Mediating 'Absence-Presence' at Rwanda's Genocide Memorials: Of Care-taking, Memory and Proximity to the Dead

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Abstract

This paper analyses the connectivities between violence, memory, personhood, place and human substances after the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. It explores the practice of 'care-taking' at genocide memorials – the preservation and care of human remains –to reveal how survivors of the Genocide re-make their worlds through working with the remnants of their dead loved ones. I argue that 'care-taking' is a way to rebuild selves and to retain lost relations to the dead that still interfere in the everyday lives of the living. Survivors project their emotions, sentiments and confusion about an uncertain future onto the remains. Care-taking reverses time because it gives back dignity to those who died 'bad deaths' during the Genocide. I further argue that the memorials are a vehicle for what I coin 'place-bound proximity' that enables a material space of communication between care-takers and their dead loved ones, provides a last resting place and a 'home' for both the living and the dead. Following a 'victim-approach' this paper draws on extensive fieldwork conducted in Rwanda between 2011 and 2014.

Keywords: Rwanda, memorials, survivors, genocide, survival practices, dignity

Introduction

On an overcast day outside Kigali, Rwanda's capital, Rosalinde and I were sitting in front of her house overlooking the stretch of mountains in front of us. Soaking in the beauty around me, Rosalinde's story of how she survived the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda seemed unreal, as if from a distant country in a distant time. But it is only 25 years ago, at this very place, that Rosalinde and so many other genocide survivors lost their loved ones: daughters, sons, husbands, brothers, sisters, parents, uncles, aunties, cousins, grandparents, friends and neighbours. Around one million lives were lost in just 100 days. Rosalinde and her cousin were the only survivors in her family. She holds the memory of her dead family dear, admitting that 'the grief remains because genocide and death is in our hearts'.

Genocide and mass atrocity perennially mar the lives of those who survive. For many survivors of the Genocide it is therefore tremendously important to remember those who perished in 1994. Rosalinde continues, explaining that 'we remember (…) because we represent whom we lost; it is a way of building ourselves. It is about restructuring a normal relationship to those who died'. Rosalinde's testimony raises a series of important and unsettling questions that this article aims to explore. On one level, it draws attention to the individual experience of violence by asking how survivors of the Genocide remake their broken worlds marred by the absence of those who died. In particular, it demonstrates how loss and trauma are etched in the memory of the Genocide and how it translates into multifaceted and creative attempts of

survivors to, in Rosalinde's words, 'restructure a normal relationship to those who died' and in turn to rebuild themselves. It suggests conceptualising memory as a 'function of relationships' (Lambek 1996) to others and selves which, at the same time, entails a moral obligation to the dead. The oft-cited notions of 'healing' and 'reconciliation' after the experience of mass violence appear misleading, even ill- equipped, to capture the rich repertoire of everyday survival practices and attempts at meaning-making by survivors to make 'whole what has been smashed' (Torpey 2001).

On another level, this article meticulously carves out the relationship between violence, memory, place, human remains and the ritualised practice of 'care-taking' (Viebach 2014) through the cleaning and preserving of human remains and dead bodies at Rwanda's genocide memorials. Rosalinde is what I conceptualise as a 'care-taker': a survivor who has pledged her everyday life to the care of dead loved ones at the site they died such cruel and unjust deaths. She is one of many survivors who have volunteered to clean and preserve the remains of genocide victims and who comes to the memorial every day to be close to her loved ones. The bodily remains of the dead need to be cleaned and treated regularly with white lime powder to protect them against decay in the passage of time. In describing their work at memorials, Rosalinde and other survivors speak of a moral duty owed to the dead and how their work with the bodily remains re-establishes an absent presence of the dead and supports re-interpreting a sense of belonging in a world that so often feels lost, lonely and incomplete in the aftermath of the Genocide.

Adopting a 'victim-approach' (Roumbouts 2002: 219), the article takes the testimonies, experiences and individual practices of survivors as starting point from which to expose, and better understand, the extensive layers of meaning-making through which both the memorial and human remains are interpreted, imagined, perceived and transformed. It asks why survivors clean the remains of their dead loved ones as well as what remembering and the memorial site mean to them. In discussing these questions, four central themes emerge and are explored in detail: meaning of place; imagination; dignity; and time-reversal. Each theme is bound to, and enmeshed in, the intimate relationship between memory, human remains, place and ritual practice. The analysis suggests the need for a broader conception of bodies and bodily substances as 'materialities of belongings' (Fontein 2011) that have an affective force and move between and go beyond the dualism of 'subjects making objects making subjects' (Pinney 2005: 269, in Major and Fontein 2015: 90).

The article argues that human remains and dead bodies enable survivors to reimagine the dead as those they hold dear so tenderly in their hearts and minds because often they do not see mere skulls and bones but project the personhood of their loved ones onto those remains. This contributes to a better understanding of how such 'materialities of belongings' are inscribed into a broader framework of signification after mass atrocity and genocide. But so too does it seek to promote a broader understanding of how and why survivors engage in this particular form of dealing with, and working on, the dead. The latter dimension has tended to be neglected in the scholarship on post-genocide Rwanda which rarely conceives of, or seeks to examine how, human remains' potency supports micro-level processes of meaning-making after the 1994 Genocide. The article offers an important contribution by shifting the contours of the debate from collective aspects of memory and an instrumentalist view on human remains as political objects (Vidal 2001; Brandstetter 2010; Meierhenrich 2011) to the informal and

personal memory practices. At the same time, it introduces a conception of human remains that focuses on their palpable and ineluctable presence as affective force in survivors' attempts to retain lost relationships.

Scholarly work on memorialisation and human remains has critiqued Rwanda's particular way of commemorating the Genocide as a 'spectacle of bones' (Guyer 1996, 160) that supports a dominant, state-controlled performance, fixation and reinterpretation of the past (Longman 2017). This approach however risks overlooking the connectivity between human remains, meaning-making and ritual practices beyond the 'political lives of dead bodies' (Verdery 1999). The article aims to move away from the 'politics of memory' and the 'politics of the everyday' to put into sharper relief micro-processes of meaning-making at the intersection of memory, ritual practice and materiality.[1] Furthermore, attending to human remains in the context of 'neglected networks of material agency' (Knappett 2008, 139 cited in Fontein and Harries 2013, 117) or the 'co-entanglement of things and society' (Hodder 2012, cited in Fontein and Harries 2013, 117) is particularly important if we are to capture the unfolding, relational and co-dependent processes of becoming 'by which these networks and entanglements are constituted and various entities emerge, sometimes fleetingly sometimes more enduringly, as subject and objects' (Fontein and Harries 2013, 117-118).

The article explores the layers of meaning-making at Rwanda's genocide memorials across four main sections: the first section introduces the concept of 'deathscapes' (Maddrell and Sidaway 2010) to suggest that memorials are imbued with different meanings and serve various political, collective and individual purposes. The second section explains the methodological and epistemological focus on micro-level, individual processes. The third part recounts how the Genocide against the Tutsi[1] was orchestrated, with particular focus on the treatment and degradation of victims' bodies. It continues by eliciting how the dead are re-membered into the community of the living in order to stabilise their marginal presence and reconstitute a relationship with them. The fourth section delves into the intimate space of Rwanda's deathscapes to explore the themes of meaning of place, dignity, time and imagination.[2] The conclusion summarises the main points of the analysis and connects them to broader discussions on reconciliation, memory and corporeality after mass atrocity and genocide.

Rwanda's deathscapes and their scholarly perception

'Deathscapes'[3] are places associated with death and imbued with meanings and association (Maddrell and Sidaway 2010). 'Deathscapes' can be the site of a funeral or the place of final disposition and of remembrance, or a representation of all of these.[4] Deathscapes bear the texture of personal bereavement, loss and grief but at the same time engender social contestation, power politics and public scrutiny. In short these are sites where 'the personal and public intersect' (Maddrell and Sidaway 2010, 4-5). Death and bereavement are intensified at 'deathscapes' such as at cemeteries, cremation sites, memorials or sites of violence and death. The experiences of death and mourning at these sites are mediated through the intersection of

body, culture, society and state, and often make deep impressions on the sense of self, public and private identity, as well as sense of place in the built and natural environment (Maddrell and Sidaway 2010, 2).

There are approximately 243 genocide memorials in Rwanda[5] which can be meaningfully understood as 'deathscapes'. These memorials are almost all 'authentic sites' (Assmann 2007) of massacres that took place during the 1994 Genocide.[6] Their authenticity derives from the violence these places, as geographic locations, witnessed, and their capacity to communicate the traumatic events that occurred there. In Rwanda, these sites include churches (e.g. Nyamata, Ntarama and Nyarabuye), priest compounds, offices of local authorities and schools (e.g. the Murambi poly-technical school or the ETO school in Kigali) where people sought refuge during the Genocide. Their authenticity supports the government's politics of memory and creates a highly material, daily presence of the Genocide, which is reinforced by the display of human remains and even entire preserved bodies[7] at some memorials, particularly national ones.

These 'deathscapes' are simultaneously subjected to public contestation and memory politics as well as used as places of private and individual grief and mourning. The intersection of the public and private is not unique for Rwanda. So too can this be observed at sites such as Potocari in Srebrenica (Pollack 2003; Wagner 2010) or Tuel Sleng in Phnom Penh (Manning 2018). In Rwanda there are contestations around how the dead should be remembered and for what purposes. After the Genocide, Rwanda and in particular survivors chose to commemorate their dead at authentic sites where massacres had happened, that were transformed into 'deathscapes' by creating mass graves at these sites, alongside vast displays of victims' belongings, clothes and human remains such as skulls, bones and at some sites even entire preserved dead bodies. For the Hutu population this is a steady reminder of their wrongdoings so that many resorted to a 'chosen amnesia' (Buckley-Zistel 2006). This 'chosen amnesia', as Buckley-Zistel describes it, enables peaceful coexistence between Hutu and Tutsi in the small, intimate Rwandan communities (Buckley-Zistel 2006).

As I have argued elsewhere, for many Tutsi survivors the particular way of commemorating the Genocide is crucial for public acknowledgement and serves as a form of 'memory-justice' (Viebach 2014; Ibreck 2010). In fact, a number of genocide survivors lobbied for this particular way of remembering the dead. The idea to expose around 800 lime powdered intact bodies in the classrooms of the former Murambi poly-technical school where about 50 000 people were massacred, originates from survivors who founded the survivor association 'Amagaju' in 1995. They lobbied to preserve 'facts for history' (Personal interview, 07.02.2012). Other notorious massacre sites, like the Nyamata and Ntarama churches in the Bugesera district near Kigali, were largely left as they were found at the end of the Genocide (Personal interview, 08.09.2011 and 06.09.2011; see also Ibreck 2010).[8] Others, such as diaspora returnees from the Tutsi community, sometimes view the memorial as 'rough' or 'raw', indicating a preference for more Western style commemoration without the vivid and gruesome display of the dead (Personal interview Kigali, 08.02.2012). Some Rwandan and international trauma counsellors (working in Rwanda) have also raised the question whether displaying human remains and leaving the 'authenticity' of the sites intact might lead to an obsession to remain with the dead in the past, instead of looking towards the future (Personal interview, 06.02.2012; Personal interview, 10.07.2011).

The scholarship on remembrance in Rwanda has primarily adopted a collective and political vantage point to capture memorialisation in Rwanda (e.g. Brandstetter 2010; Gruyer 1996; Buckley-Zistel 2006; Longman 2017). It perceives memorialisation as part of the state's endeavour to promote shared identity, unity, and reconciliation. Public remembrance in the form of memorials and annual commemoration is part of the government's politics of remembrance on which the ruling party, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), grounds its legitimacy. Memorialisation in Rwanda is therefore a highly politicised phenomenon that is used by political elites to cultivate a shared understanding of the past. It is not surprising, then, that authors often claim that the government instrumentalizes the memory of the Genocide and the narrative of liberation for its own pursuit and maintenance of power (e.g. Meiehenrich 2011: Vidal 2001; Guyer 1996; Brandstetter 2010). Sara Guyer even speaks of a 'spectacle of skulls and bones' that contributes 'neither to a clearer understanding of the genocide nor to the restoration of powers of minds in the face of violence' (Guyer 1996, 160). Likewise, it is argued that the way Rwanda memorialises the dead impedes collective pursuits of justice (King 2010), nurtures a 'symbolic violence' (Brauman et al. 2000, 13), sharpens ethnic divisions and potentially sparks ethnically motivated violence (e.g. Pottier 2002, Buckley-Zistel 2006; Burnet 2009). Similarly, Brandstetter concurs that 'memorials and commemoration could drive Rwandans to identify themselves either with "Hutu" or "Tutsi", thereby reducing complex and overlapping individual identities to a simple model of ethnic antagonism' (Brandstetter 2010, 17-18).

Even though there are Hutu victims buried at the memorials, and even Hutus working at some sites, it is undoubtedly true that official remembrance is directed towards Tutsi victims. Brauman et al. (2000) suggest that Hutu victims are side-lined and that, in turn, a so-called 'tutsification of genocide' (Prunier 2009, 3) has been taking place as a result of the RPF's initiatives. In a similar vein, René Lemarchand (2009, 103) speaks of a 'thwarted memory': a memory that is state controlled, determining how and who is to be remembered and victimised (see also Vidal 2001; Pottier 2002). The general conclusion arrived in these works is one that memorialisation in Rwanda has led to a 'politicisation of victimhood' (Burnet 2009, 80), which impedes reconciliation and peace-building efforts (e.g. Buckley-Zistel 2006; King 2010). This scholarship sheds light on the collective dimension and raises difficult questions of how and how much to remember after genocide. As Edkins has argued however, state attempts to control the cultural representation of violence mitigate the effects of (collective) trauma and thereby reconstitute state sovereignty. States' initiatives, to construct a shared version of the past for present political interests is therefore nothing new, although methods may differ (Ibreck 2010) as studies in other contexts show (e.g. Gillis 1994).

The work of Edkins and others is a response to a rather essentialising view on collective memory (e.g. Halbwachs 1992) that approaches it as a coercive and totalising, even annihilating, process in which individual memory is completely aligned, absorbed and integrated into the public dominant memory (Olick 1999; Kantsteiner 2002). Criticising this approach to collective memory, Shahzad elucidates that collective memories are '(…) dynamic, multiple, shared and contested in their nature' (2012, 379) and Ryan holds that, 'the analysis of collective memory purely in terms of elites and hegemony mistakenly neglects the reception of the official memory' and the possibilities for 'mnemonic resistance' (Ryan 2010, 159). This critical approach suggests that collective memory in Rwanda, as in other contexts, is complex

and dynamic, thus complicating the findings of the scholarship that tends to regard memorialisation as overwhelmingly state controlled, with few avenues for memorialisation 'from below' and little space for practices of individual remembrance.

Located somewhere in the middle of these two camps is a further strand of scholarship which illustrates the complexity of Rwandan remembrance. Longman and Rutagengwa (2006) observe how experiences and perspectives on the Genocide are complex and attitudes towards its memorialisation are not necessarily determined by ethnicity. They argue that Rwanda 'presents an interesting case study of the limits of a government's ability to shape the collective memory of a population' (Longman and Rutagengwa 2006, 243). Genocide survivors in particular play a crucial role in shaping the agenda of remembrance politics in Rwanda (Ibreck 210). The survivor umbrella organisation, Ibuka, for instance successfully lobbied to change the commemoration dates from 1-7 April to 7-12 April and has, from the very beginning, committed a hundred days of mourning to honour their loved ones (Personal interview, 10.08.2014) whereas the state officially commemorates for seven days only.[9] More generally, Edkins suggests that survivor testimony contests political power and demands change (2003, 57). It is in this context that we have to situate and understand the *individual practices* of survivors working at memorials. The survivor engagement in the production of memory, as Ibreck notes, is distinct from and sometimes at odds with the state's attempts to employ memorials and human remains to consolidate its power (Ibreck 2010, 341; Viebach 2019).

Importantly then, we ought to understand memory after violence not only as a product of political and collective processes, but also as highly individual, and personal ones. Memories are born from *individual* experiences, which means, they are intrinsically linked to identity and personhood (Antze and Lambek 1996, xxi). Memory acts as identity construction when we search for memories in order to understand ourselves (ibid, xvi). Whilst memory should support our search for identity, as Antze argues, it equally threatens to undermine this quest through gaps, uncertainties or glimpses of a past that is no longer accessible or felt as ours. A traumatic experience always risks the coherence of a life story narrative of individuals and too often threatens the narrative's flow with transformative and symbolic power. This rupture in life narratives speaks to Turner's and Van Gennep's notion of the 'rite of passage'; that is, when a liminal status occurs, caused by an incisive violent event in one's own life or the collective's (Turner 2017[1969]; Van Gennep 1960[1909]). After such violent events, through acts of remembrance, people strive to render their lives in meaningful terms.

Personal memory is, however, always connected to the social narrative that surrounds us, and at the same time collective memory is always connected to personal narratives. The transfer between the individual and the collective are mediated at certain points. 'Deathscapes' are such mediating points that bear the 'textual epitaph' (Maddrell and Sidaway 2010, 3) of bereavement and are endowed with emotion and affect through the significance of memory. For the collective, but particularly political elites, memorials serve as a 'point of connection' (Halbwachs 1993) to fixate, keep tangible and alive the collective memory of trauma and injury (Assmann 2007). 'For all their solid materiality', memorials or 'deathscapes' can be seen 'as spaces of threshold, with liminal qualities, where each narrative, or more accurately, set of narratives needs to be read in its individual context' (Maddrell and Sidaway 2010, 4). Such places can afford a public mapping of private emotion, a threshold space where on-going negotiations of absence-presence can happen and expressions of mourning and remembrance

can be located and negotiated in the medium term (Maddrell (2009) Maddrell and Sidaway 2010, 4).

The notion of 'deathscape' is helpful for understanding this intersection of collective, political and individual meaning-making as places of significance and how these interact with 'other moments and topographies, including those of sovereignty and memory (…)' (Maddrell and Sidaway 2010, 5). I suggest we can meaningfully make sense of memorials as places of personal mourning where a negotiation of 'absence-presence' (Maddrell 2013) takes place. Approaching memorials from this vantage point allows us to read and understand emerging narratives in their individual contexts. The focus of the following analysis is therefore on such individual practices at memorials and their meaning as 'deathscapes' for survivors whose emotional maps interact with, and, find expression through, these particular places while remaining attached to the broader social and political context.

At the core of this article sits the practice of care-taking which is performed at Rwanda's deathscapes by survivors who have pledged their lives to the care of the dead (edited from field notes 20.08.2014): care-taking involves the careful washing of remains that are still found 25 years after the Genocide and extends to regular washing and lime-powdering of the remains to protect them from decay. Often care-taking is done in the crypts or tombs where the dead are laid to rest. Survivors use mats to lay out the remains and buckets of water to rigorously clean them. The powder is kept in containers and added to the surface of the remains after the washing and drying of the remains and bodies. But care-taking, as I will demonstrate, also involves gifting and caring for the site, attending to flowerbeds, keeping the grounds clean and tidying and decorating the insights of the memorial with the few personal belongings of the dead, that survivors were able to recover from their destroyed houses. Care-taking helps survivors to continue bonds with the deceased. As such, as Maddrell argues 'in addition to communication, caring for each other is an inherent characteristic of positive relationships, and care and continuity of care is another important performative dimension (…) After-death care of graves, shrines etc. is a common form of continuing bonds in the context of cemeteries' (Maddrell, 2013, 515). Caring for the dead is therefore an essential part of individual mourning, and expressed, in some cases at least, in the washing and preserving of bones at Rwanda's memorial sites. Before attending to the meaning survivors ascribe to this task, it is crucial to reflect on conducting research at these intimate places of meaning-making.

Researching micro-level processes in Rwanda

Researching a highly politicised context like Rwanda poses certain challenges. Thomson (2010:20) argues that the Rwandan government 'exerts significant control over socio-political discourses and seeks to control what people can say about the government and its policies' (see also Jessee, 2011; Burnet, 2012; Thompson, 2013). Others have ascribed (rural) Rwanda as a 'pervasive culture of secrecy' (Waldorf 2006, 21) where researchers cannot expect people to say the truth about the Genocide.[10] However there is contestation about the 'reach and overreach' (Ingelaere 2007) of the state in Rwanda. The work of Clark (2014, 194) and Palmer (Palmer 2015) on the Rwandan gacaca courts, for example, reveals the perception of 'peasants' as vessels or passive resisters is a misleading one that risks essentialising entire groups and

reduces 'Rwandan citizens to mere ciphers of government diktat'. Such a view strips ordinary Rwandans – but survivors in particular – off their human agency.

In an effort to mitigate the risk of politicised 'iconic stories' (Jessee 2017), I searched for very personal and intimate accounts of how survivors re-made their worlds after the Genocide. I acknowledge, however, that survivor accounts and testimonies can be co-opted and instrumentalised by state elites for power purposes and the search for legitimacy. I am also aware that individual life narratives are embedded in broader national, political and social meta-narratives (see e.g. Antze and Lambek 1996, xxi) that might be adapted and integrated into personal biographies and memories as outlined above. However, there is always also space for counter-narratives and 'mnemonic resistance' (Ryan 2010, 159). As argued by Shahzad (2012, 279), individuals can be invested in multiple versions of an event depending on agency, access to technologies and membership of social networks. An appreciation of this intersection of collective and individual memory opens up space to interpret accounts of survival alongside individual experiences and personal biographies.

It is also important to acknowledge that 'finding one's voice in the making of one's history, the remaking of a world (…) is also a matter of being able to re-contextualize the narratives of devastation and generate new contexts through which everyday life may become possible' (Veena Das and Arthur Kleinman 2000, 6). Taking seriously this re-contextualisation and space for individual accounts, I was neither interested in political aspects, peasants' views on the effectiveness of memorials and commemoration nor in their perspective on the RPF's politics of memory and justice. Nevertheless, I included 'meta-data' (Fujii 2010), the spoken and unspoken such as rumours, inventions, denials and silences in my data analysis. My research findings produce hither-to untold personal accounts of how male and female survivors make sense of the past, with a focus on home, dignity, imagination and time and its connectivity to memorials, care-taking and human remains. Given the nature of Rwandan memorials, I was keen to learn why bones in particular play such a significant part in this and what working on, and with, those remains means for survivors. The four themes analysed in the article emerged as key topics throughout the research.

My research follows a 'victim-approach' in which the starting point is the victim and the findings are based on victims' realities (Roumbouts 2002, 219).[11] The fieldwork involved semi-structured qualitative in-depth interviews, survivor testimonies, focus group discussions with female survivors between 2009 and 2014 and participatory observation[12] of commemoration ceremonies on cell, sector, district, province and national level in 2012 and 2014. I collaborated with oversight and government bodies, such as the Commission for the Fight Against Genocide (CNLG),[13] which manages all relevant aspects of memorialisation in Rwanda, Ibuka (the survivor umbrella organisation) and AVEGA (widow organisation). In total, I interviewed over 60 individuals[14], including care-takers, memorial staff, staff of survivor organisations including Ibuka and Avega, CNLG staff members and individuals remotely involved in memorialisation. I chose national memorial sites, as well as very remote memorials mainly unknown to outsiders (e.g. Kaduha, Kinazi, Cyahinda or Cyanika). Most of those are only under marginal influence of the central government or even local authorities (Auchter 2015). The memorials covered in this article are: Cyahinda, Murambi, Nyamata, Ntarama, Nyarabuye, Kinazi, Kibeho and Bisesero. This sample includes the different provinces to

ensure a geographical balance, which is particularly important given that the Genocide played out differently across the provinces.

To recruit participants for the study, I asked care-takers and survivors if they wanted to share their memories with me. I defined care-takers as survivors who volunteered at the memorials and who cleaned and preserved human remains and dead bodies. It is important to stress that care-taking is different from the often coercive communal work, *umuganda*, or the imposed *ingando* camps. As is argued, care-takers engage in this particular work at the memorials for very personal reasons related to their experience of loss, grief and witnessing the cruel death of loved ones; care-taking is not a top-down enforced activity and in interviews care-takers did not relate their work to government policies or economic benefits or loss. I differentiated between care-takers and official memorial staff. The latter usually work for the CNLG and are responsible for giving tours to visitors and managing the day-to-day working of the memorial, at least at the national sites.[15] I also spoke to survivors who did not work as care-takers at the memorials, though they had experienced the massacres at the particular sites.

Survivors in Rwanda are a diverse group of people with different views, beliefs and understandings of memory and dealing with the past more generally. Some survivors have expressed their opposition to the particular way of memorialising the dead (see Auchter 2015; Hatzfeld 2005), whilst others have chosen to disengage with survivor organisations out of fear these have become co-opted by political elites (Burnet 2012, 75-76). The survivors I spoke to cannot, therefore, be said to represent a 'general view'. When I speak of 'survivors' I refer to the individuals who were part of my research, mainly, but not limited to, 'care-takers', without claiming to generalise their viewpoints or experiences. Notably, most of the interviews were conducted with survivors who do not belong to the well-educated, urban elite who are active in organising remembrance, raising funds and working for international agencies or the state. Furthermore, this study was limited to Tutsi survivors, thus leaving out the narratives and experiences of Hutu, who were victimised in wake of the civil war and in the aftermath of the Genocide.

I had to speak through a proxy – a Rwandan research assistant – who negotiated access on my behalf. The research assistant explained why I was conducting the research and what I would be asking about. The testimonies were given in Kinyarwanda with contemporaneous translation into English by my research assistant; I wrote down the translated version or occasionally recorded testimonies by taking notes. The encounter was very much inscribed in cultural and colonial hierarchies: as a *muzungu* (white person), I am a privileged person who has financial means and educational resources which, in this situation, establishes a hierarchy of race, in addition to the binary of global north and global south. This, in turn, affects the production of data. In the words of Tsing, the stories collected here are products of 'interconnection across difference' (Tsing 2005, 3-4). This difference can, particularly in Rwanda, translate into interviewees hiding their true feelings (Buckley-Zistel 2006, 133), rooted in an assumption that foreigners lack understanding of Rwandan culture and history (Informal discussions with research assistant, 10.01.2017). Whilst I appreciate this point, I am confident that survivors were grateful that a 'muzungu' was interested in their plight – indeed, many survivors asked me to share their stories with the outside world to raise awareness.

I did not go into the field to test or prove theoretical concepts. I understood violence as an *experience* and was interested in how people remember the Genocide and how they remake

their lives after this experience. That said, this ontological understanding of violence also shapes how we ask questions and how we understand our data. Nordstrom and Robben for example, explain that, 'experience and interpretation are inseparable for perpetrators, victims, and ethnographers alike' (Nordstrom and Robben 1995, 4). Moreover, the ways in which the survivor is positioned in the research process, is very much shaped by the movements between the tangible physicality of the social landscape and the silences of the unspeakable experience (Tewksbury and Gagne 2001, 72, cit. in Liamputtong 2007, 7). These are the dynamics and constraints we ought to bear in mind when collecting and interpreting data and reading stories that emerge from a victim-based approach.

Death at the threshold

The unmaking of the world

During the Genocide against the Tutsi approximately 800 000 to one million Tutsi and around 200 000 moderate Hutu who openly resisted the government were killed in just 100 days. The Genocide in Rwanda was characterised by what one of my interlocutors described as 'a genocide of proximity that destroyed intimate relationships through violence and ethnic ideology' (Personal interview, 06.02.2012). Although the Genocide was ordered and planned by the government and military, a mass of Rwandans participated and carried out the killings. Neighbours killed neighbours and even within families, people were forced to kill their loved ones. Another aspect of the Genocide against the Tutsi was the use of traditional weapons and agricultural tools such as machetes, (nail-studded) clubs and spears. Until then, machetes were only used for work on the farms and banana plantations. These weapons humiliated, mutilated and maimed the bodies of Tutsi victims, often causing a slow and tremendously painful death.

In an attempt to understand the cruelty of this violence, Taylor links the brutal ways of killing and torture back to culturally encoded beliefs and customs around the flow and blockage of body fluids (Taylor 2002). Taylor describes the impalement of women, often from the vagina to the mouth, or anus to head, as being associated with the 'body of conduit' that was, in pre-colonial times, connected to the belief of forming social relations by the flow of conduits through the digestive and reproductive systems of the human body (Taylor 2002, 155,165-166). In addition, in the Hutu radical ideology, Tutsi were depicted not only as traitor, enemy and foreign (e.g. Mamdani 2001; Prunier 2002) but also as 'blocked beings'; the ones who could potentially 'impede the movement of the material/symbolic material necessary to the social reproduction of human beings' (Taylor 2002, 164). The killers therefore ascribed and inscribed cultural symbolism on the bodies of their victims. The cutting off the Achilles tendons, arms and legs can be understood in this way. Eltringham describes this cruelty as 'discursive violence and asserts that 'the victim's body is a key vehicle of that discourse' (2015, 161).

Cruelty served to humiliate, dehumanise and inflict unimaginable suffering on the bodies of the entire group of the Tutsi. However, the level of cruelty differed according to areas and regions. Some early reports by local actors like Ibuka which investigated the methods of killing concluded that instruments such as clubs and machetes were used predominantly across the country, but that the patterns of use differed within regions (Kormann 2014, 8). Nyarabuye, for instance, is known amongst survivors for cannibalism, whereas Nyamata is infamous for

the sexual violence against Tutsi women. Such accounts were retold in my interviews with individuals who survived these atrocities. For instance, the Nyamata memorial crypt displays a coffin of a woman named Annonciata Mukandoli, who was gang-raped together with a group of women whilst she still had her baby on her back. Today, her coffin symbolises the violation of the female Tutsi body during the Genocide, which is closely linked to Hutu ideology (in particular the Hutu 10 commandments) and the belief that Tutsi women were superior to Hutu women (Personal interview, 10.09.2014).[16] Killers not only humiliated the bodies of their victims ante-mortem as the case of Annonciata exemplifies, but also post-mortem: they were often thrown in latrines or buried (sometimes alive) in mass graves or left naked on the ground to be eaten by dogs and other animals.

Victims of the Genocide suffered what is referred to in Rwanda as a 'bad death' (*bapfuye nabi*). Kormann suggests that 'this notion of a bad death is an important element of traditional Rwandan culture, and is one of the reasons why Christian religious discourse based as it is on the notion of salvation after death, has encountered such difficulty in adapting to the Rwandan context' (Kormann 2014, 8).[17] It is essential to understand and contextualise the treatment of living and dead bodies not only with regard to a 'bad death', but also in relation to the disruption of social and symbolic processes through which 'things and substances become human remains, bodies become bones, and living people become safely dead' (Fontein 2010, 439). Writing in the Zimbabwean context, Fontein (2010, 439-440), for example, describes how funerals were disrupted and prevented, bodies dumped in the bush and the disappearance of people became a second violence in Zimbabwe. Such treatment of bodies interferes, destroys and disrupts how bodies and persons are constituted. The immense suffering of people during the Genocide and how bodies were humiliated resonates with his idea of a 'second violence' that interrupts not only how personhood is constituted but also how social processes of funeral rites and commemoration are carried out. As Major and Fontein assert with regard to Eltringhams's argument above, the treatment and degradation of bodies ante- and post mortem points to the need to consider violence and the role the body plays therein within 'continuous, coherent necropolitical frameworks of meaning, across arbitrary or imposed distinctions between life and death' (2015, 89). The following sections delve into the meaning of place and personhood and the relation to the dead and their bodily substances in order to understand how survivors of the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda give meaning to past and present. The scale, unnerving intimacy and the way violence was carried out make questions of social and individual belonging even more pressing. I want to begin, therefore, by exploring in greater depth how the Genocide perennially mars the lives of survivors with regard to lost relationships and fragmented selves.

Reconstituting relationships to lost loved ones

The loss and absence of 'significant others' (Eramian 2014; Maddrell 2013; 2016) is constitutive of the reconfiguration of relationships and practices in the aftermath of mass violence and genocide.[18] This resonates with Hetherington's notion of social relationships being structured not only by the present, but also by the absent (Hetherington 2004, 159). This absence of objects, places or persons is, in turn, integrated into everyday life and shapes its practices (Bille et al. 2010, 7). In her work on mourning and grief processes, Maddrell describes the relationship between the absent and present as relational: the bereaved have to make sense

of the tension between the physical absence but the emotional and felt presence of the dead which she terms 'absence-presence' (2013, 505-507). The relationship to the dead and their 'absence-presence' does not only structure the mourning process but the bereaved also integrate this in their everyday lives (Maddrell, 2013, 506). In post-genocide Rwanda, the absence of persons is integrated into the everyday lives of survivors too. The mourning process seems to be filled by this tension between absence and presence of the dead which this and the following sections aim to demonstrate. Vidal (2001, 6) and Eramian (2014, 18) both describe in the context of Rwanda a 'social dislocation' and Eramian (ibid) argues that 'genocide survivors must contend with the problem of how to manage the absence of relations'.

All survivors I interviewed during my fieldwork described the absence of their loved ones and expressed 'absence-presence' in various ways. Without asking about the fate of family members, most recounted their losses, underscoring the difficulty of how to manage loneliness animated by the physical absence of their 'significant others'. Jeanette, a survivor who works at the Nyamata memorial site, explained to me

> After the RPF liberated the area [Bugesera, Eastern Province], I came back to Bugesera because I thought my family would still be alive. But no one remained. I am the only one left, the *only* [italics inserted by author] one. (Personal interview, 02.09.2014)

Similarly, in her ethnographic work in the southern town of Butare (now Huye), Eramian recounts how survivors talked about the losses of acquaintances, neighbours and friends almost on a daily basis, which she conceptualises as everyday memorial practice (Eramian 2014; 2018, 80). This practice elucidates a crucial dimension of how the violence of the 1994 Genocide affects self and social relationships and in particular the one between the living and the dead (Eramian 2018, 80). It is common for Tutsi survivors, be it an educated elite such as interviewed by Eramian or the care-takers, I worked with, to recount the exact number of loved ones lost. This is captured in the account of Alloys, who survived the massacre at the Kibeho church in the south. When I met him in 2014 and asked about his experience and connection to the site, he opened our conversation with the following words

> I was here during the genocide […] When the French came there were no Tutsi left in the region. There are only few survivors of the Kibeho massacre. Also, my family, we were 15 people, now only two are left. Some families don't exist anymore at all. Can you imagine? (Personal interview, 17.09.2014)

The Genocide has not only marred the relationship between the living and the dead, but has also had profound effect on the moral worth and dignity of victims (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2011, 1). What remains is death and loss, which feature perversely in the lives of survivors of mass violence and genocide (Robben and Suarez-Orozco 2000). This omnipresent experience of death and loss and, in turn, the assault on personhood and dignity restructures social relationships as well as the constitution of personhood and self (Anzte and Lambek 1996). This interstice between violence, memory and personhood is well captured in Marie's account. She survived the massacres in Gisenyi and has been working at the memorial for several years. She expressed her experience by saying

> Normal life is difficult. Bad things dominate. I was a mother and a wife, and now I am alone. But as a survivor it is my responsibility to use this second chance and do good. By accepting what happened it is feasible to be healthy inside. Many survivors do not have the heart to accept their bad memories to accept what happened to them. To forgive yourself is important in order to forgive others. (Personal interview, 08.09.2011)

The assault on personhood animated by extreme violence is particularly difficult to manage for Tutsi survivors because of the relational concept of personhood rooted in Rwandan culture. For Marie everyday life is a struggle. The easiest household tasks can sometimes be a huge burden because she is on her own without any support networks. This relational aspect is expressed in her words: 'I was a mother and a wife and now I am alone'. It speaks to a concept that encapsulates social relationships as constitutive of the formation, expression, enactment and transformation of personhood (Ferguson 2013, 226). Like many other African configurations of self (e.g. Comaroff and Comaroff 2010), personhood in Rwanda is produced and deeply entangled with expressions of social belonging and locating one's place in the world (Informal discussions with research assistant, 2014 and UK diaspora-survivors, 2018, 2019). Many Rwandans refer to others by their kinship status rather than by their names – parents, for example, are called la mama or le papa. Eramian refers to such naming practices as 'teknonymy' (2014, 22). Before the Genocide, Marie would have been called Mama-Pauline and her husband Papa-Claire according to their daughters' names. These naming practices[19] are indicative of how the person in Rwanda is bound to his or her relations with kin, friends and acquaintances, which includes relations to the dead. Marie today is only Marie (rather than Mama-Pauline) because her husband, children and the rest of her family were killed in 1994.

Taylor's (1992) medico-anthropological work has emphasised this relational nature of the Rwandan person, 'which is never complete and is always built through relations with others' (in Eramian 2014, 21). He provides examples such the exchanging of social fluids like beer and milk in order to create and maintain relationships that constitute persons and personhood. Similarly, he writes that the exchange of sexual fluids through the fusion of each parent's gift of self explains how a child is produced (Taylor 1992, 45 in Eramian 2014). De Lame, in her ethnographic account of life on the Muri hill suggests too, that practices like beer sharing and other exchanges that manifest relationships are central to forging relationships (De Lame 1996 in Eramian 2014, 21). During the Genocide, social bonds were severed and relations to 'significant others' lost in the world of the living.

Rosalinde's account is a poignant example of how survivors struggle to keep the painful marginal presence of the dead alive. Rosalinde is a survivor of Kinazi, a village hidden deeply in the mountain stretch of the country's south. She is a farmer, lives with other survivors and has dedicated her life to the care of genocide orphans. Rosalinde survived because a neighbour took her in and found her an ID card that belonged to a Hutu woman. When she came back to Kinazi after the Genocide, she went to her family place, but everybody was killed except her brother, who had fled to Burundi, but died soon after the Genocide. Rosalinde told me that

> We remember before and after the 100 days because we represent whom we lost; it is a way of building ourselves. It is about restructuring a normal relationship to those who died. (Personal interview, 10.08.2014)

Remembering and thinking of lost loved ones is a daily activity – as many survivors emphasised in our interviews. It speaks to a configuration of self that is constituted through relationships, but also to memory as a 'function of relationships' (Lambek 1996) and a moral obligation owed to the dead (Viebach 2014, 2019). Rosalinde elucidates that remembering is not only about rebuilding selves, because 'we represent who we lost', but importantly about reconfiguring relationships to the dead that are felt to be unsettling and disquieting, as expressed in her struggle to restructure a 'normal' relationship to those who died. Rosalinde refers to a model of memory that Lambek, in his ethnography of spirits and their hosts on islands in the Indian Ocean, has identified as a practice, 'activated implicitly or explicitly between people, a confirmation of the sense of continuity (care) and discontinuity (mourning), that each person experience in their relationships to others' (Lambek 1996, 239). Memory here is a continuous engagement and a moral practice, as Rosalinde pointed out: 'we remember before and after the 100 days'.

The dead form an important part of everyday life in Rwanda. This is well illustrated by Safari, who is an academic at one of Rwanda's Universities. During our discussion we talked about the presence of the dead and traditional funerary rites in Rwanda. Safari explained

> It is believed that you do not really die. I mean people, the deceased, are there in other ways. You enter into a dialogue with the dead; the living always have to give them something. (Personal interview, 08.02.2012)

Safari's remarks echo Rwandan cosmology and the ways in which Eramian's respondents accounted for the ancestor spirits that can 'make malevolent interventions in the lives of the living' (2014, 21). As identified by Taylor (1992) and Eramian, thinking of these ancestor spirits and making symbolic gestures towards them was considered crucial to maintaining good relations with the dead; in Safari's words, to 'always give them something'. His notion was further expressed in interviews Eramian conducted with citizens in Butare. One of Eramian's respondents explained that the dead continue to concern themselves with the affairs of the living and that they can evoke ancestors' support by making offerings to them (Eramian 2014, 22). Her interviewee further recounted

> If the dead person liked to drink, then everyone would drink. If he was known for giving to the poor, then everyone would do that. But it wasn't just to honour the memory of the dead person. It's also because people were afraid. Afraid that the dead would come back and say that people aren't doing anything for them! They may come back and do harm to people; they can be nasty spirits, so each time someone dies, the living retain their relations with these people.

These accounts speak to how in other contexts too violence and memory are enmeshed with the working of ancestral spirits. Schramm (2001,7) concurs that 'violence may reverberate in the articulations and demands of ancestral and other spirits, which need to be constantly addressed by the living'. Death ends life but not social relationships which might be expressed in continuing interactions with ancestral spirits, the 'absence-presence' of the deceased or mnemonic practices such as gifting or care-taking (Klass 1996 in Maddrell 2013, 506).

Remembering and thinking of those who perished is another way for survivors to maintain their relation to them that constitute their selves (Eramian 2014; Viebach 2014). There is no generalised way of how to maintain those relations to the dead since some people do not want to retain to those 'traditional' beliefs. Yet many continue to keep up troubling relations to the dead in multifaceted and personalised ways, as expressed in many of my interviews with care-takers and Tutsi survivors. The memorial site seems to play a significant role in this. The next section attempts to distill the contours and substance of the layers of meaning of memorial sites and how this is profoundly connected to, and mediated through, selves, human remains, place and unsettling relations to the dead.

Place-bound proximity

Rwanda's 'deathscapes' are laden with symbolic meaning directed to the collective, but also laden with individual attempts of meaning-making and the search for belonging and proximity. These attempts of meaning-making at memorial sites, including practices such as care-taking of the dead's remains, sit alongside and beneath state-led memorialisation of the Genocide (Viebach 2019). As Longman (2017, see also Jessee forthcoming) reveals, different perspectives and attitudes towards the memory of the genocide exist despite the government's attempt to create a unified and single-sided story of the 1994 atrocities. The following sections develop this further by exploring how survivors' meaning-making efforts at memorial sites are neither driven by the same intentions nor the same motivations as the state-led commemoration.[20] On a micro-level, survivors are remaking selves in the absence of relations that constitute the person, by telling stories (Antze and Lambek 1996, xxv) and by taking care of their loved one's bodily remains.

A last resting place

Commemoration and mourning processes are deeply entangled with the materiality of place (Maddrell 2013, 508), which in Rwanda includes the mass graves and the tombs where the remains are housed, or as survivors often put it, 'where the bodies sleep'. As such, memorial sites can be seen as locality where grief and mourning are framed 'within a detailed topography of significant spaces and practices' (Maddrell 2016, 168).The memorial as a place that shelters and protects the remains of loved ones gains particular significance for survivors who volunteer to work at the memorials and those who engage in the ritualised cleaning of victims' bodily remains. It is a place where they feel close to their loved ones and which offers them an opportunity to reconstitute their relationship with those who died.

In interviews, survivors expressed the meaning of memorials with regard to mourning and maintaining relations with the dead. In my focus group discussion with female survivors, some women put forward strong views. Odette argued

> (…) It is a burial place and a connection to the dead. (…) Without this place, remains would be everywhere in the country. It is good because you know exactly who is buried here of your family. Whenever someone dies, you must bury him. And graves must be cleaned. (Focus group discussion, 14.09.2011)

In a similar vein, Aline confirmed Odette's reflections, emphasising

> The memorial is a place to mourn and to put flowers. It can be a relief being there (…) It is (…) a connection to the dead. It is a place to think about value. And also, to reflect on own role for example when it wasn't possible to safe someone'. (Focus group discussion, 14.09.2011)

The women's assertions underscore the importance of a resting place for the victims of the 1994 Genocide. Their reflections speak to the more general significance of burial places after war and atrocities. Wagner (2008) describes in detail how the Potocari memorial in Srebrenica is a place where the relatives of the murdered make meaning of their loss and grief and where they hoped (at least before the DNA testing was expanded) to lay their lost family members to rest (see also Pollack 2003). In addition, in the context of the Great Wars in Europe, Winter demonstrates how kin of French soldiers lobbied for the remains of their sons and husbands to be interned in their home villages in order to give the dead not only a dignified resting place, but also in order to have a site where grief could be expressed and mediated (Winter 1998, 31-33; Maddrell 2013, 2016). This is mirrored in the women's accounts which emphasise that the memorial site is a physical connection to the dead and a place to 'think about value'. Memorials are first and foremost sites of mourning and bereavement (Winter 1998; 1999) and, in the Rwandan context, the memorials enable survivors to not only retain relations to the dead but also to normalise these rather troubling aspects of their relations as expressed in Aline's acknowledgment of her inability to save her loved ones.

The importance of memorial sites as last resting place coalesced with the significance of a sense of proximity and closeness animated by the presence and potency of the dead's bodies and remains. This was captured in Anita's account

> The first nine years were very hard for me. For all that time I stayed with a friend. I am the only one left. My kids and my husband are buried here [at the Kinazi memorial]. I feel relieved when I come here to visit them. There was a time where they couldn't find his body [her husband's], but now he is here. I couldn't keep walking, living, surviving without knowing he is close. (Personal Interview, 30.09.2014)

As alluded to by Anita, it is immensely important for survivors to know that their friends and family members are properly buried. Some, however, still do not know where the bodies of their loved ones were discarded. Bodies and remains are still being found today, 25 years after the genocide. In April 2019, remains of more than 300 victims were unearthed in Kigali during construction work. Jeanette, the survivor whose description of the loss of her family was recounted earlier, still hasn't found the bodies of her sons

> And until today I do not know if my two sons were killed. I didn't have the chance to bury them; I still do not know what happened to them. (Personal interview, 2.09.2014)

Yet she projects this uncertainty of the whereabouts of her 'significant others' onto the human remains at Nyamata church; she imagines that some of those could be her sons. As mentioned

earlier, bodies were often thrown in latrines or mass graves. The confessions of defendants before the gacaca courts often helped survivors find the bodies of the deceased. In my interview with Anita (Kinanzi memorial), she recalled

> I exhumed him in Musamo, in a small canal where they found him. There was a sister of him who was living in the area where they found his body. 'And gacaca', she continued, 'proved that information was true that a man sought refuge and was shot at that place (…) I was separated from him cause we were running all over the place. It was total chaos. (Personal interview, 30.09.2014)

At the Cyahinda memorial, Jean further described how the gacaca trials aided the discovery of bodies. During my visit there, he pointed to the few coffins in the tomb that have crosses, explaining

> Crosses that have names were identified by perpetrators. Sometimes during Gacaca they [names] were mentioned, but not found. Some perpetrators are free cause they asked for forgiveness. Others were just released cause of their age. The "liberated perpetrators" help a lot as well to find bodies. (Personal interview, 17.09.2014)

Just a couple of days before my visit, they had found more remains that Jean was still cleaning when I arrived at the memorial. When I asked him about it, he explained that 'perpetrators have brought them here. They say they found them on the farm' (Personal interview, 17.09.2014). At some of the memorials, mass graves were not sealed because of a hope that as a result of the gacaca trials the whereabouts of missing bodies would be revealed. At Nyarabuye memorial in Rwanda's Eastern Province, Martin, a survivor who works there, stated that some of the new graves 'were made possible through gacaca and that people just felt and knew in which of those the remains of their loved ones were resting' (Personal interview, 18.01.2012). Gilbert, who worked at Murambi underscored that 'when survivors get to know where their relatives are buried some of them will bring their remains to the memorial site themselves' (Personal interview, 11.04.2012). As these perceptions indicate, burials become place-bound, reconstructing a new sense of belonging that is territorially circumscribed.

However, this 'place-bound proximity' of the dead is unstable and interruptive of social dynamics and contestation, as experiences in neighbouring countries Uganda and Burundi reveal. In their anthropological work on the burial practices of the Ugandan Acholi, Jahn and Solomon (2015) reveal the disturbance of cosmological orders caused by bodies resting 'in the wrong soil'. Here, bodies were interred in refugee camps and their return to the soil of their ancestors proofed to interrupt and challenge not only cosmological beliefs, but also political and social development agendas. In a similar vein, Purdekova (2017) describes the significance of 'place-bound proximity' of graves for survivors of Burundi's civil wars. She demonstrates how the government's plan to develop an airport at a massacre site in Bugendana which was transformed into a memorial containing the remains of the victims caused the surviving inhabitants great disquiet and sorrow because their resettlement would mean that they would have to leave behind their loved ones' remains (Purdekova 2017, 7-9).

In Rwanda, there is social contestation around the memorials as burial places for the dead. Many survivors did not appreciate the government's attempt to make the burials of genocide victims at memorial sites compulsory. It is important to note that not everyone visits the memorials to be close to the dead, but victims of the genocide would, in that case, be buried in 'family memorials', as a staff member of one of the survivor organisations clarified. Crucial in the sense of a 'place-bound proximity' of the dead is that bodies are (re-) interred in what feels like the 'right soil' for the surviving family members, be it in 'family memorials', or at the genocide memorials. This is poignantly illustrated by Anita, who we heard earlier in this section, who described how her husband's body was missing for a long time and she 'couldn't keep walking, living, surviving without knowing he is close'. In many interviews, survivors emphasized the importance of finding their loved ones' bodies in order to give them a final resting place and to enable survivors to mourn them at a specific site.

The significance of burials illustrates a broader conception of burials relevant to other contexts too, one theorised by anthropologists and philosophers alike. Kristeva, for example, argues that burial is a means of purification (1982, 109) and the anthropologists, Turner and Van Gennep, have argued that funeral rites allow the body to go through a pre-liminal, ambiguous liminal phase and then reintegration post-liminal phase where the body is re-membered into society when confined to the burial place (Turner 1970[1967] / Van Gennep 1960[1909]). Laying the deceased to rest is therefore tremendously important not only for the dead to overcome the liminal phase, but even more so for survivors, because burying the dead, and the subsequent period of mourning, was not possible during the Genocide. This was well illustrated in Rosalinde's account, which emphasised 'commemoration is part of culture. It is to accompany the person until he or she is buried'. This resonates with studies undertaken in the Latin American context where relatives of the disappeared in Argentina remained in a 'liminal phase' because the fate and the location of bodies remained unknown and in turn mortuary rituals could not take place (Robben 2016). Laying the body to rest and to bury the deceased is therefore also in the Rwandan context crucial, not least because of funerary rites that make the dead safely dead.

According to Rwandan funeral customs there is a week of mourning the dead. Pre-genocide, bodies were washed with great care and dressed before being carefully wrapped in banana leaves or cloth and made ready for burial. Gilbert, who talked about survivors bringing bodies to the memorial earlier in this section, explained to me:

> When someone dies, a fire is lit for one week in the house of the deceased to accompany the dead person to the other world. Then people will recall all the good things about the deceased. (Personal interview, 11.04.2012)

Gilbert refers to world of the ancestors. Practices such as *guterekera* were important funerary rites that should make sure that the deceased is safe on his or her journey to the ancestors (Van't Spijker 1990; Longmann 2017). In *guterekera*, the food or drink the deceased liked is shared between the living and the dead by sprinkling some on the ground (Van't Spijker 1990, 18; Taylor 1992, 142; Bagilishya 2000, 346). One of Eramian's interviewees further explained

> If the dead person liked to drink, then everyone would drink. If he was known for giving to the

> poor, then everyone would do that (…) So each time someone dies, the living retain their relations with these people. (Eramian 2014, 22)

This description of the importance of *guterekera* ties into the relational conception of personhood discussed in the previous section. This points to the importance of funerary rites to retain good and 'normal' relations with the dead. Those rites however have changed after the Genocide as many of my interviewees asserted. Customarily, the dead were buried on the homestead (*rugo*) and burial places did not play an important role in the rite of passage that was focused more on the house of the deceased (Bagilishya 2000). Bodies did not play a role in funerary rites in some regions because people were afraid of the animals that would eat the remains (Eramian 2014, 22).[21] A somewhat different account is provided by Bagilishya (2000, 344), who describes how the body played a significant role in the immediate phase before death through *gupfunya umupfu nkigitebo* ('lending death the form of a basket') which refers to the position of a foetus in a pregnant women's body. The arrival of Christianity changed mortuary rites but the presence of the deceased as a mediator between the living and *imana* (God) was, and still is, a fundamental part of cultural mourning rites in Rwanda (Bagilishya 2000). Therefore, Christian and traditional ways of mourning continue to co-exist in Rwanda. The Genocide further altered this blend of funerary rites as Safari, the academic who we heard in the last section, explained:

> When Christianity came to Rwanda, cemeteries became part of the mourning process. Formerly, there was no respect for the space of the dead. Nowadays commemoration is not related to pre-colonial history at all, it is all new, particularly, to bury people together. (Personal interview, 08.02.2012)

What remains, however, is the sense of proximity to the dead, which Safari expressed by saying 'you enter into a dialogue with the dead' or 'you do not really die…people are there in other ways'. This indicates again how the dead interfere in the lives of the living and underscores their marginal presence that survivors attempt to maintain and retain. Survivors further stressed that it is essential to accompany the dead on their journey to the world of the ancestors and to commemorate them. Juliette, a survivor of Murambi echoed a feeling many survivors described in interviews

> When people die there is a week of mourning. During genocide it was not possible to mourn people. (…). This is why it is so important to have commemoration now. It [commemoration] is also important because of not having a way of remembrance in 1963 and 1973.[22] (Personal interview, 07.09.2011)

Still another survivor, Antoinette, explained in strong terms that 'if there is no commemoration, it is as living without dignity, like living with animality' (Focus group discussion, 14.09.2011). The women's accounts speak to Bagilishya's assertion of the importance of mourning rites in particular after an 'unnatural' death. The purpose of the mourning period is not only to accompany the dead to the world of the ancestors but simultaneously to control the living's

emotional shock and the risk to be overwhelmed by loss. Bagilishya explains that such control is difficult to achieve when there is nobody to care for the remains of the deceased or the body is missing which, in turn, might lead to a traumatic reaction (Bagilishya 2000, 346-347).

This section has described how materiality, place and funerary rites are bound up with survivors' struggle to reconstruct relations to their dead loved ones. The notion of 'place-bound proximity' of the dead broadens our understanding of the significance of funerary rites and the way these are territorially circumscribed and carved into survivors' everyday lives. The commemoration of the dead supports survivors' attempts to retain closeness and proximity to their loved ones. The next section further explores the meaning of place, this time in relation to the notion of home, which maps onto the ideas of proximity and belonging.

Coming home to the dead

The absence of 'significant others' and the 'place-bound proximity' discussed in the preceding analysis are important for understanding the ritual practices that prevail at Rwandan memorials such as care-taking and the ways, these map onto feelings of home and belonging. The loss of family and friends interferes with such feelings. As recounted by survivors in Butare, interviewed by Eramian, often the village or town doesn't feel like home anymore because everyone, family, friends and neighbours died and the current neighbours are strangers (Eramian 2014, 25; Major 2015, 174). As evidenced in many of my interviews, this is further compounded by the fact that homes were destroyed,. And even when houses still existed, interviewees explained, these did not feel like home anymore without the presence of family members.[23] Such accounts were reflected in Major's interviews with survivors who reported 'the keen loss they felt in relation to houses, gardens and even clothing which had been lost to the wars. They spoke of living diminished lives, haunted by the ghosts of these possessions, and only left with, in their eyes, hollow replacements' (2015, 174).

Home in these accounts (including in my own interviews) is simultaneously and indivisibly enmeshed with social relations and bound to place whilst mediated through the disquiet of dislocation. Till demonstrates in the context of Holocaust memorials in Berlin the significance of this relationship arguing that, '(…) places are never merely backdrops for action or containers for the past. They are fluid mosaics and moments of memory, matter, metaphor, scene, and experience which create and mediate social spaces and temporalities' (2005, 8). Memorials are emotion-laden places where the negotiation and reinterpretation of emotions and relations with the dead can take place (Maddrell 2016, 170). In migration studies, for example, home is conceived of as a special place like no other which is capable of having great emotional value (Wojtkowiak and Venbrux 2010) embedded in 'the accumulation of relationships and much history' (Fullilove 1996, 1519). After the Genocide, many survivors recounted how 'home' is filled by the present absence of those who perished. Since home is devoid of its intimate meaning related to feelings of safety, privacy, community and relational belonging, for some, the memorial site can turn into a 'home' or at least into a feeling of being-at-home animated by the potency of the dead's remains. To better understand how these memorials can become 'home' it is helpful, in Maddrell's words to further explore the details of a 'topography of significant spaces and practices' (2013, 168).

Let us consider the Cyahinda memorial in Rwanda's Southern Province as one example of rural memorials that have the potential to animate a feeling of 'home'. Jean is a care-taker here, who I visited three times between 2011 and 2014. Jean survived the massacres in the village and at the catholic parish. He fled to Burundi and came back immediately after the RPF had gained control over the area. He remembers from that time that 'dead bodies were everywhere', and that he wanted to bury his loved ones; he lost 35 family members during the 'time of darkness', a phrase that is commonly used to refer to the time of the Genocide. The *Interahamwe* [the notorious militia group] and other perpetrators had hastily buried corpses near the church. These holes still exist today, and Jean showed me these during my first visit. The small memorial was built near these mass graves and in close proximity to the church where people were massacred during the genocide. It features a wall of photographs of some of the victims outside the ossuary and is surrounded by well-kept flowerbeds. Similar to efforts at the Potocari memorial site where survivors sought to transform the place of anguish into one of peace for the souls of their dead loved ones (Wagner 2010, 65), the few survivors of Cyahinda cleared the stains of atrocity and placed 'identity markers' (Maddrell 2013, 510) to 'tabulate loss' (Wagner 2010) and keep the memory of those who perished (Edited from field notes August 2013; September 2014). Inside the ossuary, survivors have placed numerous coffins and crosses with names on them. On one end of the tomb, entirely preserved dead bodies 'sleep' on shelves. On one of those, a woman rests with long hair wearing a colourfully striped jumper. Jean told me that her name is Daphrose. She was his neighbour and a teacher in his village. He continued that 'before they killed her, they took her baby from her, cut off its head and brought it back to her. She rests in peace here now' (Personal interview, 17.09.2014). On the other side on the floor of the tomb, small human bones were assembled on a plastic rug alongside buckets filled with water and the white lime powder used to clean and preserve the human remains (Edited from field notes 17.09.2014). During one of my visits, Jean confided in me, saying

> It feels like home; they are here with me. It is so quiet and peaceful here, particularly because my neighbours are perpetrators. They asked for forgiveness (…). (Personal interview, 17.09.2014)

Not only does Jean take care of his neighbour Daphrose's body, but he has also transformed the small memorial into a homely space, tenderly decorated with family pictures, flowers and belongings of the dead such as necklaces and bracelets (Edited from field notes September 2014; informal discussion[24] with research assistant). Rather than seeing this practice of decorating at least at the rural memorials as one informed by a globalised way of memorialising mass atrocity (see e.g. Williams 2007), I suggest it can be understood as a form of caring for the dead; an attempt to animate and sustain 'absence-presence'. As such 'the location, inscriptions and practices (…) represent a range of relationships and beliefs, including those that signify and materialize the continuing *attachment* of the bereaved to the deceased' (Maddrell 2013, 510). It is precisely this attachment and its connection to the 'place-bound proximity' discussed earlier that animates a feeling of belonging and home in this particular setting.

Contrary to many of the national memorial sites that predominantly address international visitors, the smaller rural memorial sites bear the texture of 'home' through the careful decoration of the space and the way they are bound up with the struggle to maintain the

relation to those who perished. The material objects such as photographs and personal belongings of the dead materialise an attempt to re-evoke the identity of the dead. According to Maddrell they are means of 'embodying and enacting hope, care and communication on the part of the bereaved' (Maddrell 2013, 509) whilst at the same time presenting markers of relations to the dead (514). For Jean and many other care-takers the memorial is a place where they feel at home and at ease, as conveyed in our interviews. Taking Jean as one example, this feeling is supported by the difficult circumstances he faces in living next door to the very people who killed his whole family, friends and neighbours. His feeling of finding solace at the memorial speaks to a conception of home as a refuge from the outside world (Sixsmith 1986, 287). It is a place that offers an ordering point in space that relates self to past, present and future (Annison 2000, 260) especially since his home was destroyed. He further explained to me, that he feels unable and unwilling to reconstitute a relationship with these neighbours and prefers to spend his time at the memorial to be close to his loved ones. For Jean and many other care-takers, the memorial transforms into a place of home that evokes the memory of the past and is re-made in the wake of destroyed relations during the Genocide that enables to sustain the attachment to dead loved ones and to provides a space for them to be safely dead.

Home(s) can exist alongside each other such as 'personal' or 'social' or 'physical' homes (Despres,1991). Whilst the memorials are not just personal or physical homes, we can understand their meaning for survivors working there as a 'social home' that is a shared place, where relationships are physically embodied, felt and sustained (Despres 1991, 98-99). Here the 'absence-presence' of the dead is animated by their corporeal remnants. For Jean the memorial is not only a home for himself but by decorating it and taking care of Daphrose and other bodies, it becomes a shared, social place for the living and the dead alike. It bears the texture of a life that does not exist any longer. This has particular significance since traditionally Rwandans would refer to a death of a loved one with the words 'he has come home' (Bagilishya 2000, 343). With the dislocation of homes, we canin turn understand the memorial as the place where the dead come 'home' to.

Through connecting the notion of home with phenomenological oriented studies, we can perceive home more fully as a 'lived experience of locality' (Brah 1996) which encapsulates home as a matter of affect or feeling which is grounded in activities or practices occurring in the place (Jackson 1995, 148). Here, the memorial becomes a place where 'locating of grief' (Maddrell 2016, 171) can take place. Part of this grief process is the care-taking of the deceased in a space that is felt to be 'emotionally save' (Maddrell 2016, 170-171). This relationship between place and emotions was poignantly illustrated by Jeannette and Damascene. Jeanette, who we heard earlier, explained to me

> This place makes me feel better, gives me a sense in life. I always remember them. I have the feeling they are around with me when I am here. (Personal interview, 2.09.2014)

Damascene, who works at the Cyanika memorial in the south (near Murambi), reaffirmed Jeanette's point, saying

> I feel very close to my sisters and brothers who were killed here, when I come to the memorial. When I face problems, I even find refuge at the memorial knowing that my siblings are amongst the dead. (Personal interview, 18.09.2014)

In these accounts, the place is enmeshed with feelings of proximity, permanence and continuity that supports to retain relations with their loved ones. The memorials afford survivors a closeness to their dead loved ones that resembles a feeling of being home with them as the interviews illustrate. Their accounts speak to Maddrell's own observation of how 'bereaved people insist on the presence of the deceased in the material topography of home' (2013, 505). The site does not only connect to feelings and experiences but becomes a place of 'coming home' to the dead that reconstitutes a sense of belonging. Alloys, introduced earlier and whose family were killed at Kibeho, expressed this contention well, saying

> I am here since April this year. The work at the memorials gives us, survivors, peace, because we can take care of those who died. I think it is an honour to be around them. They are here with me. When I face problems, I come here and talk to them, ask them for advice. (Personal interview, 17.09.2014)

The concept of home that emerges from these accounts is a deeply personal, intimate way of meaning-making after violence. Homes and houses no longer offer the historical continuities between society, people, landscape and the dead that they might once have done as retold in survivors' accounts.[25] Instead, home is described as an imagined, spatial point fixed in time, to which return is possible through the 'absence-presence' of the dead. It is both enabled and sustained by the bodily remnants of the dead and animated by the care of them. The memorial recreates a sense of home, belonging and material connection to the dead. Importantly, the re-negotiation of the 'absence-presence' at the memorials is connected to the ways in which the homes and houses inhibit future-making. Yet this sense of home remains an emotionally demanding one for survivors. It not only evolves around emotions of tenderness and proximity, but also around a gravity of loss and absence. If houses and homes were appropriated from the dead, often by perpetrators, as in the case of Jean for instance, perhaps it is the memorials that offer opportunities for reimagining the future through engagement with the dead.

Dignity, time-reversal and imagination

Dignity, time-reversal and imagination emerged as important, interrelated themes in my research. In interviews, dignity was intimately linked to the way people were killed and humiliated post-mortem, the *bapfuye nabi,* bad death. Aline, a survivor of Ntarama, suggested in this regard

> Death is normal, because it is normal to die. But this was an extreme death that was more than a normal death, because nobody cared like one would take care of sick people. Death was animalistic. (Personal interview, 08.09.2011)

It is not surprising, then, that in the wake of the Genocide, 'normal death' has diminished in its significance (Coquio 2004; Bagilishya 2000, 343).[26] Coquio's findings and the account of survivors speak to Bloch and Parry's (1982) account of the categorisation of deaths in different parts of the world (e.g. the Merina in Madagascar or the Lugbara in Uganda). They argue that dying a 'good death' is seen as part of the cyclical order; it is vital for the regeneration of the social order (Bloch and Parry 1982, 15-20) or as a reorganisation of local social relations (Middleton 1982, 134). The death of an elderly family member in Rwanda, as indicated in Aline's account, is not regarded as tragic since it is embedded in this natural cycle of birth and death – similarly to the views on death discussed earlier - and can, through funerary rites ,evoke social regeneration. This is in contrast to the deaths during the Genocide that were cruel and unjust, and that defied any sense of normality. As Jahn and Solomon (2014, 188) assert with regard to Uganda, 'these bad deaths are those that are uncontrolled and inassimilable'. In non-conflict contexts, a bad death might therefore be one which did not happen at the right time or in the right place (Hockey, Komaromy and Woodthorpe 2010, 4). In some cases, a bad death can be a direct threat to fertility and social regeneration (Bloch and Parry 1982, 16) and '(…) requires ritual or symbolic management' (Douglas 1966, cited in Hockey, Komaromy and Woodthorpe 2010, 4). In Rwanda 'bad death' is rooted in the unnerving cruelty of death during the Genocide, which, in its aftermath, is connected to time (reversal), dignity and the attempt of 'ritual management' through the practice of care-taking as this section aims to illustrate. It foregrounds the argument I made elsewhere (Viebach 2019) that the experience of mass violence mars survivors' relationship with time.

Impalement, evisceration of pregnant women, the severing of achilles tendons of victims and breast oblation of women were common and widespread techniques of dire cruelty (Taylor 2002, 141) that constituted a bad death. They broke the linearity of time in the natural flow of birth, life and death. Time, at least in Christian contexts, is usually thought of and experienced in a linear, chronological fashion: it is fixed by a beginning and an end such as birth and death (Greenhouse 1988-1989; Koselleck 2001; Sorokin and Merton 1937; Nordstrom 1997). After mass violence and genocide, however, this linearity and sequence of time appear broken. It is subject to a caesura, resulting in a dialectic of time: between the past and the present there lies a seemingly insurmountable abyss, a vacuum (Koselleck 2001; Nordstrom 1997). The frequent mentioning of the lost dignity of the dead seems to refer to such a historical caesura because it is *experienced* as incisive and 'unusual'. Emanuel, who works at Murambi, touched upon dignity when he recounted that 'it is important that people sleep in dignity because of the way they died' (Personal interview, 02.09.2011). In interviews, the gruesome experience of cruel death was often framed as 'dying without dignity' or as 'animalic'.

In her ethnography on the civil war in Mozambique, Nordstrom connects the experience of violence to discontinuity. She argues that 'between the world as it was, the world as it should be, and the now of a world destroyed lies an abyss, a discontinuity, a need to define the one by the other, and the impossibility of doing so' (Nordstrom 1997, 190). The brutality of the genocide has broken this chronological sequence of past, present and future, so that there is a vacuum between these temporal dimensions expressed in interviews by using words such as 'back' and 're-', which were linked to dignity. This is well captured in the account of Anette,

an elderly woman who had lost her son during the Genocide. I asked her why, in her view, Rwandan memorialisation was so closely associated with bones

> It is to give them *back* their value, to give them *back* their dignity. Traditionally the bodies of the dead were cleaned before the burial. People were found in latrines or were partly eaten by animals. The purity of death is missing; the dignity was taken from them. This traditional culture of burial and cleaning has changed, because of what has happened was very inhuman. That is why it is much about bones. (Personal interview, 15.09.2011)[27]

Since the Genocide, exhumations and re-interments have always included the careful and rigorous washing of bones and bodies in order to re-store their dignity. In our interview, Pauline, a survivor who works at the Nyarabuye memorial, further explained to me that 'even if it is not the whole body, bones serve the same purpose of giving *back* dignity' (Personal interview, 15.09.2011). Likewise, Claver, who oversees the preservation of the bodies at the memorials in an official role, stressed that, 'it is a place of dignity because of the way people died' (Personal interview, 30.01.2012). In our focus group, Caritas stated, 'people were killed without respect and dignity; so, burying them is about giving them *back* dignity in burial' (Focus group discussion, 14.09.2011), while Marie emphasised that 'exhumations and burials are a kind of healing because it brings *back* the dignity and respect to the dead' (Focus group discussion, 14.09.2011).

These accounts resonate with Major's research on Rwandan 'survivor-exhumers', which revealed how the burial of the dead without the usual mortuary rituals felt like a continuation of the 'corporeal violations' suffered by the victims at, and after their deaths (Major 2015, 175). The burials that take place during commemoration serve the purpose of re-versing the indignity suffered by the dead. Furthermore, these attempts to make whole what has been smashed also aim at re-turning the dead and at giving them a place amongst the community of the living, to literally re-member them into the community. Through the process of re-turning them to the social space they once lived in and to the place of 'home' (here the memorial), the presence of the dead is secured 'in the passage of time' and thus discontinuity is transformed into continuity, at least symbolically.

The notion of dignity is further embedded in the attempt of time reversal through burials and the practice of care-taking. Time reversal, or what Holocaust survivor and writer Jean Améry has described as *Zeitumkehrung*, is the contradictory nature of resentment, namely the futile attempt to reverse the past. Améry argues

> It nails each of us to the cross of his shattered past. Absurdly, it demands to reverse the irreversible. Resentment blocks the exit into the actually human dimension, the future. I know those caught in resentment have a sense of time, which is twisted, crazy, one may say, since it demands the impossible, i.e. the return into the past and the annulment of what happened therein. (Améry 1977, 11)[28]

This desire to 'annul what happened in the past' is intimately connected to the practice of care-taking as an attempt of 'ritual management' of the undignified *bapfuye nabi*. Jean, whose 'home' we visited earlier, explained to me

> I am the person in charge of cleaning the bodies. What it means to me? Cleaning bodies means that they are given *back* dignity, because they were not supposed to die; it is not easy to work here, but I feel in peace. (Personal interview, 06.09.2011)

Working at the memorial is accompanied by ambivalent feelings of despair and sadness about the task at hand. As Jean asserts above: 'they were not supposed to die; it is not easy to work here'. Innocent, a care-taker at the Bisesero memorial in the Western province, shared an elucidatory account of the difficulty of dedicating one's life to the care of the dead. This highights the emotional and psychological labour that comes with the practice of care-taking:

> I clean with grief, but I do it because there was loss. I have a bad feeling, but I am patient enough not to resign. *I cannot make them come back*. I work here because I could have died also. I asked to work here because I feel responsible for my family who died here. The owner of dead bodies does not fear to touch anywhere on the body. (Personal interview, 20.01.2012)

Innocent refers to a Rwandan proverb pointing out that a person would do everything possible to save or protect his or her family from bad things happening. This expresses that he was unable to save his family and that the only possibility to 'save' his relatives in the present consists of cleaning their dead bodies in order to symbolically return the dignity they lost in death. Innocent and Jean project their sentiments of guilt of survival and despair onto the bodies and bones they so tenderly wash and preserve through expressions such as: 'I cannot make them come back' and 'I could have died also'.

In their accounts, Jean and Innocent both refer to cleaning and caring for the dead bodies as a symbolic way to *return* dignity to their dead loved ones and therefore to *reverse* their humiliation. In a similar vein, Cleristyl, a survivor from Kaduha, expressed the difficulty of taking care of his loved ones

> At the beginning it was really hard for me, but I got used to it. And I forced myself to come here before I started working at the site. When I do it, I feel something exceptional; I cannot put this feeling into words. But I do it nevertheless. I do not stop being sad, but this is what it is. (Personal interview, 18.09.2014)

Across these personal experiences of care-takers retold in interviews, we can quietly hear a moral responsibility to re-member and to re-turn dignity to the ones who perished through taking care of their remains. This is certainly a question of how much we owe to the dead: they clean and take care of the remains despite feelings of sadness and despair of having lost their loved ones. It is a way of making meaning of past and the present, in the absence of relations that constitute person and personhood alike; it is also, therefore, a way of remaking selves. And, at the same time 'care-taking', pays a debt owed to the dead because it is informed by a moral feeling, a normative obligation to remember and to care for the dead (Viebach 2014). This is incidcated in the Rwandan context by a proverb explained to me by Jeanette, the elderly lady from Nyamata who doesn't know the fate of her two sons: 'the family that doesn't remember will fade away' (Personal interview, 02.09.2014). Through care-taking and the symbolical time reversal the uncertainty of the future is projected onto the remains so as to have a possible exit into an unknown future and a past that does not seem accessible any longer, i.e. similar to the

memorials as a 'home', care-taking precisely at this intimate emotion-laden place enables a future-making.

The theme of imagination ran through many interviews and connects various strands of the article's interpretive analysis. The reader will now be familiar with the affective power of the remains, which not only evokes memory of how 'significant others' were killed, but also the imagination of the dead as human beings. In her seminal work on torture, Scarry argues that imagination is part of remaking the world after pain has unmade worlds. She writes of how 'pain and imagining are the 'framing events' within whose boundaries all other perceptual, somatic, and emotional events occur; between these two extremes can be mapped the whole terrain of the human psyche' (Scarry 1985, 165). Imagination can therefore be understood as 'mechanisms for transforming the condition of absence into presence' (Scarry 1985, 164). Angelique, who we heard earlier already, echoed the theme of imagination that run through my interviews, saying:

> I don't see skulls and bones as such, but I see them as real people. When praying [in the Ntarama church], I think of them making noise and playing. I also see how badly they were killed. (Personal interview, 08.09.2011)

Likewise, François, who survived the massacres at Nyange parish, reaffirmed that, 'I remember what happened here [at Nyange church] and I imagine how they [his two children and his wife] were killed' (Personal interview, 2.10.2014). Similarly, Damascene stressed, 'I *imagine* them being here with me.' (Personal interview, 18.09.2014). The imagination of the dead as human beings who played a significant role in the lives of survivors before and during the Genocide is deeply rooted in the very private and intimate space of the memorial, but also in the *practice* of care-taking. Scarry attributes a high importance to 'work' in the context of imagination and of what she terms 'world alteration' (Scarry 1985, 169-171). On the one hand, work can be situated in the sphere of pain as e.g. forced labour, slavery etc., on the other hand, it can be placed by the side of pleasure, art and imagination, phenomena that are mostly connected with the exterior world. Particularly important with regard to care-taking is Scarry's observation that the more work realizes and transforms its object, the closer it is to imagination. This is echoed in Jean's (Cyahinda memorial) account 'I can imagine how they looked like' (Personal interview, 06.09.2011), and when he recalled the fate of Daphrose (the dead body sleeping on one of the shelves), it felt as if he *imagined* her being alive and how she was killed (Edited from field notes/personal interview, 17.09.2014). Martin, who earlier in this section talked about the memorial as a place of dignity because of the way people died, expressed similar feelings

> When I deal with human bodies, I think of them as human beings. I can imagine how they looked like. In the beginning it was very hard, but I accepted to deal with death. (Personal interview, 30.01.2012)

The transformation of the object is linked to the untangling of the bodies of genocide victims in the process of exhumations that have taken place over the last decade. Major describes in her work (2015, 165-167) how the structure of intact skeletons is disentangled and how belongings, clothes and even human tissue are painstakingly separated from one another so that

what remains is an anonymous collective of human remains that do not bear any marks of individuality. And yet the care-takers imagine how those remains looked like as real people and imagine the faces and traits of their loved ones, they believe are amongst those remains they care for, when saying for instance, 'when I work here, I imagine how they look like' or 'I see them as real people'.

I argue that the care-taking of remains is a work that transforms the anonymity of the remains into individual human beings. The uncertainty of whether the bones being washed are in fact those of the deceased is projected onto the remains and bodies and *re-imagined* as the ones that perished. Another effect of the work Scarry describes is that its objects have the immense advantage over imagined objects of being real, which means they are shareable, making its outcome collective for the first time (1985, 171). In this sense we can consider imagination and its collective 'objects', the human remains, as a means to reconstruct the world, to create an alteration. Care-taking therefore imagines the deceased through the care of their corporeal remains they have left (or better were left) in the world of the living so that their absence is transformed into a presence. They are given *back* an identity in the face of a collective mass of bones and remains.

Conclusion

This article has explored the multiple layers of meaning-making as they evolve from, and are bound up with, Rwanda's genocide memorials. These 'deathscapes' are deeply anchored in human remains and dead bodies that serve different collective and individual purposes. The notion of deathscapes has been adopted as a conceptual tool to help illuminate how memorials are places imbued with multiple meanings, serving various public and political purposes while still offering a site of personal connection and reflection that materialise, represent and perform the trauma and injuries of an unforgettable past. By focusing on the personal dimension that expresses the first-hand account of survivors at these sites, this article sheds light on the creative ways and individual practices of how survivors come to terms with a violent past. It is through imagination and work on the dead bodies - the practice of care-taking - that the past and the devalued worth of the dead can be re-versed symbolically. This creative practice can be at odds with the official discourse on the meaning and purposes of commemorating and remembering the dead. Even though survivors often agree with the official view on the exposure of human remains as a crucial means of evidencing that the Genocide 'really happened', the bodies have a deeply emotional, affective force for survivors that transcends such notions of evidence and political consciousness.

One such ambiguity between state and micro-processes lies in the very meaning of care-taking. Survivors engage in future-making through the affective force of 'their' human remains. Imagination provoked by care-taking is a process that follows on from the more archaeological state-led process of recovery and exhumation of bones as detailed in Major's work. She poignantly illustrates, how all forms of identity of the bones such as clothes, ID cards and personal belongings and even human tissue are disentangled so that at the end of this archaeological, collective process 'is a mass of bones that imply a vast dead, one in which the specific detail and texture of the life in which these bones were once embedded is obscured' (2015, 171). Importantly, care-taking as a form of ritual management (as described earlier) is a

micro-level, personalised *response* to this very state-led process. Care-takers, in the intimate space of the memorial tombs, re-imagine the remains as 'real persons' and thereby give them *back* an identity in the face of a collective mass of bones. The careful washing of remains but also the tender decoration, cleaning and tending to the memorial sites can be interpreted alongside survivors' demands at the Potocari memorial for '(…) a reordering response of their own, one that seeks to *piece back together* bodies, lives, memories, homes, and landscapes' (Wagner 2010, 65; emphasis my own). In piecing back together bodies, identities and lives, the identity markers left at Rwandan memorials gain particular significance and form an important aspect of how memorials animate feelings of 'coming home to the dead'.

To some extent, the RPF's 'necropolitics' (Mbembe 2003) creates quiet and unstable, but individualised and emotional-laden, memory-work on the micro-level which can be read as a subtle form of 'everyday resistance' (Thomson 2013). Ultimately, the practice of care-taking extends survivors' space to *personally* make meaning of loss and to mediate between absence and presence; it is precisely this void between absence and presence that affords the remains a liminal status.

As the paper has suggested, the corporeality of the dead helps to reconstitute and to restructure relations that have been lost through unjust and cruel deaths. As Filippucci and Brown have argued in the context of the western front in France, human remains can be related to an emotive practice (they discuss archaeological practices) that provokes an experiential sense of the past through engagement with the materiality of bones (Filippucci/Brown 2007 in Fontein 2010, 431). This resonates with the discussed practice of 'care-taking' and its engagement with and work on human remains and dead bodies that transforms into a tribute to the dead and a form of ritualised commemoration in and of itself.

Human substances like bones and human remains have an affective presence as the dead persons themselves (Fontein 2010, 431). As the extension of the deceased's personhood, this presence actively affects the remembrance of the deceased by the living and structures future action (Williams 2004, 266 in ibid, 432). The analysis of the notion of home and imagination has alluded to this presence of the dead as 'real persons' and how the deceased's personhood, materialised in their corporeal remains, forcefully affects how survivors working at the memorials, commemorate and remember their 'significant others'. The memorial transforms into a home for the living and dead alike and is a place where through the workings of the 'place-bound proximity' relationships with the dead can be re-constituted and re-membered into the everyday.

These 'deathscapes' as places of mourning, reflection and communication to the dead transform into what Fontein has labelled 'materialities of belonging': bodies and graves are not merely places of belonging or symbolic focal points of human attachment and imagination but they inert an active and affective presence (Fontein 2011, 713). Through their presence as extension of the loved ones' personhood, human remains and dead bodies reconstitute a proximity to what has been lost. The 'materiality of belonging' also inverts an uncertain future that is projected on to the bodies and the place. The materiality of both asserts that the dead become safely dead. In this way the possibility of a future is secured and the everyday can be restructured in meaningful ways.

Within the field of transitional justice, memory is often seen as something that can be deployed and harnessed in transitional contexts and is therefore treated as an object rather than

a practice or a process (Viebach 2019). Even though some scholars claim that memorials – as the materialised representation of the past – lead to reconciliation and healing after violence (e.g. Hamber 2010; Naidu 2014), the relational aspect of memory is too often neglected. As Eramian notes, 'the effects of violence on the relational selves are not easily apprehended through national reconciliation or trauma focused frameworks' (2014, 28) that connote a healing of self and of relations to others is possible. Violence always includes an attack on personhood, the degradation of dignity and a humiliation of the sense of worth or value of its victims (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2011, 1).

Rather lost relationships and the struggle of survivors to maintain and reconfigure the present absence of the dead speaks to memory as a function of social relationships. As argued by Lambek, memory can be understood in part as an affirmation of past interaction and in part as traces of our introjection of one another (1996, 239). Lambek rejects the idea that memory is a passive object or even a process. According to him, western memory production, freezes words and images, puts frames around them and ultimately renders memory mechanical and impersonal (Lambek 1996, 238). He asserts that 'this enables us to resituate memory ostensibly outside engaged experience and the give and take of social relations. (…) It is thus detemporalised' (Lambek 1996, 238).

Through the ritualised practice of care-taking survivors not only attempt to rebuild themselves in the wake of loss and grief but also struggle to maintain the partial presence of the dead and to reconfigure relationships with their loved ones. Memory, as suggested by Lambek, becomes a practice that entails a moral obligation to re-member the dead into the everyday of the living. This points to the difficulty to couch memory and memorials into a framework of reconciliation when not the relationship to the perpetrator is at the forefront of remembering, but memory as a moral practice towards the self and towards lost relations to 'significant others'. The analysis of the meaning of place and of its connectivity to care-taking, dignity and time illustrates how the oft-cited notions of healing or reconciliation that animate transitional justice discourses can seem misleading and fundamentally neglect how remembered violence matters and mars the lives of survivors.

Placing memorial practices at Rwanda's deathscapes under the analytical spotlight broadens our understanding of the 'productive potentialities of corporeality's "excessivity"' (Major and Fontein 2015, 97). The literature on Rwandan memorials usually conceives of human remains and dead bodies as objects that are instrumentalised to stabilise the political regime and establish a coherent one-dimensional meta-narrative about the 1994 Genocide (Longman 2017; Brandstetter 2010; Gruyer 1996; Vidal 2000), and, at best as re-traumatising. Rwanda's particular conception of the body was reflected in the way the Genocide was orchestrated and the way bodies were mutilated ante- and post mortem. Re-conceiving human remains and dead bodies as 'materialities of belonging' is crucial to understanding how survivors imagine their loved ones and project their own sentiments and emotions onto them. Doing so advances our understanding of how and why bodies and bodily substances are transcended, transformed and brought back as affective materiality to the lives of the living – to make whole what has been smashed.

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[1] This paper uses the official United Nations terminology Genocide against the Tutsi. The application of this terminology does not in any way reflect a particular position towards the RPF government or a specific narrative of the Genocide. This paper advances a Tutsi survivors’ perspective: for survivors the use of the term Genocide against the Tutsi is a crucial one since - as many discussions with survivors revealed – this reflects that they were targeted for being Tutsi and it acknowledges their plight.

[2] These themes emerged inductively from the data.

[3] As Maddrell and Sidaway write, the idea of different forms of ‘scapes’ as a tool of understanding social processes was first introduced by anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1990).

[4] Deathscapes do not only include material sites but virtual spaces, bodies and minds, too. However, this article will look at material sites only.

[5] Some interviewees mentioned only 200 memorial sites. The current number of 243 is based on informal conversations with CNLG staff members in 2018. The CNLG supervises and organizes all of Rwanda’s memorial practices; however, other survivors associations are involved in the design, planning and implementation of policies. The CNLG was prescribed in the 2003 constitution and eventually established in 2008. Before the CNLG, memorial sites had been de-centrally administrated by the Ministry of Sport and Education that was at that time responsible for memorial practices at the national level. For a photographic documentation of Rwandan memorial sites see, http://genocidememorials.cga.harvard.edu/home.html., (accessed 30 June 2015).

[6] The number of memorials in Rwanda are under constant flux since the government decided to close smaller memorials on cell level and to reinter bodies into the bigger memorials on district level. One reason given for this change in interviews with CNLG staff members was that the government wants to ensure that the remains and the sites are properly taken care of which – as they stated – is not possible given the high number of memorials, many of which are in remote places. Due to limited space it is not possible to detail the implications

here, but this obviously impacts on survivors' (and in particular care-takers') grieving process and the 'place-bound proximity' described later in this article.

[7] I choose the term "dead bodies" here, since many survivors view the terms 'corpse' or 'remains' as insensitive. Since 2012, *Ibuka* has advocated for a rewording of the Law No. 56 on memorials with regard to replacing words such as 'corpse' with 'dead bodies'.

[8] These memorial sites were changed some years after the Genocide. However, they still exhibit victims' belongings, skulls and bones. The bloodstains at walls were left intact as well.

[9] State-led commemoration on the national level takes place in the so-called week of mourning in April only. During this week businesses have to close early to give their employees the chance to take part in commemoration ceremonies. However, the official mourning period lasts until July.

[10] This argument is made in the context of the gacaca trials. Other scholars such as Reyntjens and Ingelaere even claim that researchers who critique this viewpoint have been manipulated by the Rwandan state and/or are afraid of challenging the government for fear of losing their research access and permission.

[11] Rombouts details some challenges of a victim-approach such as identifying and defining who is a victim, issues pertaining to the construction and politicisation of victimhood and competition between victims. There is also the danger as asserted by Jessee (2017) that researchers duplicate or reiterate hierarchies of victims or dominant narratives about the Genocide.

[12] The participation in Genocide commemoration only plays a minor role for this paper's analysis which is more focused on how survivors make meaning of the memorials and the practice of care-taking.

[13] The CNLG granted permission to carry out the research at memorial sites including photography. And some staff members, and in particular those responsible for the preservation of the sites were interview partners and helped clarify factual matters. Otherwise, I worked independently from the Commission that did not perform any oversight function.

[14] I interviewed more male care-takers because more men worked as care-takers at the memorials I included in my research. However, roughly the interviews are equally distributed between men and women. The age ranged between 30 years to 65 years. I conducted one focus group with female survivors only because AVEGA (the widow organisation) facilitated it.

[15] CNLG staff is effectively neither present at the very remote memorials nor at the non-national sites. The CNLG members of staff are mostly survivors as well, but given the politicised context in Rwanda and their proximity to the government, I did not select those individuals for survivor testimonies.

[16] Some of these narratives vary, however. In particular the story about Annonciata is what Jessee (2017) frames an 'iconic story' that is not necessarily affirmed by facts but rather draws on common or popular knowledge which has often politicised connotations. Jessee further explains how survivors, but also perpetrators she interviewed, link the story of Annonciata and sexualised violence more generally to misguided believes around the superiority of the Tutsi body.

[17] More generally Christianity has been very successful in taking roots in Rwanda, often privileging and sustaining those in power (see e.g. Longman 2010; Carney 2013). Korman here refers to the tension between 'bad death' and Christian salvation as an example of contradictions between Rwandan cultural beliefs and religion in public discourse.

[18] See for a discussion on the relational relationship between 'absence-presence' in the context of mourning processes in the UK and Europe, i.e. after deaths in peacetimes, Maddrell (2013).

[19] See for an extended discussion on naming practices in relation to personhood Eramian (2014; 2018).

[20] I would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers who encouraged me to emphasise these ambivalences in the informal and formal commemoration of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

[21] In fact Van't Spijker stresses that there existed substantial regional variations of funerary rites throughout Rwanda so that one cannot speak of overarching cultural mortuary rites (Van't Spijker 1990) .

[22] During the years 1963 and 1973 the Tutsi population suffered from ethnic-motivated violence that led to a backlash of refugees to neighboring countries.

[23] The significance of an 'empty home' was particularly prevalent in more recent interviews with diaspora survivors in the UK who in oral history interviews described in detail how homes were completely destroyed and how without their family members it was difficult for them to 'build a new home' (Personal interviews, May, June 2019).

[24] In these discussions, we particularly attempted to best describe the materiality of the space and the ways care-takers referred to the decoration and maintenance of the place as well as the cleaning of the remains. Therefore descriptions such as 'tender' or 'careful' derive from both our observations and discussions, i.e. these are not terms imposed on the matter or indeed indicate a romanticised notion of care-taking at memorials.

[25] I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers who pointed out and detailed this connection between memorials, home and future making.

[26] Burnet (2012) and Eramian (2014) made similar observations in their research.

[27] The washing of bones was a common practice after the Genocide when as many interviewees recalled 'bodies were everywhere'. Survivors then collected and recovered bodies from the landscape to inter them in mass graves. Only more recently has the government started to embrace the washing of bones as part of the state-led exhumation processes (see further on this aspect Major 2015).
[28] Translation by author.