AFRICAN CONFLICTS: MEMORY, TRAUMA AND NARRATIVE (DIS)PLAY IN SELECTED MEMOIRS

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Abstract

This study participates in the scholarly conversation on the issue of memory and trauma within the research space of the rhetoric of conflicts in Africa. Three memoirs— Ahmad Tejan Kabbah's Coming Back from the Brink in Sierra Leone (2010); Ismael Beah's A Long Way Gone: The True Story of a Child Soldier (1998); and Véronique Tadjo's The shadow of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda (2002)— serve as primary data for the paper. The theoretical framework guiding the work is Teun van Dijk's approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), supported by Jonathan Charteris-Black's theory of "Metaphor and political communication". The study also employed an interpretive methodological approach that embedded the Aristotelian concepts of pathos, ethos and logos to understand the rhetorical tactics used in the memoirs to communicate various ideologies, representations and meanings of conflicts in Africa. The analysis shows that many of the problems that ignite conflicts in Africa are partly from the continent's colonial antecedents, and partly from the African leaders themselves, who employ sophisticated narrative manoeuvres for their selfish interest or for the soul of the African rich minerals.

Key words: conflict, rhetoric, trauma, Africa, Critical Discourse Analysis

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Introduction

A large number of African countries have had their share as theatres of war in the 20th century. Such wars or conflicts serve as fodder for African writers. This article pivots on the use of political rhetoric, with specific emphasis on language, memory and trauma. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah's memoir *Coming Back from the Brink in Sierra Leone* (2010), Ismael Beah's *A Long Way Gone: The True Story of a Child Soldier* (1998) and Véronique Tadjo's *The shadow of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda* (2002) provide content space to examine how literary writers use language in telling\ war stories, which are widespread in the continent, and how these conflicts affect the socio-political development of Africa. Teun van Dijk's principle of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and Jonathan Charteris-Black's theory of "Metaphor and Political Communication" are combined to demonstrate how social reality is constructed through textual discourse, and prefigures ways in which language can be used to dial up images of seemingly pacific and flourishing Africa, or the horrors of wars as signature features of the African continent. This theoretical framework is complemented by a descriptive and interpretive method, which is supported by the Aristotelian concepts of "pathos", "ethos" and "logos to critically analyse how the authors use language to communicate certain ideologies to construct power and a version of reality about themselves and their societies.

Socio-political instabilities in Africa in the 20th century

The land of Africa has achieved notoriety for civil strife, conflicts and wars. Adedeji (1999) asserts that between the 1960s and the 1990s, there were about 80 violent changes of governments in 48 sub-Saharan African countries. This continued to the dawn of the millennium, which saw as many as 18 countries facing armed rebellion, with 11 facing severe political crises (Adedeji, 1999: 5). The fact that some 19 countries were enjoying various levels of political stability, however, is an indication of some improvement. What is largely accountable for the improved political stability is traceable to worldwide transformation, and a groundswell of sweeping global economic and political changes. The turn of the century has been seen as a momentous era for Africa,

described variously as the "springtime for Africa" (Bourgi & Casteran, 1991); the "new democratic dawn" (Sesay & Alou, 1998: 48), the "third wave of democratization" (Huntington, 1991); and the "end of history" (Fukuyama, 1992).

The seed of energy for the change in African democracy and development did not, however, germinate from Africa, but from Europe and the United States of America. Both the United States and other Western powers began to insist that African governments democratise. The United States and France, for instance, reduced or threatened to reduce their aid to African countries that did not meet democratic standards. Efforts were thus made by African political leaders to meet those standards in order to continue to get foreign support. The first of such waves can be traced to the "sommet de la Baule" held on June 20, 1990, which brought together African heads of state and the then French President, François Mitterrand, in La Baule Escoublac (France), where France (and other former colonial masters) started to insist on the principle and practice of democracy as a "sine qua non for development." African countries that did not adopt multiparty democratic political systems were no longer to be in the good books of those Western countries, and were therefore not going to get "aid" from Europe and America.

Leaders who had been in power for decades decided to declare themselves democratic leaders and agreed to organise elections in which they stood as candidates as in the case of Ghana, Togo and Burkina Faso, where military rulers stood for elections and had landslide victories in most cases. By merely subjecting oneself to the ballot box was not, however, an open sesame for international financial sponsorship, and internal national peace. Politically conscious citizens kicked against such pseudo-democratic credentials that were being flaunted by their "new" leaders. For instance, in French speaking Africa, citizens insisted on what was termed "*Conférences Nationales Souveraines*" (National Sovereign Conferences) which, they thought, would reveal the dictatorship and corruption that had reigned for years before free and fair elections could be organised. Such political activism as happened in Togo and Burkina Faso did not yield any fruitful results. So the pre-

democratic era presidents continued as presidents of democratic African countries in most cases.

While lip service was being paid to democracy, the violation of human rights and massive corruption continued, with multinational organisations such as ELF, Shell, British Petroleum, together with international bodies like the IMF and the World Bank becoming the controllers of the African economy. At the same time, the floodgates for internal opposition movements for democratic and social reforms were flung wide open. This led to unrests in certain parts of Africa against their national leaders and owners of multinational organisations who, they believed, conspired to rob them of their heritage. The Niger Delta population of Nigeria, for instance, was experiencing massive pollution while the multinational organisations were shipping away all the oil of the land. The leader of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), Ken Saro Wiwa, was targeted by the then Nigerian head of state, Sani Abacha, who had Saro Wiwa hanged in 1995 for allegedly killing four Ogoni chiefs .

The 1990s also witnessed "corruption eruption" not only among African leaders but also among Western countries as well as international donors, non-governmental organizations (NGO), and international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Glynn, et al., 1997). In certain countries, the World Bank was directly in control of the local economy, through stringent and unproductive measures like the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). The SAPs were dictating to African countries which areas to invest in and which ones to ignore. The production of cash crops was encouraged while the production of corn, rice and other food crops was neglected. Imperialism, neo-colonialism and "pseudo- democracy" were at play, which dealt a big blow to African populations.

Practices among Africans and African leaders worsened the situation. The continent continued to be plagued by corruption. Gold, diamond, bauxite and other minerals were sold to foreign companies that extracted them, and paid low salaries to local employees who were most of the time working in hazardous conditions, as in the case of Ashanti Gold Fields in Ghana. Voices began to rise against such practices, and in

certain cases countries became divided and war lords emerged to control the part(s) of the country where mineral resources were found. In Liberia, for instance, several factions sprang up leading to some estimated 600,000 people losing their lives. President Samuel Doe (1951–1990) was assassinated by one of such rebel groups. In Sierra Leone, a decade long civil war erupted when the army refused to respect civilian rule leading to some 70,000 people losing their lives; while more than 300,000 have been recently killed in South Sudan where there is still simmering tension between supporters of President Salva Kiir and his former deputy, Riek Machar.

The remote causes of such conflicts in Africa are traced to European power politics, economic exploitation and oppression of the African societies (Rodney, 1973). Almost every country in Africa is still being haunted by historical injustices and oppressive structures. Political historians have been providing their perspectives on "how Europe underdeveloped Africa", to borrow from Walter Rodney's (1973) eloquent anti-imperialist description of the African situation. The balkanisation of Africa by European powers in the 19th century that created political units and divided ethnic groups in many cases is, accordingly, largely responsible for the unending tension in Africa (Rodney, 1973; Alabi, 2006; Cammack et al., 1988:13). Arms and weapons of all types circulate in Africa and civil wars and genocides have become synonymous with the continent. Several Hollywood movies like *Blood Diamond* (2006), *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) and *Shooting Dogs* (2005) capture the effects of war on the continent. In the Rwandan case, it was mainly based on ethnic differences; a division introduced by the colonial masters (Mamdani, 2001; and Gourevitch, 1998).

Theoretical framework

This paper begins with the case of Sierra Leone and uses the memoir of one of the former presidents of that country, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, as a primary source. The theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by Van Dijk, and the Principle of Metaphors and Political Communication by Jonathan Charteris-Black serve as theoretical framework for this paper. Van Dijk, who is one of the canonical figures behind the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), simply defines it in *Discourse and*

Society as a theory that "is primarily interested and motivated by pressing social issues, which it hopes to better understand through discourse analysis"(van DijK, 1993: 252). He adds:

> Unlike other discourse analysts, critical discourse analysts (should) take an explicit sociopolitical stance: they spell out their point of view, perspective, principles and aims, both within their discipline and within society at large; their hope is change through critical understanding. It implies a political critique of those responsible for its perversion in the reproduction of dominance and inequality (Van Dijk, 1993: 252-253).

CDA focuses on the role of discourse in the reproduction and challenge of dominance, and the exercise of social power by elite institutions and groups. The result of such power relations maybe social inequality in general and political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and/or gender inequality. Van Dijk adds that social discourse analysts want to know specifically, "what role structures, strategies or other properties of text, talk, verbal interaction and communicative events play in these modes of reproduction" (Van Dijk, 1993: 250). So CDA involves a careful analysis of the use of discourse in 'top-down' relations of dominance and also 'bottom-up' relations of resistance, compliance and acceptance. Van Dijk simplifies the understanding and definition of CDA by terming it as a theory that "deals primarily with the discourse dimensions of power abuse and the injustice and inequality that results from it" (van DijK, 1993: 252). He, however, remains aware of the fact that CDA does not only involve the macro-micro relations in society, but also, and even more interestingly, the relations between society, discourse and social cognition.

Jonathan Charteris-Black, on the other hand, defines "Metaphor and Political Communication" in the following statement:

> Metaphors contribute to the design of a leadership style through appealing to followers to share in a particular representation or construal of social reality. Successful and charismatic leaders create metaphors onto which followers project their own meanings and in doing so find a degree of socio-psychological and emotional gratification (Charteris-Black: 97).

Charteris-Black in his study of metaphors relies heavily on the Aristotelian view of rhetoric, precisely on the concepts of the "pathos", "ethos" and "logos". He explains that in the study of Metaphor in Political Communication, the speaker establishes an ethical appeal (which works as a rhetorical appeal) to the audience and then logos (reason by arguments) and pathos (appeal to emotion) subsequently begins to work on the audience. The whole process ultimately helps the speaker achieve his/her aim of persuasion. He adds that ideology is very important in this theory and writes that it is essential to modern political communication. He finally explains the whole concept in very clear terms:

> Metaphor is one of a number of linguistic, cognitive and symbolic resources employed by political leaders for communicating ideology. By establishing a shared view— by arbitrary decisions about what is right and wrong, good and bad—a group engages in a process of self-legitimisation through which it aspires to power (Charteris-Black: 100).

From these definitions and explanations, one can easily see that the two theories can be applied to Ahmad Tejan Kabbah's memoir and Ishamael Beah's *A Long Way Gone*, and that "Metaphor and Political communication" applies perfectly to Véronique Tadjo's *The Shaddow of Imana.*

Coming from the Brink in Sierra Leone

There are so many ways in which one can see Critical Discourse Analysis at work in this memoir. It transpires in the way in which Ahmad Tejan Kabbah provides information on himself and also the salient points of his career as a political leader in Sierra Leone. The author portrays himself in terms that connote resilience and achievement, and shows how wrong, destructive and distorted-minded his opponents are. By doing that, Tejan Kabbah succeeds in using this piece of information about himself against his political opponents.

The reader is struck by the mysterious circumstance surrounding the author's birth. The reader is told that such a mysterious birth was narrated by the author's mother to his (author's) wife. In order to

reinforce that idea, the first chapter of the book is titled a "mysterious birth" and the author explains the mystery a few lines later under a subtitle, which is "My parentage":

> Madam Damayei was the second wife of Pa Abu Bakr Sidique Kabbah. It is reported that she gave birth to her second child in Pendembu, Kailahun District in Eastern Sierra Leone on 16 February 1932, the baby (that's me), entered the world with a clasped left hand containing what was thought to be a piece of paper with an Arabic inscription. That was not all. It was also reported that although the paper was subsequently taken to a mosque where it was read, its contents were never made public (Kabbah: 1).

As a politician who has rivals and opponents, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah continues his memoir with information that illustrates his high moral rectitude and admirable childhood experiences. Action and cognition, which are some of the fundamental elements in CDA are seen here. Although the "action" part is not very salient since we do not see the author directly involved in physical confrontation with his political rivals and enemies, cognition is nonetheless obvious here. He influences the mind of people by employing rhetorical tactics to present the mystery surrounding his first days on earth. He elevates himself to the rank of a super-human being.

Ahmad Tejan Kabbah's education is described as one of the best that one could acquire, and his career as a civil servant is rendered in impressive, grandeur phraseology. The author writes about his education in these lines: "Despite my parents' strong Muslim background, my father later sent me to St Edward's Secondary School, which was the most prestigious Catholic high school in the country"(3). He further mentions the importance of such an education: "The liberal education I received at St Edward's, in a mixed society, further gave me multi-ethnic broad-mindedness" (3).

The self-aggrandizement which is obvious in the narrative (although there is certainly some truth in it) can be linked to the "ethos" part of Critical Discourse Analysis. The author describes himself and his beginnings in very respectable, dignifying and honourable terms. The

end of that process is found in his election as the president of a democratic government, after several years spent as an excellent national and international civil servant in Sierra Leone and abroad:

> On 29 March 1996, I was sworn in as president of Sierra Leone. A few minutes before the new chairman of the NPRC, Brigadier Julius Maado Bio stepped forward to hand over the staff of office to me, and all the thoughts and images of the problems I was about to inherit virtually disappeared. There was no doubt in my mind about what it means and what it takes to be addressed as "Mr. President" or "His Excellency the President" (Kabbah:34-35).

He later shows the reader how sincere he is to himself and to others. In his expression of joy when civil war had ceased and order was re-established in the country, Tejan Kabbah shows how dear his country is to him and the return of peace and order is presented as the normal order of things. There is a combination of the feelings of attachment and love for return to "normalcy" in a country where war is ending. In his speeches, he distinguishes himself from the rebels and soldiers who perpetuate atrocities:

> I am very happy to tell you that I wholeheartedly welcome the action taken by the patriotic members of the Sierra Leonean Army, the State Security Division (SSD), the Police, the Civil Defense Forces and other true patriots to oust the junta and return our beloved Sierra Leone to sanity, democracy and constitutional order (90).

Social cognition and the management of discourse access represent some of the crucial social dimensions of dominance in Critical Discourse Analysis. In other words, "modern", power as van Dijk calls it, or who is allowed to say/write/hear/read what to whom, where, when and how, is very important. This is reflected in the memoir when Tejan Kabbah uses a special platform to deliver his speech in order to win the support and admiration of the audience at the ECOWAS summit:

> For the people of Sierra Leone this is therefore a decisive summit. They look up to this summit to put an end to their nightmare and to enable them to recover their

> fundamental human rights. In the darkest period of the Second World War, Winston Churchill spoke of the hinge of fate. Sierra Leone is at a similar pass. Whether the people of Sierra Leone are to be restored to a life worthy of human beings or to be consigned to barbarism a long time to come , depends on the outcome of this summit(Kabbah:75).

His enemies, the rebels and coup makers of the Sierra Leonean Army who had overthrown him and forced him into exile in Guinea, could not have access to such a platform.

A Long Way Gone: The True Story of a Child Soldier

From the title, there is an attempt by the author to distinguish his book from other writings of this genre. By adding the words "true story" to the title, one has the impression that the author, from the very outset, wants to tell the reader that the story which he is about to read is not fictional. That gives a sort of power to the story. Instead of calling his book "a memoir" as Tejan Kabbah did, Ishmael Beah chose to situate his work from the position of power by calling it "the true story of a child soldier". That expression "a true story" can be seen by the reader as a way to classify this text above other war stories; a forceful way to tell the story of all the children who have fallen, and continue to fall victim to an abominable life experience— being a child soldier. This title can therefore be seen as a real attack to those who turn innocent children into child soldiers. We are therefore in a situation where the writer takes a position and sides with a certain camp that he sees as that of the truthful ones. Taking a stance is seen as one of the features of CDA as we pointed out earlier in Van Dijk's definition and explanation.

A Long Way Gone plainly states the author's position by his portrayal of the atrocities of civil war precisely in Sierra Leone. It goes beyond Tejan Kabbah's analysis of the Civil War in Sierra Leone; it provides a vivid image of the atrocities of that conflict and by doing that the author captures the discourse of the various fighting camps. Each side uses well-crafted linguistic repertoire to show that they are right, powerful and invincible. The rebels or soldiers of the RUF

(Revolutionary United Front) spoke and acted in a way which demonstrated that they were convinced of the necessity of the war they were fighting. Each of their actions and words was loaded with that feeling of "the owner of power"; "the one who is on the side of justice and has to fight the enemy". For instance, the following example combines words and actions. Little boys who enrolled into the rebel armed forces (the RUF) treat an elderly man (in the book) with unspeakable indignity. They use the power of the written and the spoken word on their adversaries and do not show any sign of remorse. Power abuse, which is one of the basic tenets of CDA, is expertly enacted by the rebels:

> While the interrogation went on, one of the rebels painted RUF on all the walls of the houses in the village. He was the sloppiest painter I have ever seen. I don't even think he knew his alphabet. Rather, he only knew what R, U, and F looked like. When he was done painting, he walked to the old man and placed his gun to the old man's head. "Do you have any last words to say?" The old man at this point was unable to speak. His lips trembled, but he couldn't get a word out. The rebel pulled the trigger, and like lightning, I saw the spark of fire that came from the muzzle. I turned my face to the ground. My knees started trembling and my heartbeat grew faster and louder. When I looked back, the old man was circling around like a dog trying to catch a fly on its tail. He kept screaming, "My head! My brains!" The rebels laughed at him. Finally, he stopped and slowly raised his hands toward his face like a person hesitant to look in a mirror. "I can see! I can hear!" he cried out, and fainted. It turned out that the rebels hadn't shot him but had fired at close range near his head. They were very amused at the old man's reaction (Beah: 33).

The effect of the war on human beings is carefully detailed in this work. Innocent populations are turned into "beings without feelings". Witnessing the atrocities caused by the rebels who display their power

and skills on unarmed civilians traumatises people like the narrator. The rebels are convinced that they are doing the right thing and would leave no stone unturned to win the local populations on their side and fight the national or loyal army. The effect of such a conflict and display of power turns children into such "zombies" as the author's own experience shows. He is a small boy –about 13 years old –who was forcibly recruited into the Sierra Leonean Army. He has been turned into a child soldier and this is a reflection of "counter power", an important element in CDA. The author and "his people" have suffered so much in the hands of the rebels that he and his close ones join the loyal forces, although against his will:

> My tattered *crapes* are soaked with blood, which seems to be running down my army shorts. I feel no physical pain, so I am not sure whether I have been wounded. I can feel the warmth of my AK-47's barrel on my back; I don't remember when I last fired it. It feels as if needles have been hammered into my brain and it is hard to know whether it is day or night. The wheelbarrow in front of me contains a dead body wrapped in white bed sheets. I do not know why I am taking this particular body to the cemetery (Beah: 18).

As the author states, in such a situation selective memory settles in victims; witnesses decide to remember certain things and deny or refuse to remember other things they witnessed. The book describes a scene where a woman falls out of a car and blood oozes from her ears, when one of the doors of the car opens. The work further states: "Truth is denied, pain is denied and death is denied; pain and shock prevent tears from flowing" (Beah: 13).

The middle of the book is really the section where counter power, as a reaction to power abuse, is plainly exposed. The narrator and many of the young men who had been humiliated by the rebels are now dangerous, unstoppable killers in the national Sierra Leonean army. They take drugs and confront rebels in return:

> We walked for long hours and stopped only to eat sardines and corned beef with *gari*, (some food made with cassava) sniff cocaine, *brown brown* (mixture of gun powder and cocaine) and

> take some white capsules. The combination of these drugs gave us a lot of energy and made us fierce. The idea of death didn't cross my mind at all and killing had become as easy as drinking water (Beah: 122).

The author further describes how war-fantasies had become favourite dreams and wishes for him and his friends who were the victims and cowards in the eyes of the ruling rebels, some days earlier. These children have been turned into "war-machines" and the heroes of the war movies –and their weapons— have now become the focus of the child soldiers' desires and admiration as this conversation among them reveals:

> "Sometimes I am going to take a whole village by myself, just like Rambo,"
>
> Alhaji told me smiling at the new goals he has set for himself.
>
> "I'd like to have some bazookas of my own like the ones in *Commando*".
>
> "'That would be beautiful,' I said, and we laughed" (Beah: 122).

Metaphors and political communication in the memoirs

The word "metaphor" is derived from the Greek word "Metaphoria", which means "to carry". A metaphor is a comparison of two different phenomena which share some common points. It is a kind of condensed simile. Aristotle defines "metaphor" as "a shift carrying over a word from its normal use to a new one" (Richards, 1965: 89). Metaphors provide frameworks in which issues can be viewed by creating an analogy between two concepts. Lakoff and Johnson, in their work *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), argue that "[m]etaphors may create realities for us."

Politicians use metaphors to characterize themselves, their opponents and followers, and their political agendas (as the authors of our selected memoirs do). In his article "Metaphor and political communication", Jonathan Chateris-Black uses two examples to help the reader understand such a phenomenon. One example is the former Cuban president referring to the US as a "shark", and Cuba and other small islands in South America as "sardines". Charteris-Black sees that

example as a politician establishing his ethos. He writes: "an important ethical dimension of a metaphor is that it can be employed either as a form of self-evaluation of the speaker or as a form of evaluation of policies, political opponents, or groups in society; I will illustrate this with reference to Fidel Castro," whom he quotes: "… to understand this problem of America, a book which explains the truculence of the U.S. policy in our continent must be read. It is called 'The Fable of the Shark and the Sardine'. The Shark is the Yankee empire; the sardines the weak American nations" (Castro, 30 August 1960, cited in Charteris-Black: 103). The author explains Castro's use of such a metaphor and adds that Castro's preferred animal metaphors are the sharks and the sardine to refer to the USA as a symbol of "greed and rapacity" while Cuba and other small islands are symbols of moral integrity, respectively.

Charteris-Black further exposes a case where an appeal to pathos can be combined with an appeal to ethos in a political use of metaphor. The audience's response in such an example indicates the success of this intertextual strategy. In this specific case also, it is up to the "followers" to interpret the metaphor. This second illustration of the use of metaphor in political discourse is also an extract of a speech by Castro:

> If someone was able to write that bit about the shark swallowing the sardine, and a book with that title even appeared in the initial years of the revolution by an author who at that time had certain decorously progressive ideas, today we cannot talk about the shark and the sardine. Today we can talk about the shark and the fireball, and ask if the shark could swallow the fireball.[applause] Today you can talk about the shark and steel, and ask if the shark could swallow that gigantic ball of steel which is the Cuban revolution today.[applause, chanting] (Castro, 2 November 1991, cited in Charteris- Black:105).

In the same article, the author uses another example where former British Prime Minister refers to countries possessing weapons of mass destruction (referring specifically to Iraq) as 'rogue states' (111). So Charteris- Black showed that in the use of metaphor in political discourse, ethos, pathos and logos are used in order to appeal to the

emotion and feeling of the audience (reader) and make the speaker (narrator/ author in this case) look right.

In *Coming from the Brink in Sierra Leone*, coincidentally, the author refers to the mutineers and rebels of the RUF as rogues: "I had at this ECOWAS summit, reiterated, among other things, the calamity that the rogue elements in the Sierra Leone Army together with their RUF cohorts, had brought to the people of Sierra Leone and what the people expected from the summit leaders" (Kabbah: 75). Here, the author certainly wants the audience to agree with him, and appeals to their emotions and sense of judgment, the pathos and the logos, in order to show the despicable nature of his opponents.

At the same ECOWAS summit, Tejan Kabbah made a speech in which he was really appealing to the pathos in the reader. The speech is full of passion and emotion and a strong desire to salvage his country from the Augean stable into which it is plunged. He goes to the length of referring to giants in world history like Winston Churchill of England and his use of metaphors in the dark moments of World War II. This is a part of Tejan Kabbah's ECOWAS speech which appeals to the ethos, the pathos and the logos. Tejan Kabbah presents himself as a man who thinks well and right (logos). He reminds the audience of the suffering that his people have gone through, which might continue if nothing is done (pathos), and calls for the restoration of decent living human conditions (ethos):

> For the people of Sierra Leone this is therefore a decisive summit. They look up to this summit to put an end to their nightmare and to enable them to recover their fundamental human rights. In the darkest period of the Second World War, Winston Churchill spoke of the hinge of fate. Sierra Leone is at a similar pass. Whether the people of Sierra Leone are to be restored to a life worthy of human beings or to be consigned to barbarism a long time to come, depend on the outcome of this summit (Kabbah: 75).

The memoir presents a plethora of metaphors in the section devoted to the author's speeches while he was in exile in Guinea. He was using a radio station to communicate with the people of Sierra Leone;

using metaphors that presented the situation in which the coup makers had plunged the country as a "dungeon" (72); and describing his trip to the United Nations as "a pilgrimage" on behalf of the people of Sierra Leone.

A Long Way Gone also contains several metaphors which aim at showing the cruelty which human beings are capable of. An illustration appears in a scene when rebels meet the author and his friends fleeing their town because of an imminent rebel attack. Unfortunately they are caught on their way by rebels—who are in a position of power here—and Gibrilla, one of the author's friends, is threatened: "They cocked their guns, and one of them placed the muzzle of his gun under Gibrilla's chin". One of the rebels added: "he is scared like a soaked monkey" (Beah: 31). Another metaphor which is central in the same book is "the moon". The author writes: "We must strive to be like the moon" and explains that he had learned that adage from his grandmother who used to advise people to behave like the moon because unlike the sun or the rain that could either be too hot (the sun) or make people feel cold (the rain):

> Everybody becomes happy and appreciates the moon in their own special way. Children watch their shadows and play in its light, people gather at the square to tell stories and dance through the night. A lot of happy things happen when the moon shines. These are some of the reasons why we should want to be like the moon (Beah: 16-17).

The preceding quotation simply shows that the moon is the metaphor for peace and the narrator is using it to remind people of the importance of peace.

The Shadow of Imana also contains numerous metaphors which express the author's feelings during her trip to Rwanda, after the genocide was officially over. The book opens with the author expressing special attachment to Rwanda. The country is portrayed as a tumour that the narrator/author carries. She writes: "I could no longer keep Rwanda buried inside me" (Tadjo: 3). And she adds that, "getting Rwanda out of her" would mean self-medication, curing the abscess: "I needed to lance

the abscess, lay bare the wound and bandage it. I am not a doctor, but I could still try to administer first aid to myself" (3).

One might see in this metaphor the suffering that Rwanda went through, the blood that was shed during the genocide, causing a disease (an abscess) in the body of the narrator. The narrator/writer might be trying to represent the whole humanity here and accepting that interpretation of the metaphor would mean that humanity has been wounded as a result of the genocide in Rwanda. The author shows her concern for Rwanda by saying that she "had long felt a need to exorcise Rwanda". This metaphor points to a real desire to cleanse the country, to help Rwanda recover from the tragedy that befell it. Here again, the moon is used as a metaphor. The narrator tells us that there is still no total recovery, joy and reconciliation in Rwanda. She captures that through the metaphor of the moon, which is not fully round, but a perfect "half- circle" (9). The author nonetheless leaves us with a ray of hope when she portrays Kigali as a volcano shedding itself. This metaphor might symbolise cleansing and exorcising (as she previously put it) and the beginning of a new life of hope and purity, a kind of phoenix (a bird that awakens or comes back to life, from its ashes). She writes: "just as in some of the Pacific Isles, people return to settle at the foot of an extinct volcano to till the fertile soil, Kigali is shedding its past and donning the raiment of a new existence" (10).

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to examine the themes of memory and trauma in three selected memoirs: Ahmad Tejan Kabbah's *Coming Back from the Brink in Sierra Leone* (2010), Ismael Beah's *A Long Way Gone: Memoir of a Boy Soldier* (1998), and Véronique Tadjo's *The shadow of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda* (2002). The theoretical framework that guided the study was van Dijk's principle of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), supported by Jonathan Charteris- Black's theory of "Metaphor and Political Communication". The paper clearly shows that these two theories can effectively be used to study literary texts that deal with themes like memory and trauma. The paper also hints that sustainable development is possible in Africa if imperialism and neo-colonialism are eradicated, and practices like tribalism and inter-

ethnic hostilities are wiped out. It demonstrates that the conflicts in the novels are real problems that threaten the lives and well-being of many Africans.

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