbands redefines

gender in perpetuating and witnessing violence in narratives. They may face additional challenges when confronting the guilt if they are their loved ones. Further, he seemed to point out that the act of speaking out is not a personal choice but a collective responsibility. Therefore, individuals must confront the trauma of their experiences or the burden of their silence, shaping not only trilogy's narrative structure but also pointing out a collective responsibility of being guilty or innocent.

Consequently, his speech taps into a sequence of historical events in their collective memory where the communal experience shapes trauma testimony. Leimbacher (2018) argued that testimony in documentary films is authoritative as they articulate personal experience, providing a relatable context, validating experience and hence, influencing public discourse. Based on her argument, this study noted that his acknowledgement of women and children as perpetrators introduces notions of victimhood and villainy to the trilogy. Women were indeed victims of violence, but ironically were also active participants in causing the same.



Further, focusing on a contextual understanding of those who were innocent and guilty, he urged the women prisoners to testify about their observations, identifying those responsible for wrongdoing, including their husbands. Thus, his speech reflected on social responsibility and ethical choices to speak out against wrongdoing. He seemed to suggest that innocence is not solely a passive state but requires active acknowledgement and confrontation of guilt within one's community, including individuals one has strong family ties. In this particular instance, he positioned himself as a mediator between the innocent and the guilty in legal practice. This study notes that this puts the female prisoners in a dilemma whereby they need to navigate through a moral landscape weighing their loyalty to family against their obligation to justice.

In addition, the legal and social contexts of traumatic events are introduced through a melodramatic voice. The voice presents trial times during the Gacaca trials, drawing a judicial context picture, especially instances where the audience interrogates one's oral testimony, evaluating their revealed actions, and the implications of their actions. For example, in *The Notebooks of Memory* (Aghion, 2009), the judicial officer inquired of an

unnamed man, one of the accused perpetrators, if he had had any other prior convictions before his trial began. Such an inquiry into prior convictions serves as a critical entry point for the narrative into understanding the individual's past actions and the societal implications of his confession. He denies having ever participated in any other offences before the genocide came in. He narrates:

*I ask the people from this hill to tell me about April 1994 and how the genocide began - how it happened near our homes or wherever we were at the time. I'll tell you what I saw near my home in Kigarama. What you're going to tell us, you witnessed... I saw Muberandinda with my own eyes. He was with Kanyamugara. They came together. In reality, the war only lasted two or three days - the 20th, 21st and 22nd of April. People started dying right away on the 21st. That was the day of the resistance efforts... of the Tutsis from Ntungamo.*

Later, he describes the initial attack that he participated in took place in Nyabitare, where they were directed to engage the Tutsi on the hills of Ntungamo. Upon reaching the location, Valence Buregeya, the leader of the attack, pressed that it was a conflict between the Hutu and Tutsi.

**Figure 4: Unnamed Witness Narrating How Genocide Started**



**Source:** *The Notebooks of Memory*, 2009

He asserted that they were instructed to terminate the lives of Tutsi and eradicate them. According to him, they killed most of them using crude weapons such as clubs.

The interrogation that takes place between him and the judicial officers reveals a hierarchical relationship between him and the officers. The judicial officers assumed prosecuting roles while he occupied the position of a perpetrator, revealing his tormenting past. His action of confession exposed his fears and regrets of following directives from Valence Buregeya without questioning. The judicial interrogation recounts events in a narrative-structured way. This structure highlights how past actions continue to resonate in the present, suggesting that trauma is not confined to a moment but is an ongoing process that shapes identity and self-perception.

The figure of Valence Buregeya emerges as a villain character in the narrative. He is depicted as a leader who directs the attacks, depicting individuals who led the massacres. Therefore, melodrama voice depicts not only the geographical locations but also an opportunity to reconstruct their narratives as they confront their past that may have been suppressed or repressed. For instance, as he confesses, he is ashamed and remorseful for his actions.

Similarly, his mention of the conflict between Hutu and Tutsi situates the individual's actions within a broader historical narrative. The analysis notes that this connection reinforces how his personal experiences can be intertwined with the collective memory of society. Therefore, his confession reflects on how characters are trying to navigate through personal and collective trauma and how their actions contribute to larger historical narratives.

In addition, his assertion that they 'eliminated the Tutsi' depicts acts of brutality and violence that he tends to recount, evoking sullen memories of the war that form a collection of indelible trauma scars. Fiona (2018) argued that traumatic experiences can compromise an individual's ability to regulate emotions. Hence, they experience intense emotional responses, including fear, anger, or numbness, leading to alienation and loss as depicted in the trilogy.

### **Melodrama Voice and Triple Encounter Narrations**

The melodrama voice employs a narrative approach that intertwines three types of narrative encounters: real, symbolic, and imaginary leitmotifs in mapping out traumatic experiences. In some instances, imaginary leitmotifs involve dream sequences that depict expressions of trauma that mirror internal struggles. On the other hand, real and symbolic encounters are described in both concrete and abstract expressions that signify troubled conditions. The narrations are non-linear or disjointed yet portray a fragmented remembrance of events that indicate how trauma has disrupted their perception of traumatic events with time.

For instance, nightmares depict an array of weight memories that mirror a disturbing past. In *Living Together Again in Rwanda* (Aghion, 2003), the haunting nature of their dreams reflects the traumatic scars left by witnessing such atrocities, illustrating how the past intrudes upon their mind.

He narrates:

*At night, I dream someone is being killed - someone I saw dying. I see it in my dreams. They tower over him to kill him, I can see it. In the morning, I tell people about my dream.*

**Figure 5: The Unnamed Victim Recounted That at Night, He Frequently Experienced Dreams in Which He Witnessed the Murder of Someone He Had Seen Die in Real Life**



**Source:** *Living Together Again in Rwanda*, 2003

In these vivid dreams, attackers loom menacingly over their victim, poised to kill him. He carries these nighttime visions into the morning, forcing him to share such a dream with others. The imagery of witnessing murder not only signifies the horror of the past but also highlights the ongoing emotional turmoil that he experiences daily.

Therefore, this study noted that the act of dreaming about violence is a form of re-experiencing trauma, whereby the mind attempts to process and make sense of horrific events. Such dreams put him to be at a state of anxiety, fear, and helplessness, as he is forced to confront memories that he wishes to forget. He needs to recount these dreams so that the emotional burden they carry may go away, but unfortunately, it comes back the following night. Therefore, melodrama's voice allows him to articulate his pain and connect with others who may understand their suffering.

The vivid imagery and description of attackers towering over their victims is rich with symbolism. It might represent the act of violence or the overwhelming nature of trauma itself. The towering figures symbolise the oppressive weight of grief and

fear that engulfs him, suggesting that the past continues to exert control over his present.

Furthermore, his narration oscillates between a dream state and a waking-up reality, blurring in between the circles of reality and hallucinations versus a dark past and the present. This temporal fluidity reflects the way trauma has disrupted his linear time, as memories of violence resurface in his dreams, destroying his present daily life. The clarity of the dreams into the morning indicates that the past is never truly behind him as it continues to shape his perceptions and interactions presently, and hence, really torments him continuously.

In addition, melodrama voice depicts conditioned real trauma events that are recounted to represent a wider picture of the genocide happening. For instance, in text A, he recounted a traumatic experience, revealing that he was present when his father was brutally murdered. He described the horrific nature of the act, emphasising how it psychologically tormented him. In a moment of despair, he stormed a violent, chaotic market hoping to find someone he could kill to avenge his father's death. He grieves:

*I was right there when my father was killed. I was right next to him. They killed him. It was so... I almost went crazy. I headed straight for the market where they were killing people. They pushed him in and macheted him. I was right there. At that moment, I felt I was going mad.*

He points out how he was psychologically tortured by his death. This study noted that the trilogy employs a melodramatic voice to convey his sense of desperation in that situation and to build a melancholic atmosphere as he narrates the sullen episode. Thus, through his narration of the real events that happened to him, he manages to narrate a cruel and gruesome method the killers used, which involved being forced into a banana fermentation pit and then being attacked with a machete. His location, next to their father during his murder, intensifies his torments. His desire to find someone to 'kill' denotes his despair and a wish to escape his pain. Through him, the trilogy depicts a reflective

moment of loss, grief, and the struggle for a rediscovery of one's identity in the face of incomprehensible violence.

Furthermore, the fragmented nature of his thoughts, jumping from the murder scene of his father to their frantic search for someone to kill in the market, portrays his emotions at that time. Luckhurst (2008) argued that this non-linear storytelling can be indicative of how trauma disrupts memory, making it difficult to recount events coherently.

Another similar example is in *The Notebooks of Memory* (Aghion, 2009, melodrama voice draws a picture of characters undergoing persistent trauma as they come to terms with the real events that happened during genocide. She reflected on the death of her father, mother, and brothers, noting that this loss brings her great pain and grief. After a moment of silence, she admitted that she could not escape these thoughts.

**Figure 6: Unnamed Victim Expressing War Memories; Events are Always Present in Her Mind, Making it Impossible to Forget**



**Source:** *Living Together Again in Rwanda*, 2003

The violence she witnessed, particularly the killings with machetes, instilled fear in her. She explained that seeing such horrific events changes something in her brain, creating a lasting impact that reasserts

itself over time. This persistent unease enters her daily life, and she finds it impossible to stop thinking about these sad memories.



Further, she narrates the pain of having lost six children as well as their siblings, leaving her alone. She posed:

*When he killed my six children.... I am left alone. How can I accept him if he returns? When did he kill my six children? When he killed my brothers and sisters and left me alone? They forgive him and release him just because he confessed? Without punishing him? So we too can kill and ask for forgiveness, and we'll be released?*

As a result, she questioned the justice of a system that would forgive and release individuals simply because they confessed their crimes, wondering if this meant that anyone could commit acts of violence and then seek forgiveness to avoid punishment. Her speech depicts a sense of desperation and outrage, amplifying the gravity of her situation, evoking sorrow and injustice in a landscape that is portrayed as full of grief and betrayal.

Through her, the trilogy presents characters' internal struggles as they try to come to terms with the real events that happened in their lives and, most importantly, how they attempt to comprehend the violence inflicted upon them. For her, the loss of six children and multiple siblings creates a profound sense of emptiness and isolation. Hence, she tends to question the concept of forgiveness and justice propagated by the Gacaca trials, inconsiderate of her anger and the wider implications of the victim's perception. In other words, her torments are intensified with the idea that the perpetrator might evade consequences simply through confession. Her non-linear nature of thoughts depicts unassimilated traumatic experiences, making it difficult for her to articulate grief and anger at the same time. Fiona (2018) noted that trauma often leads to a breakdown in the ability to communicate experiences effectively. Survivors may struggle to find the words to describe their feelings or experiences, leading to a sense of isolation. Traumatic experiences can distort personal

narratives. Individuals may find it challenging to integrate the traumatic event into their life story, resulting in fragmented or disjointed accounts of their experiences.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the melodramatic voice plays a critical role in the narration of traumatic experiences in the selected trilogy. First, it anchors characters' speaking positions, whereby they express and recount their traumatic experiences or articulate their responses. As a result, melodrama voice depicts retelling practices of traumatic experiences in the selected trilogy by integrating back-to-story techniques that open up past wounds. It also includes narrative transformational arcs that depict the growth or recovery of characters from trauma. In the process, the voice presents the characters' experiences from a position of victimhood, resilience, or personal and collective suffering that builds the trilogy's narrative perspective.

Secondly, melodrama's voice embeds the situatedness of traumatic experiences. It is through this voice that the trilogy depicts the way trauma is understood and experienced in certain social, historical, cultural, or judicial contexts. In several interactive storytelling techniques whereby characters tend to interrogate one another, the voice describes specific contexts of trauma. Through narrating traumatic experiences in the context where they occurred, characters are in a position to reflect on their suffering and draw a picture of a collective traumatic journey that the community went through.

Besides, melodramatic voice introduced the way trauma is narrated and processed through three distinct yet connected modalities of narration, focusing on the real, symbolic, or imaginary motifs. Each of these methods of narration provides a different standpoint in describing the experiences of trauma. The real details, factual recounting of events as they occurred, whereas the imaginary involves expressions of fantasy, such as dreams. On the other hand, symbolism depicts unspoken aspects

of their trauma, such as abstract expressions of loss, alienation, and hopelessness. However, it is important to note that characters integrate these narration techniques in describing their experiences. In some instances, characters start their narration by describing disturbing dreams before exploring unresolved, real, traumatic experiences. In either technique, there's a more cohesive narration and depiction of trauma in the trilogy. Indeed, melodramatic voice plays not only a significant role in the depiction of trauma in the trilogy, but it is the buoyant force in the narration of traumatic experiences.

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