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Revisiting Peace-Building Models of Reconciliation in African Literature: A Reading of Boubacar Boris Diop's *Murambi: The Book of Bones* and Scholastik Mukasonga's *Cockroaches*

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Abstract

This study analyses some African peace-building strategies developed from the concepts of justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation in African literature and civilization, mainly through B. B. Diop's *Murambi: The Book of Bones* and S. Mukasonga's *Cockroaches.* Although the postwar peace-building route is paved with many obstacles, the process towards peace is attainable with much commitment and sacrifice. The reality is that most postwar people are not yet awakened from the traumas of the civil war, and their wounds have not healed yet. As a matter of fact, they need to overcome the foregoing traumas and wounds to participate in the nationwide project of peace-building, as life must continue. The objective of the study is to examine how the selected novelists look at issues such as healing, through justice, forgiving, community remaking, and reconciliation in postwar nations, especially in the case of Rwanda. This study is done within the theoretical contexts of psychoanalysis and post-colonialism. The results have shown that some strategies have been devised from the concepts of justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation, and they constitute strong ethical issues, which determine the success or failure of the post-conflict rebuilding of nations, particularly in Rwanda.

Keywords: Justice, Forgiveness, Reconciliation, Reconstruction, Post-Genocide.

Révision des modèles pacifiques de réconciliation : une lecture de *Murambi : The Book of Bones* de Boubacar Boris Diop et *Cockroaches* de Scholastik Mukasonga

Résumé

La présente étude analyse des stratégies de la culture de la paix développées à partir des concepts de justice, de pardon et de réconciliation dans la littérature et civilisation africaines, notamment à travers *Murambi: The Book of Bones* de B. B. Diop et *Cockroaches* de S. Mukasonga. Bien que la voie de la consolidation de la paix après la guerre soit jalonnée d'obstacles, ce processus est un objectif qui est toujours atteignable, à condition d'un engagement et de sacrifices soutenus. Même si les populations d'après-guerre portent encore les stigmates de la guerre civile et que leurs blessures n'ont pas totalement cicatrisé, ils doivent les surmonter afin de participer au projet national de la construction et la culture de la paix, car la vie doit continuer. L'objectif de l'étude est d'examiner comment les romanciers sélectionnés abordent des questions telles que la guérison, le pardon, la reconstruction et la refonte de la communauté et la réconciliation dans les nations d'après-guerre, surtout dans le cas du Rwanda. Cela s'est fait dans les contextes théoriques de la psychanalyse et du postcolonialisme. Les résultats ont montré que des stratégies ont été conçues à partir des concepts de justice, de pardon et de réconciliation et qu'ils constituent des questions éthiques fortes, qui déterminent le succès ou l'échec des nations en reconstruction post-conflit, en particulier le Rwanda.

Mots clés : Justice, pardon, réconciliation, reconstruction, post-génocide.

Introduction

Justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation are three salient concepts that may always play a considerable role in peace-building in post-conflict African countries, especially in the case of post-genocide Rwanda. The problem with conflicts or wars is that when guns fall silent and warlords accept to surrender in a country, it is too late because the country is already torn into pieces and everything has been completely turned down. At the same time, communities are not only torn apart but they are deeply affected physically and psychologically too. This implies the destruction of the social fabric due to months of atrocities, traumas and wounds. During war, the country at war becomes unrecognizable because of the use of lethal weapons during the combat that ravages hospitals, schools, houses, and workplaces.

Most of the time, the system of governance even falls apart and people and the country's resources are divided between different war factions, which impose their will upon citizens under their leadership.

In addition to the physical destruction of the country in all aspects possible, communal life is also severely broken due to the mistrust war created between people. During the war, entire communities and family units are dislocated. This destruction causes them to scatter and forces them to develop individual survival strategies. War atrocities provoke the disintegration of communities and oblige them to lose the sense of community. Since, during the war, living together becomes a considerable threat to the survival of the whole communities; people begin to live in small groups or even individually to maximize their chances of making it till the end of the war. The fact of developing survival strategies during the hardest days of the war, whilst living outside of one's community, seen as a safety net, renders the individual unsociable. Most people who survived the war are weary when it comes to living in groups again after the war. They no longer see any reason for them to make efforts to integrate into a community that could not and would not be able to protect them against atrocities.

Furthermore, postwar citizens tend to no longer trust governmental initiatives to piece things back together again, as government forces terrorized and murdered some of them during the war. All these misdeeds during the war tarnished the image of the government in such a way that citizens were afraid of adhering to any projects initiated by the latter. All peace-building projects from the government, at first, were rejected by citizens because of the fear of reliving the sufferings they endured during the war. This aspect is the first setback regarding postwar reconstruction. The challenge is how to persuade these broken and reluctant citizens to trust the peacemaking plans implemented by the government.

From the above-mentioned problems, it becomes obvious that the postwar reconstruction period is full of difficulties that different stakeholders must fully address for peace to be a reality for all in the long run. To reach a

long-lasting and peaceful life, all the actors must be committed to creating a favorable environment for peace negotiations to take place. The foregoing is to be built on a set of strategies stemming from justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation because peace-building is a long and complex process that depends on the sociology and war trajectories of each country. In this perspective, the main objective of the study is to examine how S. Mukasonga and B. B. Diop, in their respective works, look at issues such as healing wounds through justice, forgiving, community remaking, and reconciliation in postwar nations, especially in the case of Rwanda. In other words, the study seeks to underline the strategies and peace-building mechanisms advocated by Mukasonga and Diop in their works to ensure a long-term peaceful reconciliation of people in African postwar nations, namely in the post-genocide Rwanda.

To achieve the formulated objective, the study opts for two theories, psychoanalysis and postcolonial theory, to analyze, discuss, and interpret the collected data through the selected literary texts. The psychological and social behavioral dimensions are taken into account while analyzing the findings of the study. Since the implementation of any scientific research requires a particular methodology, the paper has adopted a qualitative one to collect the study's data. To be explicit, the research design is content analysis, and it is relevant because the paper deals primarily with novels.

To ensure an appropriate implementation of the study, the paper is structurally divided into two main parts. The first part focuses on restorative and reparatory justice used to foster forgiveness and reconciliation. The second one accounts for the reconciliation process through the wisdom of the Gacaca Courts, as underlined in the selected novels.

1. Restorative and Reparatory Justice

The post-reconstruction process in any country cannot be considered a full success if it does not take into consideration the questions of justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation. The effectiveness of the rebuilding process

depends on how well or badly these vital issues are addressed. Experts such as Marlene Chism, Scott Levin, Meredith Holley, and Rich Heller working in the field of conflict resolution are of the view that the question of justice occupies the center stage and is crucial in helping post-war societies move forward. If this aspect is not well taken care of, there would be a resurgence of the conflict sooner or later because of the popular grievances that emanate from the injustice resulting from war. People, unsatisfied with the way justice has been rendered, may end up taking weapons to avenge their killed relatives. Therefore, it is clear that peace can never be a reality without proper and impartial justice. But surely, the main question that arises at this point of our analysis is related to the choice of the type of justice to be applied. During the reconstruction process, should post-war societies use justice as it is classically applied, or should they use a different kind of justice created purposefully to meet the judicial demands of the country?

In congruence with the above interrogation, for many experts intervening on the issue of justice during the post-war period, classical justice does not meet the requirements of social demands at this stage. The classical criminal system of justice is based on pure retribution, meaning that offenders have to be locked behind bars and be excluded from society. The idea is that the imprisonment of violent perpetrators would remove the sources of conflict which is supposed, in turn, to appease crime victims. The jailing of the offender takes him from the sight of his victims by depriving the individual of his freedom. This kind of justice rendering is temporary and does not often fix the problem in the long-term even though it does in the short-term. The actual challenge of this justice system is that even though the offender is incarcerated, this action does not help heal the wounds of victims, and this type of situation creates an infernal circle where victims would avenge their wronged relatives whenever the opportunity presents itself to them to do so.

Seeing how huge the downsides of such a system of justice which perpetuates the circle of violence, it does not meet the social requirements to resolve conflicts and lay down the basis of a long-lasting peace.

Regarding this situation, C. C. Larson (2019, p. 53) argues that for many victims, "revenge is a response to evil, and unfortunately, this response creates a deadly spiral of retaliation. This revenge can escalate the violence, leading to justice but to further revenge." Without perpetual peace, there is no talk about social progress and political development. To lay the foundations of a society that is at peace with itself, another justice system that is not only built around mere retribution must come into play. It ought to be a justice system that takes into account the questions of forgiveness, restoration, reparation, and reconciliation. That is why, C. C. Larson (2019, p. 53) points at the defects of the criminal justice as follows:

> Criminal justice tends to be punitive, impersonal, and authoritarian. With its focus on guilt and blame, it discourages responsibility and empathy on the part of offenders. The harm done by the offender is balanced by the harm done to the offended. Despite all this attention to crime, criminal justice basically leaves victims out of the picture, ignoring their needs. Rather than promoting healing, it exacerbates wounds. Retributive justice often assumes that justice and healing are separate – even incompatible – issues.

Instead of being solely focused on the misdeed of the offender, reparative justice emphasizes the restoration of the victim and is more geared toward the future rather than the past. In the heart of this system of justice, victims' rehabilitation is the main focus. The first step in this restorative approach is for offenders to acknowledge the harm done to their fellow human beings and all the social damages that originate from their misdeeds. The objective of reparative justice goes beyond simple retribution as it seeks to reconcile justice and healing, which criminal justice overlooks. The idea is to override any idea of revenge going forward. To avoid an escalation of the situation years later, both offenders and victims play a critical role in the outcome of the final decisions considered to be acceptable by both parties. The idea behind restorative justice is to maintain a certain social balance even after social relations and human beings' integrity have been severely violated as eyes are focused on building a common future despite the occurrence of awful situations. C. C. Larson (2019, pp. 53-54) corroborates this fact by stating this: "Restorative justice aims at

identifying responsibilities, meeting needs, and promoting healing. Restorative justice is a process in which the victim, offender, and community are involved in dialogue, mutual agreement, empathy, and the taking of responsibility." Restorative justice does not mean the total absence of punishment. It is so far from this reality. There are social sanctions that would be taken against anyone who breaches social laws by harming or killing someone else. The severity and nature of the punishment depend on the laws of the community in which the offense has been committed. In some communities, killing someone is synonymous with social exclusion or exile for some years as was the case in the Ibo land in Nigeria. This case is exemplified by Chinua Achebe in his novel *Things Fall Apart*. In this novel, Okonkwo, a rich, famous and well-respected man in the Ibo land accidentally killed someone when his gun exploded when shooting. Instead of jailing him, the collective and traditional punishment was to send him in exile for seven years to soothe the hearts of the mourning family. That was a strong case of reparatory justice in the Ibo land (C. Achebe, 1958).

In the spirit of restorative justice, upon recognizing the responsibility of the wrongdoing, the wrongdoer is supposed to tell what and how to do to fix the situation with the victim. The court in this particular case is present to facilitate the dialogue that takes place between the offender and the victim to find a peaceful way out of the situation. The role of the court is to remove all obstacles that can impede or endanger the restoration process. For instance, in case the offender has damaged the victim's house, he would be required to participate in the rebuilding process of the same house either financially or physically. This is for lesser crimes. But, if the two parties are faced with heinous crimes as was the case of Rwanda, then the wise elderly people would gather to hear different parties before making decisions. The whole idea behind restorative justice is to give the offender the possibility to correct their own mistakes to obtain the forgiveness of the victim. This process is thought to appease the anger of the victim and help him heal and recover from the crime trauma. It seeks to create new human bonds between victims and violent perpetrators, solely turned towards a common future built together as a community.

However, restorative justice appears to be easier in theory than in practice. With one or petty crimes, this judicial approach works flawlessly, but when confronted with large-scale abuses of human rights and odious crimes, would it be able to bear the weight of such tragic circumstances?

Reparative justice is based on the concept of reparation. Reparation, in its simplistic definition, can be defined as the process of repairing the wrongdoings directed to people or communities by a person or group of people. The goal is to acknowledge the victimhood status of victims, which is highly significant in the sense that it alleviates their sufferings. The concept of reparation implies a peaceful resolution of an awful situation by enabling victims and violent perpetrators to forgive one another and to create a better society where required measures are taken to prevent such vile actions from occurring again. Reparative justice is a communal conflict resolution mechanism that encourages the participation of the whole community to create the foundations of a peaceful, harmonious, tolerant, and all-inclusive society where the demons of the past are forgotten. The process of restorative justice is articulated around three major pillars: reparation by offenders or recovery, forgiveness and healing of victims, and acceptance and social reintegration of offenders.

Inclusivity is the core principle that characterizes the restorative justice approach, and the needs and interests of victims, offenders, and the community at large are taken into consideration. The seeking of agreements is to reconcile and find the balance between these different needs to set the community on the path of healing, forgiveness, and development. It is to be known that the whole process is non-coercive, as victims and members of the community are asked to participate willingly if they so desire. Unlike criminal justice that draws its power from the country's laws, restorative justice operates at the communal level based on traditional wisdom. Therefore, it does not have the same legal value as criminal justice, as it is just a communal, peaceful, and efficient way to resolve social conflicts. The two systems present both benefits and considerable flaws. It is for this reason that they need to work together to ensure peaceful living after conflicts, civil wars, and genocides. In some

complex situations, both can be used together if the use of a single method is not sufficient to bring back peace. This signifies that the two justice systems are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary.

In the same dynamics, we would now shift to exploring B. Diop's and Mukasonga's selected works to see how these post-genocide ethical questions are evoked. The selected novels take the reader into the heart of the Rwandan post-genocide society to witness the social tension that still hangs in the air. For instance, the healing journeys are portrayed with the return of relatives of genocide victims. In *Murambi: The Book of Bones*, B. B. Diop uses the return of Cornelius, the son of the top genocide masterminds, to demonstrate that forgiveness is not the absence of forgetfulness, but it is the strength for a wounded community to continue living together whilst still cherishing the memories of the past. In *Cockroaches*, Mukasonga describes the fear, grievance, and resentment that still inhabit her when she decides to visit the house of her parents in Rwanda after all her family members were completely wiped out. The return of these characters demonstrates the tense atmosphere that still characterizes post-conflict/genocide societies.

Rwandans were able to draw from their rich social mechanism to come to terms with the genocide. Without this powerful and former social justice system known as "*Gacaca*", it would have been extremely difficult for Rwandans to have a peaceful settlement of the genocide without any sense of justice and forgiveness. When the RPF invaded Kigali and took control of the country, many Hutus believed that Tutsis would take their revenge by massacring them in their turn. But there was no such thing. After guns fell silent, the RPF opted for a peaceful resolution of the civil war by establishing and reactivating the former social justice court, which had existed and ruled upon social cases before colonization.

Before examining how social interactions are addressed in post-genocide Rwanda, it is of paramount importance to look at the concept of transitional justice, which is an umbrella term that includes reparative or restorative justice and criminal justice. However, this concept has a wider

scope than these two aspects. Transitional justice covers "a wide range of mechanisms and institutions, including tribunals, truth commissions, memorial projects, reparations and the likes to redress past wrongs, vindicate the dignity of victims and provide in times of transition" (S. Buckley-Zitsel and al., 2014, p. 1). Transitional justice usually occurs in the timeframe between the fall of a regime and the establishment of a new regime. It also refers to the period that follows the end of a civil war or conflict. This particular period in the history of any country is fraught with grievances and countless human abuses that need to be tried. That is the reason why transitional justice is a complex path, and its execution encounters multiple social barriers. If transitional justice fails to make things right anew by creating a favorable environment to heal the past wounds, the post-conflict society is likely to collapse again because the factors that triggered the conflict would remain unattended. Injustice is thought to be part of conflict-driving factors. All the efforts made during this period are to foster reconciliation between different layers and communities of the society.

2. Localizing the Reconciliation Process through the Wisdom of the *Gacaca* Courts

In Rwanda, the *Gacaca* court was erected along the International Court of Justice in Arusha as a viable means to sustain cohesion among Rwandans after horrible crimes. B. B. Diop (2006) in his novel *Murambi: The Book of Bones* perfectly captures the spirit and values of *Gacaca* without mentioning it directly. When Cornelius comes back to Rwanda, he finds a Rwanda that has not come to terms with the remaining demons of the genocide yet as the country and its inhabitants are still struggling to find their old peace and communal life. Still, after the genocide officially ended, Tutsi survivors continued to live in total fear because they experienced the subjectivity of life during those deadly three months in 1994. Life is dull, and the social atmosphere is tense as the atrocious memories of the genocide overhang Rwandans. Such large-scale heinous crimes against humanity cannot be forgotten overnight. Even though people try to live as if nothing ever happened to them, the traumas of

genocide continue to terrorize them. The collective effort of Rwandans to forget this woeful past and build a new common future is described through the portrayal of famous streets and avenues that once served as butchery places.

These symbolic places witnessed the brutal death of hundreds of Tutsi people during the genocide. In a relentless effort to move forward, these places have been rid of these collective bad souvenirs, inasmuch that returnees like Cornelius, who did not witness the genocide directly, are not able to perceive any signs of the genocide. The intention of Rwandans to overcome the genocide brutalities and imagine a new communal and peaceful life reads in the description of highly genocidal places in a new light. This collective national rebirth geared towards the future is identifiable through the efforts of the government and Rwandans to see public genocide memories. In the foreword, E. Julien sheds more light on this subject by stating the following: "The novel opens a space of reckoning, calling on us readers, like Cornelius, to reflect and weigh the question of responsibility, to imagine a new future" (B. B. Diop, 2006, p. x).

Inhabited with the spirit of discovering the history of his own family, how his mother and siblings were killed, mingled with the general typical Rwandan history, Cornelius encounters a new Rwanda that has completely changed where people are not willing to talk about the genocide. It reminds them of the atrocities they witnessed or experienced themselves during these gruesome days. Cornelius' purpose in returning to Rwanda is to embark on a journey to find explanations about what led to the massacre of thousands of innocent people. Both genocide victims and offenders tend to prevent themselves from talking about their experiences after the genocide publicly. For victims, it is to preserve these awful memories for themselves, as talking about them makes them relive them as though it is happening again. In addition, for offenders, narration can be seen as a way of indirectly admitting their misdeeds and heinous crimes. For these reasons, both of these people avoid discussing issues of genocide or atrocities committed during this period. This is the first barrier that

Cornelius faces when he seeks to learn and write about the genocidal events. During a conversation, Stanley, a Tutsi genocide survivor and childhood friend of Cornelius, confides in him that he "won't find many people willing to talk about those events" because people are still grieving about their losses and wounds are still aching (B. B. Diop, 2006, p. 44). A big deafening and frightening silence usually befalls post-genocide societies as people are afraid of awakening the demons of the past that still haunt them tirelessly, but they struggle to live with these traumatizing memories.

What is significant in the case of Rwanda is the willingness of both Tutsis and Hutus to cohabitate even after the attempt of one side to efface the other from the surface of the earth. Rwandans come to realize that one simple thing, which is the interconnectedness of their lives, despite what happened in 1994. B. B. Diop (2006) demonstrates that the Rwandan post-genocide social reconstruction was built on hope in a common feature and tolerance. These two values have been two significant characteristics of the Rwandan Renaissance. Rwandans came to see their fate, as Tutsis and Hutus, cannot be separated in the same country even though one party believed so and tried hard through the implementation of an extermination project, which failed. After this social disaster in terms of losses of human lives, B. B. Diop (2006, p. 48) highlights the fact that "No one is born a Rwandan, and that you learn to become one" as opposed to the traditional Hutu perception, which defended the fact that only Hutus can be considered as true Rwandans.

For this reason, they are the people who surely have the exclusive rights to live in and rule Rwanda as a collective ethnic property. Through this particular passage, B. B. Diop sends a message to African countries by calling on them to de-ethnicize power and citizenship. It is a call for African leaders to create all-inclusive political, social, and economic systems that take into account all components of the society, irrespective of their ethnic belongingness. For B. Diop, if the post-genocide re-building mechanism does not take into consideration this inclusive aspect by giving the same importance and power to all, the country is likely to relapse into

violence again. These measures are meant to prevent the resurgence of the politics of ethnic nationalism that goes along with the politics of nativism. Or these two radical ideologies tend to create strong polarized states and marginalized economic and political outcasts forever.

Furthermore, B. B. Diop (2006) mentions the significance of the question of justice to ensure a long-lasting peace during the reconstruction period. Nevertheless, as it has been stated above, it requires the combination of both retributive and restorative justice systems to create a new balanced society. In his novel, B. Diop sometimes relies on punishment to prevent people from creating social troubles because offenders are excluded from social life while sending them to prison. He proposes that individuals who endanger peace-building processes and constitute a serious threat to public safety, must be taken away and punished severely. This measure is to prevent the occurrence of another human tragedy again. This is crucial as the goal of criminal justice is to neutralize new violent perpetrators by inflicting on them severe punishments. During a discussion between Cornelius and Stanley about the durability of the new peaceful life, Stanley believes that crime perpetrators must be inflicted with penalties to prevent them from harming people anew. “If there are politically motivated murders today, they need to punish the culprits straightaway. Otherwise, all that blood will be visited upon us again one day or another” (B. B. Diop, 2006, p. 48).

B. B. Diop (2006) also addresses another key question in his novel, which is the burning issue of forgiveness. Even if people in Kigali seem to have forgotten the atrocities of the genocide, many of them may not have forgiven their offenders or relatives of the latter. People who faced death and saw many people of their own being violently tortured and killed, found it very hard to accord their forgiveness to their former killers or their family members. With all the reconciliation mechanisms applied to appease hearts, some people are still unable to let go of their troubled past. Therefore, whenever they appear to meet former killers or their relatives, the pain comes alive and becomes more acute than ever. Diop demonstrates that forgiveness is a long process that can take years for

victims to forgive former killers. This process cannot happen overnight. This is the case of Skipper, a genocide survivor who escaped death. When he encounters Cornelius, the son of one of the top genocide planners Karekezi, he begins to speak out of resentment and contempt for Cornelius although he does not accuse him directly. Skipper's angry reactions testify to the difficulties of victims to stand the sight of former genocide planners and their offspring. Skipper's monologue is captured in the following excerpt:

> Hesitating visibly before the seriousness of what he was about to say, he announced his intention to finally reveal the truth, then came out with some enigmatic reproaches – toward whom? wondered Cornelius – in the middle of a heavier and heavier silence. He wanted to correct himself, but after having hesitated a bit again, he lifted his glass, made the ice cubes clink, and said with violence that deeply impressed Cornelius:
>
> 'Me, forgive? But you must be joking! You must be joking!'
>
> Then he addressed those present:
>
> 'Hey! Are these people or a flock of sheep? Common animals? Tell me! And me, my blood is full of blood' (B. Diop, 2006, pp. 54-55).

B. B. Diop underlines through this passage all the discomforts of genocide victims in the face of people who formerly haunted them like mere animals. Despite multiple reconciliation attempts, there will always be this social barrier between victims and killers although they live together to build a common future. The author informs the reader that forgiveness is a work in progress that may be attained in the long run. Its effectiveness is not forcibly abrupt as hearts are freshly wounded and still mourning. Time is likely to wipe out social tensions between victims and killers and even efface chronic resentment that victims have towards killers. It is this long process that will surely lead to complete forgiveness, a sign of a successful and peaceful social reconstruction.

To constantly remind killers of their attempted extermination of a whole community, the new RPF government decided to transform parishes and

high places of genocide into museums where deceased bodies are kept, as they were when the sky fell on them. The corpses untouched and meticulously preserved still bear the stigmas and atrocities of the past. They are clear evidence of the tragedy that struck Tutsis in 1994. These bodies kept intact are used to always remind killers and the whole world about the sufferings endured by the Tutsi during the genocide. The act of establishing memorials and museums to witness atrocities committed to a segment of the population is key to immortalizing this suffering memory.

Such kind of undertaking is inherently part of Transitional justice. The erection of high national and local symbols and museums is a significant component of the reconciliation process. These historical places are erected to avoid denial of victims' tragic fate or suffering experience. Diop is successfully able to portray such remembering places through the truth-seeking and discovery of Cornelius. He and Jessica visit high genocidal places such as the "Ntarama parish church, the Nyamata Church, and the Murambi Polytechnic" where thousands of Tutsi people were lured to be exterminated brutally (B. B. Diop, p. 71). These places are highly significant in the reconstruction process as they enable the preservation of the enduring experiences of Tutsi people in the 1990's events. During his tour, Cornelius insists on the significance of keeping the deceased bodies of victims in their natural states as this bears witness that the genocide has truly happened. For him, it is a place of remembering. Despite protests about burying victims, for Cornelius, this is the only way to confront the genocide's awful reality so that another tragedy of this scale may never occur again in human history:

> Cornelius understood better now the authorities' decision not to bury the victims of the genocide after the controversy that came up about it in the country. Some people said that they had to be given a decent burial and that it isn't good to exhibit cadavers like that. Cornelius didn't agree with that point of view. Rwanda was the only place in the world that these victims could call their home. They still wanted its sun. It was too soon to throw them into the darkness of the earth. Besides, every Rwandan should have the courage to look reality in the

> eye. The strong odor of the remains proved that the genocide had taken place only four years earlier and not in ancient times. As they were perishing under the blows, the victims had shouted out. No one had wanted to hear them. The echo of those cries should be allowed to reverberate for as long as possible (B. B. Diop, 2006, pp. 71-72).

B. Diop's novel terminates with a positive endnote about the reconciliation between genocide victims and killers' relatives. Although Skipper escaped the massacre organized by Dr. Karekezi, the father of Cornelius, he confides in the latter his fears and feelings by showing him that life should continue after the genocide. Simeon, the uncle of Cornelius, despite his whole family and all his relatives being massacred, decides to fight for a peaceful coexistence between Hutus and Tutsis after the genocide. Simeon is presented as the new typical Rwandan citizen who holds no grudge against Hutu killers. For him, there is a part of evil that lies inside any of us. Therefore, Hutus are no better than Tutsis, and vice-versa. Simeon is portrayed by B. B. Diop as the very embodiment of values such as tolerance, forgiveness, and above all hope. He incarnates all the good values that post-genocide Rwandan citizens need to build a common future together with no resentment and revenge spirit.

For the same reason, S. Mukasonga (2016) also addressed the same questions of justice, forgiveness, and post-genocide life in Rwanda. Living abroad during the genocide when his whole family perished under the blow of Hutu extremists, S. Mukasonga returns home years later with his children to mourn her dead relatives. She then engages in a very emotional and truth-seeking journey around the whole country to try to understand the reasons that led to this human tragedy. During her tour from Kigali to the high places of the genocide where Tutsis were massacred, she vividly depicts the acute pains of victims and the willingness of killers to repair their mistakes through the traditional justice system known as *Gacaca.* At the same time, she emphasizes the impossibility for many victims to live together again with their killers or to forgive them.

In the heart of S. Mukasonga's epic journey is the quintessential question of forgiveness. Upon visiting the genocide museums and memorials, S. Mukasonga begins to feel the woes of genocide victims and the torment they still go through in the aftermath of the genocide. She notices that genocide survivors live far from their killers out of fear. Talking about the new Rwanda in the making after the genocide, S. Mukasonga (2016) describes the beauty that characterizes this country and at the same time contrasts this beauty with the mental restlessness that becomes part of the daily enduring experiences of genocide survivors. She captures and underlines the deadly silence that befalls survivors and the unforgettable nature of their experience by stating: "Rwanda is also the land of tears, and the roads we travel take us on a journey through horror and grief" (p. 102).

Even though she notices a relative peace reigning in the country and no particular sign of the genocide except in genocide museums and memorials such as in Murambi where deceased bodies are exhibited to show the heinousness of crimes during the genocide, this partial peace and faltering living together are superficial. For there is no real coexistence and collaboration between genocide survivors and killers as the first group intends to distance itself from the second one. Despite countless efforts, the Gacaca traditional court of justice could not heal all wounds and lead all survivors to forgive killers. Many survivors refused to sustain any human relationships with killers of their relatives and kinsmen during the rebuilding process. This reality is exemplified by S. Mukasonga (2016, p. 105) in what follows:

> But many survivors have no choice but to wander aimlessly on death's shores. There were fewer than ten of them left in Murambi. They had to leave their enclosures in the hills and gather in the makeshift village around the market. They couldn't go on living among their killers, amid the stares that said all too clearly that they weren't supposed to be there. They expect nothing from the Gacaca courts, the justice handed by the wise men of the hills. In Murambi, they say that the 'wise men' named to the court will unavoidably have blood on their hands (...). It's hard for me to leave them when the Memorial closes for the day, hard to

> go back to the living, to people pretending to be living. So, we survivors stick close together, in silence. Everywhere around us, on the hills, our killers are lighting their lamps, and we're alone in the darkness. You're a Tutsi like me, but still lived abroad, you can't really understand us – not even people from Kigali can understand everything. You can't feel the fear that comes over us, that chills us to the bone. No night is darker and longer than a night in Murambi.'

S. Mukasonga raises a critical question here regarding the composition of the Gacaca court. This issue is related to the presence of Hutu old men who likely participated in the genocide indirectly. The presence of these so-called wise men, who also wear the hats of genocide planners, discourages many genocide survivors from taking part in hearings and peaceful conflict resolution proceedings in these courts. Through this challenge, S. Mukasonga draws our attention to the challenges that surround the choice of members of the transitional justice. Members supposed to rule in these significant post-genocide institutions must be upright people and impartial. They ought not to be accused of anything during the war as even their partial implications into war atrocities can endanger the reconstruction process, mainly in the case of justice rendering. Authorities chosen to lead the transitional justice must be irreproachable and incarnate values such as open-mindedness, tolerance, and inclusiveness.

On the one hand, what S. Mukasonga demonstrates at this level is that trust cannot be built between survivors and killers overnight. It is a long process that requires patience as survivors have not woken up from their traumas yet. It takes a huge time for them to learn to live with their killers again. On the other hand, the author enumerates other stories that also translate the willingness of many Rwandans to continue living together despite what happened. For the author, life must be cherished and continue even though fraught with countless negative feelings. To highlight all the paradox that characterizes the post-genocide life, S. Mukasonga uses her narrative to criticize the behavior of hundreds of Hutu killers who felt no

remorse after the genocide. These offenders continue living as if nothing serious happened during the genocide, thereby denying their responsibility for actual killings. For the author, such behaviors sabotage people's willingness to move forward and build a common future. To illustrate the post-genocidal life paradox, she narrates the story of a friend whose parents were unfortunately killed in their own yards during the genocide. The friend decided to bury them in front of a church where his deceased father worked for a very long time. The paradoxical part of the story is that his father's killers who were also his former students "pass by his grave when they go to Sunday Mass like good Christians" (S. Mukasonga, p. 103).

Like B. Diop, S. Mukasonga also finished her novel with a good endnote. The ending of her novel is quite optimistic as a former neighbor of theirs comes to ask her for forgiveness when she and her family visit the house of her parents. The house of her parents is bushy because no one has ever lived there when her whole family was exterminated. Although this neighbor disclaims his involvement in the killing of Mukasonga's parents, she is convinced that he directly or indirectly has something to do with it. Otherwise, why will he ask her for forgiveness in the first place before he goes back to his denials? The fact of asking for forgiveness from killers to genocide survivors is a major step forward in the peace-building process which is surely long, painful, and fraught with many impediments.

In sum, S. Mukasonga and B. B. Diop demonstrate in their novels that the post-genocide peace-building process is mainly based on the capacity of killers to repent and victims to forgive. Without these efforts made by the two categories, peace and reconciliation would never become a reality. The opening words of D. Bloomfield (2003) thoroughly sum up the implied strategies that B. B. Diop and S. Mukasonga develop in their novels regarding the ethical and vital questions of justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation as follows:

> There is no roadmap for reconciliation. There is no shortcut or simple prescription for healing the wounds and divisions of a society in the aftermath of sustained violence. Creating

> trust and understanding between former enemies is a supremely difficult challenge. It is, however, an essential one to address in the process of building a lasting peace. Examining the painful past, acknowledging it and understanding it, and above all transcending it together, is the best way to guarantee that it does not – and cannot – happen again (D. Bloomfield and al., 2003, p. 4).

The foregoing passage once more highlights the extent to which recognizing one's wrong and asking for pardon when guilty and forgiving when being the victim is essential in the peace-building process leading to a long run peaceful reconciliation in a post-conflict nation. These models of peace-building promoted by B. B. Diop and S. Mukasonga are similar to A. Sidiki Coulibaly's model of reconciliation. He (2016) also frames reconciliation as a culturally rooted, and a historically informed process. His model unfolds through two short-term strategies that generate immediate dialogue and healing, and a long-term strategy designed to embed lessons of forgiveness into the fabric of community life, especially in his paper entitled "Culture as Language of Reconciliation: A Case Study of Malian and South African Post-Conflict Experiences."

Conclusion

To conclude, it has been shown that the peace-building process is arduous and complex in nature. This process entails the use of various social and judicial mechanisms to reconcile hearts after mass atrocities. There is no single solution to bring peace back in a country torn by war. Solutions must be created and adapted to the socio-political and economic realities of each country. Rwandans have leaned on a pre-colonial ancestral judicial system named *Gacaca* to deal with highly ethical questions that arose after conflicts such as taking responsibility, healing of victims, forgiveness, and reconciliation, which is the final stage in the peace-building process. Rwandans have been smart enough to draw from their cultural wealth to create conditions that enable Hutu killers and Tutsi victims to continue living together despite what has happened. It is this uniqueness that the authors under study shed light on in their novels.

The situation of responsibilities plays a key part in the reconciliation process as it enables the transitional authorities to know who did what during the genocide. It happens that in some conflicts, we encounter both internal and external responsibilities. After addressing the question of the responsibility of internal actors, it is also significant to look into the responsibility of foreign actors in the Rwandan genocide. The fact of situating responsibilities is key to reconciliation as this gives the possibility to killers and their external allies to apologize and repent from their crimes to soothe the anger of genocide survivors. The foregoing indicates that the reconciliation process would be unsuccessful if the violence perpetrators do not recognize their wrongdoing and apologize, and the victims also accept to forgive. That is the reason why Rwandans have sought to have apology from European countries such as France that took part in the genocide.

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