

A CRITIQUE OF EMBODIMENT

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Abstract

Embodiment is often taken for granted as beneficial to our wellbeing, learning and healing. Embodied processes are core to various therapies and pedagogies. Current debates on decolonising knowledge, education, museums, universities and curriculums are suggesting that more art courses, more creative practices and embodied methodologies will provide solutions to the resilient crisis of transformation, representation, separateness and woundedness effected by centuries of colonial and *apartheid* violence. In the context of genocide and violence, however, an attempt to transform and heal from its trauma, embodiment should be applied with caution. Arts and other embodied approaches may be dislocating and possibly re-traumatising if applied from a philosophical, theoretical, psychological and academic logic that emphasises the notion of separation which locates the body to the margins, and isolates individuals and communities from themselves, each other and the world. In light of the metaphors going back home and the journey to healing, emerging from experiences and processes of survival and healing, this article proposes REmbodiment (reembodiment). Re-embodied are here understood as practices that take their source and feed modes of being and praxis that are more circular, opening, re-membering (bringing together, repairing), interconnecting, multidimensional.

It occurred to me then that if one could make a people lose touch with their capacity to create, lose sight of their will and their power to make art, then the work of subjugation, of colonization, is complete. Such work can be undone only by acts of concrete reclamation
(Hooks 1995: xv)

1. Opening steps: Introducing, defining, framing

This article draws on a study entitled *Journey to Healing: The poetics of body, space and memory in translation — a case study of Re/naissance & Witness, an autoethnographic*

physical theatre performance. Among the objectives was to interrogate the value of an auto ethnographic physical/movement theatre performance to engage in a reflexive analysis of a personal and collective journey to healing.

The discussion is centred around a metaphor going back home, the narrative of *My Survival* and reflections supported by the audience responses to the performance *Re/Naissance & Witness*. I reflect on the concept of embodiment within a journey to healing from the extreme tragedy of genocide. A major characteristic of this extreme violence is to cut off sources of support (real or imaginary). Fear, guilt, isolation, regret, disconnection, deterioration of relationships, losing bodily parts and family members, running away from home, are among the indicators or effects from such extreme violations of life (Niwenshuti 2012, Heidenreich-Seleme and O'Toole 2012).

Going back home emerged from a series of reflections, poems and stories, verbal and written texts from genocide, performances, supervision and therapy sessions. Going back home refers to metaphoric journeys to healing. It is a concept inspired by real personal actions and stories of survival (re)experienced and unpacked during embodied and experimental processes related to prior, during and after the creation of *Re/Naissance & Witness*. Genocide, even *apartheid*, like all colonial crimes, is a disembodiment experience. An extract from *My survival* is presented here to serve as basis for analysis. It is the main source of evidence and a ground on which embodiment and the metaphor of going back home take root, and from which propositions like REembodiment (RE) and border dancing (BD) take flight and are explored in this article.

This discussion is rooted in autoethnography (Lejowa 2010, 2011; Reed-Danahay 1997) and uses narrative (Freedman and Combs 1996; Thornton 2009) and metaphor as a form of inquiry. It is important to note therefore, that the material is personal, views presented here have emerged in a practice-as-research study. They are still shifting, growing and open for interrogation and discussion. The overall intention, therefore, is not to offer fixed or universalised outcomes. As a survivor I cannot pretend to speak on behalf of others. We experience violence, and trauma differently. I cannot pretend we can take the same paths to making sense of such complex experience and healing from it either. But possibly, this discussion may be a catalyst as to (re)thinking embodiment and how we apply it in our collective and personal interventions.

This article emphasises the necessity of being aware of the complexities pertaining to genocide contexts and related research areas, theories and methodologies. Another level of complexity comes, in my case, with the fact of being a participant-researcher who has to deal with materials that are very close, potentially dislocating and carrying potentially life long effects.

In addition, operating in communities, universities for instance, where students and staff probably also have their own histories and difficult memories of violence, genocide, *apartheid* or other shattering experiences, puts one immediately under an obligation to see such study as not just another academic endeavour or just another performance, but something that may require much more sensitive and imaginative understanding beyond what might be usually applied or defined in academia or other spaces.

2. *Re/Naissance & Witness: Performance and responses*

Re/Naissance & Witness was presented at Goethe on Main in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2012, and during the Wits University Drama For Life Sex Actually Festival 2012. Audience members were engaged in discussions, interviews, and a series of workshops were facilitated throughout 2012 and 2013. *Re/Naissance & Witness* could be divided into two main parts.

The first part is mainly dance and movement. It starts outside the building, with other artists and musicians, in silence first, then singing and dancing with the audience around a fire, for 10 minutes (symbolising 10 days spent hiding in the Ndera Hospital waiting for help and rescue which never came). As the audience enters, it has to cross, step over clothes, worn out shoes and bodies lying as if dead on the floor. The first movement, inside a venue, develops from a hanging upside down image then continues journeying in the space, with and among the audience and props. Few lights are used, and a video is projected on the screen, wall and bodies. Live and playback music is used.

Without interruption, the second part starts after 17 minutes (17 April 1994 was my *My Survival* day, one of the worst massacres I experienced during the genocide). It is mainly a storytelling part. At the transition between the two parts, I take a shower, changing clothes while watching images of genocide from April 1994 in Rwanda projected on a screen and/or a wall. I switch off the projection and follow a script, *but flexibly*, the text is just a guideline. It explores, comparatively, the narratives of survival from genocide (check extract of my survival) and experiences from *Witness to AIDs* by Justice Edwin Cameron (2005).

Re/Naissance & Witness was more than just a performance. It was more of a process and a ritual. It was a creative, reflexive, experiential and integrative performance. This concept is reflected in any instrument used in the context of this research, even in the writing. Though presented here separately for the clarity of the article, in practice all the parts, instruments, different stages of the study were approached in a much more connected manner.

My Survival²⁾ (story: extract)

On the evening of the 6th April 1994, when I heard an explosion, I was watching soccer late at the *Muryankindi* family, our neighbors. We all ran towards the back door to see what was happening. Something was burning; it exploded again and started falling. The whole sky became yellow and red as if on fire. The sound was too loud, too terrifying, the atmosphere apocalyptic. We lived not far from the international airport and military camp where the plane was hit while descending to land. My neighbor said to me: “Go back home!”

As I walked home, between 8 and 9pm, it was dark. But I felt colors suddenly becoming very alive, brilliant. I don't know if it was an illusion or fear. But I could smell the grass. I could see the green mixed with dry and chocolate leaves in the banana fields behind our house. I could see the plants moving, branches dancing because of a short nice breeze that passed through that time I was passing, going back home. It was as if all around there was breathing. The kind of last breath before something big, like this deep breath we take in before a jump, before a great game or a battle. I have done martial arts, I have participated in highly competitive games, and I recalled a feeling like this; for instance when I breathed in deeply before a 100m sprint, or before throwing a discus. I have kept the memory of this phenomenon until now. I know now that my body knew and felt the need to take in that deep breath, as everything became alive and alert in and around me. My body knew and felt what was coming more than I knew. How and why I took in such deep breaths that evening, how and why the soil and air, plants and insects, seemed to take in that breath with me, I was not able to directly connect in my conscious awareness at that time.

As I walked home, gun shots from where we heard the explosion got louder. People started turning off the lights. Babies across the village started crying. My father looked through the fences, probably wondering where I was. He had also just walked back home. He saw me and he went in. He looked through the window for a while towards the airport where the gun shots seemed to be intensifying and seemed to be coming closer and closer to our village. Later we will learn that the president had been killed, assassinated on the plane. The journalists were accusing the rebels of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF).

It was on hearing this news that somehow it became clear why we had all felt uncomfortable, fearing that something bigger was happening. Every time a highly regarded political figure had died, in the past four years since 1990, it had been followed by killings of innocent people. Although I was young, it was not difficult to feel that now that it was the president, this was the end, this was it, this was something no one or very few would survive. It was not even possible to start imagining what was going to happen.

In the morning people were running past our house. I saw a man bleeding,

his children terrified running after him telling everyone that we all need to run because soldiers and militias are killing everyone. My father told us to pack what we could and we went to hide with others at Ndera Hospital. My parents had been working for this hospital since the 1960s. My father built it, had lived in it, and now he was about to lose his life in it. We thought we would be safe there. But militias attacked, throwing grenades, killing people slowly. They couldn't do as much as they wanted at the beginning since there were some white expatriates working at the hospital, brothers of charity, mainly from Belgium and the Netherlands. Unfortunately they left — their soldiers came and took them out of the hospital. We were left alone despite our protest, our begging them not to abandon us. We stood, in vain, in front of their tanks and trucks telling them that we would all be killed if they left us like that. They could see and hear gun shots from militias across the street. As soon as they left, before they had even left the premises of the hospital, the militia attacked. We held out for a few days, as long as we could, calling UN peacekeepers, rebels, calling all the people we could, as we had been doing for the last 10 days, but no help came. No one came to our rescue.

In the middle of that madness, I will hear on the radio that South Africa is liberated — that there's a democratic government now that *apartheid*, the racist system, is abolished. I wished I could dance, celebrate. I wished many people in South Africa knew how in years before genocide, we, in Rwanda, like in other parts of the world, had protested and sung in the streets and on local Radios against *apartheid*, against discrimination and oppression. As the machete of hate and discrimination was being put to rest in South Africa, it seemed it was being sharpened and raised higher over our heads in Rwanda and the Great Lakes Region. Twenty years later, and it seems to me that we still, in certain ways and on certain levels, hold these machetes and guns of hate, shame and stigma — privileges of the oppressor and even of the 'oppressed'; machetes of dominations and oppressions, manipulations of all sorts, intending to exclude, to impoverish and exterminate ...

Finally, the building we were hiding in at the hospital collapsed. We ran to different rooms, to another building, but they all collapsed. We came out hands up. Militias and soldiers pulled us out. They dragged us down, beating us, selecting first those they called *ibyitso* (spies) of the RPF. After killing them, soldiers then called a mass of militias and civilians who were waiting around there, chanting and dancing, to finish the job (to kill the rest of us).

Before they were rushed in to finish everyone, *gukora* (to work) or *gutsembatsemba* (to exterminate) as they called it, a soldier walked towards me and extended his hand. I hesitated, then got up. He asked two militias to protect me and my family and accompany us 'back home'. I can't describe properly how I felt in that moment. I don't know how to put it in words. When the soldier came to me, a former friend of mine — we went to school and

played together — had been holding a machete over my head. He was kicking, stepping on my body, hitting everywhere. He slapped me in the face, on the nose, and he pierced my back with a knife on his gun. The soldier — instead of joining in beating me or ordering them to shoot me — he stopped them. He saved my life.

I didn't know him. I don't know if he knew me. I don't know why he did save. I was no different from others who apparently deserved to die and were dying helpless around me. Some soldiers were killed by militias because they attempted to save people. I knew the risk this soldier was taking. Two militias, who actually were wearing some of my clothes obviously stolen from our house, protected us — one marched behind and the other marched in front. They led the way ... This used to be a very beautiful road, passing across the hospital gardens and buildings, old tall trees all around. We had run and played on it as kids. Now it was ugly, dark and full of terrifying screams, lakes of bloods and bodies all the way. Soldiers and militias were stepping over them. Myself and my family tried to go around and around (the bodies) until we got home — to find our house destroyed, no roof on one side, all food and clothes gone, windows and doors stolen, all remaining things in ashes, scattered all over the place ... We were still walking but inside, like our place, we were in pieces ...

3. Moving steps: Finding our way back home

Finding our way back home, from chaos, from burned houses, decomposed bodies of fathers, friends, women and children; finding our way home through the jungle, through stones and rocks, bloody rivers and deadly mountains. Finding our way back home may mean a lot of things in this context. Recovering a lost house, land, people, money, cattle, name, space, history, home. But it can also mean (re)grounding, (re)connecting with oneself, others, lost places. It may mean getting to a place of safety, love, connection, joy and warmth. But after all has been destroyed like in the narrative above, of *My Survival*, can we ever fully get back home? What happens when the real home we get back to is in ashes or the vehicle that is supposed to drive us there, our body for instance, is in pieces, covered in scars, or our whole being totally lost? In a situation where perpetrators and victims live together and no clear social, biological (genetic, bodily, and so on), cultural or geographical boundaries separate them, how does one make sense and attempt healing?

I have been asking myself these questions and many more since the end of genocide; since I survived and discovered movement/dance between 1994-1997 (Niwenshuti 2012), as one of my main media for processing and healing. However, I was not then exposed to as many theories, practices and concepts like

embodiment as I have been over the last few years. The opportunity finally arrived to conduct a practice-as-research project titled *Mapping the Memory of Genocide: a narrative inquiry of survival for an autobiographic physical performance* in April 2012. This initial inquiry and the data collected later contributed to an extended study (see opening steps). After the mapping process, described below, and presentation of the initial findings in a performance, the collected data was used further to create *Re/Naissance & Witness* which was translated and performed for a South African audience in August-September 2012.

During the mapping process, I spent 10 full days, alone, in isolation, immersed in the memory of the 10 days I had spent with my family and neighbours hiding from militia, *interahamwe*, in the Ndera Mental Hospital. During this recapitulation process I did not step outside. I was closed in my student resident room at Wits University, improvising, journaling, dancing, interacting with different spaces, attempting to access memories of *My survival* space. It was a very intense process, often leaving me with feelings of heaviness as each day passed.

During one night, I felt the need to move from the bed to sleep on the ground. I moved the bed away and slept on the floor for the rest of the process and even after, until I had submitted and presented the first part of my work. There was a very calming, comforting feeling when I moved to the ground — a sense of freshness, holding and full contentment crossed my whole body. Every time I moved to the ground I felt like I was going back into myself and into the ground; going into the ground was like going back into the soil, re-taking root in the whole of me, cells and soul feeding into a circulating, life-giving and renewal of energy. I could relate this feeling to another experience I had when one day, still during the war, an exhausted and feverish boy collapsed and in an attempt to save him I covered his body with soil and leaves. I had been lost with a group of children and women. Before dawn, the boy recovered, jumping around with energy, ready to continue the journey home with us.

Inspired by these experiences, going back home becomes more than just a concept, an expression. It reaches beyond just being a tool in my embodied processes. Going back home seems to have opened venues for discussions that open possibilities for my re-grounding, reconnecting, (re)forming healthy, life-giving connections and relationships with myself, nature and others. It is in the context of relationships that “we can learn and heal” (Perry *et al* 2013; Derezotes 2013; Duran and Duran 1995). Going back home is in a sense recovering or at least becoming aware of life-giving interactions and reclaiming the freshness of what has been lost in our best shared humanity, and allowing it to fill our whole being and life. Going back into the body, (re)inhabiting the body, and letting the body inhabit us again, involves challenging a discriminatory, boxed-in logic. In

other words, it challenges and overcomes the Cartesian dichotomy and anxiety, finding our way through destructive binaries, alienating dualisms and similar modes of thinking (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987, Damasio 1999, Fraleigh 2000), theories and practices — examples of the dehumanising ways we treat each other and ourselves, our own bodies and emotions for instance, ways that cut (off) our ways back to ourselves and to each other in a deep, whole and authentic way.

In light of this logic of us *versus* them, body *versus* mind, emotion *versus* reason, it seems that the trauma of war and genocide feeds and worsens this sense of division and separateness. This rationalised disconnectedness does not seem to stop just at the split of body and mind, self and the other, but seems to be translated into our whole being and defines our interactions and relationships with inside and outside worlds. Like a virus, this attitude infects other areas of life with or without us being conscious of it. It is possible, in my view that this phenomenon is one of the major hindrances to the healing journey, or at least it has been perceived as such with regards to my own efforts to understand and attempt to heal, and for observed cases of groups I have worked with (Nivenshuti 2013, 2012).

In other words, going back home could mean to (re)embody all within ourselves, the earth, the world, the other, and allow them to (re)embody us, not just in thought, superficial word, academic or political rhetoric, but in heart, feeling, emotion with an aim to achieve an integrated connection. Allowing this (re)embodiment, (re)claiming this connection, challenges the individualistic and survival logic that today's modern technological world seems to be promoting.

Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987) and Fraleigh (2000) suggest that Asian, Chinese, African and South American cosmologies, seem to have had this sense of deep interconnectedness, perceiving each person's body as an extension of the whole — extended through nature, other people, plants and animals. This brings to mind the Jungian concept of the Dreambody or the 'Extended consciousness', as discussed by Damasio (1999) and Fraleigh (2000) respectively.

This notion of extension may explain the interaction that I experienced with the audience during the performance of *Re/Naissance & Witness*. I could feel throughout my body, the audience journeying with me or resisting the journey. I could sense, as performers have described this feeling, the audiences' tears, smiles, steps, laughs, abandonment, hesitations — I felt the presence of their energy. It seemed to fill the space and me. It seemed to move, to shift with spaces and moments. Their physicalities and emotionalities mixed with and shaped my own. Like a dialogue of bodies, feelings, and thoughts, we were mutually in a constantly shifting relationship that made me realise, on reflection, the potential and paradoxical power of these embodied processes. Embodied concepts and other philo-

sophical discourses seem to impact our processes and lives more than I thought before. Embodied performances can contribute to healing, but they can re-traumatise, and alienate as well.

As my wounds are opened and exposed, there is a possibility that other people's buried memories and wounds open. As I mourn and journey from ashes, struggling through a world turned upside down, daring to dance my own ghosts, joke about trouble, laugh about pain — confronting discrimination and exposing the complex politics that create and nourish it — I can feel a sense of quest in the audience as well, a need for dialogue, a thirst to interrogate their own stories as they journey with mine. This seems to evidence how such an embodied — personal, sensitive — experience could trigger an opening for more critical questioning of the narratives and positionalities of internalised oppressions and dominations, with which we all work on daily basis. In this way, perhaps, alternative doors leading to and sustaining healing could be accessed.

The paradoxical capacity the body has to trigger effects of healing and trauma simultaneously, seems impossible to grasp without going through such an experiential process as the one I had during the mapping process, the creative process and with the audience during the performance. It seems almost impossible to report such deeply embodied processes through words alone, or through reasoned and reasonable forms of writing that do not allow much space for the reader (witness) to (re)experience and be put in such a felt position. Nevertheless, I am reminded of a reflection by Hartley, which seems to hold, maybe, some hope and affirmation and explain what happens, phenomena on which I base the above statements and knowledge:

...the body is a universe of experience, constantly changing, evolving, and transforming from moment to moment. Most of these processes occur beyond the reach of consciousness and the verbal realm, but nevertheless they are determined by wisdom far beyond the capacity of reasoning alone ... Cellular intelligence, the wisdom of the body, is intimately connected to the conscious and unconscious processes of mind and emotions (Hartley 1995: 246).

4. Engaging movements: Border dancing/ dancing on the border

I would like to pose an ending movement, not conclusion *per se*, to this article, by proposing one of the concepts that has emerged during this research, border dancing/dancing on the border (BD/DB). Just as the journey to healing seems a never-ending process (Nivenshuti 2012), this discussion is also open, still moving,

evolving, and so border dancing as well contains movement and a performative quality.

BD/DB was inspired by a combination of a couple of theories and practices, mainly the Boalian methods of Applied Theatre which draws on the Freirian Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Augusto Boal talks about 'border crossing' (Boal 1979, 2002, Freire 1968); and Professor Walter D. Mignolo's (2000) work on coloniality and decoloniality, uses the terms border thinking and thinking on the border.

In an attempt to make sense of my experience of genocide, I find myself moving in and out of different spaces, crossing real and imaginary borders, sometimes standing in between, inside, outside and nowhere; taking on different identities, locutions of privilege and otherwise, chosen or imposed. For example, as a survivor I seek not only to listen to my fellow survivors' experience but also to hear from perpetrators what they did and why, what condition my father was in when he died, what did he say, where did they put his body, what were they thinking or feeling, and so on. All these seem to be my attempts to make sense of my place and experience as a survivor. It would seem incomplete or limited if I was to try to understand and continue the journey to healing without drawing on experiences and stories from different borders including the perpetrator's. Therefore, crossing the border becomes a necessity and a technique on this quest. I cross without becoming the other completely or losing myself but try instead to find a common border on which my process and dance could give birth to alternative spaces beyond the binary survivor-perpetrator, and multiple possible paths to healing.

In terms of methodology, BD/DB manifested itself in the sense that during the study I didn't seek to remain just an objective outsider and purely focused on the distanced scientific approach. But I have immersed myself in the processes and most of the time I intervened as a participant-researcher. My intention was to question, experiment and re-experience in order to try to understand deeply not just with logic but also with body, feeling and emotion. Participants interviewed were also taken through various exercises, classic and creative, with an intent to increase learning from both borders, the intellect and the emotion, the logic/reason and the feeling knowledge of the experiences and questions explored around *Re/Naissance & Witness*. On a personal level, I did not deal with my locations and positions, or theoretical and technical concerns only, but I also deeply engaged with the memories, names, stories crystallised in different parts of my body, some that felt alien and marginalised, and others that felt strong, in control, in charge. This form of investigation allowed re-examining and re-experiencing that seem to have facilitated an emergence of other possible relationships.

Another level on which the concept was applied is more spatial or contextual. Journeying from Rwanda to South Africa involved a real border crossing. But in an equivalent way, as touched on in previous paragraphs, I have engaged with a broad spectrum of people in the South African context, working with those perceived as privileged and non-privileged, academic and ordinary people, some from poor and uneducated communities to upper class spheres. In all cases, I moved and operated in a sort of transitional space, there was a border on/in which I was dancing. On this border, one can access and benefit from knowledges and experiences from the centre and the margins.

Contrary to border crossing, BD/DB seems to imply circular and multidimensional movement which makes all borders lose any real or perceived relationships to the duality of superiority/inferiority. It is an application that seems to humanise more than border crossing. It seems to open possibilities of recovery within the same spaces and even beyond them. In a way, the impression or the lesson, is that instead of constantly trying to move towards the centre (with a small c), one could re-claim a Centre within oneself building on the inputs from across spaces and knowledges or insights triggered by the liminal and transformative dance on the border. This exercise I call dancing on the border seems to have helped me to realise that there are alternatives. There are other ways. One way could be recovering, keeping and sustaining my Centre (with a capital C) of humanity and humanness whilst dancing on the border to find alternative directions that could be much more liberating and nourishing. Trauma makes us blind to possibilities and makes us feel as if there is no other choice than the already defined and narrow centre and margins from which we get confined, voluntary or not. The performance *Re/Naissance & Witness*, and related auto-ethnographic embodied processes talked about earlier, seem to have triggered bodily and intellectual reflections that made me realise there are many other possibilities and choices. This realisation, which of course needs nourishment and growth, is in my view, one of major signs of healing and starting to make sense of my trauma and genocide experience.

Another aspect of the border dancing concept which has also become a sign of healing and beginning to make sense, is questioning the tendency of assuming full knowledge or understanding, complete healing of anything or anyone; a tendency I find in most scientific, academic spaces, and sometimes in other places like mass media. This practice reveals so many prejudices and a hegemonic approach towards phenomena, including the 'other'. The body, and its healing, tends to resist full grasp of our cerebral capacities in particular, and all other faculties in general, including embodiment. This resistance to being fully known recalls the concept of 'unknowability' that Dr Pamela Nichols discussed with me in a one-

on-one conversations at her Wits Writing Centre in November 2013. She emphasised that this concept propels us to humility, constant critical thinking and research.

As an example, when I was a child, if injured playing soccer I would run to my mother's hospital for treatment and tried to heal the injury quickly. Sometimes I went back to play and do acrobatics before it was completely healed. The wound was a burden, a barrier, and undesirable. Slowly I grew more careful, having less and less injuries because I learned to be more careful and the body having internalised the experience I often found myself instinctively stopping before hitting the ball and when I checked the ground behind the ball I would find a stone or something that was about to hurt me again. I never stopped to think about this, I thought I was lucky or becoming smarter (intellect, thinking) but it seems now I know that the body knows. It keeps memories. My body knew but as a boy I was not able then to understand and acknowledge this knowledge. It perhaps felt natural, normal, and this seemingly internalised knowledge has benefited (or served) me in ways I might never be able to fully grasp. I had taken for granted³) that anyone who is hurt would definitely want to rid themselves of the wound. I was shocked (positively) and learned from a student I interviewed, almost a year after she saw *Re/Naissance & Witness* that images from the performance and feelings had triggered in her a very vivid memory. I learnt from her that what seems to be a healthy tension between the journey to healing and the healing in itself seems never to be fully achieved upon reflection.

I don't want the wound to heal. I want it to calm, ... put an ointment on it. Maybe dance is like the ointment. But I don't want the wound to go away and disappear. Because I don't want to forget. I don't want myself or the world to repeat what gave me this wound. (Follow up interviews: November 2013)

Before I continue this line of analysis, it is important to remind the reader here that, like in the case of genocide in Rwanda or elsewhere for instance in the case of the Holocaust, for "many South Africans ... apartheid has left scars and shame untellable and unknowable in its full extent" (Kilian 2010:484). Kilian, echoing my observations from workshops and group discussions I facilitated after the performance, notes, "on a regular basis in my therapy room, I am reminded of how insidious and destructive...it [apartheid] has been" (Kilian 2010:484). The tension between wanting to remove the scars, the wound, as my interviewee puts it, and the apparent need for the wound to remain, resisting both full grasp and forgetfulness, seems to be another way of keeping the wounded sane. From her voice, it seems to serve as a constant trigger of memory and learning, an impulse to prevention, and a site of reclamation and recovery of a humanity which might be lost

if it were to collapse into what seems, in my opinion, as tyrannical, hegemonic pretence to absolute knowledge (total crossing over, or complete healing).

5. Re-embodiment

Embodiment, as a technique and as a mode of thinking, applied with this understanding of border dancing initiated what I designate as re-embodiment. One direct outcome, for instance, is that it allowed me to bring insights and lessons from my survival and journey to healing experiences into a relationship with other academic theories and discussions I was exposed to. Through extensive movement explorations, improvisations, performance, creative interviews, workshops and reflexive journaling (Personal research journal 2012, 2013), the body became a constant unique medium (Dymphna 2001; Grotowski 1968; Lecoq 2000; Merleau-Ponty 1945) at the same time it remained a *loci* and a border on which attempts to map, process, translate and make sense of healing and learning from the memory of genocide (Heidenreich-Seleme and O'Toole 2012) were conducted.

Moreover, as I danced, this embodied reading seems to have contributed to a deeper self-understanding and has increased awareness of historical traumas and hidden memories that often perforate my daily activities, including personal relationships and professional and academic endeavours. But perhaps most importantly, re-embodiment seems to be another insightful approach that might aid in our attempt to read complex and sensitive processes of healing and reconciliation in the context of extreme human tragedies and crimes like (post) *apartheid* South Africa, (post) genocide Rwanda, the Great Lakes Region, or even the individual and collective trauma-stigma illnesses like HIV and AIDS (Cameron 2005).

REmbodiment in light of the above discussion seems to disrupt the taken for granted therapeutic side of embodiment that might miss or fail to address immediate and/or long-term effects, not just internal but external. REmbodiment seems to stand beyond just one space of resistance, contestation, therapeutic in a classical sense. It is an interrogation against what seems like an *apartheid* style of life, a world fixed in unmoving binaries, a dehumanising and disembodied era and forms of knowledge that tend to exclude and cut off choices and connections with others (Conquergood 2002, Denzin *et al* 2008; Fatseas 2009). All knowledges, bodily or otherwise, are imprinted and reproduced in the ways we see and treat each other, the ways we live and govern our own bodies and those we are part of (Binkley and Capetillo 2010; Foucault 1994, 2008; Merleau-Ponty 1945) by birth, choice or imposition; and they inform or determine the source and quality we apply to healing and related processes and theories.

In this study, REmbodiment emerges as a location for creative re-interrogation that seems to operate both as a technique but also as a theory that may inform how we apply or read embodiment. REmbodiment seems to be coming up as a key outcome which is forcing us to (re)think healing and how we work with movement, theatre and other embodied interventions, (auto)ethnographic performance and methodologies (Denzin 1989, Heddon 1997; Lejowa 2010, 2011; Reed-Danahay 1997, Roberts 2002). In my own case, embodiment processes have triggered these reflexive texts, and they offered alternative ways and tools for conceptualising and understanding healing, what I termed metaphorically going back home. Re-embodiment this lost home, the body with which I/ most of us have been disconnected from for a long time, and allow this home to re-embodiment my whole being, it is equally important to reclaim healthy relationships with not just all pieces of who we are inside, but also with the memories and experiences they carry (or they could trigger), our practices and the world around us. It is making an effort to re-inhabit the world and recover healing relationships with things, creatures, people, theories and philosophies we apply in our interaction with others no matter where they or we are positioned or located.

REmbodiment is like an answer to what Edward Said (2013) warns against when he argued that home and language are taken for granted and can become like prisons. Said also discusses that the exile who leaves home behind becomes aware of its provisional quality. She/he crosses borders and can break boundaries in terms of thinking and experiencing. My actual home, found in pieces when I went back after surviving the first 10 days, was a direct experience of losing a home. Later, it is through the creative and research processes that I started to make sense of the meaning and impact of such loss. REmbodiment allowed for a possibility to re-imagine home, to dare to think of my body and my whole being as a home, and to re-interrogate institutions, forms of knowledge, identities, theories, histories, spaces and places we inhabit and tend to take for granted. Working on *Re/Naissance & Witness* gave emergence to border dancing/dancing on the border concept which in return informed REmbodiment. Applying REmbodiment as a mode of thinking, being and doing facilitated multi-dimensional levels of connectedness, understanding and freedom to research and theorise sensitive and complex experiences and memories. In terms of healing and making sense of traumatic experiences of genocide, fixed boxes like survivor and perpetrator, body knowledge *versus* intellect and mind, us and the world, were challenged. In this article I made attempts to point to the fact that these boxes could be necessary agents and allies for healing instead of remaining rigid borders than can be engaged and crossed in a linear form only.

Moreover, dancing on the border and trying to re-embodiment these opposing

(and potentially re-traumatising spaces) seem to have increased my awareness that there are many more possibilities and that there is always more than one direction/orientation to choose from beyond oppressed/victim and oppressor/perpetrator dualistic centres. The challenge, however, is that trauma and these extreme shattering tragedies seem to blind us to the existence of possibilities. It is also very difficult and may take much time to reach a place where, for example, re-imagining the perpetrators' stories and experiences as potential allies necessitates our own healing. Prior processes, having started to engage with own trauma or sensitive personal material, seem a much needed predisposition before attempting a process and/or study like this. In addition, it seems to require much empathy and high levels of compassion that might have to be cultivated or considered first prior or during such experiential study.

A limitation I must share is the fact that this study is somewhat personalised. Some reflections might not be applicable to other people even those with similar experiences to mine. I have warned against universalising these experiences, practices and outcomes, but it is important to remember the specific nature of these investigative attempts conducted in this article and the contexts that drove them. It is also important to clarify that I have not touched on the possible significance, which is probably enormous, of previous wanted and unwanted engagements with healing and the search for meaning, for instance other conversations, dance improvisations, private and public performances, storytelling, therapy sessions, advocacy campaigns, teaching and speaking to young and adults about my story or genocide in general, one-on-one and group works, all that may have prepared me for this stage which I see as part of a whole continued journey.

REmbodyment, as explored in this article, seemed to inspire the remembering processes, and seemed to expand spaces, connections and relationships to ourselves and the world that seem to nurture and renew while still allowing interrogation and critical engagement. The body as an integral part of our whole being is experienced as an embodied and fluid border that facilitates and extends worlds living on all sides. Re-embodied practices seem to have the potential to ensure that chosen or imposed theories, methods, histories, identities, locations and positions do not become prisons or barriers to constant re-imaginings, rebirths and journeys towards warmer and more humane learning and living homes.

Endnotes

1. I would like to thank the organisers of the symposium "Decolonizing Knowledge" at the University of the Free State and a Critical Seminar series hosted by the Institute of Reconciliation and Social Justice at which drafts of this paper were presented; and the

Wits School of Arts/Department of Drama and Drama For Life Programme at the University of the Witwatersrand.

2. Developed from an initial poem, *My survival* written during genocide. Original extracts were destroyed during genocide. A reconstitution was done later by memory.
3. For more than 20 years now, I have been involved in my own healing process. Also, I have been working with young adults at universities, schools and communities in programmes that sought to achieve healing and reconciliation. It appeared to me that this was a process limited in space and time, and that the wounds could heal completely. I seem to have forgotten that in Kinyarwanda there is saying that a wound leaves a scar, and this scar could be re-opened and certain scars never cease to hurt.

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