

Institution: University of Nottingham
Unit of Assessment: 28
Title of case study: A Contribution to Commemorating and Learning From the 1994 Rwanda Genocide
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Hitchcott's research on the relation between textual and material commemorations of the 1994 Rwanda genocide has benefited survivors and rescuers whose experiences form the basis of the Francophone African novels on which she publishes. As a result of her leadership of a research collaboration between The University of Nottingham and The Aegis Trust, a leading Nottinghamshire-based NGO dedicated to the prevention of genocide through education, an AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award has ensured that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the stories of Rwandan survivors and rescuers are more accurately preserved in Genocide Archive Rwanda in Kigali • their stories are digitally available worldwide through the new Rwanda Archive and Education Programme of The Shoah Foundation (the American partner of Aegis), following the selection, translation and editing by Hitchcott's CDA-holder of 50 Rwanda genocide testimonies • authentic survivor testimonies can be accessed by school teachers for use in teaching about crimes against humanity • the quality of evidence available to historians of the 1994 Rwanda genocide has improved • the quality of materials available to the general public, within Rwanda and worldwide, for understanding and learning from the genocide has been enhanced.
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The research underpinning the impact was carried out between 2006 and 2013 by Dr Nicki Hitchcott, Associate Professor and Reader in African Francophone Studies. Since appointment in 1993, Hitchcott's research has centred on Sub-Saharan Francophone Africa; she has published two monographs on Francophone African women's writing and supervised seven PhD students on Francophone African topics. Her post-2006 research on the 1994 Rwanda genocide ('Rwanda genocide stories: fictional responses and survivor testimonies' [5.1]) has emerged from this context; it has been enriched by on-going dialogue with two doctoral students currently working under her supervision on Rwandan women's testimonies of the genocide, as well as by collaboration with a wider interdisciplinary network of Nottingham-based Rwanda specialists.</p> <p>In 1994, in 100 days, around a million Rwandans were systematically killed. In 2006, Hitchcott began a project on commemorative responses to this genocide. Her research on the way it has been documented and remembered inside Rwanda has focused on fictional writing produced after 1994, in particular nine texts by a group of ten African authors who travelled in 1998 to Kigali, the Rwandan capital, to reflect on and write about the still recent genocide. This collective literary mission was known as 'Rwanda: Writing with a Duty to Remember' [3.1]. Hitchcott's research has led to a series of articles concentrating in turn on different commemorative texts published in response to the 1994 genocide [3.2–3.5]. In particular she has uncovered a marked preoccupation in the commemorative fictional works with the memorial museums (Murambi, Nyamata and Ntarama) that have been constructed by the Rwandan government in commemoration of the genocide. For example, 'Writing on Bones: Commemorating Genocide In Boubacar Boris Diop's <i>Murambi</i>' [3.2] analyses the relationship between a fictional text that commemorates the massacre at Murambi and the Murambi genocide memorial in Rwanda that is managed by The Aegis Trust [5.1; 5.2].</p> <p>Key findings of Hitchcott's research include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 The centrality of memorial museums as the subject matter of fictional commemorations [3.2] 2.2 The importance of fictional writing as a medium for capturing, working through, and communicating memories of genocide [3.1–3.5] 2.3 The importance of testimonial narratives (both oral and written) in preserving memories of genocide and educating the world about what happened in Rwanda in 1994 [3.4]

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2.4 The importance of witnesses, both real and fictional [3.2; 3.3; 3.4; 3.5]
 2.5 The crucial role of oral and written texts by Rwandan people in challenging official narratives on the genocide [3.4; 3.5]

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- 3.1 HITCHCOTT, N., 2009a. 'A Global African Commemoration – Rwanda: *écrire par devoir de mémoire*', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 45:2, 151–161. (doi: 10.1093/fmls/cqp003)
 3.2 HITCHCOTT, N., 2009b. 'Writing on Bones: Commemorating Genocide in Boubacar Boris Diop's *Murambi*', *Research in African Literatures* 40:3, 48–61. (listed in REF 2)
 3.3 HITCHCOTT, N., 2009c. 'Travels in Inhumanity: Veronique Tadjou's Tourism in Rwanda', *French Cultural Studies* 20: 2, 149–164. (listed in REF 2)
 3.4 HITCHCOTT, N., 2012. 'Benjamin Sehene vs. Father Wenceslas Munyeshyaka: The Fictional Trial of a Genocide Priest', *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 24:1, 21–34. (listed in REF 2)
 3.5 HITCHCOTT, N., 2013. 'Between Remembering and Forgetting: (In)Visible Rwanda in Gilbert Gatore's *Le Passé devant soi*', *Research in African Literatures* 44(2): 76-90 (listed in REF 2)

Quality indicators:

All the above been published in peer-reviewed journals. In particular, *Research in African Literatures* (Indiana University Press) is the top refereed journal in Hitchcott's field [3.2; 3.5].

In May 2013, Hitchcott was awarded a 12-month Leverhulme Research Fellowship to develop her findings into a book, *Rwanda Genocide Stories: Fiction After 1994*.

The article on *Murambi* [3.2], research for which led to collaboration with the Aegis Trust, prompted an invitation to extend it for inclusion in a multi-disciplinary volume, *Remembering Genocide*, edited by Nigel Eltringham and Pam Mclean (London: Routledge, 2013) [in press].

4. Details of the impact

4.1 The pathway to impact:

4.1.1 As indicated in section 2, Hitchcott's research on fictional responses to the 1994 Rwanda Genocide uncovered the significance of memorials as a focus for literary production [2.1]. One of her key primary texts was Boubacar Boris Diop's *Murambi*, which places the memorial museum at Murambi at the centre of a fictional commemoration of a massacre whereby some 50,000 Tutsi were slaughtered at Murambi Technical School. The title of Hitchcott's article 'Writing on Bones' [3.2] alludes to the parallel commemorations of the Murambi Memorial Centre, which displays mummified bodies, skeletons and skulls at the site of the massacre [5.2], and that of Diop's novel, which inscribes both the massacre and its material memorial within its writing. It was background research on the history and commemorative significance of the Murambi Memorial that led Hitchcott to make contact in 2008 with The Aegis Trust, the Nottinghamshire-based NGO and genocide education charity that manages the Murambi Memorial Centre [5.2]. Correspondence and a series of meetings with the Executive Director of Aegis (an internationally respected expert on the Rwanda genocide [5.3]) led to the partnership that underpins the impact of Hitchcott's research.

4.1.2 The Aegis Trust has a very significant presence in Rwanda: along with the Murambi Memorial and five other commemorative sites, it manages the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre which houses Genocide Archive Rwanda [5.4]. In the course of on-going discussions between Hitchcott and Aegis in 2008, it emerged that Aegis had begun the process of archiving and digitising over 2,500 testimonies from survivors of the 1994 genocide. In 2009, Aegis agreed to partner and support Hitchcott's application for an AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award 'Remembering and Recording the Rwandan Genocide: Women's Testimonies' [5.3]. A successful application led to the recruitment of Caroline Williamson, who spent the second year of her PhD (2011-2012) working as an archivist at the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre [5.1; 5.9]. During the year, Hitchcott supported the CDA-holder's work for Genocide Archive Rwanda by maintaining

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regular contact via email and skype.

4.1.3 As part of this work, Hitchcott's CDA-holder was responsible for indexing, transcribing and translating her own selection of fifty survivor and witness testimonies from the Kigali holdings for the digital Visual History Archive of the Shoah Foundation, directed by the co-founder of Aegis at the University of Southern California [5.5]. Crucially, her work involved the identification and correction of translation errors in testimonies that had been collected in three languages (Kinyarwanda, French and English); where careless translations had misrepresented the factual content of individual testimonies they were likely to lead to distorted interpretations of events of the genocide. The testimonies now form part of 'Witnesses for Humanity', an ongoing Shoah Foundation project that aims to enhance genocide education through the digital preservation and worldwide accessibility (for teachers and the general public) of the testimonies of survivors [5.5]. Brief news coverage of the work of the CDA-holder at Genocide Archive Rwanda was included on University of Nottingham website (9 November 2012), *Times Higher Education* 'Campus roundup' (22 November 2012), and the blog 'Africa at LSE' (22 November 2012) [5.9].

4.2 Beneficiaries of Hitchcott's research:**4.2.1 The Aegis Trust** (Nottinghamshire-based NGO)

For Aegis, because education of the next generation is key to the prevention of genocide, meaningful commemorative memorials and digitised survivor testimonials are central to its mission. Hitchcott's research outputs on commemorations of the 1994 Rwanda genocide have contributed to enhanced visibility of Aegis and its work in Rwanda (the commemorative and educational mission of Aegis Rwanda is specifically mentioned in Hitchcott 2009b [3.2]). Having supported Hitchcott's successful application for a Collaborative Doctoral Award to be managed in partnership with Aegis, a letter from its CEO confirms three key benefits of the project for The Aegis Trust:

- Provision of a French-speaking graduate to work on the archive which is a resource of global significance, searchable from anywhere in the world, and where there is a vast amount of material waiting to be documented
- Help with raising the profile of The Aegis Trust in the UK through the dissemination of the project's findings.
- Strengthening of the links between The Aegis Trust and the University of Nottingham [5.3].

The partnership is now developing a more ambitious collaborative project on post-traumatic growth in genocide testimonies. A meeting with Aegis CEO and its Executive Officer for Education on 30.4.13 at Aegis HQ in Newark formalised this continuing commitment [5.6].

4.2.2 Genocide Archive Rwanda (based at Kigali Genocide Memorial in Rwanda) [5.2 & 5.4]

Hitchcott's CDA-holder's work has made an important contribution to one of the most important digital genocide archives of the world by improving its consultability and accuracy (through correction of significant translation errors). Examples of translation errors identified by the CDA-holder include: a claim it was possible to get away with being Tutsi (not true and not stated); an implication that both French and Belgians were involved in beatings of Tutsi at roadblocks (the text says it was the French only); removal of a criticism of the international community through omission of a key phrase ('they say they will help Rwanda but then they go and take their help elsewhere') [5.8]. This work has improved the quality of evidence on the 1994 genocide.

4.2.3 Rwandan genocide survivors [5.7; 5.8]

Hitchcott's 2012 analysis of Benjamin Sehene's fictionalised confession of real-life perpetrator, Father Wenceslas Munyeshaka, has been described by Sehene as a contribution in itself to the process of commemoration ('a magnificent gesture in memory of the victims of Father Munyeshyaka' [5.7]).

The work of Hitchcott's CDA-holder for Genocide Archive Rwanda has benefited Rwandan genocide survivors whose post-traumatic psychological and social adjustment requires that their testimonies be accurately recorded and disseminated to the world. One survivor explains: 'The Rwandese should help the rest of the world by sharing our history, telling them how things really are to help prevent them not repeat the mistakes made here. If you look up the written documents

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that have been stored you will find all the evidence. [...] If someone participated in the genocide and that person is capable of destroying all the evidence of his involvement, it is like telling you that the genocide did not take place, or saying that there was a civil war knowing that it wasn't what really took place. People were killed from one hour to the next. The way I see it, there is no other way of fighting the genocide unless we show how it took place by storing and archiving its history.' [5.8]

4.2.4 USC Shoah Foundation (The Institute for Visual History and Education) [5.5]

In April 2013, the Shoah Foundation invited The Aegis Trust to add its first collection of testimonies outside the Holocaust. The selection and editing by Hitchcott's CDA-holder of fifty Rwandan survivor, rescuer and witness testimonies from Genocide Archive Rwanda for the digital Visual History Archive directly furthered the educational aims of the Shoah Foundation's award-winning genocide-prevention website for secondary school teachers and pupils (Iwitness). This website is a globally accessible resource for:

- Teachers and school pupils throughout the world wanting to use testimonies for pedagogical purposes
- Members of the public wanting to learn about and understand the 1994 Rwanda genocide.

The Executive Director of the USC Shoah Foundation, explains that 'The Rwandan testimonies will support scholarship and research into the causes and consequences of genocides and the role of audio-visual testimony in research and education, as well as the development of education programs and learning tools for students in Rwanda and worldwide' [5.5]. On his recent appointment to the UNESCO Chair of Genocide Education, he reaffirmed: 'I am a firm believer that education is the bedrock of our efforts to prevent genocide.' [5.5]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

5.1 Website for overview of 'Rwanda genocide stories', membership of Hitchcott's research group, and the work of her CDA-holder <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/french/research/rwanda.aspx>.

5.2 The Aegis Trust website for its educational mission and memorials and other work in Rwanda <http://www.aegistrust.org/> and the website of the Murambi Memorial Centre <http://www.kigalimemorialcentre.org/old/centre/other/murambi.html>.

5.3 Letter from Chief Executive Officer, The Aegis Trust, outlining the benefits of the project for Aegis (available on request)

5.4 The website of Genocide Archive Rwanda (Kigali) for its searchable archive http://www.genocidearchiverwanda.org.rw/index.php/Welcome_to_Genocide_Archive_Rwanda.

5.5 The website of the USC Shoah Foundation for its genocide education mission, its partnership with Aegis Rwanda and its digital 'Witnesses for Humanity' project <http://sfi.usc.edu/>. Location of specific quote: <http://sfi.usc.edu/news/2013/04/every-genocide-leaves-legacy-rwandan-tutsi-genocide-testimonies-integrated-usc-shoah>. Location of article referencing UNESCO appointment <http://sfi.usc.edu/news/2013/10/usc-shoah-foundation-executive-director-stephen-smith-named-unesco-chair-genocide>.

5.6 Correspondence between Aegis CEO and Hitchcott relating to follow-on collaboration between University of Nottingham and Aegis (available on request)

5.7 Email from the Rwandan author of *Fire Beneath the Cassock* for the impact of Hitchcott's research on Rwandan authors and survivors (available on request)

5.8 Examples of translation errors and survivor quotation provided by CDA holder (available on request)

5.9 News coverage of the work of Hitchcott's CDA-holder at Genocide Archive Rwanda: <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/news/pressreleases/2012/november/can-living-through-genocide-lead-to-personal-growth.aspx>

<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storyCode=421874§ioncode=26>
<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2012/11/21/can-living-through-genocide-lead-to-positive-change/>