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‘Regardez la vie reprendre’: Futurity in Véronique Tadjo’s *L’Ombre d’Imana* / *The Shadow of Imana*

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In this essay, I review a series of binaries that are examined by Véronique Tadjo’s recent narrative about Rwanda and its 1994 genocide, *L’Ombre d’Imana* (2000, Engl. trans. *The Shadow of Imana*, 2002), and doubly blurred. These binaries (inside/out, here/there, past/future) and envisaged from two points of view. They are situated first in the dreadful zones of biopolitical indistinction in which the law legalizes its own suspension and renders legal atrocities normally outside the realm of the permissible; and they are re-envisaged in a movement which “turns inside out” (Esposito) these indistinctions to assert an unbroken fabric of life, human or otherwise, which resists even the perversions of the extreme manifestation of biopolitics evinced by genocide. This article shifts its focus away from the customary topic of the relationship between genocide and representation, towards issue of genocide and biopolitics, and to a form of semiosis that does not merely “mean”, but makes life (continue to) happen. Rwanda may stand, emblematically, for the stamping out of life on the continent, for the existential negativity that African often emblemizes in the global imaginary; by contrast, Tadjo, in her reading of Rwanda, poses to the African continent, not a rhetorical question but a fundamental ontological and existential enquiry: “Comment envisager le futur ici? Quel futur?” (Tadjo 125, “How can you envisage the future here? What future?”) **Keywords:** Rwanda, genocide, immunity, translation, life, futurity.

In his remarkable 2001 book on the Rwandan genocide, *When Victims Become Killers*, Mahmood Mamdani asks why, in the horrific one hundred days of killing, spaces in which the victims took refuge, such as schools and churches, became the spaces in which they died, sometimes by the thousands (Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers* 7). Mamdani’s question is a question about space: about spaces in which protection, shelter, or the care of the young are abruptly inverted into their utter polar opposite, death and destruction.

But his question is also about time: about the ways in which temporalities of mediated passages via turning points such as birth, marriage and death, and the mediated transition from childhood to adolescence to adulthood, are reversed into brutal moments of rupture, indeed of terminal negation. Churches and schools are sites where individual human trajectories are integrated into the social fabric via rituals and performances of faith and learning. Here such temporal cohesion was

negated, not simply erased, but spectacularly rehearsed in stagings of annihilation performed spatially and temporally. Churches and school as “heterotopias” (Foucault 175–85), sites partly removed from the banalities of everyday life but essential to regulating its regimes of signification became here “zones of indistinction” (Agamben 36–8) where the boundary between life and death was blurred, where the victims were reduced to “bare life” included in the state mandate of “cleansing”—but excluded from the polity and thus able to be killed with impunity (indeed, in the Rwandan genocide, not to participate in the killing was itself punishable by death).

Likewise, time itself underwent perverse transformations as a result of what occurred in these “heterotopic” liminal sites. The processes by which social time is regimented but also calibrated so that human life progresses through its customary stages collapsed into a temporality of trauma. The time of trauma is one in which the brutalities experienced can never be banished to the past but, as “a perpetual present”, as “prolonged affects that happen perpetually” (Pollock 4, 8) haunt the subject in nightmares and flashbacks. Trauma, as an “eventless event” and “a happening [...] not in the past”, (Pollock 2) creates an empty time without a future. The “heterotopias” exploited for genocide, usually associated with “heterochronias” (Foucault 182) become nightmarish “atopias” in which neither a utopia nor a dystopia is a possibility because the future, like the past, are no longer accessible to the victim.

Yet in the text about Rwanda that I wish to read in this article, Véronique Tadjo’s *L’Ombre d’Imana* (2000, trans. *The Shadow of Imana*, 2002), such perverse inversions of time and space are reversed once again to bring us back to something that can have no other name than life. Tadjo’s text is at once a distinctively African attempt to come to terms with Rwanda (Tadjo and Gray, *English in Africa*, 114–15; Tadjo and Gray, *Research in African Literatures* 146), but also a distinctively African attempt to come to terms with issues of sovereignty and violence. Significantly, Tadjo’s novel arose out of a project entitled “Rwanda : écrire par devoir de mémoire” (“Writing from the obligation to remember”) which mobilized, alongside Tadjo, other Francophone authors such as Tierno Monémbo, Abdourahman Waberi, Koulsy Lamko, Monique Ilboudo, including two from Rwanda, Vénuste Kahimahé and Jean-Marie Vianney Rurangwa, as well as the English-speaking Meja Mwangi from Kenya. Several novels arose out of this project, alongside Tadjo’s: Diop’s *Murumbi: Le livre des ossements* (2000), Waberi’s *Moisson de crânes, textes pour le Rwanda* (2000), or Mwangi’s *The Big Chiefs* (2007) (Brezault 1; Diop, *L’Afrique au-delà du miroir* 21n). By virtue of their collective enquiry, these texts inevitably posed much broader questions about the place of human life within new forms of sovereignty in Africa.

Mamdani intimates this too when he asks, in his study of Rwanda, “What can the study of Africa teach us about late modern life?” (Mamdani, *Victims* xv). The question has a number of implications. One is that modernity is not merely about a demarcation from a pre-modern or traditional past, a resonance of the term which is destabilized

by the qualifier “late”; rather, modernity is also about futurity, and the possibilities of future under regimes which are increasingly “necropolitical” (See Gržinić, Mbembe, “Necropolitics”). A second implication is that essential answers to questions about futurity may be provided by Africa itself, a continent where “radically new assemblages of capital and labor are taking shape, thus [prefiguring] the future of the global north” and indeed of the globe (Comaroff and Comaroff 12). The answer that emerges through a reading of Tadjó’s text is a lesson on the underlying dynamism of a connective, generative force which infuses all of existence, what the Italian philosopher of biopolitics Roberto Esposito has called “the sphere of *bíos*” (Esposito, *Bíos: Biopolitics and Philosophy* 146). In this essay, I review a series of binaries which are examined by Tadjó’s text and doubly blurred: once in the dreadful zones of biopolitical indistinction in which the law legalizes its own suspension and renders legal atrocities normally outside the realm of the permissible; and again in a movement which “turns inside out” (Esposito, *Bíos* 157) these indistinctions to assert an unbroken fabric of life, human or otherwise, which resists even the perversions of the extreme manifestation of biopolitics evinced by genocide.

This article pursues the topos, ubiquitous in African public discourse today, of the “inside/out” (Chapman, ed.; “Africa Inside Out: Media for Development”; “Inside | Out: Social Innovation on Paper”; the “Inside Out” photo project at Enkanini Township, Stellenbosch; *Inside Out*, feature film SA, 1998). Elsewhere I have investigated the phenomenon of African megacities metropolis “turned inside out” (Murray 87–135) with particular reference to post-apartheid Johannesburg (West-Pavlov “Inside Out – Geographies of the Post-Apartheid City in Mpe’s and Vladislavi’s Johannesburg Texts”). In this article I link the inside-out topos to a phenomenon both elided and revealed by the “dynamisme, quelque chose qui se passe, une concentration d’énergies [...] extraordinaire” of a city such as Johannesburg (Maximin, Anyinefa and Tadjó 370). What is both elided and revealed, indeed embodied in the city’s energy is the pulse of life in all its multifarious manifestations, whose very impetus is to “deterritorialize”, “reterritorialize”, and thus makes insides of outsides and vice versa as new assemblages emerge at all possible scales (Deleuze and Guattari 82–108). In order to track these double reversals in Tadjó’s text, I shall examine a number of entangled and mobile binaries: the inside/out, its concomitant here/there, the crucial binary past/present (which opens onto the central problem of futurity), and finally, life/death (which places us centrally within the realm of futurity). One consequence of this attention to binaries is that I also address the text as doubled by its translation, and therefore quote throughout from both the 2000 French original and the 2002 English translation by Véronique Wakerley so as to reveal a productive doubleness in the text itself.

My interest in translation does not focus on semantic problems of translation, nor of the constitutive impossibility of translation (Derrida). Rather, it asks about translation as a dynamic of productivity. To that extent, it skirts around the aporia of representation

which are laid bare in the translation process. My reading proceeds on the assumption that problems of representation, and the associated politics of representation, are not merely related to a post-structuralist critique of signification, nor of a materialist critique of ideology, but must also be placed within the context of somewhat neglected debates about the materiality of the signifier. In Stuart Hall's formulation, "The word is now as 'material' as the world" (Hall 232). In the tradition of Deleuze and Guattari, aporia within the domain of linguistic representation reflect its very partial coverage of a much broader spectrum of meaning production over and above linguistic semiotic, namely the realm of the semiotics of life production itself, where "the 'meaning' of a sign is a measure of the probability of triggering a particular material process" (Bonta and Protevi 4).

Much has been written about genocide and trauma, about genocide and the failure or recuperation of representation (e.g. Burnett; Hinton and O'Neill; Hitchcot; LaCapra; Masterson; Mirzoeff; Möller and Ubaldo; Sautmann; Stockhammer). This article shifts its focus, however, away from the relationship between genocide and representation, towards issue of genocide and biopolitics, and of a form of semiosis which does not merely "mean", but makes life (continue to) happen. Rwanda stands, emblematically, for the stamping out of life on the continent, for the existential negativity that African often emblemizes in the global imaginary (Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* 1–5). By contrast, Tadjó, in her reading of Rwanda, poses to the African continent, not a rhetorical question but a fundamental ontological and existential enquiry: "Comment envisager le futur ici? Quel futur?" (Tadjó, *L'Ombre d'Imana* 125; "How can you envisage the future here? What future?" [*The Shadow of Imana* 110])

Inside/Outside

Tadjó identifies the "immunitary" logic underlying principles of community: the notion that the life of the body politic emerges out of a tension between individual and communal rights and obligations, that in turn is projected onto elements without, which are then interpreted as a threatening foreign body (Esposito *Immunitas: The Protection and Negation of Life*). The life of the polity (community) must be protected (immunized) against that foreign element, which may have already infiltrated the polis and thus must be ejected: "the [...] enemy, a 'foreign body' [...] must be expelled or eradicated" (Mbembe, "On Politics as a Form of Expenditure" 306). Precisely this language of biopolitics, with its inner/outer border demarcations constituting community, immunity and threat, is performed by Tadjó's use of prosopopoeia:

[C]’était eux ou bien c’était nous et il n’y avait pas plus de peur que de ça, c’était eux qui voulaient nous tuer, qui allaient un jour nous tuer s’il en restait encore. [...] qu’on se débarrasse des traîtres qui sont allés à l’extérieur du pays pour apprendre à manier le fusil. [...] il fallait riposter, se défendre. [...] Il fallait qu’ils soient tous

tués parce que si l'un d'eux s'échappait, il pouvait aller rejoindre les rebelles de l'armée du FPR et revenir nous attaquer. Il fallait aussi tuer les enfants car beaucoup des chefs du FPR étaient des enfants eux-mêmes quand ils se sont sauvés du pays. Le nettoyage devait être total. [...] les ennemis devaient disparaître du pays. Ils croyaient qu'ils allaient ressusciter et revenir occuper le Rwanda mais grâce aux armes nous pouvions les tuer. (Tadjo, *L'Ombre* 115–18)

[I]t was them or us and there was no greater fear than that, that they were the ones wanting to kill us, who would one day kill us if any of them survived. [...] we needed to get rid of the traitors who had left the country for weapons training. [...] We had to strike back, defend ourselves. [...] We had to kill them all because if any of them escapes, they could go and join the RPF army rebels and come back and attack us. We had to kill the children too, because many of the RPF leaders were children themselves when they fled the country. The cleansing had to be absolutely total. [...] the enemy had to disappear from our country. They thought they could gather strength again and return to occupy Rwanda but thanks to our weapons, we were able to kill them. (*Shadow* 103–05)

But such an inner/outer topology is fragile. Even this portrayal of an inner Hutu domain against an outer Tutsi domain is undermined by its own performance of border-crossing Tutsis, who are “traitors” because they leave, and a threat when they attempt to return. This rhetoric performs a border-crossing that it also resists, so as to constitute the Tutsis as the threat they must be in order to sustain the border. And indeed, the entire self-perpetuating logic of this circular rhetoric is confirmed in the post-genocide paranoia of the former perpetrators as they live under a Tutsi-led government: “Seuls les rescapés ont droit au témoignage. C’est un trahison entre la justice et les rescapés” (Tadjo, *L'Ombre* 112; “Only those who have survived the genocide can testify”, says one prisoner, “It’s a betrayal created between the courts and the genocide survivors” [*Shadow* 99]).

Such border-blurring already nestling in the rhetoric of border-drawing may be one of the points where Tadjo’s text is discretely participating in a particular African tradition of deconstructive thought. But Tadjo pursues such thought in a manner which leads to unexpected destinations.

In a particularly disturbing episode which only tangentially concerns the genocide, Tadjo describes a case of incest in what one assumes is probably a Tutsi family. A young girl, Anastasie, is raped by her brother as punishment for what he believes to have been her flirtatious behaviour with boys: “Ce fut sa première mort” (Tadjo, *L'Ombre* 76; “That was her first death” [*Shadow* 66]). All the hallmarks of the later genocide can be found at the heart of the family, within the group that will later become the victims of interracial violence. The “seeds of violence” (Tadjo, *Shadow* 19; “les grains de la violence” [*L'Ombre* 28]) are not merely outside the group, but at its

core, and among those who are the putative victims (significantly, the rapist-brother's name, Anastase, mirrors that of his victim-sister). Ulrike Kistner astutely comments that the "geodetics of the genocide industry"—marked by the stations of the narrator's travels from Durban via Paris to Kigali and then on to Nyamata and Ntarama—"initially form the frame of the *montage*" but are then "blasted open from the inside" (Kistner 627). It is this type of topological inversion, in this case one that unsettles all the easy binaries of the genocide, which Tadjó will deploy at a continental level, as I will show below.

Thus, wherever biopolitics in its extreme forms is manifest, there opens up a "topology" of a zone of indistinction. The zone of indistinction reposes upon a primordial violence which is epistemological in nature, undermining in advance the frameworks of the rule of law. Genocide may be driven by ideology, but at its origin there is an self-legitimizing decision to label an other as other and then kill her/him: "Si on voulait le faire, il fallait le faire car on ne pouvait plus reculer" (Tadjó *L'Ombre* 116; "If we wanted to do it, we had to go ahead and do it, because there was no going back" [*Shadow* 103]). This tautological statement demonstrates its own lack of foundation except in a popular sovereignty, "imposant [sa] loi" (Tadjó *L'Ombre* 30; "imposing [its] own rule of law" [*Shadow* 21]) and instantiating "violence as primordial juridical fact" (Agamben 26). The rule of violence has no recourse to a point of reference outside itself. This legal atopolgy grounds the subsequent zone of ontological blurring which results.

The rule of violence grants itself, *de facto*, the right to reduce others to the bare life (compare Mbembe *Postcolony* 25—6): "Un animal, un tas de chairs. Un crane qui craque comme une branche sèche" (Tadjó *L'Ombre*, 131; "An animal, a heap of flesh. A skull cracking like a branch" [*Shadow* 117])—or, even sub-animal, "cafards" (Tadjó *L'Ombre*, 118; "cockroaches" [*Shadow* 105]). (The latter topos is ubiquitous in Rwandan genocide narratives, even forming the eponymous image of Mukasonga's 2006 autobiographical text; reversing this process of dehumanization, giving back the victims their humanity, according to Diop, is a central project of genocide fiction [Diop, *L'Afrique* 31].) Such minimal life can be killed with impunity (Agamben 114): "Seule l'impunité enfante la mort" (Tadjó *L'Ombre*, 115; "Only impunity gives birth to death" [*Shadow* 102]).

This impunity gives rise to a pandemic state of emergency where the law suspends the law, so that there is no longer an "outside" of the law, but rather, a "topology" of indistinction (Agamben 23, 37) between legality and illegality, where everything hitherto regarded as illegal (murder, torture, rape, pillage) is permitted, where "everything is possible" (Agamben 170). Or rather, there is an outside of the national community which is coeval with entirety of the inside of the nation (compare Agamben 38): that is the collective body of the other who does not belong (is outside the polity) and therefore must be eliminated (erased from the inside). Thus arises a further zone

of indistinction, exemplified in the “topographies” (Agamben 23) of genocide. Places of worship, of education, of healing (even of birth [Tadjo *L’Ombre*, 21; *Shadow* 13]) abruptly become the outside-places where foreign body can be annihilated: “Les autorités avaient demandé à la population de se regrouper: ‘Rassemblez-vous dans les églises et les lieux publics, on va vous protéger’ ” (Tadjo *L’Ombre*, 21; “The authorities had asked the people to gather together: ‘Assemble in the churches and public places, we will protect you’ ” [Shadow 13]). Here the boundaries between protection/extermination, birth/death, religion/nihilism blur utterly in these already liminal (inside/outside) spaces whose liminality becomes that of those who, like Anastasie, are dead even before they die: “Elle n’existait plus [...] Ce fut sa première mort” (Tadjo *L’Ombre*, 76; “She no longer existed. [...] That was her first death” [Shadow 66]).

Tadjo is not content however, to tease out these binaries and entanglements of inside and outside in a manner which mimics, albeit in aesthetic guise, the work of deconstruction (see Gehring 295–98) or of biopolitical critique à la Agamben. She continues to turn inside-out these inside-out structures in a fashion which might best be compared to the “affirmative bipolarities” of Roberto Esposito (Esposito *Bíos*, 146–94). For instance, a turn of phrase from Parkin’s popular Rwanda novel *Baking Cakes in Kigali*, the double structure of “She no longer existed. [...] That was her first death” is turned inside-out to become “They killed me [...] but I did not die” (Parkin 64). (Something similar, albeit within a spatial rather than a temporal paradigm, happens in Boubacar Boris Diop’s novel *Murambi*: “A Murambi, les corps, recouverts d’une fine couche de boue, étaient presque tous intacts. Sans qu’il pût dire pourquoi, les ossements de Murambi lui donnaient l’impression d’être encore en vie” [183].)

In one highly ambiguous episode, the narrator interviews a young mother: “Joséphine n’a pas voulu me dire si elle était hutue ou tutsie. J’ai eu honte de le lui avoir demandé” (Tadjo *L’Ombre*, 118; “Joséphine did not want to tell me whether she was a Hutu or a Tutsi. I was ashamed of having asked her” [Shadow 105]). Refusing to reinscribe the very categories which have driven the genocide, and which continue to define the identities of perpetrators and survivors after the event (e.g. Burnett), the text perseveres with the young woman’s story without categorizing her within the inevitably binary narratives of Hutu/Tutsi hostility. The episode does not release the character from intimations of culpability, or at the very least moral ambivalence, but stresses none the less the business of living on after the genocide: Joséphine has “une grande fille, Philomène, et Gratien, un garçon de dix ans. Elle s’occupe aussi de plusieurs nièces orphelines” (Tadjo *L’Ombre*, 118–19; “an adolescent daughter, Philomène, and Gratien, a boy of ten. She is also raising several orphaned nieces” [Shadow 105; translation modified]). Another zone of indefinition (inside or out? native or foreigner? Hutu or Tutsi?) is sketched out by the text. Here, it is life itself, “la vie qui coule: gestes quotidiens, mots ordinaires. La vie de tous les jours telle qu’elle est” (Tadjo *L’Ombre*, 18; “life as it flows along: daily gestures, ordinary words. Everyday life as it really is” [Shadow 10]) which blurs the erstwhile binaries of ethnic cleansing.

Here, beyond moral demarcations, but none the less without explicitly disqualifying the need for justice (Tadjo *L'Ombre*, 33; *Shadow* 23), life continues in the cautious beginnings of futurity: "Regardez la vie reprendre" (Tadjo *L'Ombre*, 131; "See how life resumes its course" [*Shadow* 117]).

Here/There

To understand the inside/out topoi as merely relating to Hutu/Tutsi relations, however, would be to fall into line with a strain of thinking which regards Rwanda as an exception, and reifies it, losing sights of its deep imbrication in the colonial histories of a number of African countries: "For Africans, it turns into a Rwandan oddity; and for non-Africans, the aberration Africa" (Mamdani, *Victims* 7). As Tadjo herself comments, "Ce n'était pas uniquement l'affaire d'un peuple perdu dans le coeur noir d'Afrique" (*L'Ombre* 11; "It was not just one nation lost in the dark heart of Africa that was affected" [*Shadow* 3]). Precisely this attitude was evinced in the British Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd's apparently compassionate description of Rwanda as "a true heart of darkness" (Melvern and Williams 17). Such a description immediately evokes Conrad's famous topos, so often present in representations of Africa (and even in Tadjo's English title) (see Stockhammer 135–9; Diop in Tadjo, "Interview with Boubacar Boris Diop" 425). Hurd's intensifier "true" consigns Africa to an (ineluctably inner) other space, one that is shorn of genealogical linkages to other parts of Africa, indeed of the world, in such a way as to eradicate obligations or self-interrogation. Rwanda becomes an inward-turned, cryptic/encrypted core of pure darkness, emblemized (in negative) in a collection of traditional masks inhabited by "un 'cœur', un objet sacré caché à l'intérieur" (Tadjo, *L'Ombre* 19; "a 'heart', a sacred object hidden inside" [*Shadow* 19]); Rwanda is a *desecrated* object, obscure and remote in its Heart of Darkness, but globally stereotyped in such a way as to implement a "denial of coevalness" (Fabian 35).

It is significant, then, that Tadjo's narrative begins in South Africa, where, soon after the publication of the book, she would take up a chair at the University of the Witwatersrand. "L'Afrique du Sud post-apartheid pourrait peut-être apporter quelques réponses à mes questions, en particulier en ce qui concernait le problème de la réconciliation à l'échelle nationale" (Tadjo, *L'Ombre* 12); "Post-apartheid South Africa might perhaps be able to offer some answers to my questions, especially in relation to the problem of reconciliation on a national scale. [...] South Africa forms part of our collective memory" [*Shadow* 3–4]). This logic is not dissimilar to that which leads Mamdani to place Rwanda and South Africa together in his analysis of post-national-trauma reconciliation enterprises in which victims and perpetrators must create a future living alongside one another (Mamdani "The Logic of Nuremberg"). But Tadjo's project transpires to be slightly different when, in the next breath she adds, "Je ne

m'attendais pourtant pas à faire ma première rencontre avec le Rwanda, là-bas" (*L'Ombre* 12; "Nevertheless I did not expect to have my first encounter with Rwanda while I was in South Africa" [*Shadow* 4]).

This gesture is more than one of mere historical parallels or genealogies. Far more, it is imagined as an entanglement or an intertwining of the two countries' histories of trauma, so that the core of one history can be found in the other. Outside of Rwanda, the "heart" of Rwanda's history can be identified ... as trauma: "ses yeux [...] étaient recouverts d'une voile opaque. On ne pouvait rien lire d'identifiable dans son regard" (Tadjo, *L'Ombre* 13; "his eyes [...] were covered in an opaque film. Nothing could be read in his deep, unfathomable gaze" [*Shadow* 5]). This interpenetration of the unrepresentable and unspeakable in the two countries provokes a deep malaise in the narrator: "Pendant une fraction d'une seconde, un vertige m'a traversé la tête" (Tadjo, *L'Ombre* 13; "For a fraction of a second I was overcome by a feeling of dizziness" [*Shadow* 5]). This interpenetration means that an unresolved colonial and postcolonial past continues to burden both countries. In South Africa, Tadjo has said, "Dix ans après la fin de l'apartheid, rien n'est toujours gagné. [...] Les stéréotypes, les catégorisations et la suspicion persistent de façon vicieuse" (Kanaté and Tadjo 184). South Africa may perhaps now be "la locomotive du continent", but "[c]ela ne se passe pas sans accroc", as she comments dryly: "il y a quand même les restes de l'apartheid qui marquent encore le pays, les mentalités [...] La ville [Johannesburg] est toujours divisée." And Tadjo adds, significantly in the context of her concern with the continental implications of Rwanda, "Il y a un vent de xénophobie qui existe" (Maximin, Anyinefa and Tadjo 368–69).

Tadjo imagines a network of overlapping, mutually interpenetrating postcolonial spaces ("un peu tout le monde s'est engouffré dans le pays" [Maximin, Anyinefa and Tadjo 368–69]) in which interconnected paranoid hostilities and ensuing traumas can be seen to function according to similar protocols, in part because they share similar and intertwined political histories across the colonial and the postcolonial periods. The nested levels of interpenetrating problematics of belonging-non-belonging, of exclusion and violence, are constantly being turned inside-out across the continent: "Oui, je suis allée au Rwanda mais le Rwanda est aussi chez moi. [...] Et j'ai peur quand j'entends parler chez moi d'appartenance, de non-appartenance. Diviser. Façonner des étrangers. Inventer l'idée du rejet. [...] Le Rwanda est en moi, en toi, en nous" (Tadjo, *L'Ombre* 47–8; "Yes, I went to Rwanda, but Rwanda is also here in my country. [...] And I am afraid when, in my country, I hear people talk of who belongs and who doesn't. Creating division. Creating foreigners. Inventing the idea of rejection. [...] Rwanda is inside of me, in you, in all of us" [*Shadow* 37]).

Once again, Tadjo's gesture of shifting the boundaries so that the outside of one zone becomes the inside of another, and vice versa, is not the final move in the successive strategies that she rehearses. Not only the content of her text, or its

programme of critique, but its existence as a text, constitutes part of an inside-out which is affirmative in its nature. Tadjó acknowledges her debt to African oral traditions, and to the participatory mode of narrative they assume (Maximin, Anyinefa and Tadjó 371). Charles Piot has noted the prevalence of storytelling, drawing upon traditional narrative forms and techniques, in contemporary Togo. In that context, two aspects of storytelling are notable: their dialogical nature, involving a constant exchange between storyteller and audience, and their open-ended nature (Piot 19). Speaking of her own work, Tadjó echoes such remarks: “c’est un type d’écriture où le lecteur doit participer à l’élaboration de l’histoire. Le lecteur est un participant” (Maximin, Anyinefa and Tadjó 373). Because it is an open, dialogue-based aesthetic form, narrative is also driven by contingency, and the possibilities opening out before it as it develops and unfurls: “the African oral tradition [...] has always been very innovative, always looking forward” (Tadjó and Gray, *English in Africa* 113; Tadjó and Gray, *Research in African Literatures* 145).

The manner in which the oral narrative is open both to its context, via its participatory mode, and to its future, via the contingency arising out of that interaction, resurges in the relationship between the French original and the English translation. Rather than seeing the translation as a secondary, derivative version of the original which reduces its “originality”, one can see it as amplifying the continental and global resonances of the original, thereby affirming its value. The English text opens up the French to a global audience, thus “deterritorializing” the text itself—allowing it to be read from many more points of view. Published by Actes Sud in France, and then by Heinemann in the UK but also distributed in Africa by the Harare-based Weaver Press, the text straddles different parts of Europe and Africa, thus becoming a cosmopolitan, polyglot text which thereby performatively engages the sort of dialogue—in the first instance with its own linguistic other—which be at least one antidote to racism and discrimination. It is for this reason that I have insisted upon treating Tadjó’s text(s) as the multiple facets of a single project.

Yet the text’s “deterritorialization” should not be understood merely as a literal geographical translation, but in the sense intended by Deleuze and Guattari: that is, as a radical transformation of a structure as it enters a new set of ambient, contextual relationships—a process of “emergence” which generates transformation, and generates generativity: “translation reproduces itself” (Serres 32; my translation). The relationship between original and translation, between inner core and outer mantle (in Benjamin’s metaphor of translation) (Benjamin 76) echoes Tadjó’s own bilingualism: in a 2002 interview she claimed to have chosen “English [via a doctorate in American studies] as my scholarly profession, while keeping French as my creative profession” (Tadjó and Gray, *English in Africa* 111; Tadjó and Gray, *Research in African Literatures* 144). However, in the ensuing decade, since taking up a Chair of French at Wits, and in the wake of several translations into English (*As the Crow Flies*, 2001; *Red*

Earth/Latérite, 2006) these binary terms have been reversed chiasmatically and their boundaries blurred (Maximin, Anyinefa and Tadjó 378).

In much the same way, the translations which have made her an English-language writer can be understood as having effected a progressive revision of the originals. In the last few pages of Tadjó's text, assertions of the resilience of life multiply, performing the generativity of which they speak: "Regardez la vie reprendre" (*L'Ombre*, 131; "See how life resumes its course" [*Shadow* 117]); "La vie finit par reprendre le dessus" (*L'Ombre* 133; "life always regains the upper hand in the end" [*Shadow* 118]). Significantly, between Tadjó's "La vie finit par" and Wakerley's "life always", there is a connotative slippage in which the rhetorically closed "finir par" is replaced by the iterative "always". This minimal semantic difference gives expression to a notion of life itself "conceived as richly open in possibilities rather than rigidly determined in its outcomes [...] driven not by the forces and closures of the past but fundamentally directed to the future and thus [...] nonteleological or evolutionary in nature" (Grosz 187–8). The translation thus generates a surplus of semantic and temporal open-endedness which embodies the renewing force of translation, and of life as translation itself (see Serres 11). Just as the inside-outside relationship between original and translation is questioned by Benjamin, so too the temporal hierarchy is reversed by Tadjó's double text. The translation process as a whole is a process in which the novelty of the translation renews the original novel, affirming and reinforcing its original value (compare Benjamin 71–2). Translation is productive of futurity, not merely in the present, but also reaching back into the past: "C'est justement parce que j'ai été à Kigali et que j'ai vu que la vie reprenait que je me suis mis à écrire" (Kanaté and Tadjó 183).

In the above, I have repeatedly operated a shift from an inside/outside structure which is reversed or turned inside out to an engagement of an ongoing futurity. The inside/outside binary as a static structure underlies what biopolitical criticism calls "thanatopolitics", or, in the specifically African context, "necropolitics" (Mbembe "Necropolitics"). In the moment of its literary performance, "necropolitics" is revealed as such, and subjected to a deconstructive twist, in a manner not dissimilar to the exposure of "entanglement" (Nuttall) or "seams" (de Kock) as founding topoi of the (South) African polity. Yet in the moment of the turning-inside-out which Tadjó insistently produces, those structures are rendered fluid, dynamic, and are temporalized, so that "La vie finit par reprendre le dessus" (Tadjó, *L'Ombre* 133; "life always regains the upper hand in the end" [*Shadow* 118]). Whence the strain of futurity which does not merely contradict, but actively transforms the "temps figé" (Tadjó, *L'Ombre* 25; "frozen time" [*Shadow* 16]) of genocide and its trauma.

Past-present-future

Tadjo's text raises two interrelated issues. First, it asks how to create a future, in a situation in which trauma, whether victim or perpetrator trauma, has vitiated all perspectives for the future: "Vous avez gâché mon avenir" (Tadjo, *L'Ombre* 74; "You have destroyed my future" [*Shadow* 64]). Second, it wonders how to avoid repeating the past: "Oublier le Rwanda après le bruit et la fureur signifiait devenir borgne, aphone, handicapée. C'était marcher dans l'obscurité, en tendant les bras pour ne pas entrer en collision avec le futur" (*L'Ombre* 11; "To forget Rwanda after the sound and the fury was like being blind in one eye, voiceless, handicapped. It was to walk in darkness, feeling your way with outstretched arms to avoid colliding with the future" [*Shadow* 3]). In a sense, these questions are the same, for trauma can be defined as a collapse of representational techniques which allow the subject to narrativize an experience ("Pour moi l'avenir est fait d'un jour après l'autre" [*L'Ombre* 125; "As for me, the future consists of just one day following another" (*Shadow* 110))); to that extent, it vitiates the possibility of being able to return that experience to the past, to make of it a narrative preterite: "traumatic experiences [tend to] freefloat in time without an end or place in history" (Rothschild 36). Trauma is an eternal present occupied by an unspeakable experience from which no escape is possible, a "mémoire capturée, figée, arrêtée sur le temps" (*L'Ombre* 38; "captive memory, fixed, frozen in time" [*Shadow* 29]). Trauma knows no future, only a repeating present-past: "Consolate a fait le deuil du futur. L'avenir n'existe plus pour elle" (*L'Ombre* 29; "Consolate has mourned the future. The future no longer exists for her" [*Shadow* 29]). Slavoj Žižek has pointed out the respective inflections of the two words the French language uses to refer to the future, *le futur* and *l'avenir*. The former, *le futur*, denotes "the full actualization of tendencies which are already present, while *avenir* points more towards a radical break ... *avenir* is what is to come (*à venir*), not just what will be" (Žižek 264). Consolate has abandoned hope in a future (*un futur*) which merely promises the repetition of the past in an eternal present; the future as possibility and contingency (*l'avenir*) has vanished.

Yet, once again, Tadjo does not let things rest there. Alternative perspectives are suggested by a semi-mythical tale-within-a-tale embedded at the heart of her text. After the genocide, the dead are caught in a limbo, unable to find their rightful resting place in the other world. They are caught in a place which is no longer inside life, but still outside of the other world; they are still inside our world but outside participation in it. This is a classical "zone of indistinction" which somehow participates in the "topologies" that Agamben defines as constitutive of the biopolitical threshold (Agamben 23, 37). A soothsayer is called in to talk with the dead so that they can cease haunting the living and finally go on their way. Here Tadjo appears to be advocating a release of the dead into a clearly demarcated "outside" domain. Ironically, with her notion of proper places and sites of belonging/non-belonging, the text un-

cannily replicates the sort of native/foreignness diad that underpinned the rhetoric of genocide itself. The logic of genocide appears to be repeating itself, in a displaced form, within the text that seeks to condemn it and lay it to rest. Tadjó's text, however, is too canny to fall into this trap. No, for there comes a coda: when the dead depart, they are reincarnated in many sectors of everyday life:

"Les morts renaîtront dans chaque parcelle de vie aussi petite qu'elle soit, dans chaque parole, chaque regard, chaque geste aussi simple qu'il soit. Ils renaîtront dans la poussière, dans l'eau qui danse, dans les enfants qui rient et jouent en tapant des mains, dans chaque grain caché sous la terre noire [...]" (*L'Ombre* 56)

"The dead will be reborn in every fragment of life, however small, in every word, every action, however simple it may be. They will be reborn in the dust, in the dancing water, in the children who laugh and play as they clap their hands, in every seed hidden beneath the black earth [...]" (*Shadow* 46)

Thus an affirmative biopolitics comes to the fore, in which the dead become part of the fabric of an ongoing generativity of life: "La mort est naturelle. Elle est l'autre face de la vie" (Tadjó *L'Ombre*, 133; "Death is natural. It is the other side of life" [*Shadow* 118]).

The logic of immunity peels life and death away from each other: "La violence des hommes a fait la mort cruelle, hideuse" (*L'Ombre* 133; "It is human violence that has made death cruel, hideous" [*Shadow* 118]). The logic of immunity makes life and death into a dichotomy, dealing death to one social group in the service of the protection of the life of the other social group. In Tadjó's text, by contrast, life and death are brought back together to generate an intertwined futurity in which death segues into new life. The inside/outside indistinction of suspended death is turned-inside-out to reveal a positive zone of indistinction. The negative zone of indistinction undergoes a process of *Aufhebung*—preservation in its transformed form, cancellation in its virulent form.

Tadjó's formulations of this entanglement sometimes take the shape of chiasmus: "La mort qui hante notre vie. La vie qui surmonte la mort" (*L'Ombre* 48; "It is death which haunts our life. It is life which overcomes death" [*Shadow* 38]). Lest we think, however, that this is a mere deconstruction of chiasmic binarity into a complex but static structure (compare West-Pavlov, *Spaces of Fiction / Fictions of Space* 54–6), Tadjó's anecdotes constantly explore the contingency of futurity. In a paradoxical episode, Tadjó describes a survivor who, after the genocide, falls in love with the neighbor who has murdered her family. In turn, he is infected with the AIDS virus she carries, thereby accepting out of love a deferred punishment for his crimes: "Cet amour est né de la mort. La mort est le début et la fin. La mort est l'amour, le lien" (*L'Ombre* 47; "This love was born of death. Death is its beginning and its end. Death is love, the connection" [*Shadow* 37]). Death is not merely that which has to be shared out to the outsider to protect the life of the polity. Rather, it becomes that element of life which

binds subjects together, the shared precarity of life (Butler). Death, far from being the end, is the “connection” which allows futurity to emerge and flourish.

Tadjo, as I have shown in this article, consistently reverses (and then reverses anew, thereby turning inside-out) binaries such as inclusion/exclusion, home/away, original/translation, past/present, and most significantly of all, life/death in a project that finally erodes those binaries. Connections, whether geographical, temporal, social, inter-ethnic, or finally vitalist, always have the upper hand. Life, here, is a term with no opposite, with no outside. Beyond the binary of trauma enclosure “inside” an eternal present and working through as an escape into an “outside” constructed of memory (Bennett 22), there may be an all-enveloping “life”, and it is there that Tadjo takes her readers with her on her travels.

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