
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Traumatic Discourse in Scholastique Mukasonga's *Cockroaches* and Illuminée Nganemariya's *Miracle in Kigali*

Abimbola Ayo-Afolayan

Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

Corresponding Author: Abimbola Ayo-Afolayan, E-mail: abimbolaayoafolayan@gmail.com

| ABSTRACT

This study examines the traumatic journeys of Scholastique Mukasonga in *Cockroaches* and Illuminée Nganemariya in *Miracle in Kigali*. The thematic focus of these literary texts explicates the challenges faced by these authors and how they have affected their sociological and psychological wellbeing. 1994 in Rwanda, a genocide presumed to be one of the deadliest attacks on the human race occurred, its effects spanning every sphere: political, religious, economic and educational sectors since its occurrence. The resulting violence and its lingering traumatic effects have spanned over three decades of literary discussions. Some Rwandans documented their experiences before, during and after the Genocide. This study adopts trauma theory as a theoretical framework for the interpretive analysis of the prose narratives. These literary narrations exposed the extent of the violence and its lasting traumatic effects on the people. This study foregrounds that literary works are used as post-conflict peace-building materials; they are information materials to the public and a means of offloading burdens to the writers.

| KEYWORDS

Trauma, Pain, Violence, Genocide, Memory.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 01 May 2024

PUBLISHED: 17 May 2024

DOI: 10.32996/ijts.2024.4.2.3

1. Introduction

Trauma discourse opens up on the extent of the damage an individual is being exposed to as a result of events that affect the psychological states. Trauma can be feasible in two states: it can be noticed externally due to some behavioral changes and can also be noticed internally by the formation of negative emotions. Also, trauma is not a physical wound; rather, it is a pain rooted in the memory, and it can be best described by the victim. According to Kurt:

It is a pathological mental and emotional condition, an injury to the psyche caused by catastrophic events or the threat of such events, which overwhelm an individual's normal response mechanisms...Dozens of sometimes contradictory behaviors, emotions, and mental states have been identified as signs of trauma, including reliving the event through intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, hallucinations, or nightmares; numbing or dissociation; avoidance; hyperarousal and an inability to rest; depression; antisocial acts; difficulty concentrating; and all manner of combinations of these and other symptoms. Responses to trauma may be physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, spiritual, or societal (2021:18-22).

The definition encompasses all the effects of trauma on the victims. It foregrounds that violence acts and the outcomes can lead to trauma. Trauma is interwoven with pain. The best definition of pain can only be described by the person going through it or the person who has experienced it. Trauma can linger in the painful experiences of individuals; it can be tucked somewhere deep in

the memories of the victims. However, discussing these traumatic events through documentation is a form of release from the hidden pain.

2. Discussions

Scholastique Mukasonga *Cockroaches* documents her memoir about the years surrounding the Rwandan genocide and introduces a unique style and narrative structure into the story that follows. She produces a place in which she can talk intimately. She sits across the table with readers and shares her experiences in low tones (the children are sleeping in the adjacent room). She opens her dossier, *Cockroaches*, as countless authors also do, with dedication, but hers has a greater murky and nuanced than expected. She enumerates a number of the thirty-seven relations murdered during the Rwandan genocide and ends it with the trounced line, "for all those of Nyamata who are named in this book and all many more who are not". As exemplified in *Cockroaches*, names are markedly weighty, earning their title from the Kinyarwanda word *Inyenzi*; the Tutsis are resented for naming them after the insects, thus debasing them. Scholastique Mukasonga's penchant for those gritty and stodgy appellations offers an alternate route to the blander studies of the genocide and knowingly drops on readers an ominous text (Sebastian Sarti, 2019).

More comprehensive but concise than confessional, *Cockroaches* relays a feeling of narration on the scene, thereby shortening the gap between the present and the past. The chapter titles give an antique basis to appreciate the happenings that necessitated the 1994 genocide and find the horrific classic of Mukasonga's family within this history. "The Late 1950s: A Childhood Disturbed" opens in Mukasonga's birthplace, the Gikongoro province, on the outskirts of the Nyundgwe forest. Over the next four decades, her parents and six brothers and sisters were extradited to Nyamata ("1960: Internal Exile") and witnessed the first parliamentary elections in Rwanda ("1961–1964: Democratic Exclusion"), which enshrined Hutu primacy and introduced savagery to a continuum. In April 1994, the Hutu majority, as told by extremists in Kigali, killed as many as 800,000 people. The carnage spread through the country like wildfire and pugnacity as the Hutu Power government rouses citizens to rise against the *Inyenzi*. In France, her adopted home, she looks over a family photograph taken on the day of her youngest sister's marriage ceremony. She says, "They're going to die. Maybe they already know it" (*Cockroaches*, 10).

Cockroaches glides over the brief but well-articulated scenes strung by a bare-stripped voice of merciless specificity. Exiting Rwanda before 1994, she possesses no personal account of the genocide's culmination. She gives an account of the bigotry she experiences as a child, stating she and other Tutsi children, while fetching water in the village, had to pass young revolutionaries, who laughed at the teardrops of the cockroaches, the *Inyenzi*, and little snakes. The revolutionaries' vicious speeches are full of violent actions; they usually assault the boys while the girls are raped. Although full of austere prose, Scholastique Mukasonga sometimes departs from this voice. Her regretful scenes employ a more lyrical language, which underlines her childhood's contradictory world where ruthless prejudice cohabits with pastoral family moments. She speaks of the "truly happy days" of working in the fields "close to the earth, to the peasants" when she would soak in her mother's stories and scream "More! More!" at their end. She describes her mother's conscious search for and use of rootstocks and the stories aired with their consumption. She would feel like tasting the magical food people eat in stories while feasting on these foods. Through them, she forages in a world she needs not to live fearfully because of her nose's shape.

Utilising emphasising detailed daily activities, she absconds from every aim to theorise the genocide's political or cultural root. Indeed, the most powerful chapter in the book eradicates even her brief scenes; rather, it tracks back to her dedication and lists names of victims she knows. She bellows,

I recited the names of all those who have no one left to mourn them...Rutabana, whose rice I so loved... Buregeya, who thought himself so handsome...Emma Mariya had married Bahia, a rich merchant in Nyamata. She'd raised some ten children. They were all killed, like her" (*Cockroaches*, 148-150).

The torrent of names and depictions sheds light on her primary aim in writing the book. The memoir is a personal record of the lost, their commemoration on the brink of extinction owing to the acute obliteration.

Scholastique Mukasonga's ability to bring out meaning and vivacity from the little details she can recollect gives tone to even the most obvious horrors. She leaves the reader with an icy comfort because she does not use this ability to water down the narration but to throw so much in the genocide's shadow. Her goal is accomplished, and this helps to offer an undaunted witness to the bulk of what the genocide almost stamped out: the customs and lives, both named and not.

Unveiled also in *Cockroaches* are some of the most appalling misdemeanours ever conceived. Thus, she recognises her family members' agonising events and, thus, evocations as separate events, etching them into the larger story. She gets to know the full

details of her youngest sister, the tragic death of Jeanne, and her brother-in-law, Pierre, explaining the disturbing aspects of their deaths.

Unrelentingly, the hunt for unravelling the ultimate fortune inflicted on her parents and siblings when she visits her old, now missing family home in Gitagata. There, she contacts the one-time neighbour of her parents, a Hutu, who still lives nearby. The neighbour does not seem to recognise Scholastique Mukasonga at first. Remembering the name of her father, he begins to beg for her forgiveness, but he stops abruptly, claims not to be a murderer, vehemently rejects the massacre, and then ends flatly with complete denial, asserting that no one died in the location. Here, her precious quest is doubled and ends at a juncture of senselessness and paralysis this instance: *"I'm no longer listening. Was it he who assassinated my parents, who played a role at least? Was it another person? I am never going to understand"*. The numbness of her simple desire to understand what is going on is provided only by the refraining and guilt of a possible culprit, which, in turn, is distinctly heart-wrenching. Scholastique Mukasonga knows where her parents are murdered, as well as other survivors, but not where their bones are. The neighbour embodies living access to memory but also rejects it. Rwanda is still filled with the demand for missing testimonies.

Unlike Scholastique Mukasonga, Illuminée Nganemariya in *Miracle in Kigali* was in Rwanda during the genocide. She had her first experience with her ethnic group after her primary education. She realises this before she writes the government high school examination. All Tutsis were asked to identify themselves, and, of course, the remaining students looked on as they were separated. She sees that she is a minority, and she is made to think at the same time about what she has done wrong. She had to put her ethnicity on the test document as well.

In *Miracle in Kigali*, a singular incidence distorts the lives of Illuminée Nganemariya and her siblings. They are subject to a lifetime of dealing with a drunk father. She recounts the incident thus: He asked to see Dad. Mum said he was asleep, but they insisted that she wakes him, as they wanted to talk. She did as they asked, but when Dad appeared, Calixte and his friends attacked him with sticks and nails. They left him in a pool of blood and ran off into the night (*Miracle in Kigali*, 12). Her father survived some fractures and lost one eye because of his ethnic group. Calixte passed a message across to him that he does not deserve the good things happening to him. After spending more than a year in the hospital, he never fully recovered from his losses. Eventually, he succumbed to his struggles and spiralled into alcoholism. The adverse effects of these experiences attend to varying degrees of trauma. The encounters might look similar, but they are different in their attendance to trauma because the ways victims handle their experiences do not go in concurrence with the situation. For Illuminée Nganemariya, it is an experience that affects her psychologically and leads to failure, while for Scholastique Mukasonga, it is an experience that raises disturbing questions in her heart.

Additionally, Scholastique Mukasonga receives several heart-wrenching messages that she feels she should have used her tears to document them. One such information is the death of her pregnant sister, Jeanne. She was murdered in front of the town hall, her belly sliced open. The foetus in her was used to beat her right in front of her daughter. Also, the news about her brother-in-law causes excruciating pain in her heart and that of her niece. The way he was handled is described as follows:

They came to arrest him, and Pierre gravely injured himself as he was trying to flee. Rather than let him die, his tormentors gave him medical treatment so they could torture him at their leisure. They kept him prisoner in the town hall. For the several days, they cut pieces off him one by one with a matchet (*Cockroaches*, 126).

Likewise, in *Miracle in Kigali*, Illuminée Nganemariya's husband's hands were hacked off before two shots were fired into his head. She was not present at the scene, but the killing was described to her vividly. She documents it below:

Ten minutes after I had heard the gunshots, mukamana, a girl who worked for Azera, ran into the house. She told me what had happened. In a final attempt to save his life, John had managed to persuade Masumbuko to take him to Azera's house. He obviously hopes to bribe them with money, but there were no Rwandan franc in the house. John offered to give them a cheque. What use was a cheque in a chaotic country? These drug and drink –crazed killers wanted hard cash. John's final gambit had failed, and the gang set about him with their machetes outside the house (*Miracle in Kigali*, 52)

Upon receiving this information, she is so traumatised, and she believes death would have been a better option for her. Knowing the cause of her husband's death is not her only problem; also, knowing the killers and how close they are to the family. These left her devastated.

Also, in *Cockroaches*, Scholastique Mukasonga's family and some other Tutsis experience sudden seclusion from the rest of the people. "I don't know when my parents realised they'd been deported to Nyamata, in the district called Busegera. It was almost unpopulated savannah, home to big wild animals, infested by tsetse flies." (*Cockroaches*, 20) Soldiers were in place to watch over them and ensure they did not leave. It was a difficult situation for all of them but they strived to survive.

All the people in this district are Tutsis, as such, are victims of various degrees of humiliation, but what left most of them traumatised is the constant threats to life. Grenades are thrown carelessly and often, and homes are often raided to ensure they keep the portraits of Kayibanda hanging in the place of honour. So many school children are left wounded and some deformed. One such child is Kayisharaza; her leg is shattered on her way to school, and it becomes impossible for her to keep dragging her dead leg to school in Nyamata, regrettably dropping out of school.

Furthermore, living in perpetual fear is part and parcel of the Tutsis, as represented in *Cockroaches*. Every mistake is an offence, and the penalty is often death. Every of their right as humans is tampered with. There is no freedom of speech, let alone that of association. They are subjected to regimented rules, and any form of disobedience might warrant a death penalty. For example,

"The soldiers demanded that President Kayibanda's portrait be hung in every house. The missionaries made sure the image of Mary was put beside him. We lived under the twin portraits of the President who'd vowed to exterminate us and Mary who was waiting for us in heaven" (*Cockroaches*, 55-56).

The rules are not limited to these; Scholastique Mukasonga's notes how their movements were restricted without any warning. "Sometimes, on the contrary, they confined us inside our houses. No one knew why the curfew had been imposed or how long it would last. They forbade us to farm. The children couldn't go to school. The soldiers methodologically patrolled the village. Anyone careless enough to set foot outside was beaten." Life became hard if the curfew went on: there was no way to fetch water or wood. We couldn't dig sweet potatoes or cut bananas. Even latrines, which were generally far from the houses, off in the banana grove, were off limits. Closed up in our houses, we were paralysed with fright; we didn't dare speak (*Cockroaches*, 65). It was more of living in bondage. They were monitored and harassed perpetually. These actions were registered in their subconscious, and they affected their mental state. Living in despair possibly causes emotional trauma that will affect their daily productivity. Homes were perpetually raided to ensure that these rules were obeyed.

People are disillusioned, while some are murdered in broad daylight without anyone to question the soldiers. For example, Regis is kidnapped from Kigali and brought back to Kbagayi, where he is shaved with pieces of glass and stoned to death. Decisions were made by impulses, sponsored by fear, not reasoning. The death toll has increased, and the end is not in sight. There is no form of intervention from any quarter. Fear and tension grew as it became vital to leave a part of the family alive in case of any evil occurrence. This silent fear leads to Mukasonga and Andre fleeing the country to Burundi. This is important because if the whole family stays in Rwanda, there might not be anyone to carry the memory on. The duo is chosen to survive.

Tragically, Scholastique Mukasonga is re-experiencing the trauma through intense and distressing recollections of the event. So many nights, she finds it difficult to sleep because it would bring back the memories of her family members and their deaths. Her dreams describe the situation she has survived throughout the years and her inability to forget or let it go. She is reminded of what she ran away from in Rwanda, even in faraway France:

Every night, the same interrupts my sleep. I'm being chased. I hear a sort of hum coming towards me, a roar, more menacing with every moment. I don't look back. There's no need. I know who is chasing me... I know they have machetes. I'm not sure how, but even without looking back, I know they have machetes...sometimes the other girls from school are there, too. I hear their cries as they fall. As they...Now, I'm the only one running. I know I'm going to fall, I'm going to be trampled, I don't want to feel the cold blade on my neck, I... (*Cockroaches*, 9)

The frequency of her nightmares is alarming. She remembers the dead often and feels as if she is amidst them. She is restless and overwhelmed with grief. Also, Illuminée Nganemariya in *Miracle in Kigali* is in bad shape. She consistently deals with nightmares. She is hospitalised for three months to deal with the effects of her nightmares. "Then I stopped sleeping and began hallucinating. Images from the genocide kept flashing in front of my eyes. I stayed in bed all the time and was in a terrible condition" (*Miracle in Kigali*, 100). It leads to mental illness, and she must deal with her state of depression. Her genocide experiences are always with her. She feels as if, in her own horror film, she plays the leading role. It was a very depressing experience for her. In like manner, she lives with a paralyzing fear that made it impossible for her to stay out of bed. Sadly, she stops sleeping. This she describes in

her own words as follows, "Then I stopped sleeping, and began hallucinating. Images from the Genocide kept flashing in front of my eyes. I stayed in bed all the time and was in a terrible state" (*Miracle in Kigali*, 100). This form of hallucination results in weight loss and mental breakdown for her. It took her over eight months to recover from this and start life over again with the aid of a therapist.

In *Cockroaches*, Scholastique Mukasonga often relives the experiences of her family members, and this affects her physically. This she describes in the following quotation:

It was an enormous weight landing on my shoulder, a very real weight that kept me from climbing the little staircase to the classroom that paralyzed me at my apartment's front door, unable to open it and step through. I was burdened with the memory of all those dead: they would be with me for as long as I lived (*Cockroaches*, 120-121).

The death of her loved ones is challenging for her. For ten years, she could not visit Rwanda. She comes up with various excuses for not traveling from France. Visiting the country and rediscovering the pains that ought to have been forgotten is her main challenge. She refers to Rwanda as the land of the dead. The names and faces of the departed are permanently engraved on her mind. There is always a huge moon in my memories, hanging over the village to pour out its pale blue light. They are all there in her memory's warm night. They have been permanently inscribed on the sand of time. She continues by stating that "*The murderers tried to erase everything they were, even any memory of their existence but, in the school child's notebook that I am now never without. I write down their names*" (*Cockroaches*, 165). She often documents their names to picture their existence as if they are still living. She is a survivor who will have to constantly hear about how her loved ones died and how she is left with no bodies to bury but a paper grave she has created by herself.

On another note, sexual violence was systematically used by Hutu extremists towards Tutsi women and girls as a method of war, not only to inflict pain and humiliation but also to spread HIV – and thus ensure the end of the Tutsi people (Human Rights Watch, 2004). In a 1996 UN Report, it was estimated that at least 250,000 women were raped during the Rwandan genocide. It was also estimated by the Rwanda National Population Office that between 2000-5000 children were born as a result of rape during the genocide. These children are called, amongst other names, "children of hate". Rape is a form of humiliation mapped out against the Tutsi. It is not to instill bodily harm but to terrify, humiliate and eliminate them. It is also used to intimidate, control and instill unnecessary fear in the victims. It is not a temporary or discrete form of trauma. According to Mukamana and Brysiewicz 2008, Hutu Leaders ordered their troops to rape Tutsi women as part of their genocidal campaign. Women are at the center of both family and cultural reproduction, and they become strategic targets when the aim is to eradicate people. When rape is carried out on a massive scale, the social fabric of family and community unravels exponentially, weakening people's capacity to resist.

Illuminée Nganemariya, a woman who had just given birth and was nursing her baby, was not spared. She is humiliated. She begged to be killed than raped; she did not want to be used, but her plea fell on deaf ears. It was not as if her personality was under attack, but all Tutsi women must suffer the same. The rapist was very rough. The awful memory of the gun and grenade dangling from his belt remains with her.

The devils did terrible things to me. I struggled to handle both, but they were too strong for me. They hit me with their fists, held my neck and tried to suffocate me. They did it as they said nasty words, saying they were going to humiliate and kill me (*Miracle in Kigali*, 48).

She was helped on her way from Kigali, and they promised to help her to her destination, but since they realised she did not understand French. They took advantage of her by removing her clothes and penetrating her. They identified her as an old returnee and took advantage of her. Unfortunately for Jocelyne in *Cockroaches*, after her husband and son were killed, she was raped and infected with AIDS. Her tormentors had a slower death for her in mind. Unfortunately, many Tutsi women who were used as sex slaves were infected with HIV and gave birth to orphans infected with HIV. This particular act will cast a long shadow on the nation.

Illuminee Nganemariya in *Miracle in Kigali* lives daily with the fear of being HIV positive. She laments in the quotation below :

I suspected that I might be HIV positive, the legacy of the Hutu student's visit. I attributed my weight loss and persistent cough to the onset of AIDS. I had kept the rape a secret from my family. Like many women, I was too ashamed to talk. I did not think that I had a life to offer anyone. (*Miracle in Kigali*, 91)

Illuminée Nganemariya's heart was not at rest after the genocide. More than the problem of having to deal with HIV, the fact that she will have to personally bear the burden of being alone and dealing with the shame associated with rape is a big challenge. She repeats this in her documentation to place emphasis on her challenges :

Deep inside, I 'knew' that I had AIDS. My time in Norwich with Esther and the children should have been a period of recovery from the genocide. But I was constantly troubled by dark thoughts. I had convinced myself that I was not a 'true' survivor. I was under sentence of death, thanks to the disease that was taking hold of my skinny frame (*Miracle in Kigali*, 97).

She feels depressed and hopeless. She almost destroys her mind and body with fear out of mere speculations. This memory was hatched from rape. She believes everyone raped during the genocide must have contracted AIDS. Luckily, it was just a torment she built on the assumption that herself she was not HIV positive.

In the same vein, in *Miracle in Kigali*, "Once inside they rounded on Clementine, who was mixed Hutu/Tutsi. What are you doing in a Tutsi house? They shouted. She was roughly taken to another room and was gang raped. The screams were terrible" (*Miracle in Kigali*, 46). It is not just an experience; it is consistent. The author expresses this by stressing that "Clementine was their possession". She was dragged off for further abuse at the hands of these animals." (*Miracle in Kigali*, 47)

A girl called Uwimana, aged 20, had also survived. She was a cousin of Azera's and helped her look after the children. Uwimana had been raped as Azera was killed. Now, each night, five killers, masked and carrying torches, came for her. To this day, I cannot bear the sight of torches. They took her at 1 am and dropped her back at 9 am, then Uwimana went straight to bed. This happened every night for two weeks. The children, who loved her, would jump on her bed and ask, 'Why are you crying?' 'Are you sick?' She was a big, strong girl, and throughout her ordeal, she kept apologizing for not feeling well enough to help look after the children (*Miracle in Kigali*, 55).

Sexual violence against the Tutsi is not limited to rape. They are also forced to marry without the consent of their parents or their approval. Scholastique Mukasonga depicts this by stating that the Tutsis are voiceless and choiceless, "Of course, it was the girls that interested the young revolutionaries the most. On the way home from their parade, they would come after any girl who hadn't had time to hide. Rapes were not rare" (*Cockroaches*, 71). The young girls live daily in fear of the unknown, especially when they are out of their homes, as depicted by this quote. However, this challenge often follows them home, and they are harassed inside their private homes by the revolutionists, especially after dark. "Sometimes it was more serious, their eyes were red, they weren't laughing, they beat up the boys and dragged a girl into the undergrowth behind their camp to rape" (*Cockroaches*, 71).

The fire of hatred fuelled by ethnicity is daily fanned to flame. Its effects on the Tutsis are more of a psychological preparation for the eventual death that must occur:

They shouted at us," Inyenzis, lower your head, don't show your faces, don't show your noses, we don't want to see that, whatever you don't look us in the eyes, come forward but keep your heads down, never forget, you're Inyenzi (*Miracle in Kigali*, 87).

They kept their documents, and the humiliation was next to none. They might spit on their faces, kick them with their heavy boots, or strike them with rifle butts, depending on their mood or fancy. They are made to look down at the Nyabarongo River, firmly assuring them that death is their only way out of the humiliation. Understanding the weight of the challenges of the Tutsi seems impossible. They carry around the burdens of their ethnic group. It becomes impossible for them to live a day without having to pay for the crimes they do not commit.

This humiliation did not just start at the beginning of the genocide. It has been a part and parcel of their existence. Take, for instance, the joy of gaining admission into the prestigious Lycee Notre-Dame-de-Citeaux for Scholastique Mukasonga knew no bounds because it is nothing short of a miracle. She believes she was leaving Nyamata, the happiness of leaving chaos and violence behind at home. However, her nightmares just got started. Everything about her speaks of rejection. Her nose is too straight, her hair too much, and her skin too dark. She expresses her concern in the following words:

The room filled with the sound of conversation, but no one ever spoke to me. I could feel them staring at me, telling me I wasn't by choice that they were living – and even worse, eating –with an Inyenzi, a cockroach. I grew used to serving myself after all the others (*Cockroaches*, 80).

The humiliation cuts across all segments of human relationships. The expressions of rights have been swallowed by intimidation and harassment.

They divided us up into teams, and we took turns doing the dishes cleaning their factory or the dormitories. The team leader was always a third –year girl. My leader was named Pascasie. I was the only Tutsi on the team. Pascasie and the rest took an immediate dislike to me. The hardest chores fell on me. In fact, I soon realised it wasn't my place to wait for orders. I always volunteered. As the major of Nyamata had said, the Tutsis had lost the right to be proud (*Cockroaches*, 80).

This experience shows the level of decadence that pervades their environment. Most nights, the Tutsis in the dormitory wait for the light to go off before they proceed to the toilet to study. The author claims that all she learned at Notre-Dame-de- Citeaux she learned in the toilet (*Cockroaches*, 82). It was difficult for them to live comfortably amidst their peers.

Regrettably, somewhere amidst the intersection of violence and trauma lies a dangerous silence. This silence serves to magnify the repercussion of trauma, and all too frequently, unexpressed, unobserved, and unacknowledged trauma manifests itself as additional harm inflicted upon oneself or others. Silence is not the lack of what to say but the inability to say it. It is caused by a form of inexplicable violence that produces lumps in the throat of the victim at any point the victim wants to express themselves.

Jeanne-Francoise is a victim of such silence, having witnessed the death of her mother, father, and four little brothers. Jeanne-Françoise saw the slow dismembering of her dad. She does not make a moving story out of it. I heard her speak only a few sentences as if ripped from an incurable sorrow. I never tried to bring them out. She comes to me.

Auntie, I have something to tell you. "In a detached tone, she begins to tell. But suddenly, the story breaks off. Her head hurts. Everything's gone blurry. She feels dizzy. She wants to be left alone. She closes herself up in a pain that can never be soothed (*Cockroaches*, 126).

It is laid on by culture as the family member to bring food for her father in jail by sheer sadism. She sees her father's body shredded daily from one toe to his fingers, and the whole body reduced to spattered shreds. Narrating her ordeals during the genocide is a gruelling experience that leads her into a pregnant silence.

3. Conclusion

These two authors have been able to share their experiences and how they have shaped their lives through them. They have been able to establish the level of their trauma. Also, they have been able to distress their minds and elucidate the lingering dangers of violence and the need to always embrace peaceful coexistence. This study explains, in reality, the traumatic representations and perspectives of Rwandan literature. Pennebaker (2004) posits that clinical studies illustrate that writing about painful experiences can improve immune response, reduce recovery time and promote physical, psychological, and social well-being. In Pennebaker's view, writing is purposeful, and the key purpose is to heal; this gives credence to the fact that the traumatic representations and images are deliberate acts done to achieve the narrative values of the literary works considered in this study. Ronni Miller (2019:3) corroborates this by stating that it is a form of process. One of the most important goals is to write about trauma, small or large, and in the mere act of writing, poisons are released that have adversely affected the victims. Eventually, healing comes to the soul, and the mind is free. Lastly, most recent Rwandan prose narratives revolve around the genocide. Therefore, these narratives are succinctly analysed via the genocide experience, and further discussions could be to treat perpetrators of the genocide as victims of violence.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

ORCID iD: 0009-0000-3347-4788

Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

References

- [1] Caplan, G. (2007). Rwanda (and Other Genocides) in Perspective. *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 2(3), 275-288. Available at <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/gsp/vol2/iss3/10>
- [2] Kurtz, R. (2021). *Trauma and Transformation in African Literature*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315467535>
- [3] Levine, P. A. (2005). *Healing Trauma: a Pioneering Program for Restoring the Wisdom of Your Body*. Berkley
- [4] Luckhurst, R. (2013). *The Trauma Question*. Routledge. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9780203607305>
- [5] Miller R. (2019). Write to heal. Retrieved from www.writeout.com on 28th February, 2019
- [6] Mukasonga S. & Mauthner M. (2016). *Cockroaches USA: Archipelago*
- [7] Mukamana, D. & Brysiewicz, P. (2008). The Lived Experience of Genocide Rape Survivors in Rwanda. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 40 (4), 379-384. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1547-5069.2008.00253.x>
- [8] Nganemariya, I. & Dickson P. (2007). *Miracle in Kigali: The Rwandan Genocide-a survivor's Journey*. Tagman Worldwide Ltd.
- [9] Pennebaker J.W. (2004). *Writing to Heal: A guided journal for recovering from trauma and emotional upheaval*. New Harbinger Publication.