ADVOCACY LITERATURE SANS FRONTIÉRES: AFRICAN WARSCAPES, INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, AND POPULAR NARRATIVES FOR EMERGING HUMAN RIGHTS NORMS

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This dissertation analyzes a set of contemporary works that have all been conceived, produced, and circulated in frameworks of international concern as advocates work to popularize narratives representing grave injustices, thereby strengthening the basis for international response to African conflicts characterized by massive human rights violations. All of the feature advocacy literature examined here—*Kony 2012* (documentary), *Johnny Mad Dog* (a film), *Johnny Chien Méchant* (a novel), *What is the What* (a novel), and *Ruined* (a play)—intersect with a variety of institutional and organizational efforts seeking recognition for victims—ones that can be translated into means of support, protection, and redress. This study traces the life of these particular works, their relationships to such organizational efforts, and the ways they contribute to advancing a social project central to human rights culture: developing in the audience or readers a sense of civic duty attached to common membership in the "international community." These representations support the central project of human rights, but also highlight the political complexity of undertaking such a project in the face of radical inequalities and the history of interventionism sanctioned by empire in the name of humanitarianism and aid of African subjects. A central argument in this study is that one must understand these works in the context of emerging patterns in "international civil society." The popularity of these works, and the interpretations of conflict they promote, can be read as an important index of emerging norms in human rights, particularly the 2005 United Nations initiative,

the Responsibility to Protect, which has sought to redefine state sovereignty with greater emphasis on its responsibilities toward citizens. Drawing from the insights of philosophy, reception theory, cultural anthropology, and postcolonial critique, this study highlights a series of salient ethical and political complexities involved in these projects of gaining recognition for victims, including the possibilities and limits tied to the concept of an international community—a group with trans-national solidarities faithful to human rights principles—envisioned as a limitation on state power.

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Were it possible to monetize and attempt to pay the debt of gratitude I owe toward the sprawling cast of characters who have backed me during my years of research and writing on this project I should be eternally destitute. Mercifully, there are neither currency conversions nor legal structures in existence to collect on such immense personal debts.

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triggering joyful memories of storytelling to each other: our earliest times together reading Voltaire's novelette in the evenings, listening to him spin tragedy into absurdity, and feeling our own struggles grow paler in the light of his exquisite exaggeration. That book is among the best gifts I've ever received and a testament to your enduring thoughtfulness. You have given me gentle, skillful reminders to laugh and love at precisely the moments I've been most afflicted with a bad case of overthinking.

I dedicate this dissertation to my father, Jim Camp, who did not live to see me complete an ambition for schooling he encouraged in me since I first expressed a desire to attend higher education at age five. A few weeks before he leapt into the great unknown, he gave me his Special Forces jump wings—a talisman of his bravery—as I was admiring them in his office. He also bought me one of the books on my dissertation reading list and wrote in the front cover: "Tuna lia juu ya magumu ya watu wa inchi yetu, Congo. Tuna umoja ya roho."[1] Baba, may I be as fearless, disciplined, serviceable, and sensitive to others' needs as you. Thank you for your hard work for the family, for your patients, and for many in need of help with no one else to turn to. May my advocacy and intellectual work do your memory honor as I aim to amplify public understanding about the Congolese people's continued struggle, and cultivate more solidarity of heart for the country and its people to flourish in peace. I think you made a prophetic choice to name me after the Mark Twain character Becky Thatcher. Not only was Twain an important advocate for DR Congo, but Tom Sawyer won Becky's favor by protecting her access to reading voraciously in the face of stern and overwhelming social opinion that too much reading was a corrupt influence on delicate little ladies. Thank you for never treating me as if I were too fragile for worldly knowledge, for seeing my love of knowledge and of books as a solidly good thing, and for believing writing to be fundamentally important, as I do, to all the things I want to accomplish in my time on earth.

[1] "We weep for the struggles of the people in our country, Congo. We are one of heart."

1.0 BEGINNINGS

The seeds of this research project—including its central political and aesthetic preoccupations, its privileging of reception as a framework for analysis, and its lines of investigation into the "use" of advocacy literature—were sown during a volunteer effort that had no formal relation to my work in literature and cultural studies. It was a source of surprise to me that this experience significantly enriched and shaped my scholarly pursuits and served as a form of extracurricular practicum. At the time I was motivated to volunteer largely for personal reasons. In 2009 my father invited me to accompany him to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the North Kivu region, where our family has spent several generations in service to missions and medical work (see fig. 1). I was only twelve when our family left the country under political duress in 1990, and although I had returned once on my own in 2002, the opportunity to go back with my father and to have a responsibility and relation to something beyond the texts I was studying at the time was fortuitous. I was eager to develop better understandings of both our family history and of the nature of work in the area, and I expected my father's perspective—that of someone born and reared in the region, who served there in a rural hospital for nearly a decade as a nurse anesthetist—would aid my understanding. Shadowing him as he visited old medical colleagues and institutions did just that.

Figure 1. Earl Camp Sr. and family in Kihindo, North Kivu, DR Congo, circa 1925.

And so I stayed in Goma after my father returned to the US. Wanting "to be of use,"[2] I spent my days volunteering and evenings reading dissertation-related texts, most of them African coming-of-age novels. I worked for HEAL Africa, a medical NGO in Goma co-founded in 2000 by a social activist (Lyn Lusi) and an orthopedic surgeon (Jo Kasereka Lusi) which has built an international reputation for providing sanctuary, reparative surgeries, and social services to victims of sexual violence.[3]

In a professional environment treating serious cases of physical and psychological trauma, there is no very urgent call for literary critics. However, in the organization's administration I found familiar territory. HEAL Africa's planners were laboring with difficult decisions about their work of advocacy for the people under their care. The professionals sweating at the administrative controls and attempting to navigate this series of decisions depended heavily on language and narrative to keep things afloat and move in direction of their choosing, meanwhile fighting the riptides of funding competition, scarcity, and the whirlpools of national and international politics.

People like Virginie Mumbere were responsible for developing discourse and stories.[4] They had to tell their own stories and their patients' stories in order to secure funding for their work, bend political will, and increase protections and win some redress for the powerless people they served.

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[2] I am thinking, here, of Marge Piercy's poem "To Be of Use" which talks of the human need for meaningful work: "The pitcher cries for water to carry and a person for work that is real." See Bibliography for reference.

[3] For more information about HEAL Africa and its work in the region, see www.healafrica.org.

[4] Virginie Mumbere is the Relations Director at HEAL Africa. She has served as a contact point for the organization's many high-profile visitors over the last few years—including Secretary Hillary Clinton, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, George Clooney, Ben Affleck—and she has fielded a great deal of media curiosity aiming to understand the issue of sexual violence treated at the organization. During an interview in 2012, Mrs. Mumbere shared with me some of the negative consequences attached to the increasingly dominant narratives shaping discourse about sexual violence in the international media. She described how HEAL Africa has modified its approach to focus on "safe motherhood" rather than paying exclusive attention to sexual violence. The information she provided me in this interview informed my analysis in Chapter Four.

Advocating effectively involved an endless series of complex negotiations.[5] Given the nature of the organization's service, HEAL Africa's staff often had to prioritize the pressing material needs attached to their work and decide how to represent victims responsibly. How does one tell the stories of Congolese rape victims to a general audience in an ethically responsible way, a way that protects the victims and encourages understanding, investment, and action to help advance the organization's aims? What kinds of stories will be emotionally effective while encouraging healthy engagement and not simply voyeurism? Are there stories that might prompt disengagement, stimulate disgust rather than empathy, and even work to retrench harmful stereotypes about race, violence and gender? In short, what defines good advocacy? I had never before operated from inside an organization struggling to determine the value of different forms of representation—with women's health hanging in the balance. Here was storytelling where the rubber meets a hazardous road, and it struck me that I might contribute meaningfully to their efforts. Shouldn't someone who has cut her teeth on the works of Foucault, Said, Spivak, and others critically attuned to the operations of institutional discourse, the politics of representation, and power/knowledge paradigms associated with race, gender, and colonialism, be useful in just such a situation? So was my hope.

I soon was elected to join a small team with the task of compiling the 2008 annual report for HEAL Africa's upcoming board of directors' meeting. In this capacity I came to understand the work of the organization more intimately, but other than helping to summarize and analyze data, and to produce turns of phrase appropriate for an English-speaking readership, it was largely a

[5] In the absence of government programs, NGOs in East Congo must network. Though their primary activities involve treatment, HEAL Africa has been involved in many different strategies to address issues of prevention: establishing and networking with safe houses across East Congo, partnering with community leaders to find ways of reducing women's vulnerabilities, hosting conferences, and developing forms of community organizing designed to increase community stability and resolve local conflicts. HEAL Africa's co-founder, Dr. Jo Lusi, who served as a Senator during the transition government, played a significant role in lobbying for recognition of sexual violence as a crime. Congo's new constitution, adopted in 2006, acknowledges the state's responsibility to eliminate sexual violence as "an instrument in the destabilization and displacement of families" and recognizes the need to "to fight all forms of violence against women in their public and private life." Articles 14 and 15 in the new constitution constitute an improved foundation on which to both empower women and prosecute those responsible for violence against them (see Appendix A).

bureaucratic exercise without occasion to engage with substantive questions. It wasn't until I was asked to write a piece for a general audience that I faced the difficulty of making aesthetic and narrative choices. I heard that a UK women's magazine, *Woman Alive,* had asked for an article about Lumo Sinai, the main character in the documentary *Lumo* released in 2007. Lumo had been a patient at HEAL Africa. She was a young woman who sustained a serious injury from sexual violence requiring five surgeries to repair; the film followed her through her two-year recovery. The end of the documentary had shown Lumo's conflicted feelings about returning home to an area still wracked by warring militias—and a postscript explained that attempts to reach her at the time of the film's release had been unsuccessful, leaving her fate a source of curiosity for many.

Curious myself, I agreed to write the piece, but ran into difficulties almost immediately. What I learned did not conform to any story arc that readers would find easy to digest. When Lumo returned to Masisi, healed, in 2005, she and her fiancé (who had rejected her after her injury) reconciled. However, just three months after they married, he was murdered by a militia, and she was once again sexually assaulted. She had returned to HEAL Africa with the same injury, vaginal fistula. I realized that readers familiar with her story would be hoping for a happy ending. And while it was clear that I had a responsibility to reflect the details of her story as *accurately* as possible, I was uncertain about the nature of my responsibility to the magazine's readers. I was ethically opposed to the idea of using the shock of her experience to capitalize on their sympathetic investment in her story. I valued the work of HEAL Africa and planned to highlight their role in the course of her treatment, but I did not see the principal value of this piece as an opportunity to solicit donations. Neither, it seemed, did the organization. They gave me free rein to compose the article however I liked, providing information I asked for without comment or suggestion or editorializing of any kind. I was free to relate to my audience in the way of my choosing, and I was

inclined to feel that I should make efforts deliver the bad news gently and help them put the tragedy into context, but how?

Lumo is observational in its approach and realist in its conventions—a stark contrast to the sensationalizing documentaries telling the stories of women similarly victimized (See Chapter Four: Acting for Human Rights in *Ruined* for a discussion and analysis of such trends). The camera follows Lumo largely without comment as she carries out her everyday activities at the hospital; at intervals she is invited to speak about her experience, including what has happened to her and what she hopes for her future, but there are no heavily didactic messages on the part of the filmmakers to summarize and interpret her experience. The film focuses on how Lumo herself experiences what has happened to her.

As I wrote, I wanted to follow the example of the film and focus on Lumo's own perspective. But I had only second-hand information—and not much of that. I cobbled together accounts of those who had spoken with her and found a few positive details. I was able to say that her post-second-assault surgery was successful, that she did not have to embark on another lengthy round of treatments, and that donations had helped her and her mother to relocate somewhere outside of Masisi and to purchase a home in an area with more security. I was also able to say that she had learned to read and write during her second stay at HEAL Africa and that she had taken several opportunities to participate in local public events speaking out against sexual violence. I realized that speaking publicly was risky for a woman in her position. I wondered what had motivated her to accept the risk of speaking openly. How would she describe this, if I could speak with her directly and in Kiswahili? Would she identify what had happened to her as a problem in social, political, or moral terms? How did she feel about the film and its representation of her experience? Were there any corrections she might like to make? Anything additional she would like her audience to understand that was not covered by the film? What was the value, to her, of sharing

her story in an international context? In a local context? Had these occasions been empowering? Did she now conceive of herself as an advocate?

With no way to ask her such questions, I couldn't give much emotional depth and interest to the information I'd gathered—not if I were to compose the narrative responsibly. It would have been irresponsible, though expedient, to tell a story about "turning pain into power" or "a journey of rape survivor to advocate." I also had a limit of 800 words. I was beginning to think that, in this case, perhaps the organization would be disadvantaged rather than enriched by having a student of literature with my background undertake such an assignment.

In the end, the word limit solved some of my problems; I was obliged to summarize the film for those unfamiliar with it, and this made brevity in every other regard compulsory. I wrote that Lumo's experience is all too frequent among women living in rural Congo, and I outlined what had befallen her since 2005. After I gave an account of the reunion with her fiancé and their marriage, I inserted an artificial literary stop acknowledging that "this is where we might wish to end the story" (Cech 18). It was a signal that hers was not the kind of story to celebrate what *ought* to be. Unable to fit her experience into a neat dramatic structure, I used personal growth as a form of resolution, as it was the only familiar arc that seemed fitting and reasonable to use, given the circumstances. I explained that that her victimization and her new literacy seemed to have emboldened her to speak out—she was talking publicly about sexual violence in a place where social stigma about rape remains strong (Cech 18). But I did not wish to represent these developments as triumphs. I chafed against the breathless enthusiasm of activist groups like V-Day, with their stories of "transforming pain into power," even as I largely shared their political investments. It seemed to me that, in films

like *Breaking the Silence,* triumphalist stories encouraged a facile, prescriptive attitude about "speaking out" that conflates ideas of public testimony with self-empowerment.[6]

I tend to agree with Doris Sommer that good listening in the context of trying to understand subaltern experience requires that we "resist the reflex that Adrienne Rich, among many others, celebrated in her classic and cumulative statement of 1975: 'We are breaking silences long established, 'liberating ourselves from our secrets' "; Rich's subsequent question, "How do we make it possible for another to break her silence?" wrongly assumes that "all women are equally served by candid disclosures" (Sommer 21). As I recently learned in conversation with Lumo filmmaker, Nelson Walker, it is unlikely that Lumo herself conceived of sharing her story in liberatory terms or invested in such ideas of "breaking the silence."[7] Though he was able to make contact with her a few times, she was not eager for more attention associated with the film. Her evasiveness may indicate dissatisfaction with the way she has been represented, a longing for privacy, efforts to avoid dangers associated with a high public profile, or even—as Nelson hoped—a level of independence that meant she had returned to a life in which she did not feel the desire or need to cater to the demands of an international audience. I have no doubt that readers would have been enriched by Lumo's reflections and that, with her input, my article would have been vastly improved, but I share Nelson's hopes, and have been satisfied that the most important authorial choices I made at the time still feel like responsible ones. The best I can hope for my article is that its deficiencies can be read as an ethics of care—an attempt to honor what couldn't be said about Lumo's perspective while addressing the reader's emotional investment sensitively (for the full article, see Appendix A, reproduced with the permission of *Woman Alive*).

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[6] This is common in liberal, liberatory discourse, as Doris Sommer notes: "During decades of campaigns for self-empowerment, feminists have demanded that women and their books 'break the silence'" (Sommer 21).

[7] Interview, Goma, 2012. See bibliography for full reference.

Like Gayatri Spivak, I think of myself as an "amateur activist" interested in the ways that "literary studies [can] prepare us for multiple-issue gender justice" (*Death of a Discipline* 39). In this way, writing Lumo's article had been an exercise in putting theory into practice. Even with limited space, for instance, it was important to me that I show, in the course of comparing Lumo's experience to that of others, that not all women were equally vulnerable (Cech 18).[8] When the article was published that summer, in July of 2009, I was disappointed to find that my modest attempt at representing the problem as "multiple issue" had been largely foreclosed by the heading. The editor entitled my piece "Where Rape is a Weapon of War," a title insisting upon a strain of analysis that was dominant in popular discourse about the issue of sexual violence in the region. And so it now seemed less likely that Lumo's story would be understood as one woman's experience providing key insights into shared struggles. Instead it would stand an example of "the kind of violence that exists in DRC." Framed this way, her story was easily absorbed in the growing body of awareness campaigns, where differences were ironed out and stories were slipped onto ready-made advocacy frameworks. I would not have characterized Lumo's victimization in the language of war weaponry because I knew of important controversies over the accuracy—and value—of using this terminology as a framework for analysis: it downplays the significant and growing participation of civilians in violations as well as the "underlying structural factors" that contributed to women's vulnerability—even in the absence of conflict.[9] I was reminded of Spivak's complaint that "single issues are for office convenience" (*Death of a Discipline* 39).

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[8] I noted: "The 2008 Medica Mondial report suggests that 90 percent of women victimized come from rural areas in situations just like Lumo's, working by doing domestic chores or agriculture" (Cech 18). My objective here was to show the heightened risks facing rural citizens—especially agriculturalists—whose duties require them to tend fields where they are more vulnerable to attack.

[9] The 2010 report "War is Not Over Yet: Community Perceptions of Sexual Violence and its Underpinnings in Eastern DRC" discusses this issue specifically. As the summary reads, this "study examines whether the 'rape as the weapon of war' analysis for sexual violence, which has become one of the main building-blocks of the international community's response, is sufficient to explain the persistence of sexual violence, for even though military forces and rebels groups

Though *Women Alive* had certainly seen it as more convenient to present Lumo's story as a "single issue," HEAL Africa did not show "impatient philanthropy caught in organizational priorities"; they remained focused on "hands-on engagements that [could] allow nonhierarchical understanding to develop" (*Death of a Discipline* 38). Had they been focused on crafting a simple message out of her experience, they would not have, I should think, left the opportunity to present her narrative so freely the hands of a volunteer literary critic.

I remain grateful to Lynn Lusi for giving me the opportunity to make the exercise of writing this article entirely and somewhat painfully my own. There would have been some measure of comfort in following a template or having someone determine what material was most important and what kinds of responsibilities I had to Lumo, HEAL Africa, *Woman Alive,* and the reader. I felt both compelled to and anxious about representing Lumo's story. For me, the struggle to make responsible and compelling authorial choices strengthened my conviction that writing in aid of others is preferable to silence, *when it is possible to undertake the task thoughtfully*. Unless it is swallowed prematurely by a catch phrase, my own writing could make its way into the arenas where public opinions are being shaped and make a worthwhile political contribution in service of something other than dominance.

Largely because of this exercise in advocacy, the study that follows has become important to me in ways and to a degree I could not have imagined when first I began my study of African novels of personal development. The experience sharpened my interest in forms of reception outside the academy and developed my curiosity about the form, reach, and impact of popular narratives in advocacy and policy circles.

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remain the primary perpetrators, sexual violence is also increasingly committed by civilians. The report argues that although it is still valid to describe sexual abuse as a weapon of war in certain circumstances in Eastern DRC, we should look at additional underlying structural factors such as poverty and scarcity of land, weakness of state structures, physical and economic insecurity. The study also examines the part played by ethnic and gender identities, gender norms and discourses as well as changing gender roles." For the full report, see: Dolan, Chris. "War is Not Over Yet: Community Perceptions of Sexual Violence and its Underpinnings in Eastern DRC," *International Alert*, November, 2010.

1.1 THE POLITICS OF INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

Advocacy, as an act of representation, is fraught with the politics of power. Particularly given the current academic climate advocacy literature can appear as a fool rushing in where angels fear to tread. As Alcoff explains in her excellent review of the arguments surrounding "The Problem of Speaking for Others,"

> the question of speaking for others bears crucially on the possibility of political effectivity. Both collective action and coalitions would seem to require the possibility of speaking for. Yet influential postmodernists such as Gilles Deleuze have characterized as 'absolutely fundamental: the indignity of speaking for others' and important feminist theorists have renounced the practice as irretrievably harmful (11-12).

The drift of much criticism in postcolonial, subaltern, and feminist studies in the last twenty years has been to arouse suspicions about the supposed universality of operative concepts in humanism and to investigate the deeply unequal power relationships involved in "speaking for" and extending "help" to the "other." In "Righting Wrongs," for example, Spivak makes a convincing case for ways that liberal discourse surrounding aid and human rights work often functions to produce new forms of patronage, continuing a legacy of colonialism and imperialism by confirming and preserving the position of those in power as the legitimate "dispensers of rights" (538). In this reading the human rights paradigm is not marked by genuine struggles for equality but by Social Darwinism in which the "the burden of the fittest" becomes the modern, global analogue to the old concepts of "white man's burden" or "noblesse oblige," where the privileged are responsible to provide expressions of goodwill toward the less fortunate but never to redress power imbalances or dig at the roots of systemic oppression ("Righting Wrongs" 538).

African authors have offered some of the most striking reflections on the hypocritical, self-congratulatory, and self-serving habits of power that successfully presents itself in the guise of empathy and markets itself as humanitarian assistance to postcolonial subjects. Abdourahmana A. Waberi's *The United States of Africa* is a recent example of an African novel that provides a satirical snapshot—developed as a negative image—that inverts global dynamics to make Africa the center of prosperity and knowledge-production, providing forms of aid and relief to a politically-troubled, economically-depressed, and underdeveloped West. The main character is a girl adopted by an African family (her father is a doctor who "rescued" her while on a humanitarian mission in Paris) who travels to find her birth mother and negotiate her identity as a minority, an "other." In this story those in the West are represented as "the wretched of the earth," dependent and helpless—configured as eternal victims, a benighted population in need of benevolent African paternalism (Waberi 15). The text imagines an alternate set of histories which have constructed an Africa as the center of power—as the benevolent savior, the heart of the "international community" that decides who deserves help and what kind.

Perhaps the best-known and most biting recent satire on Western habits of representing themselves as the saviors of African subjects—a piece familiar even to many who not commonly read contemporary African literature—is Binyavanga Wainaina's 2005 piece "How to Write About Africa."[10] In this short work he counsels those writing books to "establish early on that your liberalism is impeccable" and decide on an attitude to shape the literature's tone and approach: "Africa is to be pitied, worshipped or dominated. Whichever angle you take, be sure to leave the strong impression that without your intervention and your important book, Africa is doomed"

[10] In "How to Write About Africa II: The Revenge By Binyavanga Wainaina" he explains that, "The issue came out, my article went online. It became the most forwarded story in *Granta* history. I started hearing from friends, from strangers; started getting my own words forwarded to me with a cheerful heading, as something I might be interested in, as though I hadn't written it. I went viral; I became spam. I started getting invitations — to conferences, meetings, think tanks. I started getting mail. Now I am 'that guy, the conscience of Africa: I will admonish you and give you absolution.' "

("How to Write About Africa" 92-93). He is suggesting, of course, that attitudes of pity and exoticization of Africa are not only perfectly compatible with Western domination but are instrumental in Western power. Accordingly he strongly suggests that writers treat African suffering in graphic detail, describing

> naked breasts (young, old, conservative, recently raped, big, small) or mutilated genitals, or enhanced genitals. Or any kind of genitals. And dead bodies. Or, better, naked dead bodies. And especially rotting naked dead bodies. Remember, any work you submit in which people look filthy and miserable will be referred to as the 'real Africa', and you want that on your dust jacket. Do not feel queasy about this: you are trying to help them to get aid from the West. ("How to Write About Africa" 94)

He ends with a refrain used throughout the piece: "because you care" ("How to Write About Africa" 95). Though it is presented as a legitimate reason for writing, through the prism of satire and the phrase's repetition its tone begins to sound defensive—even pathetic. Wainaina's and Waberi's works highlight the "discontinuous divide between those who 'right wrongs' and those who are wronged" and expose that the unhealthy attitudes and habits governing how the West treats African subjects is rooted in imperial attitudes ("Righting Wrongs" 563). Such writing echoes Achebe's famous essay "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,"* where he explains that the narrator "Marlow comes through to us not only as a witness of truth, but one holding those advanced and humane views appropriate to the English liberal tradition which required all Englishmen of decency to be deeply shocked by atrocities in Bulgaria or the Congo of King Leopold of the Belgians or wherever" (123). Such criticisms make it easy to see the political impact of representing, on the one hand, one's own activity as an articulate and sophisticated exercise of enlightened civility and, on the other hand, the "realities" of Africa as a ceaseless groan. Doing so constitutes a variation of one of the oldest and most enduring habits of Western empire:

representing forms of violence and suffering—occasions for shock and spectacle sure to offend the cultivated sensibilities of a liberal public—as the ultimate and unquestionable legitimation for the West's intervention in African territories. It is easy to understand why writers revolt against depictions of African subjects as utterly dependent on "the benevolence of the West," and reject the idea that such relations express a natural or normal state of affairs ("How to Write About Africa" 93). Wainaina and Waberi take pains to make familiarity and identity with the narrator of the text very uncomfortable; as Lazarus such explains, such

> definitional "otherness" or incommensurability, of course, [is] intended strategically to prevent those who take up the burden of representations from assuming—from their own positions of relative power, relatively untheorized by themselves—that "the people" are, as it were, "just like them", only contingently poorer or more disempowered, and that, if these "people" were to be given the opportunity to do so, they would make the same choices and think the same sorts of thoughts as the representers themselves. (*The Postcolonial Unconscious* 147)

He is not referring to satire, here, but to texts like Coetzee's novels *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Foe* which deny access to the interiority of subaltern characters like Friday. Not giving the reader access to their thoughts "obviously allows us to dwell a little longer on the idea that there is an incommensurability—radical alterity—between elite and subaltern cultures, value systems, and ways of seeing" (*The Postcolonial Unconscious* 149).

The literary technique of denying a reader's identification with the text is not simply an issue defined along the lines of the global north and south. The denial of reader intimacy and identification are common in "particularist" texts—works that emphasize the discontinuity between the reader and author and "contribute toward a rhetoric of particularism that will appreciate artful

maneuvers for making cultural distance..." (Sommer x). In *Proceed with Caution: when engaged by minority writing in the Americas*, Doris Sommer shows how writers from the margins have often resisted pandering to the benevolent authorities of an imagined audience and have taken up writing styles and modes of address designed to deliberately worry and disturb such readers. This is not merely a case of shocking one's liberal sensibilities, mystifying the subject, or of infusing the text with "difficulty, ambiguity, or complexity that demand and reward interpretive labor," but the deliberate construction of text that is "obstina[te] to interpretation" and makes readers aware of their limits—about what they can identify with and what they are permitted to know (Sommer x, 9). Reader empathy, in this configuration, is rejected as "the egocentric energy that drives one subject to impersonate another, the calamitous dismissal of politics by feeling" and the denial of aesthetic identification is an effort to cultivate the reader's political awareness (Sommer 22). It is quite possible to read Wainaina's piece as "obstinate" in this regard: he subverts emotional engagement and, though he proposes to talk "about Africa," he ultimately gives readers no access to any "deeper truths" or realities about the place; instead he provides only unflattering reflection of readers themselves. Such texts undercut the tendency of privileged readers to expect accommodation by the author—promises of access, intimacy, and "universal" forms knowledge and experience. They offer, instead, a "barricade against the rush of sentimental identification that lasts barely as long as the read. Refusal ensures an indigestible residue from voracious mastery" (Sommer 15). Writers wishing to subvert authoritative readings construct boundaries as means to develop new political engagements; they are keen to develop habits of reading that are more aware and more respectful of particularity, and less prone to the issues of over-identification and erasures of difference. In the works Sommer examines, she highlights the fact that " 'ideal' or target readers for particularist texts are… hardly the writer's co-conspirators or allies in a shared culture, as we have presumed in our critical vocabulary. They are marked as strangers, either incapable of or undesirable for intimacy"

(Sommer 9). The movement between invitation and refusal is an issue of negotiation answered differently by the authors Sommer examines a "challenge for Palancares or Rodriguez, Menchu or Morrison, is how to be interesting without promising the dividends of ownership. They wish to produce enough desire for refusal to smart, because the objective here is to engage unfamiliar, perhaps unfriendly readers, not to be ignored by them" (Sommer 15).

As someone politically sympathetic to the struggles experienced by authors on the periphery, I have found the particularist text's indigestibility, its boundaries and "slaps," as Sommer calls them, highly instructive (Sommer ix). I am aware of the importance of learning to constantly read anew, and of the need for respecting difference, largely because of encounters with such writing. As a regular reader of postcolonial literature and theory it has become easy for me to accept that something deliberate and thoughtful is taking place in a piece of writing even when I feel off-balance and am unaccustomed to the writer's mode of address. I have become accustomed to the patience and humility that will be required of me. What I know from my own experience, and what strikes me as highly underdiscussed, however, is the fact that privilege (especially access to higher education) often affects one's ability to appreciate difficult texts, and that "obstinacy to interpretation," no matter how precise its political motivations, is still experienced as difficulty (Sommer 9). Consider that literary scholars, who do not expect a text to yield easily to reading, may have a better chance of realigning their expectations and discovering a new of reading through these "obstinate" texts than do lay readers. In addition to expecting that engaging new writing will constitute considerable work, students of literature who have studied at a graduate level are also likely to recognize, if not appreciate, some of the manifestations of political objection and resistance common to such texts, given the extent to which essays like Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak" and books like Said's *Orientalism* have been mainstreamed and popularized in this professional environment. The probability that lay readers will encounter the same resistances in the text and simply disengage or

use these as reasons to devalue the text are, I should think, much higher. Let me offer a teaching experience of mine that has informed this view.

Some years ago I taught Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* in a freshman course; it is a creative nonfiction prose book that operates in a direct, affrontive register. Like Wainaina, Kincaid addresses her reader in second person, representing "you" as a privileged Westerner, an "ugly" tourist.[11] The mirror she holds up to the reader is withering. In large, my students were precisely the unfamiliar and unfriendly readers to which Sommers refers—the privileged westerner. Presuming that the book's presence in the course indicated that it should be treated with reverence, and furthermore presuming that they ought to be reading it in a conspiratorial mode, the students were obviously offended but reluctant to say so. It was only after prodding them and giving them permission to dislike the book that they opened up. Nearly every student in class then admitted to disliking, even "hating," the book. Most had been tourists on islands like Kincaid's Antigua and were extremely defensive about being identified with the imagined reader of the text. By pointing out that they were reacting just the way she had planned (She is *trying* to offend a certain kind of reader, isn't she? Why?) real discussion began, anger turned to confusion and, then, developed into curiosity. Eventually most of the students changed their appraisals, and many were able to clearly articulate the reasons they believed Kincaid might choose this confrontational mode of address, even if they did not agree with her views, but this was not before hours had been dedicated to studying how she speaks to the reader, how this changes between the beginning and end of the book, and how the context in which she wrote might have informed her writing. Had these students picked up the book without the imperative of reading provided in a classroom environment, where their grade depended on engaging the material seriously, I feel safe in suggesting that most of them

[11] Kincaid, Jamaica. *A Small Place*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1988.

would have either abandoned it before finishing the book or, driven by defensiveness, missed the value of its challenge.

My point is not that one must be in a classroom to appreciate an "obstinate" text. All of the analyses we conducted in class are, of course, possible to undertake on one's own entirely outside of the university. Neither is my point that Kincaid—or any author for that matter—should have to write in a way that flatters and pleases or make their work easily digestible. It should be obvious, from my profession of choice, that I value difficult texts. However, because I also value reeducation, it strikes me that the decision to frustrate the reader's desire to identify with the author seems like a calculated risk. To be experienced as an opportunity for reeducation (and not just a suggestion to "get lost") such a text demands the investments of time and patience and, especially for the unfamiliar reader, this work entails an element of specialization. There are plenty of savvy readers who might pick up Kincaid's book and understand immediately that they are being asked to read differently than they are accustomed to reading (there were two or three in my class), but these will also tend to be those who are talented, experienced at reading related texts, or familiar with the political perspectives or positionality of the author. The strongest candidates for reeducation—readers insulated by privilege, whose views would be expanded and usefully challenged by these resistant texts—are the most likely to be resistant, themselves, to what the reading will require of them, and they will therefore be the least likely to benefit from its challenge, except when encounters are structured in academic environments or they are otherwise highly motivated to invest. (This is a reason, perhaps, to appreciate the influence of Oprah's Book Club when it recommends novels such as Morrison's *Beloved* or Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.) What I wish to underscore here is that particularist texts demand particular kinds of work—*kinds that are, ironically, more accessible to those with privilege.* The decision to appeal to an imagined reader who is configured in the more classically "ideal" sense need not always be an invitation to occlude

difference. It might simply be the author's choice to make their material more accessible to a *popular* audience. It is important to remember that all reading does not take place in a classroom and take seriously how reading goes elsewhere and works differently. I cast my lot with Said in believing in the value of

> breaking out of the disciplinary ghettos in which as intellectuals we have been confined, to reopen the blocked social processes ceding objective representation (hence power) of the world to a small coterie of experts and their clients, to consider that the audience for literacy is not a closed circle of three thousand professional critics but the community of human beings living in society, and to regard social reality in a secular rather than a mystical mode, despite all the protestations about realism and objectivity (Said 146).

Sommer argues that "ours is a culture that presumes to reduce the experience of Self and Other into a neat totality. If everything fits into the One, of which the ego is an expression, then the Other fits inside the self with no remainder, no loose, particular, or incompatible features. It is the promise of ultimate fit that drives traditional universalism forward," but, while I agree with her general point here about the cannibalistic tendencies of dominant cultures and the value of resisting this overidentification, I disagree that an author's decision to use the aesthetic of identity can lead only and inevitably to a "neat totality" and collapse of distinctions (Sommer 28). One need only think of the ways in which feminist novels routinely use multiple women characters as screens against which a the main character imagines a series of possible selves she might become; she, and the reader, for that matter, might be encouraged to identify with several different characters without being asked to "disappear into" any one of them. In *Residues of Justice: Law, Literature, Philosophy,* Wai Chee Dimock shows how, even in realism, which is often accused of assuming a neat correspondence between narrative and reality, attempts to find a correspondence between reality, in all its lived complexities, and justice, in its constructedness, reveals many incompatibilities—

"residues" and remainders. It seems to me that, by the very act of reading particularly, every text becomes particularized and any pretenses to universality cannot hold. With strong readings that treat every text as particularly-situated and -constructed:

> In order to evaluate attempts to speak for others in particular instances, we need to analyze the probable or actual effects of the words on the discursive and material context. One cannot simply look at the location of the speaker or her credentials to speak; nor can one look merely at the propositional content of the speech; one must also look at where the speech goes and what it does there…All such evaluations produced in this way will be of necessity indexed. That is, they will obtain for a very specific location and cannot be taken as universal. This simply follows from the fact that the evaluations will be based on the specific elements of historical discursive context, location of speakers and hearers, and so forth. When any of these elements is changed, a new evaluation is called for. (Alcoff 26-27)

In this way, even texts that are understood to make universalist claims and to encourage readers to grossly over identify with others—think of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—are best analyzed, I would argue, by an approach that includes *the attempt to understand what particular reader the author imagined reaching or producing, and with what aesthetic strategies*. In Stowe's case one finds an inversion of idea in producing "obstinate texts," but with a curious relation to the particularist project: rather than simply assume an ideal reader, the goal in her work is cultivate one. She compels her readers to operate in an unfamiliar register, too, forcing their identification with African Americans at a time when many were anxious to deny common membership in a moral community. The aim, as I read it, was to produce an emotionally magnetic text—one that would cultivate a new kind of reader unable to resist the enlarging of her moral universe to include the other. Pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty has argued that "[t]he task of the intellectual, with respect to social justice, is not to provide refinements of social theory, but to sensitize us to the suffering of others, and refine,

deepen and expand our ability to identify with others, to think of others as like ourselves in morally relevant ways" (Ramberg 2007). Rejecting reason as a guarantor of justice, and conceiving of sentiment as a way of breaking through resistances to acknowledging common membership in a larger community, texts like Stowe's tap into the sensibilities of a particular zeitgeist, and, so, *construct a particularly perishable imagined reader*. In that sense her text may appear to operate in a register that's sweepingly universalist, but could hardly be more particularist: it does not work on us in the ways it affected readers of its time, as Jane Tompkins shows in her analysis of the text and its simultaneous broad popularity and rejection by the academy as serious work.[12] She argues that reading Stowe's novel requires the reader to

> set aside some familiar categories for evaluating fiction—stylistic intricacy, psychological subtlety, epistemological complexity—and to see the sentimental novel not as an artifice of eternity answerable to certain formal criteria and to certain psychological and philosophical concerns, but as a political enterprise, halfway between sermon and social theory, that both codifies and attempts to mold the values of its time. (Tompkins, 127).

Sentimental literature uses emotional appeal to demand reader recognition, which has a stronger association in the academy with the politics of colonial domination than it does with a politics of struggle; particularly for

> theorists weaned on the language of alterity and difference, the mere mention of recognition is likely to inspire raised eyebrows. To recognize is not just to trivialize but also to colonize; it is a sign of narcissistic self-duplication, a scandalous solipsism, an imperious expansion of

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[12] For an excellent review of Stowe's book, its popularity, and its reception in the academy, see: Jane Tompkins. "Sentimental Power: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Politics of Literary History." *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860*. New York: Oxford UP, 1985.

> a subjectivity that seeks to appropriate otherness by turning everything into a version of itself. (Felski 27)

As Rita Felski points out in *Uses of Literature*, "what look like political disagreements often say more about the schism between academic criticism and lay reading" and, given that a "hermeneutics of suspicion is now virtually *de rigueur* in literary theory, rather than one option among others," the mechanisms for valuing sentimental codes in literary works—at least in environments dominated by poststructuralist theory—have been outmoded (11-12, 3).[13] However, outside of the academy, the project of using the codes of sentimental education to cultivate a reader who will accept ideas about "justice" tied to "a larger loyalty" retains extremely popular appeal. Lazarus argues in *The Postcolonial Unconscious* that academic focus on incommensurability and texts that refuse reader identification is not an accurate reflection of the majority of postcolonial literatures in production. It is, rather, a reflection of an ideological shift in the academy in which the

> struggle over representation gave way to the struggle against representation itself, on the ground that the desire to speak for, of or even about others was always shadowed by a secretly authoritarian aspiration. The theoretical resort has then often been to a consideration of difference under the rubric of incommensurability. While the idea of incommensurability has been given an airing in some very well-known works of the 'postcolonial' corpus, I suggest that the vast majority of 'postcolonial' literary writings points us in a quite different direction, towards the idea not of 'fundamental alienness' but of deep-seated affinity and community, across and athwart the 'international division of labor. (*The Postcolonial Unconscious* 19)

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[13] Felski credits John Guillory for allowing us to see the split in reception between academic and lay reading as more than an issue of politics, and she credits Eve Sedgewick with identifying the theoretical dominance of the "hermeneutics of suspicion." (11-12, 3)

The desire for common membership in a global community is an idea that all the featured works in this study actively attempt to cultivate in their imagined reader, even as some of them focus heavily on dynamics that actively undermine or prevent equal membership from being realized. They invest heavily in human rights culture and all do so through particular concern for African subjects, affording the opportunity to ask questions about notions of relationship and membership that are not the typical mode of departure for those interested in African literatures. The value in this approach, as I see it, reflects something that anthropologist James Ferguson points out in *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order:*

> The re-emergent question of supra-national membership—of 'Africans' as, in some yet to be defined sense, 'citizens of the world'—puts the question of unequal relations between Africa and the West back on the table in a radical way, after decolonization and national independence had channeled it, for a time, into the question of national development. At this point we can see the emergence of forms of new politics which are not captured in the old frameworks of nationalism and development. These include the emergence of a politics of 'international civil society'… claims of transnational moral responsibility… claims to a supranational authority that might recognize rights that are denied at the level of the nation state… and attempts to assert transnational responsibility directly, often via desperate forms of migration… Analysis of these newly emergent politics is only beginning, but those seeking to understand contemporary African politics, in the widest sense, will need new habits of thinking if we are to grasp their true originality and importance (23).

It will be my goal to engage with some of these important emerging political dynamics as I conduct my analyses of the texts. When I was in North Kivu in 2012, a Congolese friend told me, wryly, that MONUSCO (as the UN mission in the country is called) is "the first government of Congo." He was not entirely joking. What I have experienced in Goma bears out what Ferguson

said of fields saturated with aid in Africa: "As more and more of the functions of the state have been effectively 'outsourced' to NGOs, state capacity has deteriorated rapidly—unsurprisingly, as Joseph Hanlon has pointed out, since the higher salaries and better terms of employment offered by NGOs quickly 'decapitated' governments by luring all the best civil servants out of the government ministries" (Ferguson 38). The weak state and "government by NGO" are in tension with one another, but they are not always merely opposed; instead they are locked, as Agamben noted, in a

> binary world [opposing] a politics of death, that of the criminal states, to a politics of life, that of the humanitarian agents. Politics is defined in moral terms: it consists of a new war of an axis of good against an axis of evil. By an astonishing paradox, at the very moment when some countries are throwing themselves into a moral crusade against their demonized enemies and appropriating the vocabulary and symbolism of humanitarianism, nongovernmental organizations are distancing themselves while nevertheless casting their discourse in the same rhetorical mold. This remarkable mimetism—which operates in both directions—should nevertheless not lead one into a form of relativism that would set warmongers and humanitarians on the same level. The fact that the rhetoric is reproduced does not mean that the politics are equivalent. While it may be fallacious to reduce the war makers to a consistently barbaric "necropolitics" and humanitarians to a purely altruistic "biopolitics," it is much more interesting to compare them in terms of the politics of life they effectively engender. (Fassin 511)

Agamben's insight about the complicity between humanitarianism and the powers they are meant to fight against helps raise important questions about the relationship between advocacy, intervention, and ways that international community can be used to limit or extend different kinds of power. Fassin's rejects Agamben's complaint that the problem is a *separation* of humanitarianism and politics, observing instead that, "rather than become separate, humanitarianism and politics are

tending to merge—in governmental, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental spheres (509).[14] The complicities and conflicts between the politics of life and death in these texts will be of special interest to me, particularly regarding the different ways that governments and humanitarians use "aid bait" to either lay claim to resources, the responsibility to intervene, or (and) the 'Responsibility to Protect"—an emerging human rights norm that aims to alter the definition of state sovereignty so that it might be characterized not only by rights to self-determination but by responsibilities to one's citizenry. In this sense, an advocacy project aimed to ratify the Reponsibility to Protect can illustrate that, although

> the evolution of cosmopolitan norms of justice is a tremendous development, the relationship between the spread of cosmopolitan norms and democratic self-determination is fraught, both theoretically and politically. How can the will of democratic majorities be reconciled with norms of cosmopolitan justice? How can legal norms and standards, which originate outside the will of democratic legislatures, become binding on them? (Benhabib 17)

As Benhabib notes in *Another Cosmopolitanism*, the question of state sovereignty lies at the heart of major political struggles and the "distinguishing feature of the period we are in cannot be captured by the bon mots of 'globalization' and 'empire'; rather, we are also facing the rise of an international human rights regime and the spread of cosmopolitan norms, while the relationship between state sovereignty and such norms is becoming more contentious and conflictual (17). By examining literatures designed to spread cosmopolitan norms and cultivate international human rights culture

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[14] Fassin gives the following examples as support for this merging of spheres: "In France at least three former presidents or vice presidents of MSF have become ministers; some have been elected to political office, others have entered the civil service at high levels--not only the traditional aid sector, but also in health and social welfare. Conversely, former ministers of social affairs or of health have become presidents of Action contre la faim (Action Against Hunger) and the French Red Cross. Thus one is seeing a humanitarianization of national health and social policy and a politicization of humanitarian organizations. At the international level the process is even more marked, and one sees how, particularly since the Rwandan genocide, with the French army's belated Operation Turquoise, Western military action in arenas of disaster or conflict is conducted under the banner of humanitarianism, and increasingly insistent attempts are made to bring nongovernmental organizations on board" (509-510).

we can see some of the possibilities as well as the complications and limits tied to justice imagined at the level of international civil society.

1.2 UNDERWRITING HUMAN RIGHTS

All the focal works I examine in this study aim to make "common sense" of human-rights norms—that is to make them "both legible and legislatable, imaginable and articulable" (Slaughter 6). Each of the fictions I examine can be seen as an "*intentional witness*" helping to arbitrate a series of difficult arguments about the translation of life into law that is properly cyclical and self-renewing:

> Human rights, like desire, is a battlefield with ethical dimensions. Social conflict may be occasionally destructive of the social bond, but it is also one step in the development of political and ethical forms of community. But the desire for the other, remains a step ahead of law. It keeps seeking greater formal recognition but, as soon as the claim for legal form has been granted, its achievement undermines the desire for the other. This intricate but paradoxical intertwining of identity, desire, and human rights is Hegel's lesson for postmodern jurisprudence. (Douzinas 405)

Hegel shows us that recognition is always *mutual* recognition, and while this can be expressed in powerfully uneven ways, it nevertheless speaks to an ongoing set of relations that are dynamic and responsive, and can therefore be changed. In his study focused on the Bildungsroman Slaughter offers important insights into the literature's role in instituting and mainstreaming law. *Human Rights, Inc: The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law* examines the relationship between forms of world literature and international law, and the ways that these are mutually constitutive and ratifying. He focuses on the aspects of literature that enable law to function as a *regulator*—corralling ideas into an orderly, common understanding of norms—but I am more interested in the ways that

which literature enables law to act as *problem-solver*—aiming to revise its practices so that they better align with ideals of equity and justice held in common. I do not see the establishment of legal norms merely as a process of translating normative experience into common sense; I see it as the active search for common ground in a field of ideas about being human and living in the world that are highly contested. As the organization Search For Common Ground asserts, such an act "does not necessarily mean to be satisfied with a compromise or in finding the lowest common denominator. On the contrary, it means finding the highest common denominator, finding a common vision with the other person, and working together to achieve it" (SFCG Manual 47).

Art is capable of staging very compelling and complex bids for social inclusion that help readers search for common ground and accommodate (not simply integrate) the represented reality into their imaginative and moral universes. Consider the collection made to commemorate Amnesty International's fiftieth birthday; the organization sought out works by writers "from many different corners of the world" who are all "inspired by human rights" and published the resultant anthology, *Freedom: Stories Celebrating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, in 2009 (Cox xiii). Celebration seems an odd choice of qualifier. As one might reasonably expect, this project does claim an affirmative goal: to "advance" Amnesty International's "vision of a world in which all people enjoy all the rights set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted in 1948 to prevent the recurrence of the atrocities of World War II" (Cox xiii). However much as the vision itself and the value of its commitments are underwritten by the stories included in this collection, what takes center stage in these narratives are the realities that point to the enormity of the work yet to be done in securing and protecting the rights named in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The tenor of the collection is principally that of longing, not celebration, and the narratives underscore the need for redoubled and collective commitment to end the abuses and enslavements represented. The rights ostensibly guaranteed by international law appear as an ideal

horizon—a promise announced on the first page of each story, above the titles, with the exhibition of an article from the UDHR (whose full wording appears in the book's epilogue). It is not difficult to guess the typical relation between a majority of these stories and the articles they are tied to. This is clearly illustrated by Marina Lewycka's story "Business Philosophy," which is prefaced with "Article 4 No One Shall Be Held in Slavery," and sketches the brutal and thriving business of sex trafficking in the Balkans; it is told from the perspective of the business owner who complains about his gout and a "girlie" of his named Katya who has turned into a whistleblower after escaping captivity and seeking the help of organizations in the region working to provide refuge to women in her position (Lewycka 37). He makes the woman who advocates for her the object of his ire, calling her a "hairy, anti-sex, lesbian communist religious sour-pants whore" who "feeds Katya some human rights cow tripe about, no one shall be held in slavery or servitude and other such piffle" and he resents that this woman is determined to make his activity public, despite the police's attempts to hush up the scandal (Lewycka 37). To stay in business the narrator relies on a system of corruption and complicity between shadowy businessmen and local authorities, many of whom are his patrons after hours, and he is annoyed that it "cost [him] a gold pig in bribes to get [the trial] stopped" once the names of prominent folk have been published in the newspaper; he complains that he has been made unfairly into a scapegoat, that he's being treated as "someone to pin the blame on" when, he is merely "giving [his] customers what they want"—supplying the demand of those obliged to point fingers when the issue comes to light (Lewycka 39, 40). To underscore his point about just how much business is booming, he explains that his associates have expanded operations to send women to the men of Western Europe who "can't get enough of our girlies" (Lewycka 40). He notes that the traffickers are biding their time awaiting independence for Kosovo, which will offer them a new (and safer) route through Albania.

Though the initial spotlight on his business interrupts it, the narrator expresses begrudging satisfaction that "after a while things get back to normal, and Katya goes back to Mummy and the lesbian goes off to brag about her women's refuge—what a load of donkey doo—and our punters breathe a sigh of relief and the girlies get their knickers off, and even my toes settle down" and he appears ready to ease back into his normal routine (40). However, just when he believes that he has managed to control the situation, the story ends with his lament that

> another bunch of wankers start poking their noses in. What happened to the trial? Why was it dropped? What about all the big names that were named—how come no one got punished? Questions questions. And when there aren't any answers, they start calling for the case to be reopened. Amnesty International, they call them. Amnesty. What a joke. I'm the one that needs bloody amnesty around here (Lewycka 40).

In fewer than five pages the story identifies a crime (trafficking and violence against women), victims (like Katya) who need protection and advocates to work on their behalf, perpetrators (like the narrator) complicit in systematized abuse who will not cease their trade unless named and exposed sufficiently enough to face legal repercussions, and nongovernmental agents (like Amnesty) committed to "righting wrongs" that merit support and, if empowered to act in the best interest of individuals at risk, can help tip the balance toward justice even in unideal circumstances where governmental systems are weak or corrupt. For a book whose proceeds were allocated entirely to supporting Amnesty International's work, perhaps there could exist no better endorsement than to be heroicized as the worthy opponent of this gout-ridden, self-pitying human trafficker and his plentiful ilk. Amnesty appears, at the end of the story, as a last line of defense when things threaten to relapse into "business as usual," and they are represented as a perpetual foil to those, like the narrator, interested in maintaining a status quo where women like Katya are routinely victimized and held captive. The story is designed to shape the reader's understanding of a problem in terms that

relate directly to the UDHR—to recognize the "business as usual" of the narrator's world as an unacceptable norm that infringes on the human rights of the women who are often unwittingly and unfairly caught in this underworld of sexual predation. At the broadest level, it suggests that international outcry is needed to arrest this cycle and that one of the main conditions for change is to first "shine a light" on abuses and make them widely known and recognized as a crime.[15] It is a variety of the logic that "breaking the silence" is the key to empowerment. The story also illustrates Amnesty's precise institutional role in combating a problem that it characterizes as global; the story configures the structures of complicity as well as the possibilities for justice as supranational. The narrative effectively brands the organization as a dogged champion of righteous causes and defender of the vulnerable that does not rely on national authority to conduct its work. This provides no great depth of insight into anything particular about the Balkans. In many ways it is a caricature of a universal villain operating in a weak state—useful to notions of globalism and boundary-crossing. The story is meant to popularize Amnesty's expression of concern about the issue of trafficking in terms that relate directly to the UDHR, and, thus, to human rights norms. It is clear that a story like "Business Philosophy" is designed primarily for institutional use, and perhaps even for "office convenience."

I agree with Colin Greenland that, "[a]s a compendium of global injustice, *Freedom* is illuminating and impressive. As an anthology, it's more like a box of tough chocolates: three dozen different centres, all containing the same indigestible nuts. So much poverty, oppression, torture; so many barbed wire fences, prison cells, smug politicians and dull-eyed soldiers" (Greenland). He points to the ways in which many of the stories "seem less like fiction than case studies or sketches for magazine articles. Creation reverts to transcription, as if the immensity of the issues overpowers

15 "Shining a light" is language that Amnesty has often used to describe the exposure of abuses—so much so, that its 50th anniversary campaign and film were named "Shine a Light on Human Rights" (Amnesty International).

the imagination" and he goes on to admit, somewhat sheepishly, that "the most satisfactory, to the selfish, are perhaps the more oblique and inventive stories" which make the reader work a bit harder to connect the UDHR article with the associated narrative, and "might be reprinted anywhere and read without reference to its origins as propaganda" (Greenland). Among the handful of stories he names as comparatively satisfying is Rohinton Mistry's "The Scream," a piece that was, in fact, published elsewhere prior to its appearance in this anthology, unlike the majority of the works commissioned specifically for Amnesty's collection. What Greenland seems to be valuing here is the more "literary" of the stories—the ones that are more likely to surprise and to use the tools in the literary arsenal in intriguing ways. "The Scream" departs from the typical formula of using the UDHR article as a rigid framework of concern—a right whose violation is then illustrated by the story, presented as a problem to be robustly solved. Above the title of Mistry's story appears a reference to the UDHR's Article 29, summarizing it as "Duty to Others"; it is an article famously at the center of philosophical wrangling at the Geneva Convention, when the UN's member states struggled to agree on how to define the normative relationship between an individual and society. The issue of responsibility to others is not merely illustrated in this story, but questioned and tied overtly to interpretive work. In Mistry's story an elderly man lives out some of his waning days in a Bombay apartment where he meditates on his many physical discomforts and complains of neglect by his family. As part of his description of daily living, he explains that he's begun to hear signs of torture; at night, he says, a scream "comes like a disembodied hand to clutch [his] throat and choke [his] windpipe," adding to his "many worries" and inability to sleep (Mistry 372). There are indications in the narrative that a number of his complaints may be better understood as the paranoid signs of dementia. For instance, he insists on identifying a young man in the household as a servant, despite the fact that his children express repeated incredulity at his failure to recognize his grandson. However, the man's careful observations, strong grasp of language, and sharp humor

counterbalance such lapses in memory and complicate a reading that would judge the man as an unreliable narrator. He is both curmudgeonly and empathetic, perspicacious with significant lapses in memory. It is difficult to know how much to believe of what he claims. The man insists that his family is determined to trick him. While it is far-fetched that the family would lie to him about things like his grandson's relation to him, other details in the story do move readers to consider whether the family is really acting for the narrator's benefit: he claims that they laugh at him, that they restrict him unnecessarily while pretending it's for his welfare, that they blame him for sundry things outside of his control, and that they join the community in reveling at the opportunity to accuse and then needlessly bind "a harmless drunkard under the stairs" as though he were some kind of criminal (Mistry 381). He adds to this list of complaints that the family refuses to believe he's been hearing a scream, telling him that he's imagined it. Here he protests strongly by addressing the reader directly:

> But wait. You be the judge. You weigh the evidence and form your opinion. Listen carefully to my words. Regard the concinnity of my phrasing. Observe the narrative coherence and the precise description of my pathetic state. Does this sound like a crazy man's story? Does it? I implore you, plead my case with the ones in the back room. It is no more or less than your duty. Apathy is a sin. This great age did not come upon me without teaching me virtue and vice… Apathy is a sin. And yet, not one of them goes to help the screamer. (Mistry 381)

The direct address announces the reader's role in the adjudication of evidence. The narrator obliges us to read his narrative as testimony and to accept our role as the ultimate arbiter. All along he has configured the reader as ideal by expecting the best of the reader, placing his trust and confidence in the reader. This is not the classic "ideal reader" of which Sommer speaks, but one the narrator himself has constructed in hopes of finding an advocate. He has praised us for

understanding the difficult words he is using, for refusing to laugh at him when his family has unkindly done so, and, in asking us to act on his behalf. In doing so, he disposes us kindly toward him. He cultivates our sympathies and helps us feel the terrible weight of not being believed. Before we can protest, he has absorbed us into the complexities of the "moral universes" he inhabits—asking us, not to ourselves negotiate its spheres of responsibility and spheres of influence—but to simply listen to him out of duty and human kindness because, "(as Thomas Haskell put it) failing to go to the aid of a suffering stranger might become an unconscionable act" (Dimock 155). He readies us to strain our ears in listening to hear him, and—perhaps—to hear the scream. In this story it is the reader who is the last line of defense, not an organization. Here complicity is the very basis for advocacy; it is our inability to turn away that provides the basis for action. I find it relevant that the short story was not conceived as a "human rights" story, but originally published in 2008 as part of a limited release of 150 signed and numbered collectors copies sold for $500 apiece—a fundraising effort benefitting World Literacy Canada, "to help create a world where knowledge and power are more equally shared" ("The Scream"). The story reminds us that the buyer, the reader, the judge is always privileged, but that there are nevertheless good ways that text, in the face of such inequalities, can help us imagine how to act for "a world where knowledge and power are more equally shared." Surely this is the best form of advocacy.

Until something like planetary citizenship comes to pass, investment in the notion of international community may be the best way to keep both the possibilities and limitations in view of global projects that demand identification with others as the basis for fighting injustices. The compulsion to recognize the suffering of others is not always already an expression of power. As Mistry's story shows, it can be deeply unsettling. One can feel inclined to think "who, me" and cast a glance over one's shoulder, wishing to duck out of sight. Advocacy that both compels and unsettles can make us more literate advocates—informed citizens who can help bring to popular

attention and to trial some of the things that require institutional recognition and amelioration. As Arundhati Roy put it when discussing her view of the modern writer's responsibility:

> once you see it, you can't unsee it…What is happening in the world today lies, at the moment, just outside the realm of common human understanding. It is the writers, the poets, the artists, the singers, the filmmakers who can make the connections, who can find ways of bringing it into common understanding. Who can translate cash-flow charts and scintillating board room speeches into real stories about real people with real lives. Stories about what it's like to lose your home, your land, your job, your dignity, your past, and your future to an invisible force. To someone or something you can't see. You can't hate. You can't even imagine. It is a new space that has been offered to us today. A new kind of challenge. It offers opportunities for a new kind of art. An art which can make the impalpable palpable, make the intangible tangible, and the invisible visible. An art that can draw out the incorporeal adversary and make it real. Bring it to book. (Roy 32)

As an example of boardroom speech touting profit margins and hiding ugly truths, she explains that "in business circles, the Enron contract is called 'the sweetheart deal.' A euphemism for rape without redress" (58-59). Rape is not merely a metaphor for what is happening to Congo's resources, as I noted in the opening of this introduction; it is literally connected to sexual violence in the region by contributing to destabilization and illegal trafficking in minerals. I agree with Roy that wrongs cannot be righted unless they are first made imaginable and legible, brought into an institutional framework and into common human understanding.

1.3 NOUVELLES CAUSES CÉLÈBRES

My methodology combines phenomenological, comparative, and historical modes of engaging texts to analyze *Kony 2012, Johnny Chien Méchant, Johnny Mad Dog, Ruined,* and *What is the What*. I pay special attention to the advocacy concerns inscribed in each, and to the ways that each relates to a nouvelle cause célèbre—that of sexually victimized women, child soldiers, and refugees escaping genocide. To draw out these concerns and show how they either attempt to bring problems "into common understanding" or seize on trends that have already mainstreamed a particular discourse or narrative strain, I will sometimes compare them to stories that 1.) attempt to define problems and solicit specific types of support in the Global North, like the films *War Child*, *Lumo*, *Pushing the Elephant*, and *Women in War Zones*, and 2.) inform people "on the ground" about these problems, as in print publications by SFCG and local organizations. I believe two of Felski's critical concepts for engaging texts, "shock" and "recognition," help readers access the range of what these works offer. Shock and recognition are important concepts not only for engaging with aesthetics and politics in the representations of African subjects but also for ethics and law on an international scale. If Slaughter understood international law's formative moment in 1948 to seek out the wisdom of a narrative international legislators felt would offer a representation of acceptable norms, then I would venture an update: that international law now appears to want (and perhaps need) allies more attentive to *unacceptable norms*. These works assert the protagonist's rights to "free and full development of the human personality" while demonstrating how they have been excluded from such developments. In this way, these stories seek serve as *deliberate witnesses* (they are begging to be put on the stand and have the reader as judge), and they are clearly cognizant of human rights norms and repeated failures to observe international law. In each story, forms of oppression and

atrocity, as well as direct references to failures by international organizations (like the UNHCR, Médecins Sans Frontières), *testify very clearly to needs for better ways forward.* All of these stories effectively make the case that the status quo supports intolerable forms of injustice. In the cases of *Kony 2012, Johnny Mad Dog, Ruined,* and *What is the What,* the producers, playwright and authors all set out to craft a story with advocacy goals that are not rooted in personal experience of suffering, but have been stimulated by concern and belief in a common membership in a global community that requires forms of civic responsibility. They each gather testimony from victims, discuss the conflicts with experts, and aim to depict "realities on the ground" in ways that are understandable to an international audience. *Kony 2012, Johnny Mad Dog,* and *Ruined* were used in professional environments by decision-makers and legislators as they conversed about how to develop or revise policies to better respond to sexual violence and to protect children in zones of conflict. In the contexts of professional concern, all of these works succeeded in strengthening the grounds on which the international community could make a case for intervention and recognize those at the center of these conflicts as victims. They also gained broad popular appeal, raising the profile of conversation about the conflicts each of them depicts, and defining the root causes. For *Kony 2012* I find its effectiveness unsettling; the organization manipulated the facts to streamline the story of child abduction and give it rhetorical power, did not seem to listen carefully to either the victims or the professionals giving these children service and support, and ultimately used the popularity of its documentary to promote US military intervention in Uganda—a dubious goal for advocacy work. What I admire about a project like *Ruined* is that the work registers careful listening on Nottage's part to the women's experiences. It is possible to see in her project a compilation of the women she has interviewed, to follow their struggles, and not just to register their trauma, but to understand their attempts to build a new life. Keeping these different women's stories in tension with each other helps combat the oversimplifcation or flattening of the characters into ideal victims that is

common to advocacy narratives while still providing compelling ways of seeing the injustice involved in these women's victimizations and the worrisome similarities between their stories. The film *Johnny Mad Dog* also listens carefully to the child soldiers and reproduces pieces of their experience, giving them agency over a significant part of the creative process; while admirable in its approach, and effective in providing a strong basis for international recognition of the child soldiers as victims, this project seemed blind to the ethical complications. In its eagerness to justify its work rather than confront those complications, it missed an opportunity to depart from an accepted narrative about child soldiers and fully confront the uncomfortable realities of children's participation in war, which is a missing and important element in child advocacy. Works like the novel *Johnny Chien Méchant* and *What is the What* are valuable precisely because they draw the reader's attention to the complexities of advocacy and to the relations between those who have the power to mainstream narratives and those who must navigate a system from a position of persistent vulnerability.

2.0 *KONY 2012* AND *JOHNNY CHIEN MÉCHANT:* THE CHILD SOLDIER, BILDUNG, & ADVOCACY[16]

In 1985, ten years before his execution by the military government of General Sani Abacha for scathing political critiques, Nigerian author and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa published *Sozaboy: A Novel in Rotten English*, the story of a naïve teenager who takes up arms and joins the Biafran war. The story ends, famously, with a sign-off asking the reader to interpret the novel as the narrator's epistolary act; it also concludes with an epiphany: "And I was thinking how I was prouding before to go to soza and call myself Sozaboy. But now if anybody say anything about war or even fight, I will just run and run and run and run and run. Believe me yours sincerely" (Saro-Wiwa 181). In this narrative the deflation of the young man's expectations, his categorical rejection of the sozaboy identity, and his anti-war sentiments serve as an instrument of awareness-raising and political critique: the novel is an act of public witness condemning the necropolitics of the postcolonial state and a literary treatise proposing the need for the human rights paradigm and its politics of life.[17] This can be considered an early example in the trend toward global attention to the participation of children in conflict. It was published only a few years before the 1990 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) treaty which stands out as the one most quickly and widely ratified in the UN's history (with only two of the 194 member nation states abstaining—the US and Somalia—and the rest in agreement).[18] The treaty recognized "the need to extend particular care to the child" that had

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[16] For an overview of the Ugandan LRA rebellion, see Appendix B.

[17] Achille Mbembe's use of necropolitics and Didier Fassin's reflection on Human Rights' "politics of life" are concepts I will review in more detail as the chapter unfolds.

[18] During the drafting of the document, the US actively participated, and it also signed the later Optional Protocols 11b regulating "the participation of children in armed conflict", and 11c prohibiting the "sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography", but it remains the only member state involved in the drafting process not to ratify or declare intentions of ratifying the treaty (OHCHR). Somalia's transitional government signed the document and declared its

been set forth in a number of international legal precedents tracing back to the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1924 (OHCHR).[19] Since the publication of Saro-Wiwa's novel, personal accounts of youth's participation in battle have been increasingly employed as a vehicle to condemn children's participation in armed conflict and to underwrite or provide leverage for a variety of legal and humanitarian responses. Stories about the "child soldier problem" appeared with increasing frequency, especially after 2000, when the concern gained very specific institutional attention as the UN adopted and opened for ratification the "Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict." In its preamble, the Optional Protocol announces calls "for continuous improvement of the situation of children without distinction, as well as for their development and education in conditions of peace and security" and recognizes "the special needs of those children who are particularly vulnerable to recruitment or use in hostilities contrary to the present Protocol owing to their economic or social status or gender" (OPCRC). The period following the Responsibility to Protect (instituted in 2005) has seen a remarkable proliferation of "child soldier" novels, memoirs, ethnographic accounts, and films.[20]

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intentions to ratify in 2009. The only other member state who has not signed is South Sudan, a newly-formed nation whose independence was declared in July of 2011.

[19] The precedents for extending 'particular care' to children were connected to the following precedents: "Bearing in mind that the need to extend particular care to the child has been stated in the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924 and in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child adopted by the General Assembly on 20 November 1959 and recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (in particular in articles 23 and 24), in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (in particular in article 10) and in the statutes and relevant instruments of specialized agencies and international organizations concerned with the welfare of children" (OHCHR).

[20] Here is a useful, though not an exhaustive list of publications and productions about the experience of child soldiers. Even a cursory survey shows that the majority of these products feature African children. **Novels**: Ahmadou Kourouma *Allah N'est Pas Oblige* (2000), Emmanuel Dongala *Johnny Chien Méchant* (2000/ Eng 2005), Uzodinma Iweala *Beasts of No Nation* (2005), Chris Abani *Song For Night: A Novella* (2007), Delia Jarrett-Macauley *Moses, Citizen and Me* (2005). **Memoirs**: China Keitetsi *Child Soldier: Fighting for My Life* (2004), Grace Akallo *Girl Soldier: A Story of Hope for Northern Uganda's Children* (2007), *God Grew Tired of Us* (2007), Ishmael Beah *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* (2008), Emmanuel Jal *War Child: A Child Soldier's Story* (2009). **Ethnographies and other professional accounts including child soldier testimony:** *Innocents Lost: When Child Soldiers Go To War* (2005), *One Day the Soldiers Came: Voices of Children in War (2007)*, *Stolen Angels: The Kidnapped Girls of Uganda* (2009). **Films:** *Soldier Child* (1998), Children of War (2000), *Voces Inocentes* (English title: *Innocent Voices*) (2004), *Child Soldiers (2002), War Dance* (2007), *Ezra* (2007), *Invisible*

One is prompted to ask, what is the relation between the development of law regarding child protections and the appearance of so many of these narratives? On the one hand, it is understandable how developments in law might raise public awareness and contribute to supply and demand. On the other hand, as I will demonstrate, the figure of the child soldier fits very awkwardly within "the lines laid down by the official institutional structures of representation" in human rights discourse, and the urgency with which narratives—both legal and literary—try to solicit forms of recognition speak to not only the nature of the problem represented by children's participation in conflict, but problems in representation itself as international institutions struggle to provide protections to the subaltern ("Can the subaltern speak?" 306).

The high profile of representational projects tied to child soldiers cannot be understood merely as a case of greater public awareness—that is, an evolution in collective consciousness. In his often-cited book on the subject, *Armies of the Young*: *Child Soldiers in War and Terrorism*, the cultural anthropologist and practicing lawyer David M. Rosen discusses how this increased attention to children's participation in war signifies a set of acute political contestations at both national and international levels:

> The child-soldier 'crisis' is a modern political crisis, which is only partly related to the actual presence of children in war. In modern discourse, it is difficult to disentangle humanitarian issues from political ones because humanitarian groups increasingly define themselves as political actors, and political groups use humanitarian rhetoric to further their own goals. The language of humanitarianism and human rights has become the language of political discourse. Little attention was paid to the presence of child soldiers in the era of national

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Children (2006), *War Child* (2008), Returned: Child Soldiers of Nepal's Maoist Army (2008), Heart of Fire (2008), *Kassim the Dream* (2008), *Wide Angle: The Lord's Children* (2008), *The Rescue: The Story of Joseph Kony's Child Soldiers* (2009), *Rebelle (War Witch)* (2012).

liberation movements, but it has become a significant issue now that postcolonial states face their own insurgencies." (157)

A forthright consideration of historical fact proves that children's participation in wars is old, but the concept of "the child soldier *as an abused and exploited victim of war*" is relatively new and the surge in international attention serves to underscore that "the struggle over age has an increasingly global dimension" (Rosen 6, 132; emphasis mine). Keeping this dynamic in view clarifies some of the political stakes—particularly where interpretive communities rely on child soldier stories as calls to action. Rosen suggests that institutionalized attitudes about children and conflict tend to serve various bureaucratic ends, not only to mobilize support for projects aimed at relief or assistance, but by lending legitimation for policing and interventionism—that is, wherever power seeks ways to frame its activities of self-preservation or aggrandizement as practical and benevolent matters of responsibility and exigency. It is clear that strong messages of imperilment, the ethics of care, and discourses of humanitarianism continue to be useful to state powers as a means to sanitize, repackage, and reuse old models of universalist or humanist ideas that have been key in past to garnering public support for imperialist enterprises. Jean Bricmont's *Humanitarian Imperialism: Using Human Rights to Sell War,* for example, gives a historical account charting how the imperative to relieve suffering has been used repeatedly as a pretext for military intervention overseas. Indeed, he argues, power needs a justifying ideology and "it is fairly difficult to find an openly cynical power; individuals living on the margins of society, such as street gangs or mafias, no doubt provide the best examples" (Bricmont 30). Spivak goes further to claim that the benevolent gestures of power can be found in a much broader segment of the global population than the "dictators, monarchs, bosses, aristocrats, bureaucrats, or colonialists" serving as Bricmont's models (Bricmont 29). She does this in part because her feminist commitments take seriously the history of power relations operating in private as well as in public spheres, but she also explains, in "Righting Wrongs," that

modern operations of power are not demarcated along the lines of geography and race so neatly as they once were, and that the rise of globalization means that "the burden of the fittest" may serve as the contemporary, global analogue to the "white man's burden," indicating that a wealthy global class and its acts of philanthropy are indexes for new operations of power ("Righting Wrongs" 538).

Consider the striking case of *Kony 2012*, a thirty-minute social documentary produced by the American nonprofit organization Invisible Children that is said to have been the most viral video in history, reaching more than 100 million viewers worldwide within its first six days.[21] Launching a social networking awareness campaign that targeted younger people, the organization aimed to mobilize pressure on twenty selected American "culture makers" and "policy makers" with platforms and clout, to spread a sense of urgency as widely as possible regarding the atrocities committed by the Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony, and thereby, in their words, to "make Kony famous." In this at least, they succeeded. On March 15, 2012, ten days after the film's release, the Pew Research Center published a poll showing that almost a quarter of all Americans aged 18 to 29 had watched the video. Social media was saturated with voices of support, often messianic in tone. Invisible Children called for two responses: 1) buying a $30 "action kit" of bracelets, buttons, stickers, posters, and a t-shirt, as part of the awareness campaign to increase public attention, and 2) pressuring the US government to intervene militarily to capture Kony. Their stated goal was to produce international pressure that would bring Kony to justice in the International Criminal Court.

But before long, there were waves of criticism. Advocates, academics, and aid workers, especially, pointed out misleading information in the film—e.g. the fact that it had been six years since Joseph Kony and the LRA were active in Uganda—and it was attacked on many other fronts.

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[21] The popularity of this documentary was not only manifest in the astonishing number of views this video had but in the fundraising that resulted. Financial reports for 2012 (which, because Invisible Children is an NGO, are a matter of public record) indicate that the group made $14,881,591 *in profits* for the year from what they have labeled "awareness products," a majority of this being the T-shirts and "action kits" promoted by the *Kony 2012* video. Their annotated financial statements can be found on their website: http://invisiblechildren.com/financials/

The Pew Research poll indicates that such criticism stimulated some skepticism but that an overwhelming majority of people continued to favor the campaign. Meanwhile, as arguments raged online, a nonprofit group set up a public screening north of Kampala enabling local Ugandans to view the film. The event was publicized heavily on Ugandan radio and attracted more than 5,000 attendees. Al Jazeera TV coverage showed the audience growing angry, and they interviewed some Ugandans who objected to having their suffering commercialized and to Kony's being granted celebrity status. The evening ended with rocks being thrown at the screen (Flock). By then the film was making its way in America into the halls of power, with media personalities and celebrities like Nicholas Kristof, Oprah Winfrey, and many others defending and spreading it. The massive attention and pressure on the US government yielded a response in Congress. Politico reported that

> More than a third of the 100 senators introduced a bipartisan resolution… condemning Kony and his Lord's Resistance Army for their "unconscionable crimes against humanity" in central Africa, including rapes, murders and child abductions. House members are giving floor speeches about Kony. And some senators are discussing how to create a bounty for Kony's capture or death. "This is about someone who, without the Internet and YouTube, their dastardly deeds would not resonate with politicians. When you get 100 million Americans looking at something, you will get our attention," said Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), a co-sponsor of the resolution who's now working on the bounty bill. "This YouTube sensation is gonna help the Congress be more aggressive and will do more to lead to his demise than all other action combined." (Wong)

The African Union, having just met in February to discuss how to deal with the problem of the LRA (or what it represented), was obliged to ramp up its efforts due to the increased international pressure. The head of the U.N. office in Central Africa, Abou Moussa, "said soaring international interest in Kony had spurred regional efforts to eliminate the LRA", adding that "[t]he

awareness has been useful, very important" (Muhumuza). A follow-up video, *Kony 2012: Beyond Famous,* was released a month after the first, giving some further information about the situation in the region and including Ugandan voices supportive of Invisible Children's work (something largely missing from the first video). To legitimize its call for U.S. military intervention (something they had been criticized heavily for promoting), the video notes that "traditional methods" aren't working, citing the five failed peace processes and the impotence of the UN to resolve this issue, despite its 2005 initiative on the "Responsibility to Protect." Using Darfur as compelling evidence for the failure of institutional means, the video recasts the "Responsibility to Protect" as the mandate of world citizens who are connected to each other globally. On screen (and on nearly all of its merchandizing products) *Kony 2012* projects an inverted social hierarchy triangle as its logo. The video makes clear that the logo symbolizes the "new world" we live in, where power/knowledge has shifted so that the privileged control once held by the elite is now in the hands of the masses. In this new age, they suggest, with direct access to information as never before, the public can serve as agents of change by putting tremendous pressure on the elite. Under the inverted triangle one sees an invitation to "join the revolution," and, given the scope of response, a number of publications have called this phenomenon a "global movement."

The case of *Kony 2012* curiously inverts the pattern that concerns Bricmont; whereas the phenomenon of governments using humanitarian discourse to "sell war" to a public scrutinizing its extension of power and use of national resources is well-documented, here we see citizens pressuring government to extend its power internationally in the name of humanism, implying that no cost is too great. While conceived as an inversion, this activity does not indicate a dramatic overturn in the ideological or historical power paradigms that the makers of *Kony 2012* suggest; though they use the language of revolution, their approach is clearly not a threat to the current order

of things.[22] Agamben suggests, in fact, that reduction of human rights to "bare life" shares an underlying premise with a predatory state's exercise of bio-power:

> The separation between humanitarianism and politics that we are experiencing today is the extreme phase of the separation of the rights of man from the rights of the citizen. In the final analysis, however, humanitarian organizations - which today are more and more supported by international commissions - can only grasp human life in the figure of bare or sacred life, and therefore, despite themselves, maintain a secret solidarity with the very powers they ought to fight. (133)

This caveat is useful; uncoupling civil and human rights can lead to co-optation by state power. In the case of *Kony 2012*, for instance, it is only by ignoring the Ugandan state's role and responsibilities towards its citizens as well as the US's longstanding support of Museveni's dictatorial power that these advocates can treat the US military operation and Ugandan military as benign humanitarian partners. This, in turn, makes it possible for the organization, in the course of its operations, to legitimize forms of engagement designed by and for national interests and political ends.[23] However, it is also important to note that what we see in this film is not a complete severance between human and civil rights; instead the film performs surgical excisions of national history, grafting pieces of civil struggles onto injustices abroad. Given Invisible Children's evident frustration and impatience about working through the international institutional channels in place

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[22] In addition to using the concept of revolution, they also use the phrase "fight war." The discourse of militant opposition is code for denunciation and action. Clearly, a group that conceived of itself in ideological terms as revolutionary would not generally amass support for projects undertaken by the military of a state.

[23] It is notable that *Kony 2012* put its support behind a US military operation that had already been deployed by the Obama administration several months prior, and which had raised a number of eyebrows, when they sent a group of 100 special operations troops or "military advisers" to help the Ugandan army neutralize the LRA. Many experts pointed out that the timing of this effort did not make logistical sense, as the LRA was severely weakened and posed no national threat. *Kony 2012* appears to have a conflict of interest in its promotion of a military solution here. Even if the US troops are not physically engaging in battle, it is clear that supporting military confrontation of Kony would result in some deaths of the child soldiers he uses—the ones the film is claiming a responsibility to rescue.

which have failed to protect the powerless and marginalized, they cast an eye backward at American civil rights discourse and make use of a stance in radical politics that demanded immediate recognition of equal human worth and espoused the militant view that this goal should be sought "by any means necessary." Rather than understanding the abolitionist's position as a carefully-worded threat hoping to avoid violence—one that actually commits to using the least amount of force necessary—*Kony 2012*'s repeated mantra, "stop at nothing," encourages viewers to see their work and power of influence in a field of unlimited possibility. What we find here is not a cleavage between civil and human rights, but a linking of civil concerns and duties to humanitarian ideals as a means to formulate naïve notions of world citizenship.

As a piece of propaganda full of glittering generalities, thought-terminating clichés, oversimplifications, half-truths, and inaccuracies serviceable to branding, *Kony 2012* clearly calls for a hermeneutics of suspicion.[24] However, as an aesthetic product bound up in the politics of recognition and codes of justice, the narrative calls for a hermeneutics of faith to ascribe meaning and significance to the experience of the suffering, and to provide institutional recognition for the injustice represented. In her article "Human Rights, Child-Soldier Narratives, and the Problem of Form" Moynagh shows that these narratives often call on the codes of sentimental literature which have been historically used to establish cases of injustice against the marginalized. She notes that many child soldier memoirs, "[l]ike the autobiographical narratives produced under the auspices of the first international human rights movement [and] the movement for the abolition of slavery… participate in a 'division of literary labor' that presupposes that a certain kind of reader and, in most instances also a certain kind of editor or journalist, are needed to 'complete' the text." (Moynagh 46,

[24] I mean suspicion here in the technical sense (reading as form of demystification) but also in the sense of taking a cautious approach. Many critics have, with good reason, used the film as a symptomatic example of the representational problems blighting advocacy efforts that seek international attention and powerfully interventionist responses to African violence. Moreover, the ease with which the organization sold US military intervention to American youths in the package of human rights discourse ought to raise not only alarms but also important questions.

Andrews 32-33). I would like to suggest that some of the critics have tended to react to *Kony 2012* in the same way that a majority of contemporary academics respond to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Knowing that the politics of recognition has been split along lines of power and access, academics may be encouraged to dismiss sentimental conventions as an exhibition of the "simplistic moralizing" and "pity at a distance" that characterize so many privileged appeals (Moynagh 44). I think, however, that this dismissal misses an opportunity to reflect on the ways in which sentimental narratives serve to cultivate communities of sympathetic readers outside the academy—particularly wherever professional work or political commitments rely on forms of advocacy. Such interpretive communities are concerned with a need for political recognition, for "acknowledgement [where] the claim for recognition is a claim for acceptance, dignity, and inclusion in public life. Its force is ethical rather than epistemic, a call for justice rather than a claim to truth… recognition in politics involves a demand for public acceptance and validation" (Felski 29-30). Felski suggests that academic approaches should look for ways to understand literature that solicits a hermeneutics of faith "in terms other than gullibility" and take the lesson that political theory offers us where it "does justice to our everyday intuition that recognition is not just an error or an ensnarement, that it is, in Charles Taylor's words, a 'vital human need'" (Felski 29).[25]

A closer look at the ways in which *Kony 2012* solicits sympathetic responses shows just how fundamental the codes of *Bildung* may be to struggles over the politics of recognition. In the film Jason Russell (one of the organization founders), juxtaposes the privileged and protected life of his

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[25] Felksi argues for a greater attention to political theorists for, "[w]hile recognition has received a drubbing in English departments, its fortunes have risen spectacularly in other venues. Political theorists are currently hailing recognition as a keyword of our time, a galvanizing idea that is generating new frameworks for debating the import and impact of struggles for social justice. Nancy Frazer's well known thesis, for example, contrasts a cultural politics of recognition organized around differences of gender, race, and sexuality to a goal of economic redistribution that defined the goals of traditional socialism." (29)

own son to that of his friend Jacob, a former LRA combatant he met while working on the ground in Uganda in 2003. It is the comparison of an ideal development with one crippled by circumstance that allows the film to characterize Jacob's childhood and, by extension, the others he represents — the video describes and shows Jacob in a graphic as "one of" thirty thousand — as a time of loss. The story of Russell's son Gavin begins with both parents' expectant joy at the moment of their son's birth. In a close up we see the happy, protective, relieved, tender parental response to the boy's first cry as he enters the world. This is quickly followed by a photo montage and voiceover as Jason profiles Gavin's developing personality through his first five years, before turning to discuss "another boy" who, he claims, changed the course of his own life years earlier and helped him see a "way forward"; this development he connects explicitly to a desire that his son should grow up in a "better world." The video turns from sunny depictions of Gavin's life on the West coast to a series of night scenes in Gulu, Uganda, where a boy named Jacob stays with other Ugandan children who, if they stayed in their villages, would be vulnerable to LRA attacks and recruitment at night. Panning shots show large groups of children arriving in town and sleeping together on the cement floors of public buildings by the hundreds; the space has the appearance of a refugee camp and we learn alongside Jason, likely feeling the same surprise, that these children have been using this source of refuge for years to avoid their capture (or recapture) by the LRA. Prompted by questions about his experience, Jacob describes a sense of despondency at this prolonged insecurity, a thwarted desire to become a lawyer, as well as a personal loss—his brother's murder by rebels. In a statement that Jason says he will "never forget," Jacob claims that "it is better if you kill us"—a statement claiming that he would rather die because of such poor conditions and the fact that there is no one to help secure his future. This segment ends when Jacob cries, and Jason makes him a solemn promise that "we are going to stop them" (the LRA). The screen fades to black, and we are left with the sound of Jacob's weeping—a cry, like Gavin's, betraying vulnerability, but more troubling

because apparently inconsolable. The sound of Jacob's disconsolate cry contrasts with Gavin's at the beginning of the story, which was a sign of health and promise.

The *pièce de résistance* in this comparison between Gavin and Jacob comes shortly afterward, when, turning from the night scene in Uganda we cut to Jason and his young son arriving at a well-lit US studio to film an exchange in a room unaccompanied by any intruding noise; in this intimate and direct exchange the Invisible Children co-founder describes to Gavin the nature of his work and attempts to arrest Joseph Kony and stop his criminal recruitment of children. He explains that Kony steals children, gives them guns, and forces them to hurt people. In shock, the five-year-old asks "[b]ut they're not going to do what he says 'cause they're nice guys, right?" to which his father replies that the children do not *want* to hurt anyone, but that Kony "*forces* them to do bad things." Asked what he thinks of this, Gavin replies that "it's sad." The envelope structure here of Gavin's development narrative helps reinscribe young combatants as victims and their participation in war as a form of theft. The five-year-old's resistance to accepting that "nice guys" would commit violence, even under duress, serves to not only to show the perversity of Kony's crimes and assign him blame, but also enables a person familiar with human rights discourse and confronted by the uneasy truths about the children's participation in violence to process the information in a sympathetic way and to ultimately judge these children's situations as tragic. It functions on yet another level by setting up the childhood untouched by violence as a benchmark, in which innocence is represented not only as an ideal but as a *natural* state—a norm that can be preserved through protection. While Gavin's development is shown to be full and free, Jacob's is shown as frustrated and thwarted, and while Gavin is successfully protected from the details of Kony's violence at a tender age, Jacob has not been afforded protection and, as a consequence, has been traumatized to the point where he expresses a preference for death. Following his son's pronouncement of this situation as "sad," the scene fades and Jason begins to address the audience, conspiratorially. As a clip dramatizing a

Ugandan child's abduction takes place in slow motion, we hear him acknowledge the limit of what he is willing to tell his son because "the truth is Kony abducts kids just like Gavin." The viewer—having just lost a measure of innocence along with Gavin and having developed the same kind of feeling for Jacob—awakens to the gravity of this problem from the perspective of the father as protector and caretaker. The recipient of information explicitly kept from Gavin, the viewer is now entrusted with the status of an initiate and confidante. Though the remainder of the film conveys information meant to explicitly invite the reader's participation and to help the viewer understand a bit of the history and dimensions and scale of the situation for children in Uganda, it is principally the first ten minutes—the first third of the film—that cultivates the viewer, in the tradition of Bildung, and lays the groundwork for the remaining material. The reader's rite of passage is made complete at this moment by a hermeneutics of faith which reads Jacob's childhood has an unacceptable norm, a case for injustice—in this way, the video aims to newly-mint World Citizens.

Bildung is thus used to produce a literary division of labor that requires the audience's action to complete (Moynagh 46). The narrative aims to bring the world citizen into being by constructing a formal relation between ideal personal growth and the collective, global project of righting wrongs. This formulation is precisely what opens the film up for the kinds of hermeneutics of suspicion that interpret such gestures as "a sign of narcissistic self-duplication, a scandalous solipsism, an imperious expansion of a subjectivity that seeks to appropriate otherness by turning everything into a version of itself" on the part of the West (Felski 27). Bildung serves as a "technology of recognition"—what Shu-mei Shih has indicted as the "mechanisms in the discursive (un)conscious--with bearings on social and cultural (mis)understandings--that produce 'the West' as the agent of recognition and 'the rest' as the object of recognition, in representation" (Shih 17). In this same vein of concern, Slaughter has linked Bildung to the "rights-man's burden," in part because of the ways it has been historically deployed to rationalize the West's "*mission civilastrice*":

> In his posthumous 1826 tome on linguistics, Humboldt characterized the transformative work of Bildung as a project of humanization, whose intellectual fruits consisted in 'the idea of merely respecting a person as a human being' and the 'sentiments of the resultant human rights and duties.'… Like the UN's imagination of an international human rights order, Humboldt derives from his ideal of 'universal good breeding [Bildung]' an intimation of universal humanity *not as a natural fact but as a project that remains to be realized* through 'every means at our disposal,' and he gives this humanitarian brief to the mercantile, missionary, and military agents of imperialism: their mission is to globalize Bildung, to universalize the ostensibly universal ethos and attendant sociocultural conditions of modern Europe--in short, to spread the good news of human rights by any means necessary (Slaughter 232-122, emphasis mine).

One can see both the strengths and the limits of the form here. Connected historically not only to an ideology of humanism but to an aesthetic of *Weltliteratur,*[26] *Bildung* posits a telos of Enlightenment ideals. As Slaughter points out, the Bildungsroman is an incorporative technology:

> Like contemporary international human rights law, the affirmative Bildungsroman offers a narrative model for enfranchising the disenfranchised, for unproblematizing the problematic individual, for keeping the broken emancipatory promise of the Enlightenment by repairing the citizen-subject divide. (133-134)

The story's promise to enfranchise or, in the words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), to enable the "free and full development of the human personality," is a large part of the

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[26] Goethe, author of a novel generally regarded as the first Bildungsroman, and a developer of the concept of *Weltliteratur* (World Literature) is quoted in an 1835 publication identifying a globalizing trend: "I am more and more convinced that poetry is the universal possession of mankind, revealing itself everywhere and at all times in hundreds and hundreds of men. . . . I therefore like to look about me in foreign nations, and advise everyone to do the same. National literature is now a rather unmeaning term; the epoch of world literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach." Quoted in Damrosch *What is World Literature*?

reason why this "genre retains its historic social function as the predominant formal literary technology in which social outsiders narrate affirmative claims for inclusion in a regime of rights and responsibilities" (Slaughter 44, 27). In this paradigm, a personal story of growth serves as the benchmark for a norm and, where falling short, may indicate the need for certain forms of rewriting the rules in order to better recognize persons deserving and yet unfairly prevented from reaching their potential.

As we see in *Kony 2012*, the filmmaker's leveraging for change is not only based on an idea of theft that posits everyone's a right to "free and full development," but also depicts an unacceptable norm for Ugandan youths that it argues can *and should be* rescripted. For an effort purportedly focused on the problem of these children's participation in conflict it is notable that there is no sustained attention to Jacob's or any other child's direct experiences as a combatant. In what takes only a few seconds, images of mutilation are flashed on the screen to represent the *kind* of violence that children like Jacob are forced to commit, but no particular person's story is linked to them. The conventions of memoir or confessional that could give prominence to these children's perspectives are not utilized. Instead, we are given Jacob's story, in brief flashes, as a trajectory of trauma and healing, as a "plot of innocence corrupted and then restored, or at least one of reintegration into a social world--the plot of *Bildung*" (Moynagh 40). In the beginning Jacob is shown in oscillation between states of escape and stagnation; in the end we see that he has grown into an advocate. In a shot close to the film's end we see him lifting Gavin into the air, celebrating the boy's happy childhood as an active member of this community committed to protection. With the form of *Bildung* and its horizon of "normal development," these characters' developments can be sutured together to produce the narrative most compatible with human rights norms, wherein a protagonist's happy family life (like Gavin's) is brutally interrupted by abduction and violence (like Jacob's experience) and then later resumes a course of development when the ex-combatant returns

home and/or becomes an advocate or "voice" for others faced with the same situation (like Jacob and, to a degree, Jason). It is possible to understand the use of *Bildung* or "normal development" and de-emphasis on violence in *Kony 2012* as a means to compel a hermeneutics of faith, in the name of victim recognition:

> Given the ways the child soldier figure tests the limits of human rights discourse, it is not surprising that the memoirs (and a few of the novels) invoke the trope of Bildung apparently in order to challenge its forward-looking developmental thrust. For while the chiasmatic structure of child soldier memoirs may seem to accord with the ring-like plot of the classic Bildungsroman (Moretti 19)[27] it does so only at the expense of the signal "event" of these narratives, the experience of being a soldier is confined to the beginning and the end of the narrative; the considerable narrative duree in between has to be understood, since it can hardly be ignored, as an error, an interruption, an experience to be disavowed so that the process of Bildung can continue apace...The wrongs represented by the child's conscription can thus be neatly set apart from the "normal" course of an essentially static development, and the intervention of the human rights agent (including the former child soldier as human rights agent) can be scripted as putting Bildung to rights. (Moynaugh 40, 49)

The fact that this must be scripted at all demonstrates how the child soldier tests the limits of legal and human rights discourse crystallizing around the figure of the "ideal victim," because it collapses the operative boundary between perpetrator and victim, between the guilty and the innocent, between a person who merits punishment and one who merits rescue and assistance. As Bouris demonstrates in her work on *Complex Political Victims*, a conventional "victim constellation" requires that a person under consideration for assistance or redress must exhibit "characteristics of innocence, purity, moral superiority, and lack of responsibility" to qualify for recognition as a victim,

[27] See bibliography for reference.

both in a social and legal context (49). One of the reasons she believes that "a more nuanced discourse of the victim" has not been fully developed has to do with the fact that

> individuals and governments need clear-cut, demarcated identities in order to be confident in their self-perception and policy actions. As such, there are both normative concerns with fracturing this constellation (it can easily lead to victim blaming) and practical considerations (it may be necessary for the formation of policy and broader community needs). (Bouris 50)

The preference for clear-cut demarcation is evidenced by the frequency with which human rights and relief organizations use images of children to represent the "innocent, simple, and compelling victim"—they "[amplify] the statement of injustice" (Moeller in Bouris 27). This is one of the reasons why, in many humanitarian appeals, one can see explicit attempts to draw a cordon sanitaire between civilian and military life and underscore the victim's non-participatory status. Using the phrase " 'women and children' [to denote] 'innocent civilian victim' " has long been a popular way to accomplish this (Carpenter in Bouris 27). It is understandably difficult for international human rights organizations to achieve victim recognition for a militarized figure, however much in appearance a child, who commits violence against the very kinds of civilians that have functioned iconographically as these organizations' "ideal victims." Moynagh argues that child-soldier narratives in these contexts "can be understood as a kind of textual battle ground for this ideal of purity and innocence that must be protected, accorded 'special care and assistance,' in the language of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) and the CRC" (48). In this battleground, advocates for child soldiers have appeared to gain considerable ground in the last several years. Moynagh notes that the "link between human rights and the figure of the child soldier, particularly the African child soldier, has gained sufficient currency" to such a high degree that an advertisement aired during the 2010 world cup depicting a boy "expertly assembling an automatic assault rifle" was received rather straightforwardly as a solicitation for sympathy

(Moynagh 39). Accompanied with the written appeal to the viewer—"let him be good at something else"—the advertisement ends with a voiceover inviting viewers to visit the NGO website and encouraging them to donate as a way to "help give a child their childhood back" (Right to Play). Here child soldiering is coded explicitly as theft, "mobiliz[ing] sympathetic intervention… [and] proposing to restore to him (or her) the rights conflict has taken away" (Moynagh 39). We see here that successfully mapping human rights onto the figure of a child soldier relies heavily on notions of *Bildung*. It is only by "emphasizing the interrupted development of the child soldier" that representations like this one can provide such frank acknowledgement of a child's participation in violence and yet have this serve to acquit him from responsibility (Moynagh 54). The violence is real, but the party responsible, it can suggest, lies elsewhere. In this formula, the child as both participant in violence and victim is only intelligible if he represents a *tabula rasa* on which the desires of power-hungry others are inscribed, a screen on which the personalities of the warmongers are projected. While it is not possible to produce "ideal victims" in a child soldier narrative by suggesting the gun-wielding children are categorically helpless and uninvolved, it remains possible, using the interrupted Bildung, to represent them as either overtly menaced or hapless—in thrall to or swept along by forms of collective madness that they had no hand in creating.

What one very rarely sees in child soldier narratives with human rights concerns are depictions of the protagonists as creative agents of violence.

This is one reason why Emmanuel Dongala's novel *Johnny Chien Méchant* provides a constructive contrast to the type of representations discussed above. There is no tabula rasa in his narrative—and neither of the protagonists is passive. The titular character, Johnny, is the self-interested image of "openly cynical power" Bricmont refers to. In one section he says that the main reason they are fighting is

> To line our pockets. To become adults. To have all the women we wanted. To wield the power of a gun. To be the rulers of the world. Yeah, all of these things at the same time. But our leaders and our president had ordered us not to say this. They insisted that when people asked us questions we should say that we were fighting for freedom and democracy. By saying this, we'd win the sympathy of the outside world. (*Johnny Chien Méchant* 64)

The other protagonist is a clever, capable, independent, compassionate, and resilient girl named Laokole. While Johnny is terribly self-deluded she is enlightened. The narrative form is split along two formal lines as the chapters alternate back and forth between them: a picaresque for the boy soldier and Bildung for the girl refugee. Though extremely active, Johnny does not develop personally in the space of the narrative; he survives by his wits and lives the life of a dangerous rogue, a life in the moment. Laokole, on the other hand, never stops reflecting on what she would like to become, and reaches for ideal forms of self-development and socialization, regardless of how difficult things get. The opening scene sets in motion trajectories of predation and escape that define the two protagonists (who are both sixteen years old, on the verge of adulthood). The first two chapters begin with a common point of reference—the announcement of a forty-eight hour looting period by the newly-christened General. The first-person perspective is that of Laokole, and afterward, that of Johnny, each listening to the radio broadcast by those who have taken power following the coup. When Laokole receives the news it prompts her to prepare for escape with her family, and in her response and determination to prevent another disaster, she establishes that her father has already been killed and her mother's legs damaged beyond repair in a previous round of looting by another militia. Her line of thought and action suggests that the family's vulnerability to violence is total, regardless of who is fighting and for what ostensible cause. Her reception of the news—contained in a single line that registers the declaration of a looting period—contrasts with the opening of the second chapter, where Johnny listens to Giap's speech with somewhat

contemptuous but careful attention to its full expression, allowing the reader to hear some of the discursive details. He says "You should have heard him, squawking away" when the general comments that "Our brave freedom fighters have fought like lions, like buffalo! They've struck fear into the hearts of our enemies, who have fled with their tails between their legs. Victory! *La luta continua!* We are afraid of nothing!" (*Johnny Chien Méchant* 6) With a sense of entitlement and dismissal of Giap's authority, Johnny explains that he and the other members of his militia will loot "until there [is] nothing left to be looted, whether that [takes] twenty-four, forty-eight, or seventy-two hours, or as long as a week. Even the VIP we were fighting for, the guy who'd been president of the country for the past few hours since we'd captured the city—even he couldn't stop us" (*Johnny Chien Méchant* 7). With this radio announcement the die has been cast and the operative contrasts of the novel are established. Johnny and Laokole will act in roles prescribed by war and its spoils, not by those of a country purged of conflict, as the official version of history on the radio broadcast suggested. These protagonists will largely fill the roles of predator and prey, aggressor and victim, for the duration of the narrative. The general's use of a Portuguese rallying cry historically tied to liberation movements on the continent (notably in South Africa and Mozambique)—"*la luta continua!*"[28]—employs the language of collective struggle claiming a shared interest between the people of the nation and those fighting to wrest power from an oppressive regime. Laokole's and Johnny's situations demonstrate immediately that their realities are not defined by collective national struggle, and everything in the book before and after this expression of solidarity serves to undermine the suggestion that a genuine ideological cause exists and that the people's interests align. To Laokole the radio broadcast's version of the turnover in power doesn't register as a repository of information; what Giap says is irrelevant, in practical terms, to the parameters of escape. In that moment the only form of solidarity she cares about is that of her family and the only performance

[28] Translation: "The struggle continues!"

of ferocity that interests her is the one she must use to convince her younger brother of the urgency to move quickly so that they can increase their chances of getting away cleanly. Johnny's ability to survive and take advantage of his position, however, depends on the uses of language that Giap displays, as his narrative repeatedly attests.

Johnny works actively and inventively to brand and rebrand both himself and his fighting group in ways that he believes will strike the most fear into both those who are fighting alongside him and those he will meet in battle. He explains that a "name isn't just a name. A name contains hidden power. It's no accident that I've taken the name Lufua Liwa, which means 'Kill Death,' or rather, 'Cheat Death'" (Dongala 9). He tries on another *nom de guerre* for himself—Matiti Mabe[29]—in the course of the narrative, but this attempt, like the first one, falls flat and even subjects him to the ridicule of other combatants, instead of producing the intimidating effect he desires. In chapter eleven he settles on "Chien Méchant" as his alias, which he judges, during the moments of self-satisfied reflection that follow this choice, as a "strong, powerful name. A name that inspires the same gut-wrenching terror that a condemned man feels before the firing squad, a name that makes people tremble when they see it on a sign" (Dongala 98). He mentions the sign here only in passing. It is never made explicit, but it strikes me as a powerful way to configure the ligatures between territory and identity in this text as well as the political horizons of the human rights concerns. Though reliable records do not seem to exist indicating how widespread or common the "beware of dog" sign Johnny references might be, my own experience in Eastern Congo indicates that the sign is fairly common in gated urban communities (see: figure 2). In a significant account showing why the name might be an appropriate one for striking terror into civilian's hearts exists in a Human Rights Watch publication (2000) discussing intimidation tactics by Congolese authorities trying to exert control over the populace and suppress protests:

[29] A phrase in Lingala meaning "poison weed."

> Soldiers detain both civilians and soldiers in a number of detention centers; while their existence is not illegal, their sheer number is very confusing for any relatives who are trying to find an arrested family member. In Goma, the National Information Agency (Agence National de Renseignments, ANR) uses the kitchen of a former residence as a jail; it is known universally as "Chien Méchant" (Vicious Dog), because of a sign on the front gate. Soldiers confine both civilians and other soldiers in a military lockup known as Bureau II,[30] once a private house. …The organizers of the strike have not been identified, but RCD officials blamed many NGO leaders and intellectuals and arrested them. The commander of the "Chien Méchant" detention center in Goma told Human Rights Watch openly that the arrests were meant to intimidate civil society: "We arrested all of these people, and everyone was afraid because they did not know what would happen to them, whether we would kill them or beat them. But they were fine, and we released them the next day. Really this was only intended to intimidate the population." ("Eastern Congo Ravaged)

This unselfconscious reflection on the exercise of power—its deterritorialization and reterritorialization—to police boundaries is typical under the conditions of the postcolony, where "colonial occupation entails first and foremost a division of space into compartments. It involves the setting of boundaries and internal frontiers epitomized by barracks and police stations; it is regulated by the language of pure force, immediate presence, and frequent and direct action; and it is premised on the principle of reciprocal exclusivity. But more important, it is the very way in which necropower operates" (Mbembe, "Necropolitics" 26).

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[30] This appears to be a transcription of the French "deuxième Bureau," in which case the phrase is likely not only a reference to French military agency but contains a bit of dark humor. Literally meaning "second office," the phrase is commonly used as a euphemism for adultery or taking a "second wife." The extreme unpleasantness that meets detainees at these locations may be used as a point of irony, contrasting the pleasure of such a tryst, or the distress of spending time at the "deuxième Bureau" may refer to the deflation or frustration of expectations embedded in the phrase itself, in which having a second wife is equated to taking a second job.

In the postcolony, a child soldier not only serves as an apt "figure for a crisis in human futurity" but also to me serves as a sign of frustrated and contested projects of development on a broad political spectrum (Moynagh). It is vital to remember that independence on the African continent was not won through revolutionary means, and that the forces of globalization generally made these young nations' abilities to self-govern on equal footing with Western powers *recede from view* rather than become more plausible as they had initially hoped:

> In 1957 Nkurumah looked forward to an era of unity, strength, and humanity: today's observer would … find in relative abundance, rather, is the exact opposite: fragmentation, weakness, and social violence. Independence seems to have brought neither peace nor prosperity to Africa. Instead, it has paradoxically borne witness to stagnation, elitism, and class domination, and to the intensifying structural dependence—economic, political, cultural, and ideological—of Africa upon the imperial Western powers. Thus, in an article on the African experience of independence, the historian J.F. Ade Ajayi has speculated that "the most fundamental aspect of post-independence Africa has been the elusiveness of development." (Lazarus, *Resistance in Postcolonial African Fiction* 3)

The fact that the story of *failed, frustrated, and arrested development* would become a subject for African authors is not surprising, if we understand the literature as an expression of social and political realities.[31]

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[31] Consider the development indicators tied to economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) as reported in a 2011 UN Department of Social and Economic Affairs (DESA) working paper: "Between 1970 and 2000, real income growth failed to keep pace with population growth in SSA. After posting a modest average annual growth rate in real per capita income of about 0.7 per cent during the 1970s, these rates turned negative during the 1980s and 1990s, falling 1 per cent and 0.5 per cent, respectively. Since 2000, SSA countries have posted improved growth rates, largely thanks to primary commodity-driven recoveries, and most seem to have recovered relatively quickly from the global economic crisis. Even so, average real per capita income is still barely higher than in 1970 and SSA fell behind all other regions on most development indicators" (Sundaram 1). Sundaram, Jomo Kwame, Oliver Schwank and Rudiger von Arnim. "Globalization and development in sub-Saharan Africa." *Economic and Social Affairs*. DESA Working Paper No. 102. February 2011.

The windfall of independence that came to African states in the 1960s did not create a radical break with the colonial order, and the structure of gate-keeping remained intact in most states; new governments "had weak instruments for entering into the social and cultural realm over which they presided, but they stood astride the intersection of the colonial territory and the outside world. Their main source of revenue was duties on goods that entered and left its ports; they could decide who could leave for education and what kinds of educational systems could come in" (Cooper 5). It strikes me that, for the activist as for anyone else in the African postcolony, the world is structured by the roadside barrier, the barricade, and the gate. Dongala's material for this novel came from an encounter with such a limitation, as he explains in his piece on "Hollywood, Pirated Videos, and Child Soldiers." He recalls an experience he had in 1997 at a roadblock in Brazzaville, Congo, when he and thirty other civilians fled the fighting that has broken out in the city. Here they encountered a group of "a dozen kids" with Kalashnikovs manning an improvised barrier, and he describes how they were harassed and how one man was chosen, apparently at random, for a beating (*Warscapes*). The experience awakened a feeling of shame in Dongala at not doing anything to intervene on behalf of that man. The man was a neighbor of his who had long admired Dongala as "honest, upright, courageous" which was a consequence of how he viewed himself:

> I have always been a social activist, and I have written many articles criticizing the passivity and cowardice of many of my intellectual peers who have stood by silently in the face of political corruption and the violation of human rights in their countries. I have always seen myself on the side of the weak and the oppressed, ready to pounce on the offender and save the victim whenever I witness an injustice or whenever I see a person brutalized. There was never any doubt in my mind that had I lived in Nazi Germany, I would have been among the Righteous, those heroic men and women who protected the persecuted. (*Warscapes*)

He claims that, studying and writing about violence as an author had helped him form these strong opinions on the subject and view of himself. He believed that he was somehow morally superior to the others he saw as making compromises, but that this all changed dramatically before a "makeshift roadblock" as he faced the realities of violence carried out by boys who called each other by the names of action movie characters (*Warscapes*). What is interesting to me here is the nascence of this project in both a strong conviction about the value of human rights discourse and a frank acknowledgement about failures of practice when faced with the operations of biopower. Perhaps Dongala's uncompromising stance prior to this experience might have been analogous, in ways, to Invisible Children's mantra "stop at nothing." But at the barrier, where he was stopped, he ran up against the limits and costs of speaking for others very clearly, and it prompted him to ask why so many children joined the fighting, not by coercion, but eagerly. In an NPR interview he laments that some of his students "took part in this fighting, which was sad because after all the talk of democracy, respect of human rights, etc., when the fighting started, I was astonished to see how quickly they can fall behind their regional ethnic leader" (NPR). In the novel he represents how the failure of practice is institutional as well as personal. Through the character of Laokole, the reader is often led to meditate on the presumptions and logic of human rights, especially concerning those who would be the enforcers of its laws. Sometimes contradictions are used to show that her experiences do not, in practice, reflect the principles of protection that these laws are ostensibly designed to enact. When the great crowd of residents in her community tries to escape the advance of soldiers, they head to the area where the embassies are located. Laokole talks about how the term "international community" becomes almost talismanic as it spreads through the crowd, with accompanied assurances that they will find protection and asylum. She then notes that "she has never stopped to ask herself who, exactly, represents this 'much vaunted' international community; she asks: are the heads of state responsible for the war considered members of that international

community? Is she herself also a member?" (Dongala 67) This throws into relief not only the power paradigms at play but also the problem of what forms of recognition will actually guarantee protection. Eventually brought to safety in the US with the help of some American friends, he did spend time in refugee camps where he witnessed the many inefficiencies and inadequacies of aid. But what troubled him more were the hierarchies of value on different people's lives that contradicts the claims of equality on which human rights is based. Asked about a particularly dramatic scene of European exit, The NPR interviewer wants to know how much of this material was based in experience:

> HANSEN: How much did you exaggerate the cruelty? How much did you exaggerate for effect?
>
> Mr. DONGALA: I didn't exaggerate at all. On the contrary, there are things I couldn't write.
>
> HANSEN: So when you write a scene, for example, where a young girl is literally run over three times by tanks and soldiers...who are coming to rescue the white European hostages that have sought refuge in what is the United Nations compound... that is something that you know happened?
>
> Mr. DONGALA: Yes. And even the story of their dog--coming back to get their dog, that's a true story, too.
>
> HANSEN: One of the European hostages forgot the dog, went back into the compound...and then got on the helicopter and took off, leaving the rest of the African refugees in the courtyard.
>
> Mr. DONGALA: Right. (NPR)

Laokole, as our witness to this tragedy and many others, and as our moral compass in the novel, gives a strong, critical view of these human rights failures. In one scene she reacts angrily to an attempt at merchandizing her family's suffering by news organizations that want to use her

mother's image as a call to action (a reporter asks to video tape her mother because she is disabled and in pain—a sympathy bid). However, Laokole also shows the operations of humanitarian groups as inherently difficult; she credits many of the aid workers with sincerity and gives them critical and occasionally heroic roles in the novel. She puts stock in the idea of mutual recognition and of collective responsibility in recognizing the category of the "human" as a means to imaginatively enter into someone else's experience. Her story shows that the ideal of international, collective responsibility seems especially important to invest in, even as we can critique its discourse and take lessons from its significant failures. The model of community—at least its norms of joint ownership, common interest, and shared standards—offers something valuable in terms of rights and responsibilities on the international scale. The perspective of Johnny provides a needed counterpoint, as Moynagh indicates:

> In narrating the war-machine from the inside, whether as activist or as picaro, the (former) child soldier also rights/writes wrongs, holding out the promise of a more human/e vision of globality. In emphasizing the interrupted development of the child soldier, the memoirs and novels foreground the crisis for human personhood that necropolitics represent. Emblematic not only of inhuman conditions but inhuman behavior, the child soldier nonetheless invites sympathy as a figure who is as much wronged as doing wrong. In extending our sympathy, we readers lay claim to a common humanity belied by the very structures that produce these narratives, riven as they are by global inequalties that sustain necropolitical formations. Even humanitarian intervention, as Fassin has argued, is marked by a "politics of life" that sets a different value on the life of the human rights agent and that of the victim of suffering. The narratives, though, the memoirs and perhaps especially the novels, lay bare the inequalities and call for a difficult solidarity in the face of them, one that

can recognize at once a common humanity and the structural inequality that threatens it. (Moynagh 54)

What we witness in *Kony 2012's* production and reception in different interpretive communities is both the promises and problematics of recognition that speak to deep ambivalences—both the need for and the limits—of adopting "the responsibility to protect" as a response to the issues that the child soldier represents. What Johnny Mad Dog underscores is that, while using Bildung is no guarantee of good advocacy work, it remains significant that the division of literary labor it requires helps to ensure that the form is not a rigid "technology of recognition" but a platform of appeal that can both support a hermeneutics of faith while still conceiving of its telos—"ideal humanity"—as a contingent and unfinished project.

Figure 2. Private residence warning sign in Goma, DR Congo

3.0 THE NEW BARBARISM & THE MAKING OF *JOHNNY MAD DOG*[32]

On July 15, 2008, the UN held a special advance screening of the film *Johnny Mad Dog* at its headquarters in New York City to an audience of diplomats, UN officials, and members of the press. Their press briefing advertised this film as "a drama about African child soldiers spreading machine-gun terror and death"; a screening served as a prompt for several panel discussions, including one held by the UN National Security Council two days later on the question of "children and armed conflict" (Daily Press Briefing").[33] The UN had provided assistance and some logistical support for the filming in Liberia, testifying to the organization's general sympathy with the project. Nevertheless, an internal disagreement arose about screening it at an official function because of the degree of violence it depicts. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict, insisted that the film is an important tool for generating understanding about the realities on the ground while the Assistant Secretary General in charge of information believed it was much too graphic. In *The Making of Johnny Mad Dog* (*TMOJMD*) film director Jean-Stéphane Sauvaire mentions this contention and seems baffled and disappointed by objections to the graphic nature of the film, not only because the subject itself is war, but because the film, in his view, should properly issue a challenge. He asks, "If these people can't face reality, how will things ever change?" Both Sauvaire and Coomaraswamy feel that it's imperative to confront the audience with difficult material in order to galvanize the political will necessary to make changes. Coomaraswamy praises *Johnny Mad Dog* in a panel discussion on "Conflict of Interests: Children and Guns in Zones of Instability," likening it to the Brazilian film *The City of God*, partly because the lives of violent marginalized youth

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[32] For an overview of the Liberian LRA rebellion, see Appendix D.

[33] Excerpted from the "Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General." *Spokesperson's Noon Briefing*. 15 July. 2008.

are central to each, but also because "[b]oth films point to the fact that, in many parts of the world, the lines between armed gang violence and armed groups in conflict are blurring. Armed groups are becoming criminal gangs, and criminal gangs are becoming armed groups—with a large number of children often engaging in criminal activity" ("Conflict of Interests" 2). Ultimately, then, *Johnny Mad Dog* is useful to Coomaraswamy—and, I would argue, to the UN's mission more broadly—not only because the film viscerally conveys "the child soldier experience" in a way that supports the rights of the child but, because its representation of the conflict in Liberia is generic enough to be instrumentalized as a *type*—one that helps explain what happens in other "zones of instability."

Johnny Mad Dog's ahistorical treatment of conflict is a significant reason that academics like Singer and Dovey charge that the film "participates in a persistent racist discourse that constructs civil conflict in Africa as vortexes of meaningless destruction, with no rational history or explanation, and consisting of 'no victors but only victims' " (158). I'm inclined to agree with them that the film endorses stereotypical views of conflict in Africa, but what concerns me is not so much how Johnny Mad Dog is being used in service of classification, but how it is being used in service of *ratification*. Brought to UN talks as a form of witness to predation on children and held up as an example of the danger of small arms proliferation, the film aligns with theories of the modern era as an age of "post-modern 'non-trinitarian' war, with a shift of initiative to non-state actors (from terrorist networks to organized crime), the rise of low-intensity war, and the blurring of boundaries between citizens and soldiers, war and peace" (Porter 49-50). This "blurring" is precisely what Coomaraswamy speaks of in foreboding tones, and these are the conditions she suggests have laid the groundwork for children's participation in conflict. According to David Rosen's account in *Armies of the Young: Child Soldiers in War and Terrorism*, many child advocates like Coomaraswamy have accepted as a professional standard the view that youth's participation in conflict is an escalating problem tied to threats of political chaos on a global scale (10). He notes that humanitarian and

international legal accounts, particularly, tend to "mythologize the past and render invisible the thousands of child soldiers who fought in wars of national liberation" (Rosen 14). The participation of youth in war, he argues, is not a modern phenomenon; the issue as it appears in public discourse often says more about the ways in which ideas about childhood are being normalized and institutionalized by organizations like the UN than it does about the realities on the ground.

A surge in international efforts to define and strengthen human rights norms (particularly as they apply to children) coincided with the end of the cold war, the timing of which is significant as it marks a tectonic shift in the grounding of foreign policy and international relations. It is clear that international actors claiming a responsibility to protect children worldwide have not only been pooling resources and organizing for cooperative ways to support and extend aid to those most vulnerable, but actively defining how conflicts are understood by powerful institutions that provide legitimacy and access to resources. Discourse about child soldiering is instituted, shaped, and disputed by various actors with interests that both align and compete, and Rosen finds it telling that the alarm over the use of child soldiers tends to vary depending on who is employing youth in battle: "The image of the child soldier—to the extent that this image is created and burnished by international humanitarian groups, agencies of the United Nations, and the policies of many national governments—vilifies military life. This characterization is targeted particularly at rebels and insurgents—the armed groups that are most dependent on younger soldiers" (9). It is significant to keep this in mind because it advantages postcolonial governments working in the international sphere to recognize children's participation in combat as a human rights violation (the UN Screening of *Johnny Mad Dog* was sponsored, in part, by Special Court for Sierra Leone prosecutor Steven Rapp). However, when one examines how these governments treat former child soldiers, it is clear that they see them, not as a category of vulnerable persons deserving redress for injustices against

them, but as a group of potential aggressors—as viable and volatile political threats to their rule. Governments trying to consolidate power and prevent insurgencies often have a stake in adopting international norms as they seek international patrons or allies and ways to exert control over citizens who have a history of armed violence.

Wherever advocacy language clamors for the moral high ground, those looking for strategic advantage can also be found. Amidst controversies in 2012 over the advocacy group Invisible Children's use of the child soldier narrative to promote US military intervention in Uganda, Chris Blattman (political scientist and assistant professor at Columbia University) noted that there is "something inherently misleading, naive, maybe even dangerous, about the idea of rescuing children or saving of Africa… It hints uncomfortably of the White Man's Burden. Worse, sometimes it does more than hint. The savior attitude is pervasive in advocacy, and it inevitably shapes programming. Usually misconceived programming. The saving attitude pervades too many aid failures, not to mention military interventions. The list is long" ("Visible Children"). Blattman shows that the political function of the savior narrative—particularly where it takes a patrimonial and protective stance—tends to reproduce colonial paradigms. Consider a recent example.

In September, 2012, President Obama issued an executive order to fight against human trafficking: " 'When a little boy is kidnapped, turned into a child soldier, forced to kill or be killed—that's slavery,' President Obama said in a speech at the Clinton Global Initiative. 'It is barbaric, and it is evil, and it has no place in a civilized world. Now, as a nation, we've long rejected such cruelty' " (Rogin). Less than a week later, however, he released a memorandum waiving sanctions that should have been carried out under the Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2008, which "prohibits U.S. military education and training, foreign military financing, and other defense-related assistance to countries that actively recruit troops under the age of 18. Countries are designated as violators if the State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons report identifies them as recruiting child

soldiers"; the justification memo cited security reasons for several of these waivers and it was clear that counter-terrorism merited special priority and those countries who emerged most important for supporting US efforts in this area received leniency (Foreign Policy).[34]

I mean to draw attention, not merely to the strategic nature of the US administration's inconsistencies, but to the ways in which President Obama's admonishment and justification for leniency, while apparently contradictory, is consistent with colonial age development ideology and policy which structured forms of access to resources in Africa long past the days when the "civilizing" mission was still the framework of encounter structuring the state's relation to its subjects. In was in the 1920s that colonial officials began to realize some limits to their power, and "convince[ed] themselves that their policy should not be to 'civilize' Africans, but to conserve African societies in a colonizers' image of sanitized tradition, slowly and selectively being led toward evolution, while the empire profited from peasant's crop production or the output of mines and settler farms" (Cooper 18). Historian Frederick Cooper suggests that the answer the West gave to justify its hypocrisies during WWII—fighting for democracy "at home" and for imperialism "abroad"—was to institute a new phase of policies: "Developmental colonialism was in part a response to the narrowing grounds on which a convincing case could be made for the exercise of state power over people who were 'different.'… developmental ideologies implied that difference would over time be eclipsed" (37). We can see the same form of patrimonial logic at work in President Obama's statements: strong condemnation as well as the allowance of exceptions, underwrites the notion that those who have "long rejected" these "barbaric" practices have the

[34] The waiver memorandum reads thus: "Pursuant to section 404 of the Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2008 (CSPA) (title IV, Public Law 110-457), I hereby determine that it is in the national interest of the United States to waive the application of the prohibition in section 404(a) of the CSPA with respect to Libya, South Sudan, and Yemen; and further determine that it is in the national interest of the United States to waive in part the application of the prohibition in section 404(a) of the CSPA with respect to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to allow for continued provision of International Military Education and Training funds and nonlethal Excess Defense Articles, and the issuance of licenses for direct commercial sales of U.S. origin defense articles; and I hereby waive such provisions accordingly."

right and responsibility to help develop those at an "earlier" stage in the same modernizing process that led to that rejection.

Those who adopt this view of historical development tend to interpret the broad destabilization of Africa in the last two decades not as a process of political negotiations in its own right, but as a result of interrupting colonial influence:

> The end of the Cold War coincided with the outbreak of war in West Africa. To many, the simultaneity of these events was not incidental. In the absence of superpower manipulation, this narrative goes, there is no longer anything to check Africans' primitive tribal animosities. Such thinking has been criticized as "New Barbarism" (Richards 1996) and new evolutionism (Lutz 2001). Whatever it is called, the result is the same: Africa is alleged to have noticeably, and violently, departed from the modern world. (Hoffman 253)[35]

I believe a strong strain of this thinking can be found in what Patrick Porter calls "the cultural turn in studying war." In recent years, he argues, there has been a sharp increase in the West's use of culture as the dominant explanatory theory for the modern dynamics of war taking place in many parts of the non-Western world. He explains that, among other factors, the America's grave miscalculations and misunderstandings in the Iraq war has led "a number of strategists, historians, and officers on both sides of the Atlantic" to reconceive of how military power can be negotiated in this terrain with "blurring boundaries," and to

> see today's global war on terrorism as a clash of profoundly different cultures, between American-led forces on one side, and jihadist warriors or tribal warlords on the other. To make sense of recent military failures, they have turned back to cultural knowledge of the

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[35] David Rosen discusses "New Barbarism" as a historical view that "posits that traditional, or 'old,' wars were rule-bound and limited, while 'new wars' are anomic and chaotic. This analysis establishes two ideal types based on a sharp dichotomy between 'traditional' and 'modern' wars", and Rosen's work demonstrates the error of drawing a bright line between these categories (10).

> adversary... Today's military confrontation of "the West vs. the rest," they argue, replays ancient differences between strategic cultures.[36] (45)

It seems to me that this response shares something in common with the colonists' realization of power limitations in Africa and their attempts to "conserve African societies in a colonizers' image of sanitized tradition" (Cooper 18). This view uses culture as a unit of analysis and fails to see "where the differences between conflicting approaches to war are dictated less by cultural traditions and more by the hard realities of power, weakness, and pragmatism" (Porter 46).

Johnny Mad Dog is the filmic analog to President Obama's apparently contradictory stances and provides a rich case for investigation into the dynamics of international politics at work in addressing the problem of child soldiering. One reviewer suggested that the film may feel especially confrontational because "Johnny Mad Dog makes no concession to European or American perspectives.… Made with an African cast, and representing a wholly African experience, the film immerses us without protection in its world, rather than drop the subject cleanly packaged into our laps" (Romney). It's easy to see why Sauvaire's technique in this film has been called "assaultive" when you consider how the material is presented (Dargis). However, the film's immersion technique itself can be seen as a concession to Western perspective. The film's aesthetic forces the audience to enter the structure of feeling for "what it's like to be a child soldier" (stimulating identification), but also encourages viewers to feel securely insulated from the "vortex of meaningless destruction" by exoticizing the cultural mores depicted in the film (allowing one to serve as a disinterested viewer or, even, as a voyeur). The film does not challenge Western presumptions that African conflicts are principally sites of chaos; in fact, it relies on a Conradian aesthetic to feel familiar—the messages of the film will only strike the audience as bearing truth

[36] It's relevant to note Dr. Patrick Porter's professional background here: he is a Lecturer at the Defense Studies Department, Kings College London at the Joint Services Command and Staff College, Defense Academy of the United Kingdom.

claims if viewers are willing to accept that African violence is a norm and that their conflicts operate according to an impenetrable logic. It capitalizes on Western prejudices to produce shock in hopes that audiences will reach President Obama's conclusions: that we should condemn such practices as deviant and fight to change the norm. The opening scene provides an emblematic example of the film's confrontational mode, its artistic style, and the thrust of its message. It begins with the looting and forcible recruitment of child soldiers, and the action opens on Johnny knocking a door down, while all around him other members of the child unit also force their way into residential apartments, demanding information about rebel hideouts, money, and food—and looting items from the homes. The camera shifts to one of the resident's bedrooms. As the other members of his unit gather people into an open area outside and harass them, the boy in the room laces himself with apparent care and self-admiration into a wedding dress before he rejoins the group.

Figure 3. *JMD*, Looting a wedding gown. A member of the small boy unit transforms a wedding gown into war regalia.

Here, as in many indoor and nighttime scenes in the film, the chiaroscuro lighting highlights the subject and intensifies contrasts for dramatic effect. As he dons a pair of matching white gloves and veil in front of a mirror, the viewer can hear the thin wail of an unattended infant in a nearby

room and the muffled sounds of the militia's harassment outside. His dressing has a ceremonial quality that generates suspense and apprehension as the boy's motivations are neither apparent nor explained. The moment appears private and reflective but the viewer recognizes his active membership in the violent gang outside. As the camera cuts between his meticulous and quiet act of dressing and the militia members who have gathered the people in an open area and are pressing them for money, we see one of the boys kill an old man after he claims that the people here have nothing to give and are suffering in the region. The disrespect the boy pays to the man, given his age, and the fact that he insults him after he's died indicates how upside down the social world has become in this war. The cameras follow the boys at their eye level. It is an ambiguous angle which, at times, makes them seem larger than they would otherwise—showing that they command the roles of "big men"—and, at others, showing how small they are. The boy's commanding officer, General Never Die, looms as a reminder of their relative size, even as the adult civilians are made to kneel before the boys.

Immediately following the execution of the elderly man, the boy who has been inside returns dressed in the full-length, beaded, gown, a bright glove gripping his AK-47 and the scene's action turns to a boy who has been discovered in hiding. First they accuse him of fighting for the government and look prepared to kill him. While his mother insists that he is a student and "not a fighter" the general expresses incredulity: "He won't fight in the war?" (*Johnny Mad Dog*). This expression is immediately recognizable as a threat and a challenge, but those who know a bit about the Liberian war will also recognize it as an assertion about the realities of this conflict. A child in this environment will have difficulty remaining insulated from the violence and unclaimed by military. It is easy to deduce General Never Die's line of reasoning: if his group doesn't recruit the boy now an opposing group will collect him later and this will be one more fighter for the enemy. As the parents continue to plead on behalf of their son, a gun is forced into the child's hand. He is

ordered by the general to "show us what you can do," while the father remains on his knees in front of them, asking repeatedly that they leave his child alone (*Johnny Mad Dog*). The members aim their guns at the boy and one tells him "Kill your father or you die. We've all done it" (*Johnny Mad Dog*). The general repeats an order to kill as the other members cheer the boy on with increasing intensity. As the threats reach a fever pitch, the boy pulls the trigger, his mother begins to wail, and the general gives the orders to move out. As they leave, the group sings a victory song, and the militia members raise their AK-47s and march, in a loose cadre, away from the ransacked residential area. The boy wearing the wedding dress is positioned at the front of this group, raising his gun with one hand and his skirts with the other. The dress is shockingly white—a macabre celebration of a perverse union between a young recruit and the militia. Train dragging in the dirt road, the dress begins its path to ruin by war, as does the boy they captured. The scene ends with Johnny Mad Dog in the foreground walking ahead of the group. Against the background of their celebration Johnny appears in sharp contrast, his gait and countenance sober, his air detached, his expression difficult to read. The viewer is left to wonder what he is thinking. We know but one oblique detail of his past: he was the one to raise his gun to the boy's head and tell him that he must kill or die—that *everyone* among them had made the same choice. The ending shot—Johnny's thousand-yard stare—is a familiar trope signaling battle-weariness and emotional detachment. This look is an inscription of trauma.

Figure 4. *JMD*, Leaving the scene of child soldier recruitment

As the opening scene shows, the story begins *in medias res* and does not provide the audience an exposition or easy access to interpretive frameworks—political, historical, or otherwise explanatory—that would help orient the viewer, emphasize key dynamics, and assign meaning to the events underway. Moments like the thousand-yard stare, which help the viewer map the cinematic terrain, are few and far between. The rapidly- and disjointedly-unfolding events produce a structure of feeling, at a visceral level, for what it's like to be absorbed into an African civil conflict, both participating in a child soldier unit and fleeing the violence. Stripped of contextual details, the action of the film plunges the viewer into an environment characterized by hostility and volatility that triggers a sense of apprehension. The cinematography, by turns, jars and enthralls. Sauvaire explained that he hoped to disturb the audience and prompt their identification with the actors, as "he wanted audiences to understand what it was like to be a child soldier and to be shocked and moved by the stories in the film" ("French director shocks UN"). This is clearly how the UN panelists use *Johnny Mad Dog*—as a form of witness to the trauma these boys have undergone. However, to grasp the ways in which this film can be used to aid our understanding of the realities of child soldiers—particularly understandings tied to discursive frameworks, like justice and human

rights, which rely on images of these children as "ideal victims"—one must look not only at its distribution and reception in the West, but at its site of production and distribution in Liberia. It is only when we begin to investigate this project in relation to the forces of globalization (the nature of labor in the postcolony characteristic of late capitalism) that the problems this project wishes to address become clearer and more complex.

The film was always conceived as an artistic project with activist aims tied to understanding the experience of "child soldiers" as a category of war victims. French film director Jean-Stephane Sauvaire's earlier work (2004) with child soldiers in Columbia had given him an enduring interest in the subject.[37] During the early stages of his plan to adapt Emmanuel Dongala's novel *Johnny Chien Méchant* he first traveled to Liberia in 2004 to gather narratives from former combatants. When asked in an interview why the filmmakers ultimately chose Liberia as a film location (the novel had been set in an unnamed African nation but bore many signs of its regional location in central Africa), Sauvaire explained that it was partly a wish to honor the Liberian children's insistence that this was their story, but also a matter of practicalities. His original thought had been to film in the Democratic Republic of Congo:

> At first, I thought I'd make the film in Kinshasa because I know the place better, but it's a big city and it's a complicated country politically. Also, the problem of the child soldiers has affected West Africa, in particular Liberia and Sierra Leone. It was important for me to film with former child soldiers and when I met them, they said not to make the film in South Africa or Senegal, which was what the producers wanted initially because Liberia had just

[37] In a 2009 interview he explains: "I wanted to do something on child soldiers because I made a documentary in Colombia [in 2004] that I couldn't complete the way I wanted. It was meant to be fiction but I turned it into a documentary called *Carlitos Medellin*, about the kids hired by Pablo Escobar to kill policemen and politicians because they're minors. We received threats and I realised [sic] that we couldn't make a documentary during the civil war in Colombia" (Electric Sheep).

come out of war and [the filmmakers] didn't think we would get insurance to film there (Sauvaire).

The interviews he made with child soldiers in Liberia came just a little over a year after the fourteen-year civil war officially ended. Many of them were living in the streets and conditions for demobilized military were difficult, in general.[38] Sauvaire registers the significance of this timing for his project when he explains that, as they began to shoot the film a year later, the staging of its violent scenes in public required special dissemination of information throughout the entire city advertising that the event taking place was not, in fact, a resurgence of violence, and that the guns were not real. As he speaks about the project, Sauvaire emphasizes the Liberian government's support for the film's production in the country and notes how they provided official permissions and access that made the project possible. At the time, the Liberian minister of information publicly expressed his enthusiasm for the work, expecting it to "put Liberia on the map," encourage a local film industry, and boost tourism. Perhaps the government saw *Johnny Mad Dog* as analogous to the film *Hotel Rwanda* which helped attain global fame for Rwanda through a Hollywood film account of the genocide. Although one might argue that its violent portrayal is more likely to discourage tourism, government support for this project seems like a well-calculated risk. Having an image of the country's devastation in wide circulation encourages international donors to give generously and nothing so effectively announces to the world that peace has taken root as inviting a project entailing serious overseas investment. It serves as an international advertisement that Liberia is open for business. Just as the film was released and largely acclaimed in the West, however, it was suddenly

[38] See, for instance, the "UNHCR Child Soldiers Global Report 2008—Liberia" which showed that by "early 2006 over 100,000 combatants had been disarmed, with 37,000 still waiting to be placed in reintegration programs. By August 2007, 90,000 former combatants had benefited from the reintegration and rehabilitation program, but many of them said that it had failed to provide them with sustainable livelihoods. The majority of former combatants were still unemployed, and thousands had regrouped for the purpose of illegal diamond or gold mining, or on rubber plantations. More than 10 per cent of those demobilized were children."

banned by the Liberian government for public screening in the country along with the claim that the acts it depicted were "not permissible to be viewed by children," in open contradiction to their approval of the children's participation in the film ("Liberia: Banned"). In this announcement, Minister Bropleh claims that the plan had always been, from the beginning, to refrain from distributing the film in Liberia, because the information is too sensitive for a population recently traumatized by war. He warns those who have been showing pirated copies of the film in their theaters that, if they are caught, the places will be shut down indefinitely and their equipment seized. While this may look like the signs of the Liberian government's unchecked power, Bropleh's behavior belies nervousness. Postcolonial governments, especially ones whose countries have been recently at war, tend to be sensitive to domestic criticisms and anxious to control the national narrative at home, as the Minister of Information's response suggests. The terms in which both Sierra Leonean and Liberian representatives who participated in the panels following the screening of *Johnny Mad Dog* interpreted its value is revealing:

> Liberia's UN Ambassador Milton Nathaniel Barnes urged the world to do more to control the proliferation of small arms which often end up in the hands of child soldiers. "Those AK47s that you saw are plentiful," he said. 'They are cheap and they are effective killing machines. I am personally of the belief that the real weapons of mass destruction are small weapons. His counterpart from Sierra Leone, Allieu Kanu, commended the UN for its efforts to tackle the root causes of conflicts, but said countries like his and Liberia needed help in reintegrating former child soldiers. "I believe the international community is not doing enough," he said. "These children who were recruited in my country, they're now roaming the streets of Freetown… They're traumatized but we don't have the means to counsel these children, to ensure these children are engaged in productive activities," Kanu added. ("French Director Shocks UN")

The problem of child soldiering, here, is discussed in terms more explicitly focused on security than human rights. The concept of traumatization serves as a mechanism to acknowledge these youths as victims while at the same time asserting that they pose a threat of destabilization. Hoffman notes in his discussion of the Sierra Leone and Liberian conflicts (he discusses them together and calls them, collectively, the Mano River War), that "reservoirs of young men languishing in the city suggest that the labor pool of violence remains a real and constant threat" and it's clear that the young ex-combatants referred to by Kanu and Barnes are making government officials uneasy (Hoffman 146). Both the state and international actors involved in the UN screening of *Johnny Mad Dog* understand that a representation showing gaps in security puts out a strong call for allies and legal reforms that will help them manage security concerns, something emphasized by the way in which Barnes correlates small arms to "weapons of mass destruction." The film's power to shock the viewer and its lack of contextual detail make it ideal for placing the violence in countries like Sierra Leone and Liberia into the international community's sphere of influence and concerns, and the way that these officials chart its relevance to concerns about international terrorism adds a degree of special urgency. In these UN talks, the shock and confusion that *Johnny Mad Dog* stimulates is clearly being used as leverage to help build consensus, direct aid, and underwrite the international policies that these parties are seeking.

The film's aesthetic of shock is partly why reviewers like Romney see the film as "wholly African" and as giving "no concession to European and American perspectives" (Romney). But I would argue that a reasonably informed viewer cannot watch the opening scene without recognizing that it taps directly into Western preoccupations surrounding African civil wars and traces rather conventional outlines of international and humanitarian narratives about child soldiering. The choices Sauvaire makes reflects a trend of global media coverage that was particularly strong in the West regarding the Liberian conflict. Photojournalists' images of cross-dressing militias and child

soldiers were widely disseminated, especially in Europe and America. In his book *The Graves Are Not Yet Full: Race, Tribe and Power in the Heart of Africa,* journalist Bill Berkeley underscored the West's appetite for a particular type of imagery in these conflicts. He characterizes the dramatic and gruesome particulars as a source of thrill for the West:

> the images that flickered across our TV screens were as inscrutable as they were chilling and bizarre. Sadistic teenage killers with names like "General Fuck Me Quick" and "Babykiller" raped, shot and beheaded at roadside checkpoints decorated with human heads and entrails. Fighters fortified by amphetamines, marijuana and palm wine sashayed irresistibly for photographers, decked out in looted wedding gowns and women's wigs and shower caps, or in novelty-store fright masks… The fact that so many of Taylor's fighters were children added an especially surreal element. One British newspaper carried a photograph of uniformed peacekeeping troops trying to lure Taylor's fighters out of the bush by offering them sweets and toys. Another featured a picture of a Taylor confederate looting a large teddy bear from a Monrovia shop. Liberia's fifteen minutes of infamy seemed to spring full-blown out of the most sensational Western images of Darkest Africa. (Berkeley 23)

That Sauvaire was influenced by such media images is more than supposition; in his discussion about the making of the film he credits among his major influences a popular cache of photojournalistic images on the Liberian conflict. Many of these depict outfits like the ones worn by the characters in his film—a pastiche of items used as sources of performance (intimidation), and magical protection. The function of such dress is explained by Nathalie Wlodarczyk in *Magic and Warfare: Appearance and Reality in Contemporary African Conflict and Beyond*:

> The importance of appearance is further reinforced by the tendency of fighters to dress in elaborate combat garb. Instead of uniforms or fatigues that serve to camouflage fighters, the tendency is toward emblems of power. For the RUF these tended to be a mixture of

> accessories associated with popular culture personae (Rambo is the favorite cited by observers, but hip hop and gangsta rap personalities also featured in their repertoire) and the occasional pastiche of traditional symbols (the masks of secret society traditions were one of the props reinterpreted by some fighters to add to their war persona). For the Kamajors the points of reference were more exclusively traditional, and fighters were generally covered in amulets, charms, and specially prepared protective clothing. (120)

In the film, this combat garb is dramatic and variegated. Johnny's outfit appears to be comprised of mostly traditional elements (charms that he explains have the power to protect him), but many others adorn themselves with elements that appear to be the product of whimsy rather than calculated choices for intimidation. A younger boy who wears fairy wings (nom de guerre: Butterfly) is reminiscent of the famous AFP/Getty image of a Liberian child aggressively wielding an AK-47 while wearing a teddy bear backpack, in the sense that the juxtaposition between the weapon of war and accessories appropriate to games of make-believe create dissonance and remind the viewer that the subject is a child, and may not have full cognizance of the consequences of his participation in war. Sauvaire takes time to explain how photos like these affected his choice, not only of costuming and filming locations, but of a key casting decision. He describes his search for Joseph Duo, whom he first encountered on the front pages of the Washington Post. This was an image captured by Chris Hondros, who had taken it in the course of covering the battle over a key bridge in Monrovia. Hondros remembered the occasion thus:

> The rocket ripped from the commander's shoulder with a deafening roar. It apparently hit its mark, because, to my surprise, he spun around and jumped into the air shouting in joy, drunk with the rapture of combat. I leaned on my shutter during his celebration. Afterward he ordered his remaining troops, mostly children, to charge the rest of the way over the

bridge to keep the momentum of their assault going. Those who hesitated were bashed with the butt of his rifle. (Hondros)

The eager reception of this photo and the ways in which it was consumed in the West surprised and troubled Hondros.[39] His ambivalence is evident when he claims that,

> for my part, I never really knew what the picture "meant." Photographers often take pictures of war victims and sometimes these move the world. But here was a picture of a war aggressor that garnered attention. Does the picture condemn or celebrate war? Create empathy for Liberians? Explore the sordid underbelly of the human condition or the darkness that lies latent in all of us? (Hondros)

Sauvaire's film reproduces the troubling world of that photo, and it's unclear whether his work, too, condemns or celebrates. It is loaded with similar moments focused on the apparent thrill of combat, some of them taking place on that bridge. Singer and Dovey share a concern that echoes Hondros' discomfort regarding the production and reception of such images: "Our interest in exploring the representation of African children through feature films has been prompted by, and is related to, the problems implicit in the capturing of still images of child soldiers via the genre of photojournalism, where such images frequently fail to contextualize the child's experiences" (152). It is the very fact that Sauvaire fleshes out and recreates the world of these photographs that helps us see how the film's solicitation of a visceral response may be more like feeding than delivering a coup de grâce to the hydra-headed problem it means to represent.

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[39] He writes "It turns out that dozens of American newspapers ran the picture that day; The Washington Post, among others, splashed it across the front page. Magazines from France to Japan that week ran it across two pages. That picture made the commander a symbol of the intractable difficulties of Liberia's long civil war. Later it was turned into posters and book covers. A Dutch photo association gave it honors, and for a while the picture was plastered on train station benches and bus stop shelters all over Amsterdam. A French journalism festival turned it into a poster much larger than life-sized and hung it from the side of a building. It's been contemplated over cheap Chardonnay in art galleries and various critics have opined on its various pictoral and symbolic elements, such as, being a crucifixion image of the soldier floating in the air. …The picture, in short, became famous." For a reference to the image, see "A Soldier's Story." Full reference: Dell'Amore, Christine. "A Soldier's Story." *Smithsonian*. Feb 2006. Web.

Though it has gained international acclaim, special attention by the UN, the approval of government officials from Liberia and Sierra Leone, and the support of many humanitarian and child advocate groups, *Johnny Mad Dog* is a far more problematic and politically perplexing project than most of these interpretive communities acknowledge. Sauvaire's employment of Joseph Duo is key to teasing out these elements. At one level, including Duo in this project forms part of the filmmakers' commitment to providing agency to those who experienced the life that Sauvaire wanted to depict—a fact that is made plain in the care they take to involve a number of former combatants not just in the acting but in the creative decisions. The filmmaker's attempts to reproduce the world that Hondros photographed, however, reveals the difficulty of interfacing with ex-combatants in post-conflict zones; they are tapping into not just talent, but a raw source of violent and recent experience that is difficult to manage and remains unresolved in significant ways. It is for more reasons than cinéma vérité that Sauvaire's casting ends up having the quality of a recruitment exercise, the acting preparation a training camp, and the living quarters a barracks. Joseph Duo not only plays a major acting role in the film but also serves as the advisor for all of the war scenes to help infuse them with details from his thirteen years of experience in Liberian guerilla warfare. His help was necessary, too, in providing a reasonable structure and order for the cast of fifteen children, the majority of who had been members of a small-boy unit under Charles Taylor, just has he had been.

Figure 5. *TMOJMD*, Joseph Duo directs child actors as he would have the small boy units he once commanded.

In a candid interview moment, the director of photography Marc Koninkcx admits that the beginning of their filming of the children was a particularly tense time, because "they grew quickly impatient when it was necessary to repeat a scene more than two or three times. They were becoming aggressive to each other and came to fight with razor blades or broken bottles. We had to separate them because they really seemed close to killing each other" (Koninkcx). He remembers that the children behaved too familiarly with the tools and methods of violence and that, "even holding a plastic Kalachnikov, they changed literally. Their muscles inflated, their expressions changed, it was more than playing. I felt ill at ease, as if we were in a situation of danger" (Koninkcx). Especially in the beginning, there was an atmosphere of barely restrained frustration and aggression amongst the boys, and they could hardly be considered actors in the traditional or professional sense. The filmmakers worked for an entire year to develop the boys' understanding of their role as actors, and to ensure the pace and demands of this project were appropriate and respectful of the fact that these were all youths between the ages of eleven and nineteen who had

been recently at war. Under such circumstances, the filmmakers needed Joseph Duo to bring order and discipline to the group, a task which suited him. Having fought in the war from age fourteen to twenty-eight, and boasting a reputation of having survived over seventy bullet wounds, he was a well-known figure whom few Liberians would challenge (Gezari). In fact, his character's nickname, Never Die, seems to reflect his real-life warrior's reputation as a man who could not be killed. In accounts about his life as a soldier, he explains that many people spread the rumor that he wasn't human because of what he had been able to survive (Gezari). When you consider the perspective he shares with a journalist who asks him about the famous photo shortly after the war's ending, his recruitment through the iconic bridge image raises some questions. Duo says that the exultation he felt at the time that photograph was taken can be understood an expression of his joy at fighting for his country, but he adds that the image now triggers painful memories (Dell'Amore). In that moment, not long after the war's official end, he seemed anxious to forget or, at least, to deflect the spotlight from his participation in the conflict.

One wonders, then, how Joseph Duo feels and what risks he might be taking two years later by helping to create detailed reenactments of the war from memory. Will he be a target of jealousy or rivalry in claiming the role? Will it draw attention to his past crimes? Is it for ethical reasons that he decides to participate? Does he want to ensure that the story is told the right way, with historical accuracy? Has he reached the conclusion that using child soldiers is deeply unjust and wants to help this film become a tool of reform? Is it an opportunity to express emotion or experiment with the way he feels about his violent past? Have his political views changed markedly since he was fighting several years earlier? Perhaps, given his own command of child soldiers, could this be his chosen form of penance or reconciliation efforts? Is the material compensation merely enough to forgo any misgivings and discomforts of reenactment? In a devastated post-war country with an economy to match, is this role simply the closest he can come to a fulfilling use of his range of experience and

talents, outside of a real war? A writer for Slate who spoke to him during the time of the film's shooting (spring of 2007) gives us a brief glimpse into his way of thinking when Duo shares that, following his high school graduation, he has ambitions to become

> a professional soldier or a Christian pastor, careers that, in his view, have much in common. "Even in heaven, God have an army… Who are the angels? Remember, the angels burned Sodom and Gomorrah, right?" In a place where powerlessness is exceedingly dangerous, the military and the church share a key advantage, Joseph said. If a commander tells a man to stay in the barracks, he won't leave. If a minister tells his congregation to come to Bible study, they'll come. "When pastor preach, everybody keep silent and listen to him," Joseph said. "That's like the military leader. When he talk, everybody listen." (Gezari)

As one might expect, the producer and director of the film delicately sidestep particulars about the rivalries and gang dynamics in this group of former soldiers, such as the ones the director of photography mentioned, and they never comment on Duo's past or future. They focus on the ways in which their enterprise has helped and enabled the young participants to move forward, giving them agency and opportunity for advancement and healing, and they focus almost entirely on the children's capacity for change and reform—on these boys' possibilities in the future. Given their commitment to telling a story of victimization, the producer and director both underscore in their discussions how much the boys have been manipulated by commanders (who are, incidentally, people precisely like Duo) and how socially marginal these boys are, in part because of the social stigma surrounding their participation in the war. To mitigate this disadvantage and fulfill a sense of responsibility to the boys with whom they've built relationships, the filmmakers explain that they have created an organization called the Johnny Mad Dog Foundation designed to help provide long-term support to the former child soldiers who participated as cast members. They draw the viewer's attention to the broader problem of child soldiers in Liberia and express ambitions to expand the

impact of their program. The producer and director credit both the boys and Joseph Duo with wanting to create a powerful advocacy tool for preventing future use of children in war. At the very end of "The Making of Johnny Mad Dog," three of the boy actors are shown personally speaking out against the use of child soldiers at a screening of their film in Paris, and one of them, Christopher Minie, who plays the title character, gives a particularly emotional account, talking with regret about the things he's done in the war. Set up this way, *TMOJMD* is actually crafted as a story of unmaking—it traces the arc of redemption across the span of their participation in the film, as well as giving the spectator a sense that the children look forward to a securer, happier future.

Both the director and producer seem to tread cautiously when talking about the ways these children have been asked to reenact atrocities they had themselves so recently committed. Consultation with psychologists, they claim, revealed that it would be more traumatic for children who had *not* been part of this violent dynamic to act out these scenes than for children who *had* experienced it. Though this research is proffered as proof of due diligence, it is a rather weak justification that sounds more concerned to protect their work from legal issues than to give its ethical complexities thoughtful consideration. Elsewhere they assess the film's effect on the boys in more productive (but still principally individualistic and psychological) terms when they claim repeatedly, in interviews and explanations of their artistic process, that acting has offered the children valuable opportunities for catharsis and agency. As Sauvaire puts it, "Some NGOs use art therapy to help child soldiers express their experiences… That could be painting, music, theatre—or cinema. For these boys it goes like this—you fight in the war, the war ends, no one takes care of you, you're living on the street. This film was an opportunity for them to express everything. They made it more realistic than I could have imagined" (Dazed Digital). Sauvaire equates his work in the film to the type of projects hosted by humanitarian organizations that seek to foster personal expression through art. However, having conducted some research at centers in the Democratic

Republic of Congo that work with traumatized children and child soldiers, specifically, I find stark differences between what the film does for its participants and the NGOs who employ art to assist children in finding ways to move forward. In meetings with the administrators of The New Hope Grieving Children's Center and Peace Live in the Democratic Republic of Congo in July 2012, I learned of several ways that art and theater are being used by groups on the ground to help children traumatized by conflicts, both as perpetrators and as victims of armed violence, and, often enough, as both). At the New Hope Grieving Children's Center, I was shown a display of children's drawings collected over the years. The drawings allow visitors, including the children who come to the center to engage in art activities, to see what some of the children passing through over the last decade have produced. Those who come to this center do so on a voluntary basis for counseling and play, and they are given access to resources they would not otherwise have—toys and art materials—and invited to do as they please with them. Local, qualified therapists are in attendance for all the children's activities but give them space to make whatever they like with no specific direction. Since many of these children talk about the loss of a parent or family member in the peer counseling groups, inevitably some choose to depict their greatest moments of trauma (see figure 5). However, others represent their reflections on trauma in symbolic rather than narrative terms (see: Figure 6). The children's art has a limited viewing in the context of the work being done and in the space where such work takes place.

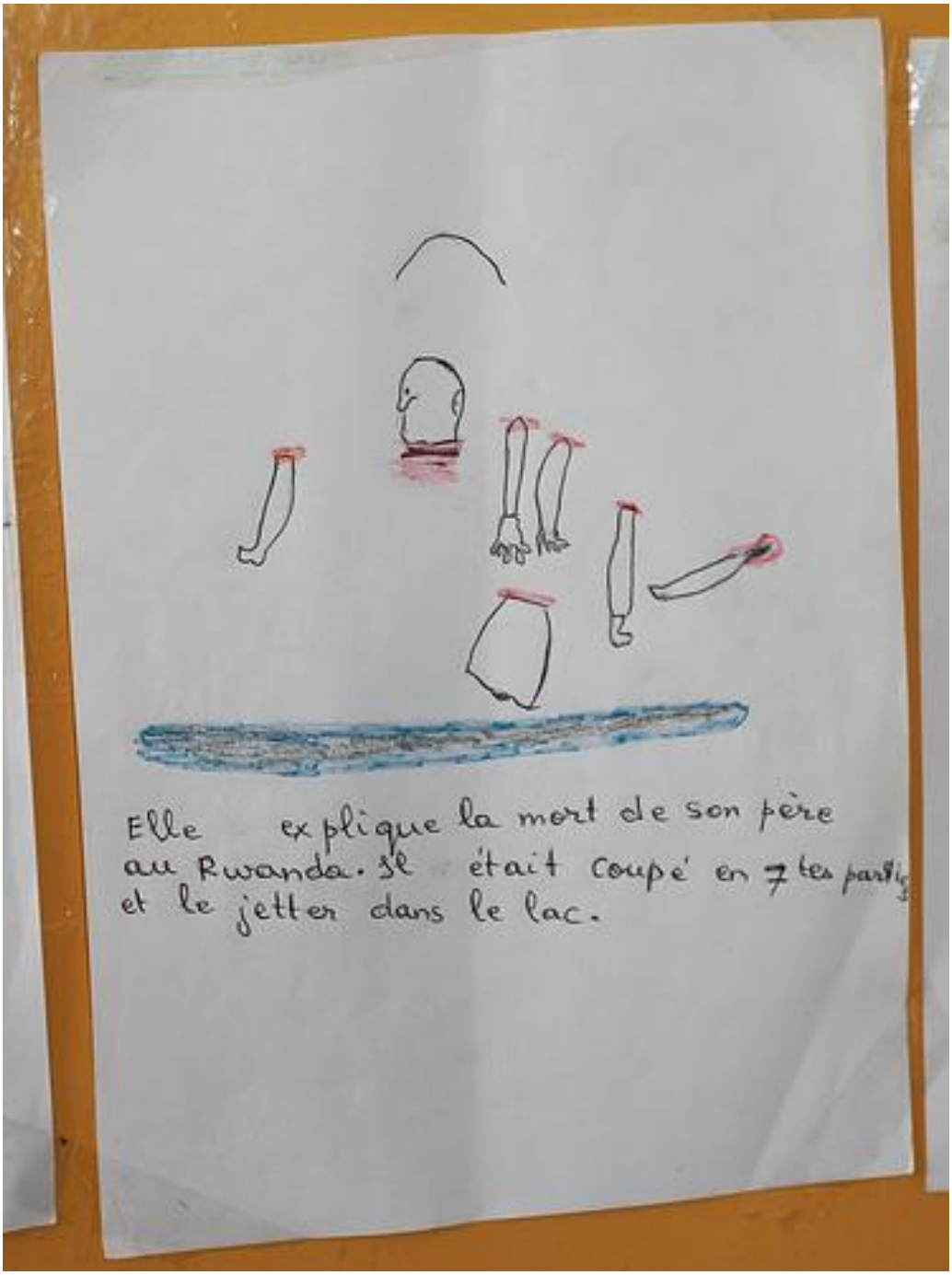

Figure 6. New Hope Grieving Children's Center, drawing of father's death. Translation of text (recorded by therapist): "This explains the death of the child's father in Rwanda. He was cut into seven pieces and thrown into the lake."

Figure 7. New Hope Center Grieving Children's Center, drawing of flower. Translation of text (recorded by therapist): "She draws a flower. It is comparable to a person. In the morning alive, in the evening, dead."

These children above were given a licensed therapist to help direct their activities; the boy actors in Johnny Mad Dog were given an ex-militia commander and an acting coach. They followed a script, the director and producer's direction, and Joseph Duo's command, all of which structured

their interface with the material during the preparation and shooting of the film. The only time we understand that the boys faced the camera without explicit direction was during the original "audition" interviews. In *The Making of Johnny Mad Dog*, Sauvaire explains that he told each of them: "do whatever you want in front of the camera…[and] most told war stories." The included clips show the boys recounting their exploits with evident excitement, in some cases bragging about how many they've killed or what kinds of weapons they've handled or how many people they commanded. One stands directly in front of the camera and, thumbing his chest, says "Tell them about me" (*TMOJMD*). This act of reminiscence stands in sharp distinction to the moment shown at the end of *TMOJMD* when the three boys appear in front of the audience at the Paris screening and two of them talk about their experiences in explicitly regretful terms. One of the boys assures the audience that they should not be afraid of child soldiers because it was not their choice to fight in the war. Christopher Minie admits, tearfully, in his address to the audience, that he "was bad during the war… [that he] killed big belly woman" (he refers to pregnancy) and urges the audience to understand the negative impact of these wars and to protect boys from recruitment. This is meant, of course, to drive home the message that Sauvaire wants to deliver, but it's also to establish an arc of development in which the children gain perspective on their experiences that they did not have to begin with. In the original interviews the stories are neither joined to monitory messages nor told in a confessional mode. Instead, the series of clips show precisely the sort of personal reflection that David Brumble refers to in his discussion of gangbanger autobiographies, in which the storytellers

> inhabit a kind of moral/psychological Demilitarized Zone. Autobiographers in the DMZ insist that they have left gangbanging behind, and they insist that they want to tell their stories in order to call our attention to grave social ills and to instruct the young, that the young might avoid the gangs… But as DMZ autobiographers tell their stories, we find

> ourselves convinced that, while they have age-graded out of the fighting, while they might be unlikely ever again to stick a gun in the face of the girl at the cash register of a Korean grocery store, they remain proud of their hard-won reputations. (156)

While the filmmakers strive to represent their role in Liberia as facilitators of change—the kind of change represented by the differences between the original interviews and the final testimony in *The Making of Johnny Mad Dog*—the truth is that they encouraged many forms of continuity with rather than breaks from their pasts, cultivating a continued identification with and valuation of their war personae. The filmmakers seem unaware that obliging the boys' desire to tell war stories about themselves and making these boys into public figures associated with their reputations in the war actually dovetails with the bragging, posturing, open hungering for power, and proud remembrance of their warrior exploits. This is partly, I believe, why Singer and Dovey call into question the benefits of their work with the children, explaining that it is "evident when one delves into the realities of the Liberian war and its aftermath… that what the child soldiers require is not yet another situation in which they are asked to assume other identities, but a process whereby they can begin to dissociate themselves from their performed roles during the war (clearly a defense) and to discover their new roles as citizens in society" (157). I would argue that the filmmakers' use of trauma theory as a basis for intervention is precisely what allows them to forge ahead with the sense that they are benefiting these boys despite the signs that contradict or complicate the idea that what they are supporting is a form of much-needed catharsis. Anxious to establish the boys' violence purely as a symptom of self-defense, they end up preserving them in the image of an ideal victim (a narrowness of interpretation that affects Singer and Dovey as well).

Contrast this approach with organizations that, while similarly supporting the agency of former child soldiers, work out of a productively different set of assumptions and goals. For instance, the program I saw when I visited Peace Live in 2012, framed the problem of dissociation

from war life not merely as a personal, psychological need, but also as a social and communal one fundamental to long term peacebuilding.[40] The founders of this organization recognized very serious shortcomings in the typical demobilization programs that often end up incentivizing young people to reenter the military or remain dependent on the systems of aid than to reintegrate into their communities. In an interview I conducted with Etienne Nshimiye from CAJED (Concert d'Action Pour Jeunes et Enfants Défavorisés) he described some of these issues. When demobilized youth return home, community members often view them with such suspicion because of their participation in the war, that ill treatment drives them to seek out the military group in which they felt acceptance; in quite a few cases, such children elected to join up in the first place because of turbulence or harsh conditions at home. In other cases, because of the goods and training these youths received through demobilization programs, their apparent elevation in status conveys the message to local children that becoming a child soldier is a viable route to access to education and enviable goods by joining up—if only to escape shortly afterward—which swells the numbers of willing recruits. At other times, military leaders returning to the area recognize young ex-combatants, lay claims again on them and force them to rejoin. For this reason, Peace Live uses theater to reach these different audiences simultaneously and make inroads to a stable, reintegrated life for the returning youth. Drama is used as a means for rebuilding severed communal ties, as a way of discouraging children from entering the military, and as a means of sensitizing local leaders and military commanders about the negative impact of using child soldiers. These productions allow the participants to tell their personal stories in ways of their choosing, and many begin, as *Johnny Mad Dog* does, with the moment of recruitment. The performance I witnessed depicted boys who had

[40] The NGO is founded and run by local Congolese in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is considered a CBO, or community-based organization.

also been captured forcibly (Figure 8 shows a shirt wrapped around the left arm of a captured youth—a common way to bind civilians using their own clothes).

Figure 8. Peace Live Center, skit about demobilized soldiers. Former child soldiers reenact a scene following the boy's capture in which the commander teaches them how to march. Here he jokes with a boy who has begun to forget his initial fear.

However, in this reenactment, the commander begins to shift focus and he gives them positive motivations for becoming a soldier immediately after untying them. After the boys' initial fear dissipates, there are moments when we see them clearly begin to enjoy themselves (see: Fig 8). It's only as the narrative progresses that the undesirable aspects of participation become more apparent. The story ends with the boys' refuge at Peace Live, their account of rehabilitation and personal reflections on their participation in the war, and their expressed desire to return to civilian life and leave the war life behind.

Compare the drama, which acts as a kind of reconciliatory testimonio to help suture communities back together, to the film, which acts as an international witness to crimes against humanity that will lead to institutional support and indictments. There is a way in which this drama functions, of course, as institutional justification—a kind of advertisement for the intervention represented in the boys' performance and its "happy ending." In this sense, the drama shares similarities with *TMOJMD*, as both performances attempt to tell the story of the boy's experience as cases of redemption, to credit their respective organizations with forms of rescue, and to present such work as a model of advocacy. However, cinema and drama have different technologies for constructing and address their viewers. Given the ways that theater engages its small audiences in person, it is better positioned than cinema to respond dynamically to local needs and less susceptible to being severed from its social and historical context. In a dramatic reenactment like the one I witnessed at Peace Live there are no valorizations of war deeds, no bloody warrior scenes animated with violence. Such representations would work against the efforts of the organizers to assure communities that the participants do not constitute a threat to the social group. However, films like *Johnny Mad Dog* take great pains to reproduce the intensity of past experience as though it were happening in real time. They dwell on the violence and gore committed by children as a signal of

deviated norms. The goal is to establish the children's victimhood not to foster their social reintegration—and these goals seem, to a degree, to work against each other.

Consider one of the establishing shots in the first scene, where we see a close-up shot that emphasizes the new recruit's confusion, agony, and reluctance to participate in the violence.

Figure 9. *JMD*, Forcible recruitment image from opening scene. Joseph Duo (General Never Die) in the background emphasizes coercion.

Though this type of scene is precisely the sort that people found difficult to watch, it is also what makes the film ideal for instrumentalization by groups like the UN. This representation reflects a convention—a type of story that has gained legitimacy because it is the path to institutional recognition. Rosen outlines a well-established humanitarian mode of presenting the issue of children in conflict:

> The compulsory recruitment of child soldiers is frequently described as being linked to specific acts of terror and horror such as forcing new recruits to kill family, friends, or co-villages in macabre ritual acts designed to ensure that the child soldier will be permanently alienated and separated from family, home, and community life. In addition, once they are

recruited into armed forces, child soldiers are said to suffer from the worst forms of child abuse, sexual slavery, the forced use of drugs, and outright murder. (16-17)

This is precisely the child soldier experience that we see the film delineate, and the ways in which the filmmakers talk about the children who participated in this war show that they share a discursive framework with the UN and this conventional mode of analysis. We know that terrifying, forcible recruitment stands for regular practice in this film. The other tropes that Rosen mentions make significant appearances in the film, too. In a scene where the general is preparing the children to attack a TV station, he tells his unit that they must "get in the spirit one by one"; he then uses a knife to make a small cut near in the main character's brow line in which he rubs cocaine, and the scene that follows has a movement and quality suggesting that all of the boys are under the influence of drugs for the siege. The viewer occupies the perspective of the child soldier who seems out of touch with the reality of what he is doing. The film prompts us to ask: given that these children have been coerced and manipulated to adopt a distorted concept of their own vulnerability as well as the vulnerability of other participants in the war, what is their level of culpability for the violence they commit? All of these moments in the film build the sense that that, although they behave as aggressors, the boys are victims. By the film's logic, it is because the children are given promises and lies and no alternatives that they fight in the war. Consider the moment when the small-boy unit is making ready to invade the city and General Never Die coordinates a ritual for the boys in which they wash in water that appears specially treated and are given the mark of a cross on their shoulders using chicken blood. Then, addressing them, he says "Gentlemen, death-dealer rebels, be strong and vigilant," and fires a round directly into the group with blanks, proclaiming the boys are now "bullet proof" (*Johnny Mad*

Dog).[41] For those present at the UN screening, such material underscores the fact that these children have been knowingly and intentionally *used* by the leaders, and that they should be understood, legally speaking, as instruments of war rather than willing actors.

Figure 10. *JMD*, Techniques of manipulation. General Never Die firing blanks at the recruits and assuring them that they are immunized from harm.

They have been taken and their identities have been displaced. In one of the only scenes devoted to giving a character backstory, Lovelita asks Johnny when he started fighting and what his name is; he replies that he began fighting at the age of ten and that he doesn't know his real name. His expression indicates regret about losing his past, about so fully becoming his war persona and knowing no alternative—no other, more genuine sense of self except what he has created to survive in a position that he didn't choose for himself. All of these features of the film confirm the human rights conventions that Rosen mentions and heighten the viewer's sense of the injustice done to children. One of the sponsors of the UN screening, Jean-Maurice Ripert, France's ambassador to the UN, has instrumentalized this story and others like it to highlight the sense of loss involved in

[41] There is a scene showing militia members emptying the bullets of their powder.

these children's lives; he "has been active in framing international standards that define child soldiers 'primarily as victims, exposed to unbearable violence and deprived of their childhood' " (Reinl). Johnny's identity and his past serve as compelling evidence of such theft and traumatization. In her book *Complex Political Victims* Bouris reviews an argument by Carpenter who claims that this sort of appeal is strategic, since "the only victim image that is sufficient in attracting broad international attention and support is that of the 'innocent victim' " (27). Though they recognize that the realities are more complex than they represent, it remains important to project "images of the 'simple' and 'innocent' victim… for the practice of human rights interventions… allow[ing] for the production of the 'objectively innocent' and the simplification of the conflict" because… this makes it "easier to work" (UNICEF official quoted in Bouris 27).

While the desire to remove impediments to accomplishing work is a reasonable goal for institutions and organizations working in post-conflict Liberia, it remains problematic that reliance on an image of the ideal victim can actually work against reconciliatory and peacebuilding efforts. As those coming from outside work to establish an internationally-recognized narrative about the realities "on the ground" and must compete for limited resources, so, too, do those who live in areas of crisis around the world where people have little in the way of material goods. Whether they recognize it or not, organizations are engaged in the task of deciding which forms of experience can be assigned more value than others—not only by giving a particular type of story exposure but *currency* in the West. In this sense *Johnny Mad Dog* can be seen as a means to penetrate a global market of suffering and assign child soldier experiences a special value. But, while the film's reception abroad in circles like the UN seems likely to help make the case for strengthening policies against children's participation in armed conflict, its long-term value to not just the boy actors themselves, but to Liberians more broadly, appears ambiguous.

To grasp the local influence of the film, one must account for the ways in which filmmaking works as an industry for profit (including the competitive and selective nature of acting as an enterprise) and the social spaces in which the films are shot and distributed in Liberia. In preparation for this film, Sauvaire and his crew auditioned 500 to 600 child soldiers, and, in the end, he chose only fifteen. Follow-ups looking into the children's lives during the year of the film's release confirm that this dynamic had a strong and lingering effect on their social lives. Fourteen-year-old Eric Stone complains that his friends taunt him: "They say I am a big star but don't have anything. That I am dirty like a beggar" (Dosso). Another of the children, Prince Kortie, explains that, when the film was in progress, "we had everything that we needed. We were well-fed, we always got pocket money," said Prince Kortie. "But after the film, they only gave us US$650" (Dosso). A third boy, Momo Sesay, says, "I drank cane juice (a local whisky) with mine because that's the only thing I could do with such an amount" (Dosso). To put the amount into perspective, Dosso explains that this money is only "ten times the minimum monthly salary in Liberia." The boys' complaints echo the kind Hoffman records from Sierra Leonean ex-combatants who express nostalgia for the days of war because they "ate well then" (109). All of this suggests that the boys were encouraged by the film to collapse the distinction between the their renown as militia members and their newfound fame and fortune as actors—each activity afforded them status attached to the performance of violence and to systems of patronage that promised to advance them personally. The boy's expressions show disdain and frustration at not being able to maintain the status they acquired when the film was being made. Without the money to show for being "stars," they easily become subject to ridicule. Hoffman notes a similar social dynamic that took place during his academic research in Sierra Leone which strained his relationship with one former combatant, since there were automatically very specific expectations attached to this privileged relationship: "Someone in his position, working with a white stranger, needed to display the material rewards of

the relationship. As long as he appeared to the world as a poor student, he was mocked at the hotel and on campus for giving away his labor, a peon client taken advantage of by his patron" (211). Being seen as exploitable is not only humiliating, but can be dangerous. In these scenarios the ex-combatants' participation is not merely the creation of a private outlet or opportunity for personal expression, nor is it simply a contribution to constructing well-informed public accounts of the war. While international audiences and interpretive communities like the UN experience the film as a product—"a record" bearing truth claims about the nature of war in Liberia—Liberians experienced the film as the arrival of a public mechanism that produced *social status*.

Figure 11. *TMOJMD*, Liberian citizens watch the filming of a street scene from the balconies. Sauvaire is explaining here that the children participating in war were not acting on their own will, but were manipulated by their commanders.

Many people in Liberia faced the material realities of this project and took part in it or witnessed the filming progress. What do the hundreds of ex-combatants who auditioned but were passed over for lead roles think of the film? Certainly to be a victim pays less and is less interesting, I should think, than playing a warrior who gets the spoils, both in the scripted plot and in the

consequent paycheck. Did any former combatants play the role of refugees and what might that have been like? Humbling? Humiliating? What did the boys who had simply been civilians but can act well take away from the experience? I wonder at the perspective of extras paid to panic in the streets or play dead bodies—to pretend victimhood—when they perhaps had been victims in reality not long before—perhaps victimized by some of those playing aggressors. It may be the case for some that, having just barely escaped death during the war, the only job they could find was to pretend to have died in it.

Figure 12. *JMD*, War casualties. Scene in the film where Johnny enters a room full of victims from the fighting and threatens an elderly man praying over one of the women's bodies.

Figure 13. *TMOJMD*, Outtake of a smoking break. An extremely brief shot showing one of the "bodies" from the scene shown in figure 13.

This, to me, is where the surrealism of the film truly resides—not in the final product and its whimsically dissonant or grotesque pageantry coupled with violence, but in the ways it commodifies violence, produces classes of victims, and blurs the lines between reality and fiction, war and peace.

Ultimately, I'm not convinced that Liberian youths who watch this film view the war as something to be avoided. Owing to the excitement of risk, as well as the promises of access to resources and control over the direction of their lives that warring can offer, this film can easily serve as a source of encouragement to participate in conflict. If children in the Democratic Republic of Congo who returned to their villages with a new set of clothes and carpentry skills could incentivize other children to view participation in the war as worth the risk, imagine how film stardom associated with battle personae might entice them to behave. A film reviewer for *the L Magazine* recognized that the boy actors' "earnest imitations of Hollywood hard guys are also a reminder of how Western weapons and war imagery have spread… When [Sauvaire] exoticizes an ecstatic nighttime dance around a bonfire or uses slo-mo, stutter cuts, and a curtain of sound to dramatize the kids' point of view as they open fire on a town, he completes the circle, turning the dreams of these Hollywood-worshipping kids back into cinematic glamour" (Nakhnikian). Although the story was conceived as a witness to the brutal realities of war and its effects on youth, it would be a mistake to presume that brutality itself acts as a deterrent, and important to remember that, "given the imbrication of visual technologies in the exercise of violence, film as technology cannot be simply claimed as a means for working against the perpetuation of violence" (Dovey Singer 153). Brumble underscores the need to look carefully at stories that fit the conventions of warrior tales when he worries about how highly people have recommended books like Tookie Williams' gangbanger autobiography for middle- and high-school students in the US; he suggests that

> we should be more skeptical about … assumption[s] that gangbanger stories will frighten children away from gang involvement by showing them the terrible reality of gang life. We must remember that in warrior tribes coup tales – tales of blood, victory, and courage, tales of wounds inflicted and received, accounts of dangers faced, respect won – inspired emulation, not aversion. (169)

For the interpretive community the UN represents, *Johnny Mad Dog* may be received rather straightforwardly as a condemnation of war. This audience, sharing rights-based approaches and looking to experts for ways to develop cooperative agendas for solutions to the problems depicted, views such a film largely through the lenses of law, security, and policy. Liberian youth, however, have a more improvisational, individualistic, and ambitious approach in their consumption of films that represent forms of access to wealth and power—however tenuous, risky, and illegal those might be.

Examining the reception and circulation of the film in Liberia underscores the ambiguity of the film's local influences and meanings, giving a clearer view of the stakes involved in adopting interpretive frameworks like the one that *Johnny Mad Dog* encourages. As one might expect, official references to viewings in Liberia exist primarily in the form of the government's public condemnations and threats against those screening the film. Given the response, it is reasonable to presume, even without this evidence, that *Johnny Mad Dog* circulated heavily in Liberia, particularly in urban areas like Monrovia, where the film was shot and where a majority of the demobilized child soldiers resided. In an article published in *Warscapes*, "Hollywood, Pirated Videos, and Child Soldiers," Emmanuel Dongala provides a view into these types of screenings; though he discusses activities in central Africa, the means of circulating film in these urban spaces resembles those operating in other parts of the continent where infrastructure is poor:

> In cities like Brazzaville or Kinshasa where movie theaters no longer exist, enterprising young men equipped with TVs, VCRs or DVD players earn their living by projecting pirated films in simply constructed spaces. Often they create these spaces in their own bedrooms or living rooms by pushing a bed here or a table there against the wall, and then adding a couple of benches. Or when they do not have their own rooms they improvise a projection room. With some poles, they delimit a rectangular area in the yard of the lot where they live and encircle it with corrugated iron or old jute sacks called "nguiri" which are sacks used to carry cassava flour. To have the darkness necessary for projection, they top the room with a tarpaulin or black plastic sheets. Every time rain threatens, the session is suspended, the electronic equipment promptly disconnected and brought to safety. They are geniuses at fixing their equipment. For example, for continuity of business in a city where electricity is as iffy as winning the lottery, they have adapted their equipment so that it runs on car batteries.

He describes this space in his discussion of what prompted him to create the character Johnny in *Johnny Chien Méchant.* Having witnessed a scene of violence take place at a roadside barrier, and hearing one of the children call for "Chuck Norris" to bring him a grenade, he puzzles over this strange detail and the fact that many kids who were his students in school did not enter militias coercively but "joined voluntarily, often with enthusiasm" (*Warscapes*). He credits film culture with a strong influence on how such youths come to regard war as a "chance to live for real what they have been living vicariously through their imaginations" and his detailed description of the makeshift theater emphasizes the entrepreneurial flexibility and keenness of the youth in question. Hoffman theorizes that understanding urban spaces in the postcolony is key to unlocking the way people understand their place in a postcolonial environment and notes that "what we find in West African urban centers… is not the perfection of the modernist institution as manifested in the asylum, factory, clinic, school, or prison. Unlike these institutions, movement rather than classification of

identities is the key productive capacity in the West African postcolony" (168). Rights-based approaches in the habit of relying on the stable classifications to define norms exhibit extraordinary blind spots as they intervene in these spaces.

Hoffman provides a key insight into what rights discourse must overlook as it insists on reading conflict itself as a departure from peaceful norms; he explains that, "in contrast to the view of the African city as a negative space measured by its deviance from an abstract, properly functioning norm" a number of modern scholars (prominently among them Mbembe and Nutall) "privilege the creation of new types of urbanity through experimentation and creative bricolage," which is a marked departure from the kind of chaos and unreason depicted in the film or the primitivist narrative that "New Barbarism" would have one believe characterizes such spaces (Hoffman 163). If one understands that conflicts like the one in Liberia are not merely a disruption but "a logical extension" of the social dynamics at play in this environment, it helps "shift the dynamics of postcolonial warscapes from an exclusive focus on what is destroyed [so that we can seek] to understand what is being produced" (Hoffman 166). Hoffman suggests the value of looking at violence not in pathological terms but as a response to the conditions of global capitalism shows just how interchangeable violence has become in the west African warscape "with diamonds and cash, its value translated into political subjectivity and masculine identity." (108) Here Hoffman touches here on the very thing concerns Dongala: that violence in these contexts comes to be perceived as a normal and even desirable for young men seeking initiation into the adult world. The normative connection between violence and masculine identity is clear in the film culture that Emmanuel Dongala discusses. When he asked a boy to "write down the films screened over the course of a month in the urban youth's makeshift theaters," he noted that violent films were the most popular, explaining why "Schwarzenegger, Stallone, Van Damme, Jackie Chan, Chuck Norris were household names." In *The Making of Johnny Mad Dog* we see that some of these same films and

characters have cultural currency in Liberia. For instance, Sauvaire talks about deferring to the boys' judgment when choosing relevant war names and references to cultural icons. He explains how the boys add detail to a scene where they find a discarded weapon as they are displacing civilians and working to control territories in the city. In the shot Johnny tells his fellow militia members that he remembers seeing this gun in *Delta Force* where Chuck Norris used it; he warns them that they should stay alert because Chuck Norris and the Israelis who use this type of Uzi might be around. In Sauvaire's estimation, "these films were references from a warrior's point of view," but he adds, perhaps fearing how this complicates the idea of his film as a deterrent of violence, that the boys "can distinguish between film and reality" (*TMOJMD*). What is conspicuously absent from this conversation and many others praising the film is the ways war films were used in Liberia to motivate fighting; relatively recent history suggests that most young people in Liberia *cannot* make the distinction Sauvaire credits to the boys. In a 2011 documentary, General Butt Naked explains that he used Hollywood action films (particularly war films) to show his small boy unit that "the people who died in one movie [are] alive again in another movie" as a way to convince them that the consequences of their actions were not permanently damaging (Shearer).

Even for those who have learned about how the reality of war differs from filmic representations, this realization does not mean that military life has ceased to attract them. This is evident when we listen to the section in *The Making of Johnny Mad Dog* where Sauvaire asks them to choose a name for the small boy unit in the film. They find his suggestion, the "Rambo Unit," laughable, and explain that this is not a proper name for rebels. One of the boys draws a distinction: "We are rebels. We are not actors in America who use one man to fight a war in Afghanistan" (*TMOJMD*). Christopher Minie shares this assessment and explains that: "Rambo fires one big gun and never dies. But me, I have fired triple guns all the way to the Wologisi Mountains" (*TMOJMD*). There is an implication in these boy's expressions of pride that the type of warfare they know relies

not on superior firepower but mobility, dexterity, intimate knowledge of one's environment—and reputation for ferocity. Given the ways they measure themselves against their filmic counterparts, we can see the attachments these boys still feel to their fighting groups; their wartime reputations and identities remain strong.

Though *The Making of Johnny Mad Dog* represents a developmental arc of transformation and redemption (the "before" moments full of warrior pride contrasting the "after" moment of their remorseful stage appearance), it is far more likely that the expressions seen at these different moments are contemporaneous and in tension with one another rather than fitted to a neat teleology. Without guarantors of safety and other support systems, retaining these ties will remain important to the boys as they face the postconflict realities in Liberia (the war associations, for instance, will remain relevant to a boy's survival if a resurgence of violence should occur). Hoffman notes that the UN, international NGOs and international judicial bodies have tended to

> generate discourses and normative visions of combatants as either political subjects (revolutionaries, rebels, or insurgents), economic agents (greedy or impoverished), or social actors (tribalists or nativists). Very few seem willing to consider combatants as all three of these simultaneously—or more accurately, to recognize that these are no longer separate domains. For the young men who participated in the movement there was no easy separation in how they evaluated themselves as "fiscal subjects" (Roitman 2005, 31) versus other forms of participation in the world—participation as national citizens, as men, as members of an ethnic group. (Hoffman 112)

Understanding the nature of youths' participation in conflict means examining the complex (and sometimes contradictory) accounts of participant motivations. The narrative that Joseph Duo has shared with journalists about his experience shares some features with the boy's reflection on war

culture, and supports Hoffman's theory on the commodification of violence. Consider his own account of the reasons he gives for joining Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front:

> 'When I went to go see the fighters, they arrested one of my best friends and then right before me, they cut his head off and then that hurt me a lot,' he said. 'I just felt bad for that whole time. I told my mother we have to move from here, you are not safe. So we left the place, but then while we were traveling from area to area, I used to dream. In my dreams, I was always a military man, a big fighter in my dreams, and I was commanding a lot of people so I told my mother, 'I cannot stand here, I have to go.' (Columbant)

He interprets his own motivation to join the war as the response to a killing and a calling. In that account, it is revenge and the will of God that moves him to fight, both a personal motivation and something outside of human control. In a similar article, he adds that joining up "was the only way to stay alive and protect his family," making his choice seem like a more deliberate strategy for gaining advantages for himself and his kin as a response to a radically destabilizing environment (Gezari). Because he has been educated through the tenth grade when he signs up, and many others cannot read and write, he is given a position of status from the very beginning of his military career, though he is just fourteen years of age at the time. Within three days of joining up he is commander of a unit of 160 boys (Gezari). Humanitarian narratives (particularly of the child-advocacy variety) would likely emphasize the moment of trauma (his friend's death) as an explanation for his joining and downplay the elements of his personal advancement. However, unless one believes that Duo is lying, it is possible that, to him, all of these reasons are valid and compatible with each other. The difference between Johnny Mad Dog's story and Duo's highlights very different ways of perceiving children and agency. David Rosen has explained that it can be difficult to find common ground in current practices between "ethnographic and historical accounts of young soldiers [that] stress the agency, autonomy, and independence of youth… [and] humanitarian accounts that emphasize the

inherent vulnerability and dependence of the young" (Rosen 134). Some disciplinary crosspollination is needed to increase advocacy's effectiveness and relevance to children's lived experience —to foster methods of approach that listen carefully and take seriously the choices that children make while planning to cultivate understanding and seek recognition for their special vulnerabilities.

Finding a way to sensitively address the issue of young people's agency appears to be the key to creating policy and humanitarian responses that support justice and reconciliation; this will be critical to long-term peacebuilding. Although it is clearly expedient and relevant to understand children as particularly vulnerable, it must be acknowledged that these vulnerabilities are determined, not by the nature of childhood alone, but by the conditions of their lives that are marked by various forms of poverty and insecurity. Narratives like *Johnny Mad Dog*, with its heavy emphasis on forcible recruitment, represent too narrow a slice of experience on which to base sophisticated solutions for the problem at large. The notion that most child soldiers have been forced into fighting is not merely an oversimplified account of the realities on the ground but does not, in fact, faithfully reflect the norm:

> …the vast majority of child soldiers are not forcibly recruited or abducted into armed forces and groups. Indeed, in Liberia, children were among the first to join the armed groups, and in the Palestinian intifada they have often been the catalysts of violence. Even the Machel report argues that not all children should be seen as victims. Indeed, perhaps for children, as well as adults, it may be true, as Nordstrom argues, that the "least dangerous place to be in a war today is in the military." (Rosen 17)

This is certainly the conclusion that Duo seems to have reached. It is vital to acknowledge that children are capable of behaving as rational actors—something that is made very clear when they enlist as a way to try and take control of their fate. In efforts to create a story that's accessible,

it's possible to strip away the social, political and cultural dynamics of child soldier experience that would actually help policymakers and advocates understand the factors that perpetuate cycles of violence and youth participation in them. Careful analysis can restore some of these complexities and identify pressure points that raise questions about the nature of victimization. I think particularly of a scene in *Johnny Mad Dog* where the Death Dealers bring a wounded member to the UN hospital. When the UN soldiers prevent them from entering with their weapons and tell them to lay down their arms if they want to proceed, they boys grow angry. The UN is presented here as the reasonable party and their rule not to allow arms in the hospital expresses a commitment to the protection of civilians and principles of nonviolence. On the other hand, it's clear that there's not just bravado and desire for conquest governing the boy's use of weapons. Much of the scene sounds wooden and scripted, but there are a few lines that strike me as improvised or at least genuinely meant, and these ring with special significance. Here Butterfly volubly rejects the UN soldier's suggestion that they would have to give up their weapons to enter the hospital. He shouts, "My weapon is my mother and my father" (*Johnny Mad Dog*). There's startling truth in this. The weapon is this boy's only form of staying protected and staying fed. In that view it is not just a tool of destruction but the most generous thing in his life. Another boy says defiantly, "We brought peace to our country" (*Johnny Mad Dog*). If this statement is taken as a symptom of brainwashing by superiors—as an adoption of empty rhetoric with no ideological backing—then it fits seamlessly into the overall narrative of victimization. However, as a genuine expression of political motivations, it presents a challenge to the notion of "ideal victimhood." One the most basic level, the boy is trying to make a case for why the UN needs to give medical attention to his friend, suggesting that they are greater agents of peace than the UN itself. He is also expressing disgust at people who would fancy themselves soldiers but who don't engage in combat.

Figure 14. *JMD*, The small boys unit issues a warning to UN soldiers.

When a medic eventually comes to accept their wounded friend, and they cannot follow, one of the boys threatens reprisals if the hospital fails to help him: "It's our country. Defy us and you die" (*Johnny Mad Dog*). It would be easy to read this simply as intimidation and the posturing of those who have taken power, but there seems to be something else at work here. The weight of the international community stands behind the blue helmets. In threatening the peacekeeper and asserting ownership, the actor seems to be expressing genuine resentment about the role that international parties have played in their national struggle. It would not be surprising if he felt this way, given that the UN has served a strong historical role here, as elsewhere, in bolstering state power. Organizations like them create official channels of recognition and access to benefits that often reproduce or amplify rather than interrupt or challenge the relations of power that exist during longstanding conflicts. One might look at the situation in the town of Bo after the conflict, where

> former soldiers, hoping to disarm and obtain the economic benefits of demobilization, were dependent on local commanders who served as gatekeepers to international resources. These commanders made the selections as to which of their former soldiers would obtain

> the benefits….but child soldiers who sought the more tangible benefits of the international community had to be categorized as adult members of regular forces, an act that required the creative energy of the gatekeeper. In Bo, rules-based bureaucratic and administrative processes created by the United Nations were converted into a system of patronage much like that of prewar Sierra Leone. Now, however, the United Nations, various international organizations, and other stand-ins for the state control the principle resources on which patronage depends. (Rosen 152)

These commanders' innovative recategorizations speak not only to the clumsiness of bureaucracy and to the cleverness of those who learn how to work for advantage within its guidelines, but indicate the ways in which patronage relationships are key to rites of passage into adulthood: "amidst the state's legal definition of the boundary between childhood and adulthood and the age norms defined by global NGOs and the United Nations is a more amorphous definition of youth as those who have no formally recognized dependents of their own" (Hoffman 131). In this view, the child soldier problem is exacerbated by the fact that "increasingly, it seems, crossing the line between youth and adulthood is an impossible challenge for young men. The life events that mark the transition and that cultivate dependents—formal marriage, initiation, establishing a farm or business—are prohibitively expensive" (Hoffman 131). I find this scene particularly noteworthy because here the boys' voices seem to punch through the fictional account and sound like forms of direct address; between the more scripted acts of aggression, these seem to be moments of true agency and expressions of frustration with the international community playing its longstanding role of gatekeeping that leaves them on the outside. The boys' discontent with the UN authority and the way it limits their access speaks not only to their ambitions and desire for recognition but to a long history dispossession and oppression. It also speaks to their desire to cross

the threshold of adulthood that would break the spell of their perpetual vulnerability and dependency.

Johnny Mad Dog's conception as a project, its production on the ground, and its reception at the UN emphasize that people who use are using these stories to advocate for children may have other priorities and motives. After all, the UN is not simply a collection of disinterested members of an "international community" but a collection of states and actors with varying interests and political agendas. It stands to reason that people who have different roles and responsibilities for problem-solving the issues under discussion will use stories that are most amenable toward their respective institutional frameworks and goals; everyone has a vested interest in gaining official recognition for particular types of problems which can be translated into courses of corrective action. Sauvaire's film, in this sense, is useful to international consensus-building because of the way it operates on the axes of many state and international interests. However, the interested and powerful parties who seek to underwrite, advertise, and promote the image of abduction and story of senseless victimhood, giving this version the status of an advocacy standard, as yet have no suitable way to explain or address many of the dynamics surrounding the production of this film as well as the majority of child soldier narratives. For, although Sauvaire's project sought to replicate the rawness and energy of Duo's famous photograph on the Monrovia Bridge, its story of victimization had no way to accommodate Duo's actual experience. If child advocacy is to be smart, it cannot afford to reproduce the scenes of "uniformed peacekeeping troops trying to lure Taylor's fighters out of the bush by offering them sweets and toys" (Berkeley). Helpful interventions must be accompanied by a "more nuanced view of both the vagaries of war and the contextual definition of childhood [which] should deepen our ability to wrestle the question" of how to best advocate for these youths while keeping both their histories of participation conflict and

uncertain futures in view (Rosen 158). Without a more sophisticated account, international organizations will be living and legislating in refracted worlds invented by themselves.

4.0 ACTING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN *RUINED*[42]

Few contemporary pieces of fiction illustrate the dramatic possibilities and complexities of high-profile performance art moonlighting as a human rights campaign as vividly as Lynn Nottage's play *Ruined*. Set in a brothel in Eastern DR Congo, the story follows the struggle of the owner and the women in her employ to survive by their wits and by selling their bodies to soldiers on both sides of the war. The show opened off-Broadway in early 2009 and quickly moved on to other venues, meeting instant acclaim and winning a slew of prizes, including the Critic's Circle, an Obie, and the Pulitzer. Attendees with large media platforms, like Oprah Winfrey, contributed to the play's success, expanding its reach into new audiences and fueling reports in 2010 that Nottage has been commissioned to work on a screen adaptation of *Ruined* for Harpo Films and HBO (Ng). In interviews the playwright has repeatedly expressed surprise that American audiences responded so positively to this work, as she "expected more resistance"—a point of view indicating her determination to draw attention to difficult subject matter (Iqbal). Nottage's background in human-rights activism is apparent in such reflections, and while she has expressed reluctance to label *Ruined* a political work, her desire for the audience to invest in finding solutions to the problem it represents is evident. In articulating what she hopes the spectator's takeaway will be, she urges a hands-on response: "Act. Put down your newspaper and actively get engaged. It's very easy for all of us to be armchair activists. And very easy for all of us to be outraged in the moment—but very difficult to choose to do something tangible to implement change. So hopefully there will be one or two people compelled to do something" (Olopade 2). Besides her interest in reaching a general audience, Nottage situates this work alongside professional struggles to advance women's rights and her expressions here indicate more defined ambitions:

[42] For an overview of the Congo Conflict, see Appendix C.

> This play is a tipping point on this issue, specifically with regards to the Congo. Will it hold water? I don't know—I wish that I could look 10, 20 years off. But I do think it's important that we have a secretary of state that has made women's issues a priority. It's good that we have a UN Secretary-General who has said, at least in speeches, that he has made this issue a priority. That's a huge step forward. I worked at Amnesty International years ago, and I remember how difficult it was just to talk about women's rights in the context of human rights. So I feel that there are huge strides that have been made already. And I think that there's been language written in… equating sexual violence with human rights abuses and war crimes that's really important from a legal framework. (Olopade 2)

Nottage's definition of progress here foregrounds the institutional recognition of sexual violence as a violation of international law, and she seems to be referring, at least obliquely, to the UN Security Council resolution 1820, adopted June 19, 2008, during a debate on "Women, Peace and Security," which stresses "that sexual violence, when used or commissioned as a tactic of war in order to deliberately target civilians or as a part of a widespread or systematic attack against civilian populations, can significantly exacerbate situations of armed conflict and may impede the restoration of international peace and security." Effectively recognizing such acts as a case of military aggression, this resolution "affirms in this regard that effective steps to prevent and respond to such acts of sexual violence can significantly contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, and expresses its readiness, when considering situations on the agenda of the Council, to, where necessary, adopt appropriate steps to address widespread or systematic sexual violence (UN Security Council Resolution 2). A few months after its adoption, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights acknowledged this UN's resolution, claiming that "the effectiveness of UN Resolution 1820 (2008) in reducing sexual violence and bringing its perpetrators to book will have to be gauged in places such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)—

arguably the epicentre of sexual violence against women today—as well as Liberia and the Darfur region of Sudan" (OHCHR). It was in the following year that the focus on DRC as an "epicentre of sexual violence" and as a test of the UN's ability to enforce the resolution became apparent. I saw signs of this increased attention personally, when, on Feb 28, 2009, the Secretary General of the UN, Ban Ki-Moon, made a special visit to HEAL Africa, a local hospital in eastern DRC whose primary mandate includes extensive care for women victims of sexual violence (where I was volunteering at the time). In the press statement held on-site following his tour of the facility, he underscored his shock and anger on learning what the women patients at HEAL Africa had endured, promised to prioritize the issue of sexual violence for the UN, stressed the need to support community-based organizations in providing service and combatting social stigma around rape, and urged that the government of DRC partner in efforts to help end the "impunity" with which military perpetrators committed such crimes and thereby help bring this "scourge" to an end ("Opening remarks at press encounter"). Just eighteen days before Ban Ki-Moon addressed the press at this event, *Ruined* officially opened off-Broadway, and four months later he was attending the play's Manhattan Theater club performance and speaking in front of the press again about his resolve to end sexual violence in the region, this time to theatergoers and, via the press, a broader American public with an interest in the arts. After the show both he and Navi Pillay, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, lauded the importance of Nottage's story for promoting public awareness and understanding about the scale and impact of sexual violence on women in DRC. The Secretary General judged the play "a very compelling story which everybody should know" (Heaton). Nottage's piece is used in such press interviews not only as an imperative to respond but *gives sexual violence in DRC symbolic status as the antithesis of international human rights ideals*.

The eager reception of Nottage's play can be explained, in part, by the work of institutions like the UN (and certain personalities within them, like Ban Ki-Moon) pushing for public

recognition of the situation in DRC in general and of sexual violence in particular. Because the story's emotional register is well-suited for delivering a moral imperative, many organizations beyond the UN—activist, non-governmental, governmental—have appropriated the story for a wide variety of uses in which international outcry can be usefully translated into tangible forms of support and underwriting for organizational policies and programming. In this sense, it seems clear that *Ruined* and the abuses it exposes have encouraged further engagement and action, just as Nottage hoped. The story has helped to boost institutional recognition of injustices against women and to improve service delivery on the ground. But there are problems. One might ask, has the play contributed as much to the broader struggle for gender justice in DRC as it has to compartmentalized efforts tuned for "office convenience?" ("Righting Wrongs" 39) Has Nottage's framing of the issue helped critics tackle any of the root issues of DRC violence or has it mainly urged solutions based in international intervention? Does it have anything to offer those asking questions about how to support *local* peace- and Justice-building efforts? The pathos that gives the story such impact is useful for cutting through the complexities that bog down response time but might it also obscure important particularities of the conflict and drown out the voices of critics who have long been marginalized because they do not have easy access to centers of power and modes of representation. If we read Nottage's piece as the "voicing" of an urgent problem, we can tease out some of the answers to these questions and examine the ways the play has been used to mainstream and entrench dominant narratives about the conflict. It is only by historically contextualizing the play, examining its relationship to institutional frameworks for interpreting the issue under discussion, situating it amongst ongoing debates over the politics of representation, and examining its aesthetic investments that we can discover the play's critical impact and significance in the landscape of globalized struggles over gender justice and activist efforts to arrest broad scale atrocities.

To appreciate Nottage's approach and investments in this project it is important to understand that her work originated at a moment when widespread sexual violence in the DRC was receiving very little attention in international news and when medical institutions on the ground were extremely limited in their ability to give service to the high number of victims with serious injuries. Nottage had originally imagined this project as a way to explore the stories of women in modern wars. Her motivations were rooted in a "desire to tell the story of war, but through the eyes of women, who as we know rarely start conflicts, but inevitably find themselves right smack in the middle of them" and she was eager to "[give] voice and audience to African women living in the shadows of war" (Huntingdon). To this end she planned to write a modern adaptation of Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* and transplant the narrative to a contemporary African warscape. Especially concerned about the gendered experience, she found it difficult to locate good information: "You could find information about the conflict, but not its impact on women and girls" (Iqbal). As an attempt to shore up the gaps in reportage, Nottage traveled in 2004 and 2005 to Uganda, where, in meeting spaces provided by local offices of Amnesty International, she collected the testimonies of women who had fled the violence in eastern DRC.

She had expected to interview only one or two women on her first trip, but she found fifteen women eager to tell their stories. Her writing plans developed directly in response to these interviews, especially because of the accounts of sexual abuse the interviewees provided, and the physical dimensions of the violence foregrounded in their experience:

> When I began interviewing the women I was really surprised by the extent to which they had been physically damaged. We know that there was emotional damage, and psychological damage, but the thing that was hardest for them to talk about was the physical damage. It made them pariahs in their own communities. In many cases, the women had been raped by foreign objects, and they had the area between their vagina and their anus torn and as a

> result they were leaking fluids. So when some of the women walked into the room you could smell them and know immediately what their history was. There was a great deal of self-consciousness, and they were really reluctant to talk about that. They felt as though there was nothing they could do about it. At least at the time, they didn't have access to doctors that could sew them up. They felt, "This is a stigma that I'm going to have to carry forever." Hence the word "ruined." (in Cruz 27)

Tracing her writing process reveals a dramatic shift away from a model of literary adaptation and towards a fresher and more localized attention in her work: "As she amassed their accounts, she felt Brecht's template slipping away. '[The women's] stories were so specific to Africa, and to that conflict, that the play had to be about them. I didn't need Mother Courage in the end. Theirs was the story that wasn't being told' " (Iqbal). The process took on a collaborative character in the course of these interviews as Nottage attempted to understand and incorporate these women's points of views into the play. When she asked for the interviewees' personal associations with the name "Mother Courage," the responses struck her for the way the women identified so closely with this title:

> Hearing the women speak in French the words "mother" and "courage" back to her – with an emphasis on "mother," a sorrowful pride inflecting "courage" – "changed everything," she said. "Their eyes would fill with tears, and they would say, 'Mother Courage, yes!' ... Even though they've lost their families, their land, almost everything, [they] could still find a way to transcend and rebuild their lives. It was a magnificent gift I received from them" ("Soul Survivors").

Without the cultural context to recognize Brecht's play, here the women participate in a kind of free association; they identify with the idea of maternal courage, not with a specific literary character.

Rather than focus on a perceived correspondence between Brecht's character and the women she interviews, Nottage works to reproduce the emotional registers and characteristics she notes in her interviewees—their sorrow, weariness, courage, fortitude, and hope to rebuild their lives are features we see in the characters of brothel owner Mama Nadi and her working girls Josephine, Salima, and Sophie. Particularly in the moments where the characters give painful reminiscences, Nottage places her audience in a position similar to the one she took as a listener, using the testimonial form relatively overtly in Salima's monologue. This character's story appears to be a composite of many accounts and she is named after one of the women Nottage interviewed whose history she found particularly moving and difficult to listen to:

> I remember the strong visceral response that I had to the very first Congolese woman who shared her story. Her name was Salima, and she related her story in such graphic detail that I remember wanting to cry out for her to stop, but I knew that she had a need to be heard. She'd walked miles from her refugee camp to share her story with a willing listener. Salima described being dragged from her home, arrested and wrongfully imprisoned by men seeking to arrest her husband. In prison she was beaten and raped by five soldiers. She finally bribed her way out of prison, only to discover that her husband and two of her four children were abducted. At the time of the interview she still had not learned the whereabouts of her husband and two children (Gener 1).

For Nottage, Salima's story registers the emotional toll that the conflict takes on Congolese women, and, in the play, the character who is her namesake is given a heavily symbolic role, representing many like her who suffer as a result of violation, loss, insecurity, and rejection for the stigma of rape, finding themselves in a position with few options. In Act Two, Scene Two, when Salima's husband comes to make amends after rejecting her, she confesses her anger and confusion to Sophie while avoiding an encounter with him. She describes the day of her attack when she was

sexually assaulted by soldiers. When her husband Fortune was out, at her urging, buying her a new cooking pot, the men arrive at her house as she is working outside: "One of the soldiers held me down with his foot… his foot was so heavy and it was all I could see as the others... 'took' me. My baby was crying. She was a good baby. Beatrice never cried, but she was crying, screaming. 'Shhh,' I said. 'Shhh." And right then… (*closes her eyes*) A soldier stomped on her head with his boot. And she was quiet" (Nottage 68). In this scene it is not the action on stage or even the details that she shares which convey the emotional weight of what has happened to her, but her inflections and elisions. The euphemism 'took' and the pauses in the actress' speech, particularly the scripted one before she describes the perverse quiet that follows her attempts to soothe Beatrice, are lacunae in the narrative that serve as emotional reservoirs—collections of multiple losses. She continues with a somewhat more explicit description of the abduction that followed this attack:

> They took me through the bush—raiding thieves. Fucking demons! 'She is soup for everyone, soup to be had before dinner,' that is what someone said. They tied me to a tree by my foot, and the men came whenever they wanted soup. I make fires, I cook food, I listen to their stupid songs, I carry bullets, I clean wounds, I wash blood from their clothing, and, and, and… I lay there as they tore me to pieces, until I was raw… five months. Five months. Chained like a goat. These men fighting… fighting for our liberation. Still I close my eyes and I see such terrible things. Things I cannot stand to have in my head. How can men be this way? (Nottage 69)

We see several different kinds of euphemism at work here. Salima's reluctance to give details is related to the unspeakable nature of her violation. In showing that she is "taken" both figuratively and literally, the link between these acts is strengthened; the body is configured as property that has been stolen, which emphasizes the criminality of what has taken place. By contrast, the perpetrators' euphemism aims to neutralize a sense of harm, deny that any violation of

norms has taken place, and lay claims to this property. The euphemism the soldiers use—"soup"—serves to deny the humanity of their victim, configuring her as a thing made for consumption. The denial of rights is therefore dramatized through an act by men who see sexual assault as a satisfaction of "male appetite" and frame their actions as natural—as a need. I was struck by Nottage's choice of metaphor here because, in my research and experience on the ground, the more common euphemism used by soldiers for cases like Salima's is "wife" which underscores not the issue of dehumanization, but social ideas about entitlement which infringe on others' rights. Soldiers employ the word "wife" to claim rights not only to sexual relations but to the abductee's labor for cooking food, washing clothing, and otherwise tending to the needs of these men, given the normative social expectations of that role. By employing a familiar metaphor that configures sexual predation as a satisfaction of appetite, and by describing men as being "this way," Nottage emphasizes a naturalized explanation for sexual victimization which sees rape as the motivation to satisfy a sudden urge. However, the details of her abduction confirm what a 2005 study conducted by local organizations has argued, that most

> rapes are acts of social and economic violence and are often planned and organised in advance. In fact, rape and pillaging almost always go together, as illustrated by those perpetrated by the Interahamwe, especially around the National Park of Kahuzi-Biega, in Kalehe and Izege, from 2000 onwards. When the attackers leave they take with them goods stolen from the community (livestock, farm produce, kitchen utensils, farm implements etc.), sometimes picking out a number of villagers and forcing them to carry the stolen goods. The attackers also abduct young women, well aware of their productive and reproductive

capacities and of the benefits they can get from them, taking them to serve as sex slaves in their camps: 10% of the interviewees had suffered this fate. (60)[43]

Nottage's interviews clearly provided her with similar information—that rape is part of a campaign to both control women's bodies and occupy territories. In the Ituri region which is the setting of Nottage's play, being "taken to the forest" has become a common euphemism for rape where dangers are related to the military occupations of those territories, showing that Salima's story conforms to a well-known narrative of violation.[44] Since human rights are "conceived through the recognition of their loss" and "by spectators who… are compelled to judge that crimes against humanity are occurring to others[,]" Nottage's choice of euphemism, and of the motif of loss, highlights the denial of Salima's humanness starkly and frames what has happened to her, and others like her, as an imminent threat against women that should be understood as a threat to human rights more broadly (Sliwinski 335).

When one looks at Nottage's work in *Ruined* it becomes clear that her ideas about global consciousness-raising are informed directly by four years of employment with Amnesty international, which she credits as being a formative influence in developing her worldview and attention to social justice issues through a human rights lens (Olukotun). In fact, she believes that "*Ruined* exists because of the journey that [she] took while at Amnesty International," when she had an opportunity to work with author and human rights activist Ninotchka Rosca and jointly take the

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[43] This study focused on interviewing respondents in South Kivu, eastern DRC. For information about the group's methodology and findings, see Works Cited reference "Women's Bodies as a Battleground." For purposes here, it may be useful to know that the survey "concentrated on 492 women and girls who had been subjected to rape. Both the network or 'snowball' sampling technique (see below), and the systematic sampling technique were used for identifying and selecting interviewees. This combination was adopted because rape victims do not reveal themselves easily, for various reasons, but mostly because of the fear of being stigmatised by their community and of the subsequent rejection that follows; or because of the fear of reprisals by the perpetrators" (12). Efforts were thus made to get information from women who might not have been initially eager to share stories, giving the sampling greater value by making efforts to include those in a particularly vulnerable position under threat for speaking out.

[44] See Elbagir.

testimonies of women all over the world, with the intent of writing a book that would effectively argue for understanding women's rights as a matter of human rights (Enough). However, it is not only this project and its methodological approach that seem to have influenced Nottage, but the institutional strategies of Amnesty International itself. The term "urgency" surfaces repeatedly in interviews as Nottage discusses the situation in DRC, and it is clear that she wants the emotional impact of *Ruined* and the lives of the women depicted to serve as a catalyst for solidarity-building and provocation—particularly to exert pressure on governing bodies and motivate institutional recognition of sexual violence as a matter of concern, much in the way that Amnesty International's Urgent Action Network responds to acute human rights threats on a global scale. Amnesty asks the members of its network to "compose and send letters, e-mails, and faxes to government officials who have the power to stop the human rights violations"; this approach builds a critical mass of public attention as a means to make "authorities quickly realize that their actions are witnessed by an international audience deeply concerned about the case's outcome" (AI).

According to this logic, once an issue achieves the status of a significant and well-publicized human rights violation, inaction may be publicized as negligence or bystanding. The organization's strategy for urgent action developed in 1961 as a global grassroots effort help free "prisoners of conscience" and to protect them from abuse (AI). Although campaigning for the "individual at risk" remains their strongest focus and the "global connection between individuals is a motivating force behind all Amnesty International campaigns," the organization has developed strategies to address groups and particular communities under threat, as well; acknowledging that they cannot give attention to every report submitted, they claim to "take up cases which are for example particularly grave, which are emblematic of a problem we are trying to address, where success in one case will have resonance for many others and where we think we can make a difference" (AI Cases). Guided by a desire to turn the story of individuals into the basis for paradigm shifts, Amnesty

International works strategically to stimulate changes in law and policy, particularly by monitoring widespread political abuses, supporting UN peacekeeping missions, and lobbying the US government. Nottage uses the story she produces in *Ruined* similarly, working to generate a critical mass of attention, to build out a network recognizing sexual violence in the Congo as both a particular case to be solved and as an "emblematic" one important to women's rights. Like Amnesty, Nottage has reached for opportunities to turn the story into not only into action aimed at immediate aid, but into US government policy. When the Enough Project sponsored a reading and discussion of the play at the Kennedy Center, Nottage expressed excitement to

> to bring [the play] to the seat of power [in Washington D.C.] because the audience will be in a position to bring about some kind of change in the Congo. One of the things we saw when we staged it in New York City is that we were very successful in bringing human rights organizations and NGOs and bodies like the United Nations in to see the play—and we found that lot of those folks were moved to act. (Olopade 1)

As a testament to the play's influence, Nottage and one of the main performers were invited in May of 2009 to attend the Senate Foreign Relations Committee joint hearing of the Subcommittee on International Operations and Organizations, Democracy, Human Rights and Global Women's Issues, and the Subcommittee on African Affairs (*Ruined* vii). Here Nottage gave a speech titled "Confronting Rape and Other Forms of Violence Against Women in Conflict Zones," and actress Quincy Tyler Bernstine performed Salima's monologue from Act Two, Scene Two, where she tells the story of her sexual assault by soldiers.

In the essay, "Broadway Without Borders: Eve Ensler, Lynn Nottage, and the Campaign to End Violence Against Women in the Democratic Republic of Congo," Bystrom examines this performance as part of her investigation into how these two dramaturges "use specific plays, and the publicity surrounding them, to intervene in and configure North American debates about the

conflict in the DRC" (Bystrom 228). Bernstine's performance and the selection she brings before the senate has a strong role in configuring those debates and "[a]s a site of convergence of aesthetics and activism, of testimony, spectatorship, and legislation, the hearing speaks to the inherently theatrical nature of human rights and humanitarian advocacy campaigns—even, and perhaps especially importantly, at the moment that advocacy is being translated into policy" (Bystrom 228).[45] It is particularly notable that Nottage's play has been so well-received and well-circulated in policymaking and advocacy circles where the drama has been called on to underwrite an analysis of the situation in the DR Congo that mirrors Amnesty International's institutional framework of concern for "highlighting the vulnerabilities that women face in war," in which the instability in Congo can be largely understood as an issue of "targeted rape campaigns by armed groups vying for control of mineral-rich turf" (AI, Women Peace and Security). The Enough Project, whose policy prescriptions rely heavily on this narrative, sponsored the staged reading at the Kennedy Center coincident with the November 2009 release of their new strategy paper "From Mine to Mobile Phone: The Conflict Minerals Supply Chain" which urges US citizens to support the Congo Conflict Minerals Act of 2009. During the thirty minute panel discussion following this reading, Enough founder John Prendergast made connections between the play and their strategy; as Olopade puts it, the organization "attempts to pick up where *Ruined* leaves off, and connect Western privilege to the sexual violence that Nottage documents in her play." This collaboration is a particularly telling one. Enough has been impactful in the field of advocacy on the DRC and played a major role in translating the "conflict minerals" narrative into successful campaigns for new legislation: "Beginning with a 2009 Enough Project paper, conflict minerals have risen in profile leading to national legislation (Dodd-Frank), conflict mineral free college campuses (UPenn is one), and state

[45] The essay can be found in a collection called *Imagining Human Rights in Twenty-First Century Theater: Global Perspectives*, which covers a wide range of theatrical productions staging human rights concerns. For a full reference on this text, see Works Cited.

legislation (California)" (Murphy). This increasingly popular narrative proposes that the conflict in the Great Lakes region is financed in significant part by illicit mineral trade. It proposes that consumer activities in the West can significantly deter such violence—that adopting new versions of the Kimberly process which mandate traceability and certification constitutes a viable path to reducing conflict. At a 2011 Great Lakes Policy Forum policy debate at John Hopkins on "How the Story of Congo Gets Told" this conflict minerals narrative and the policies it has underwritten came under heavy fire by a number of activists, analysts, and political scientists. One of the critics on this panel, Laura Seay, has written extensively on the issue and called for more evidence-based prescriptions as well as greater attention to the local roots of conflict, particularly land rights and citizenship status, even as she has acknowledged the conflict mineral narrative's popular appeal and role in mainstreaming the issues in DRC, given that the Enough Project's

> shift to a focus on conflict minerals galvanized grassroots activists on Congo and built a broad constituency around the situation in the eastern Congo. The activists' use of consumer electronics, particularly mobile phones, as a means of tying consumers to the crisis in the Congo was effective in making grassroots activists feel as though they had a connection to the crisis and could make a difference. After the adoption of this strategy, advocacy groups proliferated, news coverage of the D.R. Congo increased dramatically, and donations poured in to organizations working on the region. (9)[46]

While Enough has considerable grassroots supports through networking, one could hardly call their own operations an alternative to traditional power structures; the project has successfully hitched up a campaign tailored for American consumers to a powerful lobbying entity in its parent

[46] Seay refers to Enough's new focus in 2009 which "shifted dramatically in April 2009 with the release of their 'Can You Hear Congo Now? Cell Phones, Conflict Minerals, and the Worst Sexual Violence in the World' strategy paper in which Enough founder John Prendergast directly linked Western consumers' ownership of electronics like cell phones to sexual and other forms of violence in the eastern D.R. Congo" (9).

organization, the Center for American Progress.[47] As Seay shows in her January 2012 analysis "What's Wrong with Dodd-Frank 1502? Conflict Minerals, Civilian Livelihoods, and the Unintended Consequences of Western Advocacy," this approach provides a basis for leverage but compromises many efforts by those working to make policies for conflict-resolution and peace building. She demonstrates how the push to create international norms for holding corporations accountable has been dubiously equated to ending conflict in the Congo, particularly when Prendergast compared the conflict minerals legislation to the Kimberly process (the traceability and responsible sourcing scheme aimed at eliminating the "blood diamonds" trade); he argued that the Kimberly process can be credited with helping end the conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Angola, implying that the Dodd-Frank legislation could serve a similar function (Seay 22). I agree with Seay that Prendergast's analysis is a gross misreading of the relationship between traceability schemes and the conflicts in those countries. Seay rightly urges that "we need to decouple the value of creating a norm about supply chain tracing from the notion that doing so will end violence against Congolese civilians," because the relationship between them is not one of clear cause and effect:

> Advocates used the horrific nature of the violence in the D.R. Congo to draw attention to the crisis and leveraged emotional language, images, and testimony about rape in the Congo to promote the need for legislation on conflict minerals while promising that the violence would abate if the legislation were passed. However, many overstated the potential that a traceability and transparency scheme would have for alleviating some of that violence. Meanwhile, the unintended effects of the passage of section 1502 have put millions of Congolese artisanal miners out of work, and the violence has not abated despite the fact that few armed groups are making money from the nearly-halted mineral trade. Many policy

[47]Influence Explorer shows that the Center for American Progress spent $1,837,398 on lobbying in 2009-2010, with Bill No. S.891, the "Congo Conflict Minerals Act of 2009" listed as one of the "most disclosed bills."

makers and legislators feel as though they have been deceived as to what consequences–positive and negative–section 1502 would produce, particularly with respect to preventing civilian-directed violence. (24, 23)

Given that Enough and Nottage are both invested in finding ways to make the situation in the DRC accessible to American audiences, and given that they understand the conflict narrative in similar ways, their projects serve to reinforce one another. The fact that they are actively engaged in shaping policy means that this narrative behaves rather self-consciously in the manner that Joseph Slaughter identifies when he speaks of literature and law having a "mutually ratifying" relationship; just as an excerpt of the play was used alongside "case studies" from DRC at the Senate hearing to encourage stronger attention to sexual violence policies in US foreign relations, Enough's use of the play to strengthen their bid for legislation on conflict minerals also "dramatizes one of the roles that cultural forms sometimes perform as enabling fictions—as subtexts of the law" (Slaughter 84-85).

To fully appreciate why Nottage's play has been so useful as an enabling fiction for a wide range of stakeholders in the advocacy and service fields beyond Enough and Amnesty International, one needs a sense of the historical context and precise moment in which her work arose at the time of the play's debut and beyond. In terms of global attention to the conflict in DRC and particularly to the situation of women in the region, Nottage's characterization of 2009 as a tipping point seems appropriate. Despite the fact that, since 1996, there have been two major military invasions by neighboring countries and mass instability and atrocities related to the increased militarization of the east, the situation in the DRC has been grossly underreported relative to other longstanding conflicts. As Howard French put it in an interview for the documentary *Crisis in the Congo*, the DRC conflict "has warranted almost no sustained and enterprising reporting from the media of the world [and]… obtained no great purchase on the popular imagination" (Howard French, Crisis in the Congo Interview). Activists working to gain mainstream attention for the situation in the DRC have

seized on characterizations of the conflict as "the deadliest since WWII"—a description related to the International Rescue Committee Study published in 2008 which estimated that 5.4 million deaths during that period investigated (1998-2007) were conflict-related (Coghlan). Though many reporters, advocates, and humanitarian organizations have regarded this number as workable, and though the IRC itself has admitted the limitations of its sampling method and generated a range to account for variables, the rates of casualties have been disputed and continue to be the subject of intense academic debate.[48] Arguments over the viability of the IRC report flared particularly hot in 2009, threatening to undermine the platform on which many activists and humanitarians argued for the case in Congo as being particularly urgent and grand in scale—a characterization that was being used to compete for the divided attention of decision-makers and donors and to encourage engagement with the intense and complex challenges in DRC. In an environment where mortality numbers were being scrutinized for inflation, and where the shortcomings and difficulties of using standard surveying and sampling methods in the DRC were at the forefront of many people's minds, physical evidence of atrocity seemed to gain special status for cutting through the numbers debate and underscoring that the situation in DRC deserved special attention not merely for the scale of death, but for the *type* of atrocity ongoing there. *Ruined* appeared on the scene just as the spotlight was beginning to shine squarely on the stories of Congolese women affected by sexual violence and the organizations attempting to help them, as the anecdote about Ban Ki-Moon's visit illustrated. Attention to this issue had been steadily building up to this point for several years: "since 2006 in

[48]Consider, for instance, that the IRC report does not include 1996-1997, which were the years of the first Rwandan invasion and period of intense conflict during which the UN's Garreton Report has postulated that hundreds of thousands of Congolese died. The 2009 Human Security Report entitled "The Shrinking Costs of War" called IRC's methodology into question and suggests, among its other critiques, that the researchers at IRC underestimated "baseline mortality"—that deaths before the war were, in actuality, higher than the number the IRC report used, leading to the "dramatic jump in the mortality rate" (37). The IRC answered this critique by "pointing out that it has been transparent about field sampling problems and assumptions about baseline mortality rates. IRC said in a written response that "5.4 million is our best estimate based on established methodology and conservative assumptions, but the real figure could be as low as 3 million or as high as 7.6 million." (NBC News)

particular, a larger if loose coalition of international activists have positioned rape as 'the' symbol of the violence in the DRC, highlighting this crime to draw the attention of Europe as well as that of the North American public and the US government to the war in the Congo" (Bystrom 231). In 2008 Nolen wrote that, while "four years ago, no one in eastern Congo wanted to talk about rape, today there are local organizations ostensibly dedicated to caring for victims in nearly every town, and much more donor funding available for the issue; *la lutte contre la violence sexuelle* has, in fact, become something of a cottage industry here. And yet for Congolese women, almost nothing has changed" (Nolen).[49]

Nottage, then, began writing her project in 2004, precisely when Nolen says that silence prevailed on this issue. But by 2009, when the play was produced, a number of documentary films had already gone into circulation to bring stories about sexual violence in DRC to an international audience. The problem of underreporting, the culture of silence surrounding the taboo of rape, the prevalence and impact of sexual violence in the region, and the context of ongoing conflict and insecurity are all defining features in the documentaries *Fighting the Silence* (2007/2008) *Lumo* (2007), *The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo* (2008), *Women in War Zones* (2008), *Weapon of War* (2009), and *Pushing the Elephant* (2010). Two of these films, both American productions released before Nottage's play premiered, take place in prominent eastern DRC hospitals (*Lumo* in HEAL Africa and *Women in War Zones* in Panzi Hospital) where patients receive surgical treatment for fistula, a common injury resulting from sexual violence. The reconstructive surgery at the center of these documentaries is the same procedure that features in the play as a horizon of healing and a better future for one of the characters, Sophie who confides to Salima that, as she keeps the books for Mama Nadi, she is pinching money from the profits in hopes of putting enough aside to get the

[49] "la lutte contre la violence sexuelle" translates as "the fight against sexual violence."

surgery.[50] Many reviewers of the play have noted that she limps throughout the performance. The effect is to remind the audience of a wound that will not heal without treatment—the violation remains a source of perpetual pain for Sophie and we are meant to realize that this will not simply go away. Her trauma will not heal without specialized attention.

The emotionally compelling power of fistula has contributed to the global branding of the DRC conflict. Fistula has become a trademark for the violence the region. In April, 2010, Margot Wallstrom, the UN Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict, called the DRC "the worst place in the world to be a woman or a girl" and any cursory search will show that the country has been referred to *ad nauseam* as the "rape capital of the world," particularly since the June, 2011, *American Journal of Public Health* published findings that showed Congolese women have been raped at a rate of approximately 48 per hour, a statistic that stoked a firestorm of moral outrage and controversy in the news (BBC). There are many reasons for concern about representing the issues at stake in the aesthetic register of shock and horror, and it is neither a new problem nor one limited to Congo, though Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* did contribute to reserving a place in the Western imagination for the country as the symbolic epitome of suffering and moral corruption. As Achebe explained in his famous critique of the novella, the West has obsessively depicted Africa as "the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality" as part of legitimizing its imperial designs (Achebe 4). With the history of the early part of the century in mind, the UN's view of the elimination of sexual violence in Congo as a test of its ability to normativize human rights standards sounds like a troubling echo of colonial and missionary ideas that saw Africa as a test of civilization seeking to normativize other standards of belief and behavior conceived as universal ideals. One of

[50] In fact, Nottage donated a portion of the $10,000 Pulitzer prize she received for *Ruined* to the Panzi Hospital, as noted in this article.

the most extreme instances of Western advocacy efforts presenting the Congo as a "test" of universal ideals comes from the 2011 campaign film *Unwatchable,* which transported a story of violence in Congo to the West as a way of dramatizing the idea that Westerners would not find what is happening in the DRC normal or acceptable if it happened "closer to home"—namely to a white, middle class family in England. This film recreates one of the most harrowing stories ever collected from a Congolese interviewee—Masika's story, which has been referred to in other films, such as *Blood in the Mobile*.

The point of this confrontational approach is, of course, to suggest that failing to be outraged by what's happening in Congo is rooted in Afro-pessimism and racist attitudes that see such violence as "normal for Africa." The film works to expose a form of hypocrisy in Western countries espousing liberal ideals of individual rights and commitment to principles of equality. It points a finger directly at cell phones and the ways in which Western privilege and purchasing power connects to the violence that is so clearly designed to offend and disturb its viewers. Such depictions have received a fair amount of attention, but do little to rearrange the way the West sees the Congolese; the approach works entirely on the premise that the major problem blocking progress is a moral one tied to the negligence and indifference of the West. Congolese artists striving to participate meaningfully in the creation of cultural products which can comment on this issue have begun to "write back" to the representations of sexual violence dominantly circulating in the West and openly object to the portrayal of Congolese women as symbols of suffering. Petna Ndaliko's 2010 project, *Jazz Mama*, responds directly to such depictions, and, as "both a film and a movement" it aims "to bring awareness to gender based violence in Congo without reducing the women to victims whose lives are circumscribed by rape, but instead to recognize that, while sexual violence is indeed a devastating problem, these women are often not only survivors but the pillars of the community" (The Movement). The movement's motto is "respect," and they portray women in

their work as sophisticated social operators—entrepreneurial, opinionated, and industrious. In the film these women are not represented as passive: they express concern, indignation, and anger at what's happening in parts of the country.

Figure 15. Yole Africa, painting of the Jazz Mama movement made by a local artist on a youth cultural center in Goma, DR Congo, calling for people to "Celebrate the courage of Congolese women."

One can see in Goma, especially, local resentment about the use of Congolese suffering to secure resources and promote institutional interests. The city has been a humanitarian hub since the refugees fleeing the Rwandan genocide first arrived in 1994 and it now hosts an expansive industry of non-governmental aid and service whose *raison d'etre* is the management of and response to conflict. It is an area in which rates of sexual violence have been extremely high. This area in Congo has the largest UN peacekeeping force in the world but MONUC (the UN mission in Congo) remains at a distinct disadvantage, given their mandate and organizational structure, to

effectively protect citizens in the territory it is meant to cover. The UN's ineffectiveness in protecting civilians has contributed to its widespread unpopularity; many Congolese who interpret the UN's continued presence as a form of parasitism on Congolese suffering. [51] With this history in mind, the UN's declaration in 2009 about increased efforts to protect women and put an end to sexual violence may have appeared fatuous or even hypocritical to some.[52] Nottage's play does not include the acid opinion of MONUC that is common in parts of Congo, but we do see Mama Nadi cursing the "blue helmets" in a scene near the end when the fighting has increased and the UN is patrolling more frequently; upset that the soldiers are no longer coming to the brothel and bar, she complains: "Damn them. How the hell are we supposed to do business? They're draining our blood" (95). This is a moment in which it's possible to see Brecht's influence. Mama Nadi's curse reminds us of the ways in which profits can depend on the perpetuation of the conflict. When asked what he wanted to show the audience in *Mother Courage*, Brecht replied: "That in wartime the big profits are not made by little people. That war, which is a continuation of business by other means, makes the human virtues fatal even to their possessors" (Model Book). *Ruined* echoes this assessment, and underscores that war is big business, profiting only those who are already in a

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[51] While in Goma July 2012, I learned that a local singer had produced a popular song mocking the UN and its relationship to Congolese insecurity, which was perceived as parasitic: "Murongo, Murongo. Monuc inatafuta murongo." Monuc is the name for the UN's Congolese unit and murongo the unit of measure used at the marketplace for measuring out a day's worth of meal or beans. The lyrics translate to: Monuc is just looking for a way to purchase its daily bread.

[52] Consider the response of many who learned about the UN Security Council's decision to reinforce UN troops in Congo in 2008: "Ordinary people in Goma, struggling with the economic consequences of war, have a saying: 'No Nkunda, No Job.' The rebel leader and the war he is waging is good for business; 'White' business. Not theirs. 'That saying is really about you white guys who want to make money and for us to die,' said Deniece, who runs a vegetable stall in the teeming, chaotic centre of the Nord-Kivu provincial capital. The conflict is good for the well-paid members of the 18-nation MONUC peacekeeping force, and for the aid agencies and news organisations and the people who cater to them and their fleets of white four-wheel drive vehicles competing for space on the deeply-rutted streets. But for Deniece: 'When we see white people we know things are bad for us and good for them. 'No Nkunda, No Job,' " she laughs, and shrugs like a model advertising a brand of alcohol. The phrase rings out across the city's Birere market as her fellow traders play up MONUC's unpopularity. They see the UN force as a vehicle for prolonging the war between government forces and Laurent Nkunda's National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP) rebels" (Agence France-Presse).

position to exploit and those who take a venture capital mindset and manage to survive the risks of prospecting and trading in whatever can be commoditized, including, in this case, women's bodies. The way *Ruined* differs most markedly from Brecht's play—and where it compromises its critical power to comment on the pervasiveness of capital—is that the narrative employs pathos as a call to conscience; given the postcolonial context, the national history in DRC, and the big business that aid has become, this is a politically-freighted choice. Not only does a long historical view of the imperial enterprise show that images of imperiled and wounded Africans has served to underwrite colonialism's paternal projects and *mission civilisatrice*, but it should also be remembered that King Leopold legitimized his rule over the Congo and consolidated his colonial grip on the territory largely by using humanitarian logic and discourse; capitalizing on widespread abolitionism and anti-slavery sentiments in the Western world, he painted a vivid picture of cruelty against Congolese by Arab slave traders, which helped him establish a need for intervention and to appeal effectively to world powers for the recognition of his right to intervene.[53]

Activists working to bring attention to the situation in DRC often seize on symbols of suffering to make their work recognizable, and "the dissemination of what we might call 'shock stories'—although rarely 'shock photos'—of rape symbolized by vaginal wounding brings to mind the specter of the mutilation of hands" (Bystrom 231).[54] Bystrom's point is to point to a problematic parallel between the behavior of early activists and modern ones who use a spectacle of suffering to "raise awareness" about victimization "in a manner that resonates with imperial Western preconceptions, and feeds into the very structures of perception and representation that enabled the

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[53] A much-referenced account of Leopold's activities can be found in Adam Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost*. That his brutal activities in Congo ultimately dwarfed those of traders and produced localized forms of slavery as well as mass death stands as a bitter irony.

[54] It's useful to note that "the CRA was not only the largest humanitarian movement of the era, it was also the first humanitarian movement to use atrocity photographs as a central tool. Crimes occurring in far-away places were made publicly visible for the first time in history" (Sliwinski 334).

initial wounding of African bodies" (Bystrom 230). The comparison is instructive. It's true that, among the earliest global human rights efforts taken up on behalf of the Congolese was a campaign started in 1906 by the Congo Reform Association. Activists in this organization used a particular wound to symbolize mass atrocity and stimulate widespread moral outrage in the West against the perpetrators of such violence. The common injury inflicted by the colonial administration at the time was the severing of civilian hands as part of their terror campaign to force rubber collection. Among the first international grassroots human rights campaigns, the Congo Reform Association made effective use of the "naming and shaming" strategy to spotlight King Leopold's crimes and publicize them widely and create a coordinated effort to monitor the situation on the ground.[55] Many photos were taken to exhibit the mutilations clearly and these were distributed and shown publicly in Europe and America, using the aesthetic of shock to galvanize public support for response:

> the presentation of atrocity within the Congo reform movement took two distinct forms. This dual treatment, in turn, produced two discrete articulations of human rights. On one hand, international investigators like Casement published photographs of dismembered Congolese (children in particular) as a kind of forensic evidence of colonial brutality. Here the images were meant to serve as incontrovertible proof that atrocity was occurring in the Congo and that international intervention was required in Leopold's colony. On the other hand, missionary reformers were simultaneously delivering thousands of lantern lectures illustrated with similar images throughout Europe and North America. In contrast to the

[55] Sliwinski points out that, "Although perhaps bolstered by the legendary activism of abolitionists in the mid-19th century, scholars have identified the Congo Reform Association (CRA) as among the earliest critics of empire and advocates of a secular human rights ideology; see, for instance, Cline (1980), Ewans (2002), Hochschild (1999), Casement (2003[1903]), Taylor (1990). Both Casement's 1903 Congo Report and Morel's prodigious collection of writings on the subject offer a complex indictment that can be regarded as a forerunner to the work of present-day humanitarian groups such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International" (334). For a recent analysis of the "naming and shaming" strategy, see Emilie Hafner-Burton "Sticks and Stones: Naming and Shaming the Human Rights Enforcement Problem." A full reference can be found in the in Works Cited.

tone of criminal investigation, these lectures took the form of phantasmagoric theatrical productions; the missionaries appealed to a mythic ideal of universal human dignity, and ultimately used the Congo crisis to promote their respective ambitions for central Africa. (Sliwinski 335)

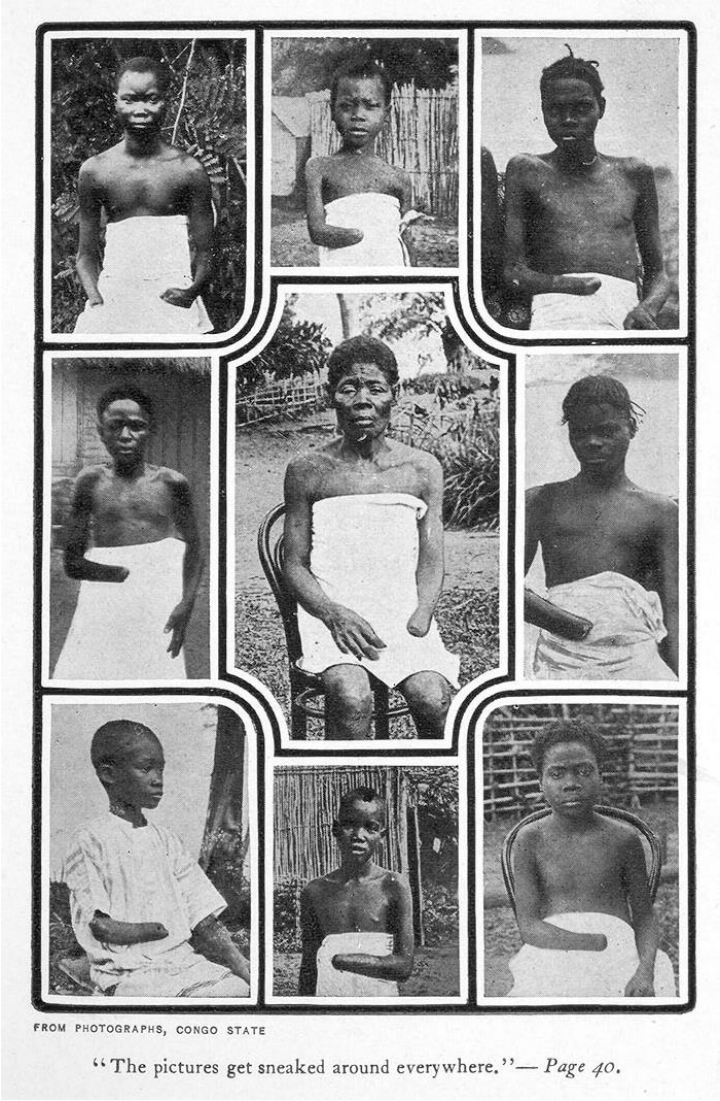

Figure 16. Photos of mutilation in the Congo Free State. Source: Twain, Mark. *King Leopold's Soliloquy: A Defense of His Congo Rule*, Boston: The P. R. Warren Co., 1905, Second Edition. Photographer/s unknown. Public domain, published before 1905.

Though they clearly issued a public call to conscience with moral resonance, Casement and E. D. Morel, who wrote *Red Rubber* specifically to show the link between this trade and atrocities on the ground, framed the problems in Congo as an issue of exploitation tied to the nature of business and profit in an imperial context. Their work was presented as an exposé and grounded in issues of citizenship and rights. In what seems startlingly anti-imperial for its time, "[t]he basis of Morel's articulation of Leopold's regime as 'criminal' rested primarily on his radical conception of the Congolese as possessing certain inalienable rights, in particular the right to property and control over their labour: 'The Congo native, like the native of every part of the African tropics, must be protected in his rights in land, property, and labour. All those rights have been swept away from him by the most colossal act of spoliation ever imagined by mortal man' " (Sliwinski 343). By contrast, the missionaries represented the problem in Congo as a dramatic example of moral failure; for them it was not only a matter for outrage and a call for intervention but a useful lesson and means to extend their existing mission—an opportunity for moral instruction:

> The missionary reformers espoused a version of Protestantism that called for social reform based on awakening audiences to their own culpability in human misery due to "indifference". The missionaries' combined presentation of atrocity photographs and "horror narratives" were meant to arouse audiences' conscience as well as provide recognizable Christian themes (atonement, redemption, awakening, and hell's harrowing) with which to form a prescribed response (Sliwinsky 359).

In this interpretive community, global citizenship is tied to the recognition of people's universal eligibility for God's grace. The ideals of Christian citizenship, as they are enshrined in the parable of the good Samaritan, do not presume national, social, or legal institutions as the territory for reform, but work for personal change; their aim is to challenge a biased audience to adopt a new way of seeing one's set of responsibilities to others, regardless of context. In this view, the injured,

suffering, vulnerable, and socially marginalized figure is preferred as a literary device. Like the Samaritan lying on the side of the road, unconscious and bleeding, the ideal victim for legal recognition in this religious framework is not someone who is striving to assert their rights, but whose life depends on intervention, because it demands the individuals in the audience to identify with the traveler and imagine her decision. The victim is not representative of a historically-situated or localized problem, but a sign of the need for individuals to submit to divine will as well as take up the duties of Christian charity. Whereas secular reformists use suffering as proof of a crime against individual freedoms and a failure of institutional integrity, religious reformists—particularly Christians—use suffering as a call to conscience that reads citizenship as the right to receive God's grace, *in which sacrifice and redemptive suffering have ideological value*. In this paradigm, calls to conscience using suffering and vulnerability point, not to a need for empowerment, but a need for submission.

Figure 17. Grounds sculpture at Protestant University ULPGL in Goma. Artists: Sanyambo and Busanga (March 2008-April 2009). The naked, defenseless woman is trampled upon by military boots; the Lamb of God, a symbol of Christ's sacrifice, refuses to leave her side. Note the worn boot, which gestures to the material and economic conditions driving violence.

Ruined demonstrates the ongoing tensions between different types of moral appeal and interpretations of suffering which employ pathos to urge for reforms. In one sense it is quite conventionally in line with other Western works that draw a clear connection between ongoing conflict in the region, profits from mineral trade, and the mineral (coltan) that is ubiquitously used in cell phones. Western consumerism is thus tied to exploitation and violence in DRC, making the audience complicit. However, especially in the depiction of Mama Nadi, we see an undaunted character—a woman who not only has her shining moments, but who also manipulates, bickers, bullies, and complains. In Act One, Scene two, a rebel soldier frustrated that he does not have the sufficient cash to buy the favors of one of Mama Nadi's women offers to pay in coltan ore, and when she asks where he's gotten it, he admits with pride that he took this from "a miner on the reserve[,]" calling the man a "dirty poacher [who's] been diggin' up our forest" and claiming that he and the rebel soldier group he was with attacked a group of them and "[l]eft 'em for the fuckin' scavengers" (Nottage 21). A Lebanese diamond merchant who frequents the bar and witnesses this exchange shapes the audience's understanding of the mineral's significance in a subsequent exchange with Mama Nadi:

> Mr. Harari: (*To Mama*) You took that poor man's coltan. Shame on You. He probably doesn't know what he gave away for the taste of that woman. (*To soldier*) Savor it! The toll to enter that tunnel was very expensive, my friend. (*To Mama*) We both know how much it would fetch on the market.
>
> Mama: Yeah, so? Six months ago it was just more black dirt. I don't get why everyone's crawling all over each other for it.

Mr. Harari: Well, my darling, in this damnable age of the mobile phone it's become quite the precious ore, no? And for whatever reason, God has seen fit to bless your backward country with an abundance of it. (Nottage 52)

Figure 18: Goodman Theater Press Promotional Photo of Mama Nadi in *Ruined*. Photographer: Liz Lauren.

A relation between profit, violence, sex and mining is drawn here, as well as the chain of supply and demand that links the West with mineral extraction and trafficking in DRC. While Mr. Harari understands the presence of this "precious" mineral as a "blessing," Mama Nadi refuses to regard the trade in positive terms. Instead she underscores the arbitrariness and suddenness of coltan's popularity, as well as the inverse relationship between the scramble for profits in this venture and the stability that would be needed to have the future she would like to build for herself. Her relative dismissal of the mineral's value represents the perspective of civilians trying to make ends meet and who remain utterly separated from access to the means of production.[56] Coltan,

[56] For a dramatic representation of the mine workers' disconnection from the means of production, see Jonathan Miller's 2005 investigative report on the Walikale mine, "*Conflict - tin: Congo's tin soldiers"* (for which he and members of Channel 4 News won an Amnesty International UK Media Award). As Miller speaks to a group of workers whose job it is to transport 50 kilos of mineral ore by foot from the Bisie mine to Walikale for transport, he notes that "not one of them knew that cassiterite was destined for the electronics industry in the rich world. One man claimed he knew: 'It goes to America,' he said, 'to rebuild to twin towers and the Pentagon.' " That the men working to extract and transport the minerals do not have even a general idea about the ultimate application of their labor here is striking; the end result does

which has transformed from "black dirt" into the object of a mad scramble for profit and advantage within the space of six months, is linked in her experience to rapacity, ongoing insecurity, and forces of dispossession. She criticizes Mr. Harari who reminds her of her "old papa… who "work too much, always want more, no rest" and whose land was taken from him when a "white man with skin the color of wild berries turned up with a piece of paper. It say he have the rights to my family land" (Nottage 27). When she asks Mr. Harari to appraise a rough diamond she's been keeping for a customer who gave it to her as collateral and never came back (it's insinuated that he has most likely died, given the amount of time that's passed) she wants to know specifically if it is worth as little as "a new generator" or as much as "a plot of land" (Nottage 27). Though she values the diamond for what it might help her achieve, it has merely fallen into her lap. She appears to dismiss the work of prospectors and the trade itself: "Everyone talk diamonds, but I… I want a powerful slip of paper that says I can cut down forests and dig holes and build to the moon if I choose. I don't want someone to turn up at my door, and take my life from me. Not ever again. But tell, how does a woman like me get a piece of land, without having to pick up a fucking gun?" (Nottage 27) This is the only moment in the play when historical dispossession by colonial powers is depicted as a significant root of current insecurity. Mama Nadi's struggles to gain legitimate, legal forms of possession are fueled by the memory of having land that traditionally belonged to her family taken away when she was only eleven, and she indicates that the struggle for ownership has a gendered dimension which leaves women few options for recourse, besides deciding to participate in violence. The cost of security for women is something the narrative emphasizes at almost every turn as she and the women in her employ must strive to please warring factions and swear fealty to each in turn, to mollify despicable characters simply because they are powerful enough to make trouble, and to

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not affect them because they have no access to anything beyond the five dollars a day they can make by working with little rest. The man claiming knowledge of the final product resonates with significance about the global forces at play.

forgo forms of pleasure and fulfillment in relationships with men based on mutuality and shared interests. Mama Nadi can be read as a rough corollary for Brecht's Mother Courage character, in the sense that she, too, is an ambiguous figure who, in a marginalized and economically disadvantaged position, takes up the role of a profiteer. Her business depends on the "thirsty miners" who come to make their fortune and the militia who are battling each other (Nottage 13). There is nothing sentimental about the depiction of Mama Nadi's character in these scenes. She is ambitious and entrepreneurial, maintaining that "the land is fertile and blessed in many regards, and the men ain't the only ones entitled to its bounty" (Nottage 53). While she provides forms of refuge and opportunity for the women in her brothel, early in the play it is emphasized that these are largely contingent on their ability to boost her profits. In the first scene of the play we see that it is with great reluctance she accepts Sophie, who is "ruined" and has nowhere else to go. Mama Nadi protests, initially, drawing a sharp difference between humanitarian work and her own: "I'm sorry but I'm running a business not a mission. Take her to the sisters in Bunia, let her weave baskets for them… Don't look at me that way. I open my doors, and tomorrow I'm a refugee camp overrun with suffering. Everyone has their hand open since this damned war began. I can't do it. I keep food in the mouths of eight women when half the country's starving, so don't give me shit about taking on one more girl" (Nottage 14). At the end of much argument she agrees to take Sophie in partly because she owes Christian, the man who brought her, favors in return for his steady contributions to her business through his trade and gifts, but she emphasizes that "[t]his is the last time you bring me damaged goods. Understood? It's no good for business" (Nottage 16).

Mama Nadi's livelihood—her profit—depends on both mineral exploitation and sexual exploitation, which are linked and mutually reinforcing in this narrative. In her rule that "Mama eats first," her watering down of the whiskey, her haggling with the man who wants to pay in coltan, her indiscriminate sycophancy to both military and rebel leaders, and her strict and even violent

insistence that the women suppress their indignation at rough treatment from soldiers and "smile… talk pretty," one sees a calculating behavior prioritizing profit as a matter of calculating for survival; she recognizes the contingency of women's security on the business of satisfying men, even as she shows strong ambitions to escape from this dynamic (Nottage 17, 31).

The diamond that Mama Nadi asked Mr. Harari to appraise appears in key scenes where we glimpse her motivations beyond profit and ownership of land. When Sophie asks why she keeps "this pebble" Mama Nadi speculates that the man who left it with her probably spent half a year unearthing it, having "promised his simple wife a Chinese motor scooter and fabric from Senegal. And there it is, some unfortunate woman's dream…. A lot of people would sell it, run away. But it is my insurance policy, it is what keeps me from becoming like them. There must always be a part of you that this war can't touch. It's a damn shame but I keep it for that stupid woman" (Nottage 53). The other scene in which the diamond features takes place at the end of the play, when insecurity flares up in the area and Mr. Harari urges her to use the diamond to escape and settle in Uganda. She refuses, saying "I have ten girls here. What will I do with them? Is there room for all of us in the car? No, I can't go. Since I was young, people have always found reasons to push me out of my home, men have laid claim to my possessions, but I am not running now. This is my place. Mama Nadi's" (Nottage 91).

Unlike Mother Courage, whose refusal to give up her canteen cart is depicted as a compromising choice that puts her perpetually close to the conflict and contributes to her children's deaths, Mama Nadi's sense of place and refusal to escape is a demonstration of her proprietary loyalty to the women in her employ, who would be more vulnerable without her. Given that she could leave with the diamond but chooses not to, her decision to remain is reminiscent of military leader declaring a last stand for the troops; she recognizes that standing ground is risky. In Brecht's piece, courage is under erasure or suspicion throughout the story. Mother Courage's name is ironic,

given to her by people who saw her continue with her business during a bombardment; she admits that her acts were motivated by fear and lack of options, not bravery. When she considers the military's call for "men of courage" she reflects that "[i]t's always the same; whenever there's a load of special virtues around something stinks… In decent countries folk don't have to have virtues, the whole lot can be perfectly ordinary, average intelligence, and for all I know cowards" (Brecht 15). Here she shifts attention from the duty of citizens to the duty of the state and essentially talks about trafficking in bravery along the same lines that Mama Nadi does when she refuses to be impressed with the coltan that so suddenly has value; the fact that the courage has market value in war is further proof, in Mother Courage's estimation, that the state has failed to properly protect and provide for its citizens. She later points out that "poor folk got to have courage. Why, they're lost. Simply getting up in the morning takes some doing in their situation" (Brecht 51).

Here, as elsewhere, Mother Courage underlines the material conditions facing people who have limited options. In Mama Nadi's case, however, the virtue itself is celebrated in her actions. It is made clear that her decision to stay is an act of agency connected to responsibility and to sacrifice. Though she has called the diamond her "insurance policy" against utter corruption and imagines using it to build her future—"My restaurant, my garden to dig in, and a chief's fortune in cows"—she ultimately asks Mr. Harari to give the profits from its sale to Sophie who has been wanting to get the fistula surgery and make a new start (Nottage 90). When he expresses shock at her willingness to relinquish this for someone else's benefit, Mama Nadi acknowledges that she knows it will be more than is required for just a start—that the value of this diamond is, in fact, "enough for a life" (Nottage 90). In this sense, she becomes an unlikely savior character. While her generosity appears surprisingly uncharacteristic in the moment she gives the diamond to Mr. Harari, we come to understand Mama Nadi's empathic connection to Sophie when she tells Christian the reason she has been refusing his affections all along—a source of tension between them throughout the play. At

first, like a true business woman, she claims that love is simply a bad investment. She stakes her refusal on the claim that it "will cost us more than it returns[,]" but ultimately she reveals "(W*ith surprising vulnerability)*: 'I'm ruined' (*Louder.*) 'I'm ruined' " (Nottage 100).

In contrast, Mother Courage's lamentations about her "ruin" are complaints about the circumstances which cut into her profits, both during times that the war demands sacrifices and when peace threatens to dry up her trade. Sometimes this seems like a genuine expression of despair and, at other times, it appears to be affectation; though one likely feels sympathetic about Mother Courage's struggle, Brecht prevents over-identification and highlights the perversity of relying on war for profit. In Mama Nadi's case, however, the moment she cries out is the culmination of tensions that have been building throughout the play; it is emotionally charged and encourages audience identification with her character, with the theme of redemptive suffering. The catharsis and romantic resolution to the play has solicited criticism, particularly from feminists and those invested in Brecht's aesthetic. Critics like Jill Dolan object to the fact that suddenly, "the play becomes a heterosexual romance, in which Mama Nadi and her girls are redeemed by the love of a good man"; for Dolan Mama Nadi's revelation is a "false note, one that compromises the rigorous, clear-eyed story *Ruined* otherwise tells." Ann Fox also expressed frustration with Mama Nadi's revelation and its "crowd-pleasing" ending; she asks, "Why would a work that had labored to expose the violence of a war fought for the economic gain of a mercenary few (and, thanks to the conflict minerals, our own ability to purchase cheap cell phones) become transformed in the end to an individuated, happily resolved love story?" (2,1).

Fox recovers the political purchase of the play by taking a disability-studies perspective and suggesting that Sophie's presence on stage at the conclusion of the play disturbs a tidy resolution. In this reading, Sophie forces the audience to recognize more at the end than just the fate of the happy couple. It's true that we are ultimately left in doubt at the closing of the play about whether Sophie

will be able to get the surgery she wants, and the fact that she remains unhealed and in view at the end is significant, but it's also true that we would have to forget quite a lot to see this conclusion as an ideal or conventionally romantic, even without Sophie's presence on stage.

In the end Mama Nadi has agreed to dance with Christian after multiple refusals. It is implied that she will give the relationship a try, but she does not say so explicitly. She verbalizes reluctance and her body language is tense. She gradually accepts Christian's embrace and dances more fluidly as it begins to feel more right to her, but there it is a moment marked by profound uncertainty. The ending is a dance—a balance between tension and release, and a demand for certain forms of cooperation that are in tension with each other. The exchange of gentleness is a moment of respite, but we know that the political instability is drawing closer to the bar and that the business has ground to a halt. They have not risen from their station; they are still a brothel owner and a black market salesman, both vulnerable to the vagaries of conflict. They are still in Ituri, and, since Mama Nadi has refused to leave, they are poised for further troubles. We also know from Sophie's situation that Mama Nadi's own injury, newly revealed, is one that will not heal without treatment. Since Mr. Harari accepted the diamond and has fled in the fighting without being able to take Sophie along, there may be no way for either of them to get the resources they need for proper medical care. It is never addressed whether any of the women might be HIV positive from their sexual assault,

Figure 19. Berkeley Repertory Theater press photo of Salima's death in *Ruined*. (l to r) At Berkeley Rep, Tonye Patano, Jason Bowen and Pascale Armand star in *Ruined*, a powerful new play by Lynn Nottage that won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

though the mention in the first scene of a prostitute who died of AIDS deliberately provokes audience curiosity on that point. Though Mama Nadi and Christian's romantic moment give us a possibility to celebrate, all of these questions and concerns hang precariously in the balance.

Some see Mama Nadi's moment of revelation as overly sentimental, but I tend to agree with Bystrom's assessment that, "[i]n choosing to end with identification rather than estrangement, Nottage rightly calls for a reassessment of older visions of the relation between critique, emotion, and political action" (Bystrom 240). Her emotional expression of ruin admits not only a personal trauma, but her solidarity with the other women characters in the play. Felski, who values such acts of recognition, explains that the "technique of deep intersubjectivity instantiates a view of particular societies 'from the inside'; we come to know something of what it feels like to be inside a particular habitus, to experience a world as self-evident, to bathe in the waters of a new way of life" (92). In Nottage's work it is not only the intersubjectivity of the reader and a single protagonist that performs this work, but the intersubjectivity between the main characters. Though we do not know Mama Nadi's precise story, we have accessed corollaries to her experience through Sophie's persistent limp and through Salima's monologue. We know how similar cases of sexual assault have affected these women. Moreover, when Mama Nadi offered up the diamond for Sophie, we realize that she has given it in the same spirit for which she has been keeping it all this time: to fulfill "some unfortunate woman's dream" (Nottage 53). With the transposition of one woman's sorrow for another, she acknowledges both that women's misfortunes are linked and that they can be allies for helping one another build a future. We ultimately see that Mama Nadi is not the main protagonist, but that the play has a collective protagonist—several women who represent different choices and struggles in women's lives. This is a device that, as Friedman points out, has been popular in earlier forms of feminist theatre, to signify a shared condition within a specific historical context. The women in the enclave behind Mama Nadi's bar share secrets and confer about how they will

negotiate their survival. Janet Brown sees in the device of the collective protagonist the possibility of enacting a "merged ego," a concept developed by bell hooks that defines the self as it exists "in relation" to others on whom it relies for "psychic [and] physical survival." (Friedman 9)

Mama Nadi is a survivor and the most ambitious of the characters, and she is the one on whom they rely for material support. She represents not only their collective survival but the possibility of securing a future. In the end, while Sophie and Josephine are gazing at her and reveling in her dance, there is also a heavy absence; Salima has died shortly before the final scene takes place, just as the military clashes are becoming more intense. Recognizing that she was trapped in her situation, Salima tried to terminate the pregnancy resulting from her rape and this attempt goes very wrong. When she arrives suddenly on stage near a state of collapse, her dress stained with blood, the audience instinctively knows what she has done. Given all she said in the monologue, we know that she cannot recover her lost infant or her former life; she doesn't think she can forgive her husband and she is not sure that she can love the child "of a monster" (Nottage 70). Likewise, as we've seen in a previous encounter, where she confides in Sophie why she's been so short-tempered that she despairs of continuing to live a life in which she is forced to make her money by sleeping with men who are constantly looking to take more from her: "Them soldiers don't respect nothing. Them miners, they easy, they want drink, company, and it's over. But the soldiers, they want more of you" (Nottage 31). At Sophie's urging to continue, Salima explains that a soldier bragged just before sex about having killed fifteen people from her tribe (the Hema: she remarks that "one of those men could be my brother") and then, afterward, solicited her sympathy to help soothe his guilt (Nottage 31). Just before dying, she says to her husband, the soldiers, and the commander present, "You will not fight your battles on my body anymore" (Nottage 94). When read alongside Salima's story, Mama Nadi's romance cannot be read as a simple capitulation to social pressure or expectation. She is Salima's foil. Her dominant modes of engagement with men

throughout the play have been battle and business. She has positioned herself at the front lines securing the women a place and resources amongst the instability and impoverishment; to do so she has remained tactical and guarded at every turn. While the other women often confide in each other, Mama Nadi stays alert and suspicious. In a scene where Sophie urges Salima to simply talk to Fortune and see where it might lead, Mama Nadi argues against this idea, promises that it is a path to mockery and the deepest forms of social shame and hatred imaginable, urges her to reject his apology, and tells Sophie that her optimism is the result of "read[ing] too many of those romance novels where everything is forgiven with a kiss" (Nottage 67). She refers to an earlier moment in the play when there is a rare moment of complete harmony and buoyant intimacy between the women, when we watch Sophie read aloud from a romance novel to Salima and Josephine who "*sit listening, rapt*" (the directions indicate that this "*is a refuge*" for them).

Figure 20. Huntingdon Theater Press Promotional Photo, *Ruined*: reading romance novels

When she puts a stop to the reading and sets them to work, Mama Nadi expresses cynicism about the formulaic romance narrative: "the problem is I already know how it's going to end. There'll be kissing, fucking, a betrayal, and then the woman will foolishly surrender her heart to an undeserving man" (Nottage 51). Her agreement to dance with Christian at the end of the play hints

at new form of engagement. It may be a willingness to see if the story can be written differently moving forward or it may be merely a moment when her desire for contact is stronger than her criticisms. The women stand by Mama Nadi not only as a symbol of communal approval (as in the traditional comedic ending of a marriage, where witnesses lend weight to the contract), but as people actively invested in her happiness and looking for something more ambitious and tangible than a moment of refuge in fantasy.

Given how important the dynamic between these women is for understanding the political purchase in this play, it's troubling to see that, for many interpretive communities eager to translate the story into institutional applications, intersubjectivity does not factor into their reading. When Salima's monologue was performed at the Senate hearing, for instance, there was no Sophie sitting alongside her to acknowledge Salima, encourage her, validate her story, or confide in turn, as we see in the play. Presented this way Salima's story becomes a testimony cut loose from social dynamics, as though she were making a statement on the witness stand rather than embedded in a wider narrative. She is isolated, and her story becomes a glimpse of a struggle without context, an emblem of the toll that "fighting battles on women's bodies" takes. As Fox's analysis indicates, the connections Nottage draws make it easy to focus on the features of an increasingly familiar advocacy narrative; the "conflict minerals" problem looks much like the "blood diamonds" issue of several years ago, and this story clearly connects Western consumption to funding and fueling forms of illicit trafficking and violence on the ground. The play is ideal for supporting this analysis, as the soldiers seem to be heavily involved in mineral trafficking and exclusively responsible for sexual assault.

In a recent article analyzing how the dominant narratives about the Congo—particularly the focus on conflict minerals and high levels of sexual violence—have affected dynamics on the

ground, Autessere explains that turning the spotlight on these issues has narrowed institutional attention in troubling ways:

> According to an insider, since 2009, there has been no interest in the Congo at the UN Security Council except when it discussed incidents of mass rapes and potential responses to them. Similarly, US State Department top officials reportedly pay no attention to the Congo except when sexual violence grabs the headlines. As a result, visiting a hospital treating victims of sexual abuse (notably the Panzi hospital in Bukavu or Heal Africa in Goma) seems to have become an obligatory stop during diplomatic visits to the eastern Congo, to the point that aid workers on the ground find it appalling. (13)

Sexual violence in the region has achieved recognition to the point that, as Autesserre shows, major organizations treating the victims have even gained a certain form of humanitarian celebrity. Global attention has not only impacted the provision and distribution of resources to these organizations; it has also factored into the equation of how warfare is being conducted on the ground, since "the disproportionate attention to sexual violence has raised the status of sexual abuse to an effective bargaining tool for combatants" and militant groups with comparatively little power are actively searching for new opportunities where they can gain a greater reputation as a force to be reckoned with and have their grievances be heard at an international level (Autesserre 4).[57] This may be the risk of any approach that compels intervention based on branding a certain form of violence as intolerable; in doing so, the international community takes a situation in which violence has

[57] Autesserre explains that such attention is exploitable by those looking for recognition: "While this mostly takes the form of threats of rapes in order to push for negotiations or end military operations, there are also examples of such threats being enacted, such as during the August 2010 mass rapes in Luvungi. A local militia called Mai Mai Sheka, which allied with the foreign rebel group the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, gang raped 387 civilians over the course of three days in a remote part of Walikale territory. According to several sources, Sheka ordered his soldiers to systematically rape women, instead of just looting and beating people as they usually do, because he wanted to draw attention to his armed group and to be invited to the negotiating table. He knew that using sexual violence was the best way to reach this goal, because it would draw the attention of the international community, and various states and advocacy groups would put pressure on the Congolese government to negotiate with him – which is exactly what happened" (Autesserre 16).

already been commodified by capital and raises the global exchange rate on special forms. Nottage's play is eagerly interventionist, and this is where I find her material the most blind to the political stakes involved. Her anti-war sentiments underscore that "war is hell" and "war is business." However, by underscoring the madness of this conflict Nottage as well as the profit-driven nature of the violence, she erases the idea that the soldiers on the ground might have genuine political motives. Both sides of the conflict represented use rhetoric about liberty that is shown to be merely a scrim for illicit activities; they use words like "liberation" and "democracy" but their actions play out in stark contrast to these declarations, proving that underneath this rhetoric they are motivated by power, greed, and opportunism. As Bystrom notes,

> The play gestures toward the colonial history of the Congo as well as the more recent transnational economic and political context of the war. However, the way in which it represents the leaders of the conflict as interchangeable brutes—particularly as the play was staged at the Manhattan Theater Club, when the same actors play soldiers on each side--suggests the overarching narrative best suited for understanding the violence in the DRC is that of inexplicable "chaos." This "chaos narrative" is familiar to global readers and spectators of Africa; the only answer to it, suggests Michael Ignatieff in a critique of contemporary understanding of global obligation, is humanitarian rescue. (240-241)

In the analytical framework here, intervention appears as the horizon of hope, and the international institutions of law, aid, and development are cordoned off from critique. It is my sense that Nottage does this because she is operating largely with an institutional framework and invested in strengthening institutional capacity for response. This would explain why she privileges the recognition of sexual violence in the DR Congo as an immanent human rights threat, because, from an institutional perspective, doing so makes it an issue for international concern squarely in the domain of International law—bolstering the Responsibility to Protect, which is a fairly young human

rights norm and still a matter of considerable debate. It stands to reason that, when an institution like the UN wishes to respond to a matter that traditionally falls largely outside the realm of its operations, it is often the work of campaigns to help extend the grounds of jurisdiction or justify the activity in institutional terms, and Nottage's piece is an appropriate ally for underwriting the terms of their involvement. As the Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect notes

> the UN resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1820 (2008), the Security Council underscored that rape and other forms of sexual violence could constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity or constitutive acts with respect to genocide. In its resolution 1820 (2008), the Council recognized that widespread and systematic sexual violence was a security problem that should be monitored by the Council. Systematic sexual violence, without a doubt, can be every bit as destructive to communities as more conventional weapons. (R2P 2009, 16)

Given these institutional mandates, focus on the systematic nature of the violence helps qualify what is happening to Congolese women as a war crime. This reading of the conflict is what gives the UN's basis for qualifying the issue in DRC as something meriting both intervention and resources—as a crime against humanity, and therefore something more than a "domestic issue." While focus on the "weaponization" of sexual violence has strengthened institutional capacity to respond, and there is merit to this analysis, recent studies, like the Human Security Report of 2012, argue that the international scramble for leverage over military entities is extremely limited in the effectiveness of this approach because it can only address strategic, "top down polic[ies]"; such an approach gives international community leverage to issue "threats to withhold aid to governments, to impose sanctions, or to push for indictments in the International Criminal Court" but it cannot address the reality on the ground that much "rape perpetrated by soldiers and rebels is not part of a top-down strategic plan, but is due to the fact that the military command system is simply too weak to stop the abuse" ("Human Security Report" 43). As Salima's story shows, and as we saw earlier in

the 2005 research study "Women's Bodies as a Battleground," much sexual predation is part of campaigns to conscript labor and seize resources. In this report and their conclusions about "what [is driving] the fighting forces to commit sexual violence" the analysts pay attention the tactical use of rape, but also take

> into account the socio-cultural context and women's status in society in South Kivu and in the whole sub-region, because acts of sexual violence can be properly understood only in relation to existing social structures and practices. South Kivu, like the whole of the DRC and the sub-region, is a patriarchal and hierarchical society, where women still generally occupy a subordinate position. Certain traditional and discriminatory practices in which women are regarded as private property, shared by the men of the clan, are still prevalent. These institutionalised practices partly explain some of the combatants' most extreme behavior. (Ohambe 62)

Nottage's eagerness to frame sexual violence as a problem tied to the denial of universal human rights tends to obscure other, vital forms of conflict analysis as well as the root causes of sexual violence that are more attributable to social and domestic issues. To read the situation of sexual violence in DRC as a "crime against humanity" or a loss of human rights tied exclusively to war would be missing an opportunity to open up a line of inquiry about

Figure 21. HEAL Africa, sensitization campaign about sexual violence in DRC: taking up arms against sexual violation.

the social change taking place as well as to misunderstand the degree to which violence has been normalized in this necropolitical environment to the point that it features as a way of thinking about survival mechanisms and ways to meet one's needs—even in service of *preventing* violence and victimization.

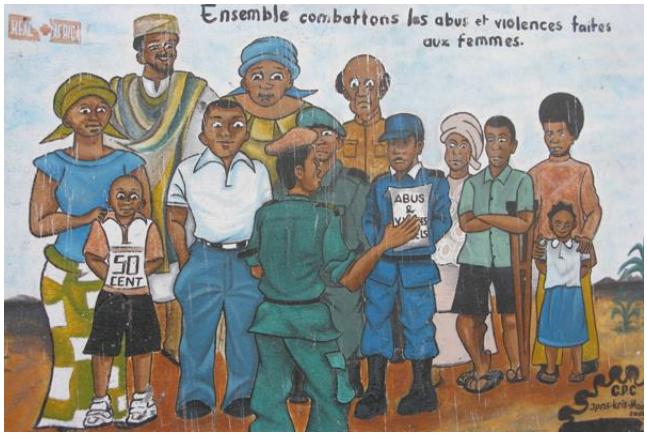

Figure 22. HEAL Africa, Local sensitization campaign about sexual violence in DRC: solidarity. It reads "Together we can combat the abuse and violence done to women." Note the diversity of partipants involved and that the soldier is upholding the law.

Sexual violence is not only an issue of immanent human rights threats but as a symptom of a longer developments and social struggle, which conflict exacerbates. In an environment like the DRC where competition over resources is particularly fierce, and where security is difficult to attain, the definition of rights and entitlement to which women and men can lay claim, especially regarding private property, are particularly contested. Desiree Lwambo, a Gender Advisor who works on the ground in eastern Congo with HEAL Africa and has been studying civilian ideas about masculinity, notes that that "humanitarian interventions that use the 'rape as a weapon of war' narrative[,]" have focused attention on studying "the images of militarised masculinity that are at the base of soldier's violent behaviour against women" (Lwambo 7). While she acknowledges the importance of such studies, she also cautions that "a singular focus on the military places SGBV outside of the broader society from where it arose in the first place" (Lwambo 7).[58] Insisting that sexual violence "is not isolated, but coexists with other forms of gender-based violence," Lwambo argues that sexual exploitation takes place in many forms where

[58] SBVG is a common acronym used to refer to sexually-based gender violence.

competition for social status and advancement are involved, writing that "female respondents reported domestic violence as a general rule. They related this to the relative lack of economic assets and the resulting lack of social status experienced by women, as well as cultural ideals that favour male dominion" (Lwambo 19). Mmambi and Faray-Kele's study on "Gender Inequality and Social Institutions in the D.R. Congo" provides a striking piece about the instability of gender and social positions:

> Youth in Kigurwe felt that while women were supposed to be subservient, this was no longer the case thanks to cinema and civilisation. They believed that these changes had started before the war but had been accentuated by it. Youth in Lubero said that as a result of emancipation, where the woman earns more than the man there is inversion of roles, startlingly captured in their statement that "les hommes sont devenus les femmes" (the men have become the women). The changing position of women was described by a respondent in Kaniola: "previously, Shi custom disregarded women; a woman was considered a thing, to bring children into the world, breast feed them, and satisfy the sexual pleasure of her husband. But since the war, women have seen their rights restored with the law which has come to protect them and give consideration to them; people have begun to show more solidarity, more compassion towards the suffering of women, and I find that positive. The negative side has been the destruction of the person's humanity through rape, killing, stealing all her goods". (36)

In the final respondent's account, we see an assessment that the war has not only resulted in tremendous damage, but also destabilized old hierarchies and opened up new avenues for opportunity and economic independence for women that did not exist before. This is due, in part, to the humanitarian sector's extensive work to provide programs focused on provisions for women, giving them refuge, service, vocational skills, schooling, and microfinancing for business ventures.

With so much effort focused on combatting the victimization of women and helping them build a future, male respondents to Lwambo's study indicated that "promoting women's economic activities without combating men's unemployment or even responding to their feelings of disempowerment is a recipe for male resistance against 'gender sensitive programs' " (21). Sensitization campaigns aimed at changing the way women are treated often focus on rape, perhaps because of the way resources have been so focused and directed toward combatting sexual violence. The city of Goma is saturated with public service announcements about this issue, and organizations have typically staged the issue in scenes. Reminiscent of the different aesthetic registers used for rhetorical and emotional appeal in DRC advocacy already discussed above, these share common features. The issue is framed as an injustice that requires stronger legal platforms, better education about and enforcement of the law, solidarity in community recognition of such laws, and collective efforts to combat victimization. When one sees these images and how some of them portray men, it's easy to understand the complaints recorded in Lwambo's report records, by a student in Goma who disliked that "Men are always accused. We have never seen an NGO that does work on men" and by an elder in Kiwanja who objected to the way "[e]verything is said as if men were condemned; this is why some will even turn off their radios"(22). These sensitization campaigns, like activist campaigns working for better conditions in the DRC dating all the way back to the CRA's first efforts, all seem to recognize that public

Figure 23. HEAL Africa, Local sensitization campaign about sexual violence in DRC, justice. The scene shows a mother and father rejoicing to hear the sentencing of a perpetrator. Translation of text: Rapists will be judged and condemned to 20 years in prison.

awareness is the basis for building a platform for justice, and that different methods of staging the atrocity can solicit response. What they do not seem to consistently consider is how, the act of appealing for recognition of "universal rights" deepen some social groups' feelings of alienation, depending entirely on how the problem is staged. When discussing issues of injustice, the role of institutional recognition should not be understated. After all, one of the frustrations expressed by respondents in Lwambo's study is that men,

> too, were victims of wartime and other forms of violence and needed protection as well as psychosocial and medical help. While it cannot be denied that men are less vulnerable than women, they are also affected by the overall climate of violence and impunity in DRC. If they receive no adequate assistance, it remains an open question why men would be susceptible to understanding the value of programs that seek to further gender equality. (21)

At the same time, what the Christian reformists understood well in the CRA campaign seems relevant here: that institutional recognition alone is not sufficient to seed meaningful change. The power of the emotional appeal—of pathos—to overcome resistances must not be directed at action alone, but be put in service of changing minds and collective practices; otherwise the effort will be short lived and nothing new will take root. Nottage's play can be read as a kind of global sensitization campaign, and in this form of staging the problem one can see similar limitations. It has nothing to say, as Brecht surely would, about the troubling forms of complicity between humanitarianism and empire, and the degree to which humanitarians and aid workers on the ground can end up in the trenches, too, conducting "business by other means." It does, however, provide a clear view of the material and economic conditions that drive violence. It also gives us Congolese women characters who are engaging and compelling and whose intersubjectivity helps us understand the dimensions of their struggle through their different choices.

5.0 THE LOST BOYS: LIVING NOWHERE AND BEING NO ONE IN *WHAT IS THE WHAT*[59]

In 2000 the US agreed to accept approximately 3,800 Sudanese refugees—most of them "Lost Boys," a term used by humanitarian workers to describe the group of roughly 20,000 boys who trekked to from Sudan to Ethiopia to escape attacks by government-sponsored militia. This was the largest group of unaccompanied minors ever to be resettled in the US. Shortly after their arrival in 2001, their tribulations became an object of intense curiosity for the American public. With the promise of captivated audiences, there was an explosion of media attention, particularly in the form of documentaries. The first full-length film was the documentary *Benjamin and His Brother* (2002). Other films followed in quick succession: *Lost Boys of Sudan* (2003), *A Great Wonder: Lost Children of Sudan Resettling in America* (2003), *Dinka Diaries* (2005), *The Lost Boy* (2006), *God Grew Tired of Us* (2006), *War Child* (2008), *Rebuilding Hope* (2009). All of these were based on personal accounts of boys who were part of this same displaced and resettled group. There were also an impressive number of nonfiction books: *Lost Boy No More: A True Story of Survival and Salvation* (2004), *They Poured Fire on Us From the Sky: The True Story of Three Lost Boys of Sudan* (2005), *The Journey of the Lost Boys: A Story of Courage, Faith and the Sheer Determination to Survive by a Group of Young Boys Called "The Lost Boys of Sudan"* (2005), *The Lost Boys of Sudan: An American Story of the Refugee Experience* (2006), *The Lost Boy: The true story of a young boy's flight from Sudan to South Africa* (2009), *Running for My Life* (2012). Most of these were autobiographies. There were only a handful of fictional treatments: Dave Eggers' novel, *What Is the What: The Autobiography of Valentino Achak Deng* (2006), for example, and some vignettes within larger stories.

Almost all of these works adhere strictly to realist conventions; and many, as one can see from the list above, make overt truth claims in the title. Egger's novel, then, was a significant and

[59] For an overview of the Sudanese civil wars, see Appendix E.

interesting departure from the norm, an arresting anomaly in a body of works otherwise anxious to claim fidelity to an originary experience. But by calling his novel the "autobiography" of Valentino Achak Deng, Eggers stimulates our desire to determine its accuracy, that is, the degree of correspondence between this story and the lived experience of a real person named Valentine Achak Deng. But Eggers is at the same time subverting the possibility of reasonably engaging the material in that fashion. Presented quite clearly as fiction, the novel allows Eggers the license to draw out certain features of form and meaning. Yet the foreword of the book, written by Deng, claims it is not a fabrication but "the soulful account of [his] life" and his own attempt "to reach out to a wider audience by telling the story of [his] life in book form" (Eggers xiv). He insists that some invention was needed to reconstruct conversations but that "all of the major events in the book are true"—that "the book is historically accurate, and the world I have known is not different from the one depicted within these pages" (Eggers xiv). Given its form and parameters the novel accomplishes a different kind of work than most of the projects aiming to share the experience of the Lost Boys, even as it adopts many of the common concerns among them about the vulnerability of displaced populations, life in the refugee camps, the challenges of resettlement, struggles to thrive in America, and attempts to contribute to public accounts and legal recognition through memory and personal testimony.

The novel begins, after Deng's flight from war-torn Sudan and resettlement in America, with a new kind of victimization. With "no reason not to answer the door," Valentino opens it to an African-American woman claiming her car broke down and requesting use of his phone (Eggers 3). Unaware that he should be suspicious—he admits, ruefully, "I never know the things I am supposed to know"—he invites in a disaster that will culminate in a long, drawn out robbery including several beatings, and a trip to the emergency room where he waits fourteen hours without proper service. Told by his main assailant—the woman's African-American male partner—to "Just sit down,

Africa," the narrator sinks down onto the couch and confides to the reader that he has an uncanny response to this invasion of his space:

> It's a strange thing, I realize, but what I think at this moment is that I want to be back in Kakuma. In Kakuma there was no rain, the wind blew nine months a year, and eighty thousand war refugees from Sudan and elsewhere lived on one meal a day. But at this moment when the woman is in my bedroom and the man is guarding me with his gun, I want to be in Kakuma, where I lived in a hut of plastic and sandbags and owned one pair of pants. (Eggers 4)

It is clear from this moment of longing that Deng is, at least in part, mourning that he has lost his bearings. He has, once again, been reduced to a "lost boy." Though he says that many of his peers dislike the name, he admits that it carries a certain truth:

> In many ways we are alone and in most cases we are unsure of exactly where we are going. While in Kakuma, one of the largest and most remote refugee camps in the world, we found new families, or many of us did. I lived with a teacher from my hometown, and when, after two years, he brought his family to the camp, we had what resembled a family. There were five boys and three girls. I called them sisters. We walked to school together, we retrieved water together. But with our relocation to the United States, again it is just boys. There are very few Sudanese women in the U.S. and very few elders, and thus we rely on each other for virtually everything. This has its disadvantages, for very frequently, we are sharing unfounded rumors and abject paranoia. (Eggers 16)

In his explanation, they are lost, not primarily for the reason that people commonly cite—the Sudanese conflict and their wandering through the desert—but as a result of their resettlement, which is also experienced as a form of displacement that tends to compound rather than alleviate their losses. This certainly contradicts accounts like *Lost Boy No More: A True Story of Survival and*

Salvation which represent America as salvivic redress for suffering. In Eggers' account, the boys are "lost," not because they are in need of rescue, but because the form of rescue that allows them to leave Kakuma also severs them from all the forms of support that they have built up while in the camp—for what is in these spaces, after all, is a dynamic and particular set of social constructs created by people looking not only to survive but to thrive in spite of their condition.

And so the reader understands why a home invasion could make him miss Kakuma. Yost explains the value of Eggers' treatment of Deng's resettlement when he praises *What is the What* for "carefully avoid[ing] the tendencies of US representations of foreign nationals to stray into paternalistic descriptions more invested in promoting feelings of superiority and to position the US as a model source for aid to a troubled world to be copied by others, offers a positive model for the testimony narrative as a form of cosmopolitan humanitarian collaboration" (Yost 150).

Collaboration is not only part of the project's creation—that is, the fact that Deng solicited Eggers's help in producing a story about his experience and their work together over the course of four years—but a fundamental concern about social commentary at the heart of the text. The opening scene demonstrates that it is the isolation that particularly leaves Deng vulnerable, and he finds it difficult to accept passively this new victimization in his Atlanta apartment. Several times he remembers details of the suffering he's endured and feels emboldened to resist the robbery. Within the first few pages of the novel, he produces a condensed but staggering account of horrors he's witnessed and experienced -- including three boys taken by lions; he was close enough, he says, "to hear the wet snapping sounds of the tearing flesh" (7). Recalling what he has already faced, Deng finds the will to assert himself: "thinking of that day, when we were driven from Ethiopia back to Sudan, thousands dead in the river, gives me strength against this person in my apartment, and again I stand" (Eggers 6). And so, Deng is pistol-whipped, kicked, and hit in the stomach so forcefully that he falls and loses consciousness. In recounting these events he is careful to note that, although

"there is little in the way of violence [he has] not seen in Sudan, in Kenya," *experiencing* violence was something new for him. America has added to his experience of violence rather than compensated for it. When he regains consciousness, his arms are bound behind him—another first:

> I have never been restrained like this, though I have seen men tied by the hands, and I have seen these men executed before me. I was eleven years old when I saw seven such men killed in front of me, in front of ten thousand of us boys in Ethiopia. It was meant to be a lesson to us all. My mouth is taped closed. It is packing tape, I know, because Achor Achor and I have been using it on the food we were storing in the freezer…my voice and movement are restricted by the things I own. (Eggers 25)

Eventually, as the robbery continues to unfold, Deng is guarded by a boy while the thieves make arrangements to come back and retrieve what they could not fit into their car during the first trip. While the narrator is bound and gagged, the boy watches the TV scheduled for imminent theft. It is at this point in the narrative, once he has been bound and gagged—utterly restricted in movement and expression—that Deng impresses upon the reader his desire to share his story. He estimates that the boy left to watch over him is about ten years of age, and claims "I was not much older than he is when I began to tell my story, what I had seen" (Eggers 28). He explains that he's shared many different versions of what's happened to him, depending on his audience's willingness to listen or the nature of their obligation to listen.

He has already mentioned, earlier, the homogenizing role that securing sponsorship has had on the stories of the Lost Boys. He insists that their experiences of the trek differ widely, but says that, nonetheless, "the tales of the Lost Boys have become remarkably similar over the years," featuring elements that seem to impress the audience most, like the appearance of lions in each story and the common account of the boys drinking their own urine, which Deng suggests is "apocryphal, absolutely not true for the vast majority of us" (Eggers 21). Searching for the signature experiences

that can represent this group's collective misfortune, "sponsors and newspaper reporters and the like expect stories to have certain elements, and the Lost Boys have been consistent in their willingness to oblige. Survivors tell the stories the sympathetic want, and that means making them as shocking as possible. My own story includes enough embellishments that I cannot criticize the accounts of others" (Eggers 21).

By showing how audience expectations prompt innovation and create opportunities for support, he recasts storytelling for the Lost Boys, not as an occasion of catharsis, but as an entrepreneurial activity. Though Deng clearly believes that sharing testimony can be valuable in cultivating empathy and testifying of injustice, he is aware that testifying is also, invariably for dispossessed asylum-seekers, a form of competition to secure status and resources. As though to develop the reader's awareness of variations in experience, he tells about some privileged boys whose experiences would neither resonate with an audience interested the Lost Boys' trials nor encourage forms of support from potential sponsors. Vivid in his memory stands a group of boys leaving some time after his own who, unlike his group, enjoyed support from the rebels as far as protection and provision were concerned; he marvels that these boys even "rode upon a water tanker… which symbolized for us everything that we would never have, and the fact that there would be, always, castes within castes, that within groups of walking boys, still there were hierarchies" (Eggers 21).

As a storyteller, Deng takes on roles designed to cultivate the reader's awareness of these hierarchies and the expectations and appetites one brings to reading fiction about a humanitarian subject and about the situation of the Lost Boys, in particular. In one sense, he functions as a truth-teller, as one who wants to set the record straight—as the reliable narrator who can give a faithful representation of the realities that the Lost Boys faced. Sometimes he gives us to understand that he speaks more truly than others, as in his early assurance that he is "not one prone to exaggeration"

and, much later in the book, in his decision, "against the advice of many, to answer all the questions as truthfully as possible" in his asylum interview, where he admits that he knows his parents to be alive, even though he knows that boy who claim to be orphans are more likely to get assistance (Eggers 16, 493). He also explains that the complex story of the Sudanese civil war has been streamlined in ways that are more a reflection of American politics than Sudanese ones: "the broad strokes of the story of the civil war in South Sudan, a story perpetuated by us Lost Boys, in the interest of drama and expediency, tells that one day we were sitting in our villages bathing in the river and grinding grain and the next the Arabs were raiding us, killing and looting and enslaving" (Eggers 56). While he does not deny that such crimes took place, he explains that "there is some debate about the provocations" and that more influential than the impact of Sharia law was "the government's tearing up of the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement, which gave the south a degree of self-rule. In its place the south was divided into three regions, which effectively pitted each of them against the others, with no region left with any significant government power at all" (Eggers 56).

Though these seem to be but slight corrections, such passages in the novel indicate a significant departure from many narratives addressing similar human rights atrocities and frame the issue of responsibility toward the Lost Boys as a humanitarian question separate from political considerations. By contrast, Deng draws attention to the American context in which stories like his are solicited, produced, and circulated, and he indicates that someone other than the Lost Boys benefit from this state of affairs. Yost explains that the main beneficiaries of such stories are often not the subjects themselves but the host nations and their interests, given a particular political moment in which they have accepted to receive new arrivals:

> Inderpal Grewal indicts human rights discourse, particularly European and US narratives, for exploiting the image of suffering, and for arousing the desire to intervene abroad in order to further establish the dominance of their own nationalisms within inter- or transnational

> space (158). She writes, "the very concept of the 'international' as a neutral or supranational space has maintained the link between the geopolitics of a universal human rights negotiated unequally between powerful states … and the biopolitics of a cosmopolitan, humanitarian self concerned with the welfare of untold populations of poor, disenfranchised women" (161). Grewal goes on to argue that "dominant representations of human rights discourse in refuge asylum constructed Europe and North America as the primary destination of refugees and thus as primary 'havens' that 'protect' those escaping human rights violations" (168). Human rights literature therefore limits rights by enforcing the "American role as the world's policeman" (171). (Yost 156-57)

Eggers' narrative is, I think, pushing against such humanitarian narratives and their legitimization of the US policeman role. The passage referred to above about the origins of the civil war highlights the fact that American audiences were receptive in the early 2000s to a story in which a dominantly Muslim northern Sudan oppresses and menaces a largely Christian south for ideological rather than political reasons. Given America's preoccupation with post-9/11 Islamic terrorism, Americans were and eager to see a connection drawn between Muslim law and unconscionable threats to innocent life and liberty. In his adjustment of the dominant narrative, Eggers shows that the boys may be seized on as a target of empathy not only because of their incredible stories and sufferings, but because Americans after 9/11 were inclined to understand what has happened in the Sudan as a form of terrorism. Eggers understands that the reality was more complicated. But his narrator makes such corrections without claiming a heavy-handed authority. At one level he even seems baffled to have gained a reputation among the Lost Boys as someone who is well-informed and insists that he has no special access to information. Yet he shows the reader amply that he functions as a social hub for hundreds of young men and a detailed knowledge of their experiences, something that enables him to trace broad patterns as well as give an intimate

picture of the Lost Boy's collective experience that differs in degree and in kind from many of the dominant narratives consumed and traded so eagerly in public.

The priorities Deng identifies of "expediency and drama" remain constant throughout this narrative as an issue of both competition and survival tactics among the Lost Boys (Eggers 56). Such drama can be fierce and cruel, as he indicates when he talks about the Sudanese men who have murdered members of their family when they have been defied or crossed; one of the women murdered includes Tabitha, whom Deng loved. In utter sadness, he reflects that abuse of women certainly existed before, but that such murders were unthinkable in Sudan and that "there is a new desperation, a new kind of theatricality on the part of men" (Eggers 367). However, theatricality is not just a matter of excess, but a vital part of ensuring one's survival. Deng freely admits to the reader that "many of us lied on our application forms and in our interviews with officials," having learned that any admission of affiliation with the SPLA rebels would disqualify them from consideration for entry into the U.S. (Eggers 17). It is his estimation that more than half of the Lost Boys had been involved in some way with child soldiering for the SPLA, but, without identifying the giver of this advice, he goes on to say that "this is part of our history that we have been told not to talk about" (Eggers 17). What he highlights here is the institutional pressure that humanitarian organizations put on people to present themselves as innocent victims. By referring generally to group dynamics and speaking in a collective voice in these moments, he incriminates no one in particular while playing the role of both informant (because he himself did not have to lie but explains that others did) and confessor (because he accepts his complicity in these lies). It becomes clear that such inside knowledge is not given primarily to induct the reader into a privileged circle of knowledge nor as a means of passing judgment on those who have cheated the system, but as the basis for providing needed critique—indicating just how inadequately the systems in place and the platforms available can account for and respond to these boys' lived experiences and realities.

Talking about the aspects of experience for which there is no market and which, in a sense, might *collapse* the market for Lost Boy stories—helps to illustrate the absurdity of affording victim status only to those who have remained insulated from politics, as if that were possible. Deng's account suggests that the stories that have been told, the stories we want to read, are not adequate to represent the forms of life or norms that have been engendered by both war and by the international response to war. And so it is that Deng begins to feel empathy for the boy who is watching his soon-to-be-stolen TV. He understands that this boy is being used to accomplish someone else's ends. Deng says that he himself knows

> everything one can know about the wasting of youth, about the ways boys can be used. Of those boys with whom I walked, about half became soldiers eventually. And were they willing? Only a few. They were twelve, thirteen years old, little more, when they were conscripted. We were all used, in different ways. We were used for war, we were used to garner food and the sympathy of the humanitarian-aid organizations. Even when we were going to school, we were being used. It has happened before and has happened in Uganda, in Sierra Leone. Rebels use refugees to attract aid, to create the appearance that what is happening is as simple as twenty thousand lost souls seeking food and shelter while a war plays out at home. But just a few miles away from our civilian camp, the SPLA had their own base, where they trained and planned, and there was a steady pipeline of supplies and recruits that traveled between the two camps. *Aid bait*, we were sometimes called. Twenty thousand boys in the middle of the desert: it is not difficult to see the appeal to the UN, to Save the Children and the Lutheran World Foundation. But while the humanitarian world fed us, the Sudan People's Liberation Army, the rebels who fought for the Dinka, were tracking each of us, waiting until we were ripe. (Eggers 48)

Some form of association with SPLA, he shows, was nearly as unavoidable as the boys' original obligation to escape if they wanted to live. They had very little control over their conditions, and so, while Deng admits that many have lied in the interviews, he also demonstrates clearly that very few of those who actually took part in fighting did so from purely ideological and political motivations, and that a majority were forced into battle. The SPLA treated the group of boys as a raw resource, as war livestock that the humanitarian organizations helped to tend and feed. In this rendering the boys are vulnerable at every turn and "somewhere at the bottom" of the camp's social hierarchy, but it is for this same reason that they qualify as ideal victims without an admitted association with the SPLA (Eggers 388). Given their separation from their families, how young they are, how great their numbers are, and how many hardships they have endured, they appear an ideal case for humanitarian intervention and "rescue"; they are, as Deng says, "aid bait."

Deng's narrative demonstrates the value of a mode of testimony which explicitly includes humanitarian modes of production in its account. He points to the mechanisms by which testimony is solicited and used, which highlights how laws and institutions continue to serve as gatekeepers, to regulate access for the marginalized to the centers of power and privilege. He underscores the material rewards of exaggeration. At moments he even appears to be winking at the reader, such as when he admits the unreliable frequency with which lions appear in narratives merely because they impress an audience, after having himself referred several times to personal experiences in which lions feature prominently. Since he explains to the reader that his story has some embellishments of its own, one is obliged to question the degree to which this is the case and for what motives.

Without any further elaboration, Deng leaves the reader to puzzle out why he declines to meditate on the nature of his own inaccuracies. Given everything he shares about the Lost Boys and the dynamics surrounding their struggles, there are two possibilities the reader is encouraged to infer. One is that this admission shows Deng is simply human and that, like everyone else, will seize

an occasion to impress if it seems worthwhile and low-risk. The other possibility is that he has, in fact, lied for a more strategic reason regarding his refugee status, and that he cannot disclose certain truths without somehow also making himself vulnerable to deportation. The first possibility would indicate a narrator who is simply foreclosing the possibility of reading him as an exemplary character, as someone occupying the moral high ground, which is clearly something he strives to do; the second reading would add the layer of keen awareness on the part of the narrator that his privileges can be revoked, and that the vulnerabilities placing him at the bottom of the camp's social hierarchy have not simply disappeared but exist in different forms. For gaining status and encouraging political engagement, the Lost Boys have learned to relay "the most dire stories," but Deng portrays his own desire to tell his story as an act that is cathartic and connective, preferring to tell the unabridged versions of what's happened to whoever will listen.

In fact, he tells his story not only to those who wish to listen but silently to anyone he feels has "wronged" him or who seems oblivious to the kinds of things he's endured: "If someone cut in front of me in line, ignored me, bumped me or pushed me, I would glare at them, staring, silently hissing a story to them. *You do not understand*, I would tell them. *You would not add to my suffering if you knew what I had seen*" (Eggers 29). His compulsory need to share is an act, one might say, of confirming his own existence: "the stories emanate from me all the time I am awake and breathing, and I want everyone to hear them. Written words are rare in small villages like mine, and it is my right and obligation to send my stories into the world, even if silently, even if powerlessly" (Eggers 29). This powerlessness is not represented as something he overcame by moving to America, but as persistent and oppressive.

What is particularly curious and inventive about this novel is its mode of address and use of frame narratives to underscore the dramatic failures of humanitarian discourse to represent the reality of the struggle of people like Deng who languish in liminal spaces, who are not merely

hapless victims but the site and emblems of the failed promises of inalienable rights and the persistence of "castes within castes" (Eggers 21). Divided into three parts, Book I, II and III, the framing events last a little more than a day. The first third of the book takes place entirely in his apartment on the night of the robbery, the second third takes place in an ER after the robbery, where he waits fourteen hours to be seen by a doctor before giving up and leaving, and the last third takes place the following morning when, after a sleepless night attempting to get a medical checkup following his attack, he goes to work manning the front desk at a health club. In each section he directly addresses the people he encounters who do not know anything of his past—strangers, for all intents and purposes. First, he addresses the boy Michael, who guards him while he's being robbed, then Julian, the ER man who keeps him waiting, and, finally, a series of regular gym members with whom he exchanges shallow pleasantries, people whose photos, through a glitch in the system, fill the display on his screen until he checks in the next person. He even directs his story, silently, at people unlikely to be interested.

Early in the novel, particularly in the first two chapters, and in the third, when he begins addressing Michael, the narrative often switches between what takes place in the present day and glimpses of events and anecdotes in his personal history. However, as the novel progresses, the references to the present day recede into the background, letting the foreground settle into scenes of stagnancy against the feverish scenes of his youthful escape. A chapter which takes place in the frame narrative of his wait in the ER opens with the following sentence: "The walk to Ethiopia, Julian, was only the beginning" (Eggers 256). The effect of beginning chapters in this way is to remind the reader that, as he is recalling this experience in Sudan he is bound and gagged on the floor of his apartment, or sitting interminably in an ER waiting room, or standing, bored, behind a desk.

Though there are many differences between the chronotopes of past and present, the direct address is used as a suturing device indicating that there is not a decisive break between the ways in which Deng is repeatedly forced into a situation where he is vulnerable, neglected, wallowing in the banalities of subsistence, and waiting for rescue both in Sudan and in America. The experience is not merely attributable to the common conventions of immigrant narratives showing the newly-arrived with their expectations deflated, but underscores the fact that humanitarian narratives cannot adequately account for the social injustices that lie at the root of his persistent vulnerabilities. The frame story dramatizes his powerlessness, his subalternity, particularly where he is bound and gagged. In one of the moments where he addresses his neighbor and, then, the reader directly, Deng struggles against his restraints: "It is criminal that all of this has happened, has been allowed to happen. In a furious burst, I kick and kick again, flailing my body like a fish run aground. Hear me, Christian neighbors! Hear your brother just above! Nothing again. No one is listening. No one is waiting to hear the kicking of a man above. It is unexpected. You have no ears for someone like me" (Eggers 142). Deng's impulse to share with the reader is as compulsive as the kicking in this scene—something that is reinforced at the very end of the novel where he promises that "whatever I do, however I find a way to live, I will tell these stories…because to do anything else would be something less than human. I speak to these people and I speak to you because I cannot help it" (Eggers 535). It appears that the furious attempt to be heard is the only confirmation he has of shared humanity—not because his rights are natural and inviolable, but because he actively asserts shared humanity in the act of speaking.

Testimony here, as elsewhere, serves as the basis for legitimate claims that an injustice has been done—something he makes perfectly clear when he calls the series of events that the Sudanese have endured "criminal" (142). However, this particular narrative exaggerates rather than attempts

to override the double bind facing the person bearing witness who does not share the same set of realities as those called upon to pass judgment:

> To be understood and to appear probable, the eyewitness account must rely for support on the community's shared perception of reality, common sense. At the same time, the witness sometimes harbours an experience that clashes with all normal sense. Similarly, one can view the form of the work of art as a deviation from general perception, and an effort to validate an individual vision in the face of the social arrangement we call "reality." (Engdahl 8)

Unlike stories that seek to make the experience of the Lost Boys more easily accessible and understandable and, to a degree, fit their stories comfortably into the audience's current set of assumptions and tailor it to their appetites, Deng kicks against the floor and asks the reader to grow new ears capable of accommodating his cry for recognition. Rather than simply recounting the events that led him from the beginning of his escape to a comfortable settlement in America, Deng uses his personal experience within a set of frame narratives as a way of illustrating that, as Engdahl puts it,

> Testimony's worst enemy is not silence but the ready-made explanation. Renaud Dulong says that the mutual animosity between historiography and testimony, which can easily be demonstrated in discussions of scholarly method and which is paralleled by the court's sceptical attitude to testimony and preference for 'technical evidence,' concerns not only the question of proof but also the witness's distaste for general explanations, which represents an uncomfortable obstacle to historical and legal procedures: The message [of testimony] is, rather, directed at upholding the past as enigma, as scandal, and as interpellation. Hence, it appears that no historical genre, by the very function of its discourse, is able to recapture

this... the one-dimensional character of chronological presentation is synonymous with progression and evokes the notion of progress (9-10).

Deng's life, like so many in his position, is consumed with escape and waiting—neither of which provide assurance that he is making desired progress. His haplessness and helplessness in the U.S. shows his position to be one of perpetual, precarious liminality. The narrative compels the reader to acknowledge the "uncomfortable obstacle to historical and legal procedure" that his story provides and to see the need for innovating a fresh response—a new mode of advocacy and representation, aesthetically as well as legally, that can fully hear him and recognize his humanity—that can adequately receive his story in its totality, not merely as it fits into existing expectations. Otherwise, Deng will continue to live as "no one" in America just as he lived, for a good portion of his life, "nowhere," in the second largest refugee camp in Kenya:

> What was life in Kakuma? Was it life? There was a debate about this. On the one hand, we were alive, which meant that we were living a life, that we were eating and could enjoy friendships and learning and could love. But we were nowhere. Kakuma was nowhere. Kakuma was, we were first told, the Kenyan word for nowhere. No matter the meaning of the word, the place was not a place. It was a kind of purgatory, more so than was Pinyudo, which at least had a constant river, and in other ways resembled the Southern Sudan we had left. But Kakuma was hotter, windier, far more arid. There was little in the way of grass or trees in that land; there were no forests to scavenge for materials; there was nothing for miles, it seemed, so we became dependent on the UN for everything. (374)

Many accounts, like Deng's, describe the experience of displacement and living as a refugee as limbo, being caught up in the vicissitudes of history, the bureaucracy of salvation, and somehow, by a cruel twist of fate, both ineligible for heaven and narrowly escaping hell.

The Kakuma refugee camp and Deng's status in relation to it is deeply symbolic of a crisis in human rights that cannot be adequately understood merely as a case of misfortune but must be accounted for as a product of global politics. Sixty-two years ago Hannah Arendt called stateless persons the "most symptomatic group in contemporary politics"; and her observation not only touches on persistent, underlying problems with human rights premises but gains a new resonance in the context of heightened global security concerns and the "war on terror" (277).[60] Underscoring the fundamental problem of basing universal human rights on natural law, especially given the fact that such rights fall outside of the jurisdiction of the state and that no supranational authority exists to enforce them, Arendt lamented that,

> If a human being loses his political status, he should, according to the implications of the inborn and inalienable rights of man, come under exactly the situation for which the declarations of such general rights provided. Actually the opposite is the case. It seems that a man who is nothing but a man has lost the very qualities that make it possible for other people to treat him as a fellow man. (300)

Europe's dramatic failure to effectively protect those who had lost their national rights during World War II revealed the extent to which the very principle of state sovereignty "made it possible for the persecuting governments to impose their standard of values even upon their opponents. Those whom the persecutor had singled out as scum of the earth—Jews, Trotskyites, etc.—actually were received as scum of the earth everywhere; those whom persecution had called undesirable became the undesirables of Europe" (Arendt 269). Arendt recognizes here that totalitarian states succeeded in reducing people to an abject condition by stripping them of the political leverage they would need to

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[60] Arendt calls statelessness "the newest mass phenomenon in contemporary history, and the existence of an ever-growing new people comprised of stateless persons, the most symptomatic group in contemporary politics. Their existence can hardly be blamed on one factor along, but if we consider the different groups among the stateless it appears that every political event since the end of the First World War inevitably added a new category to those who lived outside the pale of the law" (Arendt 276-7).

protest against or resist such treatment. The experience of those who lost their status as national subjects illustrated a fundamental weakness in human rights presumptions, since what resulted was not a kind of austerity measure reducing a fuller and more robust set of protections to a few basic rights, but a set of vulnerabilities that reflected well-established hierarchies of power and privilege:

> No paradox of contemporary politics is filled with more poignant irony than the discrepancy between the efforts of well-meaning idealists who stubbornly insist on regarding as 'inalienable' those human rights, which are enjoyed only by citizens of the most prosperous and civilized countries, and the situation of the rightless themselves. (Arendt 355)

Hayden underscores the value of Arendt's critique when he argues that "thinking of human rights in metaphysical terms—as something we possess independently of membership in a political community"—contradicts the conditions and material realities that face an overwhelming majority of those displaced (267). The stakes are high if we fail to account for these realities, because if we do not acknowledge them, we also fail "to fully grasp the crisis of human rights exemplified by stateless persons, a crisis that has grown more rather than less acute since the time of Arendt's intervention" (Hayden 267).

Arendt's political analysis of state sovereignty and denationalization in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was first published in 1951—the same year that the UN High Commission of Refugees (UNHCR) was founded "to help the estimated 1 million people still uprooted after World War II to return home" (UNHCR). She was writing, then, about the refugee as a symbol of crisis in human rights at the very moment when the UN was beginning to develop its practices, protocols, and capacity to serve displaced populations in an international capacity. Since that time the numbers of displaced persons have grown significantly, as has the institutional capacity to serve them, with the most recent numbers by UNHCR (assessed at the beginning of 2012) reflecting a global count of 10.4 million refugees falling within their organizational purview—meaning that there are 10.4 million people

officially recognized as "persons of concern" who live in designated camps, centers, shelters, and open areas organized and administrated by UNHCR, with three possibilities facing residents on the other side: repatriation, local integration, or resettlement (UNHCR).[61] Not only has mass displacement grown since Arendt's analysis of the situation following World War II, but one might argue that the UNHCR's well-developed protocols and operations have, largely because of national security concerns, increasingly normalized displacement rather than helping to effectively restore persons to a political community wherein they might regain protections and forms of representation.

Deng's experience illustrates this impasse in the seemingly interminable stretch that he and others spend in the camp, actively prevented from making any progress towards a solution to their precarity:

> We spent the first year at Kakuma thinking we might return to our villages at any moment. … The battles would continue and the refugees arrived without pause, hundreds per week, and we came to accept that Kakuma would exist forever, and that we might always live within its borders. (Eggers 371)

As more refugees arrived, the camp "grew to encompass Kakuma I, II, III, and IV. It was a refugee city with its own suburbs" (Eggers 383). Two years into the camp's existence, the UNHCR announced a census, which caused an uproar. Sudanese elders questioned if "this counting could be a pretext of a new colonial era" and, when barriers were constructed to make counting possible, someone would tear it down (Eggers 384). Deng explains that, having learned about the Holocaust, in school, most boys his age "were convinced that this was a plan much like that used to eliminate the Jews in Germany and Poland" (Eggers 385). Though no holocaust came to pass, he says that,

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[61] The numbers are significantly higher than even this, as UNHCR notes that a "further 4.8 million registered refugees are looked after in some 60 camps in the Middle East by United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which was set up in 1949 to care for displaced Palestinians" and all of these figures put together of course, do not account for those who fall outside of organizational paradigms (UNHCR).

"in a sense" such paranoia held truth, because the results of the count meant "less food and less services, even the departure of some smaller programs" because "when they were done counting, the population of Kakuma had decreased by eight thousand people in one day" (Eggers 387). The excess numbers correspond to a coping mechanism called "recycling" that the refugees adopted to combat the scarcity that led, in one memorable case in Deng's narrative, to a boy's death after two youths wrangled over rations; the boy died from a simple kick merely because his body was too weak to sustain any extra stress. Recycling is identified as common to all refugee camps, and the "essence of the idea is that one can leave the camp and reenter as a new person, thus keeping his first ration card and getting another when he reenters under a new name" (Eggers 387). By this means "extra ration cards provided a vast secondary economy at Kakuma, and kept thousands of refugees from anemia and related illnesses" (Eggers 387). This explanation is followed by an episode of misadventure where Deng attempts to "recycle" with dreams of opening a canteen using the capital he can gather if he trades items successfully along the way—as he plans to bribe his way out of the camp, travel to Ethiopia and re-cross the border into Kenya. Instead, he is made to ride in a truck full of corpses, is almost forced into the SPLA, and is swindled out of all of the items he intended to trade; finally he had to abort his plan, return to the camp, and anxiously keep out of sight, "for I knew if I were caught all would be lost, and I would soon lose all my benefits, such as they were, as a refugee" (Eggers 408).

Standing in stark contrast to the "self-made man" characteristic of so many development novels, Deng is constantly over-determined by his status as a refugee. His attempts to exercise his entrepreneurial spirit fall flat—not because of a lack of will or vision, but because of the conditions in which he lives and the status he's afforded contingent and provisional. In this space the only way to lessen one's vulnerabilities is to commodify one's very existence and use this as capital, but the

risks are high. At the end of this episode, Deng is forced back into dependency, frozen in a stage of youth without the means to grow out of being a Lost Boy and pass into a stage of self-sufficiency.

If UNHCR's activity in the fifties can be understood as an index of what happens when unchecked state power exercises its right to exclude, then it might be said that the organization's current activities, as one sees in the Kakuma episode, underscore the enduring problem that national sovereignty poses to the protection of universal human rights and testifies to the ways that zones of exclusion have become increasingly institutionalized and maintained by the organizations ostensibly designed to help eliminate their need for existence. Jeff Crisp, Head of Policy and Evaluation Services at the UNHCR, expresses frustration on this point in his 2003 paper "No solution in sight: the problem of protracted refugee situations in Africa" by comparing the situations in Northern Iraq, Bosnia, Kosovo and East Timor which all "produced (eventually) a decisive response from the world's more prosperous states, enabling large-scale and relatively speedy repatriation movements to take place" to the displacements in Angola, Burundi, DRC, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Somalia, where "the geopolitical and economic stakes have generally been much lower for the industrialized states, with the result that armed conflicts—and the refugee situations created by those conflicts—have been allowed to persist for years on end" (Crisp 2-3).[62] He criticizes national politics for interfering with a duty to act in the refugees' best interests. These protracted refugee situations, he suggests, correspond not only to the conditions of ongoing African conflicts which draw out the need for extended emergency measures, but to major ideological and political shifts affecting the UN member nations. Developments in the last twenty years have increasingly led to national policies disfavoring asylum-seekers and narrowing opportunities for refugees to resettle reasonably

[62] He writes that "In 2001, UNHCR's Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit (EPAU) embarked upon a major study of protracted refugee situations, with funding provided by the US State Department's Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration. Since that time, the notion of protracted refugee situations has become an increasingly familiar feature of the discourse on international refugee issues, especially in the African context."

quickly. As Crisp notes, many countries interface with the UNHCR primarily as a means of containing identified risks to national security. The current norms are a far cry from the protocols developed in 1951 to provide asylum for those escaping persecution:

> the strategy of containment has been devised and enforced through numerous national and international mechanisms since the 1970s, when Western states began to conceive of the work of the UNHCR above all in terms of "intervention in crisis zones of the Third World" rather than "resettlement" of European refugees. These "new" refugees were regarded as "problem people," a collective source of anxiety and potential instability due to their "irregularity." The response has consisted not only of tightening border controls and immigration policies but of rationalizing the function of the UNHCR and other refugee organizations as "emergency" or crisis relief. (Hayden 258)

The end of the cold war and the changing economic and political grounds it engendered created tectonic political shifts and mass movements led to increased security concerns. The growing unwillingness of many African host nations to accept refugees for naturalization was a prime reason why repatriation was considered by the UNHCR to be the most viable option throughout most of the 80s and 90s. Among the major factors influencing African countries' reluctance to accept refugees were: 1. Limited results in using local integration as an approach, 2. The economic and environmental burden associated with accepting refugee populations, 3. A feeling that "the world's more prosperous states" were not sharing the burden of a crisis that was officially recognized as international in nature, 4. The fact that "refugees came to be regarded (especially after the Great Lakes crisis) as a threat to local, national and even regional security, especially in situations where they were mixed with armed and criminal elements," and, 5. The political exigency of using identity politics for consolidating a base, in which "the post-cold war democratization process in

some African states meant that politicians had an interest in mobilizing electoral support on the basis of xenophobic and anti-refugee sentiments" (Crisp 4).

What strikes me in this account is the fourth reason Crisp gives regarding the Great Lakes crisis, when refugee camps set up in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide in 1994 were widely regarded as having laid bare the critical failures inherent in the international community's policies and protocols for intervention and aid.[63] The humanitarian response to the Rwandan genocide served as an object lesson for the ways that institutions striving to remain apolitical while providing relief can be rather easily manipulated and made to serve the ends of politically-motivated groups. Investigating the charges of complicity that have been leveled against humanitarian actors working to provide material support for the Rwandan refugees, Lepora and Goodin indicate that the UNHCR's response in this instance is rightly troubling to many, given that their operations ended up structurally supporting forms of predation on and violence against the very population the organization was tasked to protect.[64] Many of these camps did not exist prior to this conflict and had been set up specifically to accommodate those fleeing the Rwandan genocide, which means, in theory, that they should have had the means to organize the camp thoroughly without the confusion of working around preexisting operations. As they established and set about administrating these

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[63] Three important reports about the humanitarian response to the Rwandan Genocide that Lepora and Goodin mention in their analysis of the situation are: "Médecins sans Frontières Centre de réflexion sur l'action et les savoirs humanitaires (CRASH) by L. Binet: 'Genocide des Rwandais Tutsis—1994' (2003), 'Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire and Tanzania—1994–1995' (2003) and 'Traque et massacres des réfugiés rwandais au Zaire et au Congo 1996–1997' (2010) (prises de parole publiques are available at: www.msf-crash.org/publications/)."

[64] Lepora and Goodin explain that, although the intentions of the "UN agencies and the numerous humanitarian actors present in the refugee camps" were clearly to assist those most vulnerable, "over the two years of the refugee camps' existence, all of them sooner or later came to acknowledge the contributory role that they played in supporting war criminals through the services they were providing. Throughout the period, for example, around a quarter of the food donated to refugees was diverted and resold to support the camp leadership; between 7 and 30% of the salaries of the staff locally hired was taxed, providing a continuous and lucrative income stream (around $11,000/month, for example, from only one of the hundreds of organizations working in the region); all services used by foreigners in the camps (transport services, money changing and import/export offices, bars, etc.) were managed or controlled by the same political and military leadership. Paradoxically, humanitarian activity supported the same criminals who abused the population" (264-265).

camps, however, the UNCHR did not distinguish between those who had taken an aggressive role in the genocide and those who were fleeing persecution:

> The decision to accept indiscriminately into the camp anyone, regardless of their civilian or military status, had two irreversible effects, one practical, the other legal. The practical one concerns the impossibility of separating militias from civilians after they settled in the camp, and the almost inevitable empowerment of a military leadership by aid actors looking for efficient and willing local agents of coordination. The legal one concerns the status of 'refugee' that was automatically conferred upon anyone entering the camps. Once a person is declared a refugee, he benefits from legal protection; he cannot be sent back to his country of origin; and his status (thus the protection he benefits from) cannot be revoked. Legally, someone who committed war crimes or crimes against humanity is not supposed to be able to benefit from refugee status. However, this distinction was not implemented by UNHCR in this case, and thus genocidal perpetrators paradoxically came to profit from the legal protection of the United Nations rather than being condemned by it. (Lepora-Goodin 17)

Given that the UNHCR afforded the legal status of refugee along with its benefits and protections to genocidaires, it is little wonder that the humanitarian response to the Rwandan situation has sharpened governmental suspicions toward those who have secured such refugee status. However, it would not be sufficient to think of this as a simple case of administrative negligence or failure that could have been avoided by following proper protocols. Even if the major military leadership and perpetrators had been identified and refused status, the nature of the Rwandan conflict would still have made it extraordinarily difficult to determine, at a basic level, who was fleeing because of "well-founded fear" of persecution and who was fleeing the consequences attached to the perpetration of a crime, since estimates indicate that "between 175,000 and 210,000 active participants in the Rwandan genocide"—a significantly larger number of civilian participants

than any previous conflicts of this nature, many of whom were known to have fled across the border (Straus 85). [65] Affording all who came seeking assistance an equal status as refugees, regardless of their motivations, was perhaps the only practical way to provide aid to the displaced without discriminating, but it also functioned to break the established link between the status of refugee and that of a victim and to muddle the 1951 Refugee Convention definition, which has been used as an international standard since its inception.

The UNHCR's inadequacy to the task of distinguishing between aggressor and victim in the Rwandan situation has played a significant role in casting refugees as problematic to state order; they are often regarded by governmental bodies as potential aggressors, narrowing the grounds on which they might gain acceptance into communities outside of their country of origin. In my view the failure to respond effectively to Rwanda is linked to the biopolitical turn that Fassin identifies when he shows how "asylum lost much of its legitimacy in the 1990s for victims of political violence, even while a new criterion based on 'humanitarianism' was developed for sick immigrants" (368). Though Fassin focuses in this essay on French policies, he also places them into a context of broader international developments that have led increasingly, as Agamben has argued, to a "politics of life" and attempts to separate humanitarianism from politics:

> The biopolitics of asylum must be understood as the substitution of a social order founded on "obligation" for a social order grounded in "solidarity," to use Georg Simmel's words (1998). The recognition of the refugee status by European nations appears as an act of

[65] Straus indicates that the numbers have been "hugely discrepant" and politically freighted: "[s]ome Rwandan government officials claim there were three million perpetrators. Other observers claim there were "hundreds of thousands" (Des Forges, 1999, p 2; Mamdani, 2001, p 7; Scherrer, 2002, p 126; Waller, 2002, p 67). Still others estimate tens of thousands (Jones, 2001, p 41). The high-end estimate effectively criminalizes the entire adult Hutu population at the time of the genocide. The low-end estimate is equivalent to a small fraction of the adult male Hutu population." (85) If the question of how many perpetrators were involved in the genocide was still a wide open question at the time of Straus' report a decade after the event, one imagines that aid and relief agencies, like everyone else at the time of the genocide in 1994, were operating with a very basic sense of what had taken place—knowing only that there had been some form of broadscale participation.

> generosity on the part of a national community toward a "suffering stranger" (Butt 2002) rather than the fulfillment of a political debt toward "citizens of humanity" (Malkki 1994). (Fassin 376)

Solidarity, it would appear, is in selective and short supply. Both options for resettlement and local integration became extraordinarily difficult precisely as "the changing nature of conflict in the continent made speedy and voluntary repatriation an increasingly elusive solution for so many refugees" (Crisp 4). Despite the fact that the changing dynamics after the end of the cold war seemed to call very urgently for a radical reassessment of protocol and procedures,

> rather than responding to this impasse in innovative ways, the principal members of the international refugee regime (host and donor countries, UNHCR and NGOs) chose to implement long-term "care-and-maintenance" programmes which did little or nothing to promote self-reliance amongst refugees or to facilitate positive interactions between the exiled and local populations. According to some critics, this was partly because UNHCR, as well as governmental and non-governmental refugee agencies, had a vested interest in perpetuating the "relief model" of refugee assistance, which entailed the establishment of large, highly visible and internationally funded camps, administered entirely separately from the surrounding area and population. (Crisp 4)

The general institutional response to the protracted refugee situation has been to accept the semi-permanence of their situation and to locate the camps in areas that are, quite literally, marginalized. Such camps clearly reflect the national interests and concerns that Crisp mentions, which one can see merely by looking at the typical location:

> One of the most evident characteristics of Africa's protracted refugee situations is that they are usually to be found in peripheral border areas of asylum countries: places which are

insecure, where the climatic conditions are harsh, which are not a high priority for the central government and for development actors, and which are consequently very poor. (Crisp 6)

These are precisely the conditions that Deng describes, and precisely the reasons contributing to the refugees' utter dependency. Given the protracted nature of this dynamic, critics have pointed to the role that aid organizations play managing state interests and supporting "a virulent system of global apartheid which establishes a permanent underclass of superfluous human beings"; following Agamben, Hayden ties this problem to the nature of sovereign power:

> One of the core functions of sovereign power – the creation and coercive enforcement of national identity boundaries – now takes place within a global context where frontiers are dynamically 'managed' in extraterritorial spaces and through deterritorialized forms of rule. Even as the nation-state has been reconfigured in the global age it nevertheless operates so as to draw new lines of demarcation for maintaining segregation between 'insiders' and alien 'outsiders,' thereby perpetuating inequality of rights and social, economic, and political status. (Hayden 263)

So, while there are clearly particular geographical and historical reasons (like the Great Lakes crisis) to help explain the impasses that developed in the early nineties and led a number of African refugee camps to resemble makeshift, militarized cities, lasting beyond a decade, one can trace these issues to the nature of nationalism and sovereignty itself. Since the mid-twentieth century and the mass displacements tied to conflicts in World War II, "mass statelessness, which was and continues to be treated discursively and practically as an exceptional or temporary problem, in fact became a permanent phenomenon constituted by the sovereign rights of expulsion and denationalization"; Hayden makes use of Arendt's insights to insist that, contrary to prevailing narratives in the international community which cast the fate of displaced masses as an undesirable and unavoidable outcome of conflict, "statelessness is not an aberrant or accidental phenomenon occurring despite

the best efforts of states to prevent it, but a 'normalized' systemic condition produced by an international order predicated upon the power to exclude as the essence of statist politics" (255, 250). The camp, in Agamben's analysis, is not an aberration within modernity but its very nomos—a "space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule," or when states of emergency become normalized as zones of exception located in space and having no limits in time (168-169).[66]

Though the social realities of modern refugee camps differ in significant ways from the internment and concentration camps of World War II, it is possible to see how they share a symbolic significance—something that Eggers's novel illustrates when discussing the census. Using Agamben's work Fassin shows that all of these liminal spaces reducing a person to "bare life" can be understood as evidence of the modern nation-states' exercise of biopolitical power wherein it works to isolate and contain and, in the extreme cases, eliminate "those who are constructed as living outside the polis"—those identified as a threat to national order:

> The camps correspond to a specific response to problems of public order by instituting small territories of exception. What justifies these local states of exception is an emergency that makes the gathering up of people appear as a practical solution. But the suspension of the usual social norms is accepted only because it is implemented for "undesirable" subjects. A situation that should be considered intolerable is in fact tolerated because the public order is threatened by immigrants, enemies, communists, gypsies, Jews, and collaborators. (Fassin 379)

[66] Andrew Neal addresses this dynamic in his article "Giorgio Agamben and the politics of the exception" when he explains that: "Agamben invokes Foucault's problematization of the 'sovereign subject' as both 'free' and made subject to sovereign power. This double-edged relationship between sovereign power and sovereign subject leads Agamben to posit a reformulation of Schmitt's "Sovereign is he who decides on the exception." in the claim that: "[i]n modern biopolitics, sovereign is he who decides on the value or the nonvalue of life as such. Life – which, with the declarations of rights, had as such been invested with the principle of sovereignty – now itself becomes the place of a sovereign decision." (9-10)

In these spaces the state exercises "inclusive exclusion;" this is not merely a case of exile because "he who has been banned is not, in fact, simply set outside the law and made indifferent to it but rather *abandoned* by it, that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable. It is literally impossible to say whether the one who has been banned is outside or inside the juridical order" (Agamben 6). Auschwitz epitomized this kind of "inclusive exclusion" by concomitantly denationalizing the people it grouped in these spaces (identifying them as "aliens," as officially *outside* the realm of political representation and protection) while laying claim to the most profoundly political power a state can exercise over a person—the right to determine whether one lives or dies. However, for Agamben Guantánamo Bay is "the single most pertinent and emblematic 'zone of indistinction' [in the present-day], the space within which 'bare life' is routinely politicized… [it is] a threshold space where the rule of law has been usurped and the fundamental right to trial and prosecution after arrest has been effectively suspended" (Downey 117). While not sharing the same repressive structures as the internment and concentration camps, refugee camps can nevertheless be said to construct a similar threshold space which operates *de facto* if not *de jure* as a state of exception. The case of the Rwandan refugee camps and the UNHCR's incontrovertible role in empowering the FAR military leadership as well as Deng's account in the novel of how the Lost Boys served as "aid bait," seems to bear out Agamben's warning that "humanitarian organizations—which today are more and more supported by international commissions—can only grasp human life in the figure of the bare or sacred life, and therefore, despite themselves, maintain a secret solidarity with the very powers they ought to fight" (Agamben 133). Publishing *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* in 1995, just a year after the Rwandan genocide took place, Agamben specifically references the campaigns to raise funds for Rwanda which were so prominent at the time:

> The imploring eyes of the Rwandan child, whose photograph is shown to obtain money but who "is now becoming more and more difficult to find alive," may well be the most telling contemporary cipher of the bare life that humanitarian organizations, in perfect symmetry with state power, need. A humanitarianism separated from politics cannot fail to reproduce the isolation of sacred life at the basis of sovereignty, and the camp—which is to say, the space of pure exception—is the biopolitical paradigm that it cannot master (134).

The way in which humanitarian organizations protect "bare life" is visible in many protracted refugee situations where the UNHCR strives to attain a "minimum standard" with strained resources; the goal, in this situation, is to keep people just above the threshold of risk to life—an impoverishing state of affairs, as Deng's situation shows vividly, since "the right to life has been bought at the cost of almost every other right" (Crisp 11). Crisp cites Jamal's examination of UNHCR policies as he makes this criticism, because, although he believes that asylum given to refugees in Kenya certainly meet a need for protection from persecution in their home countries, and that the benefit of this should not be minimized:

> the 65,000 Kakuma refugees (and a further 126,000 in Dadaab), enjoy neither basic freedoms available to nationals nor the somewhat restricted but still generous rights enshrined in the 1951 Convention. Their right to asylum in the country is, implicitly but emphatically, premised upon their complying with certain restrictive conditions. (7)

Dependency, restriction, stagnancy, liminality, precarity— Deng's story features all of these to show us what a dubious lottery asylum has become. We must remember that Kakuma, as of August, 2012, has swelled to reach its capacity of 100,000; and with rising fears about security and 27,600 people waiting for their refugee status to be determined, the UNHCR is exploring the possibility of opening yet another location (UNHCR). In such a system, one has no protection or

representation outside of charity—a perpetually vulnerable and dissatisfying situation in which to build a life.

Deng's story seeks to convince us that the "rights" of the displaced in situations like his are far from inviolable; because "refugees in many of Africa's protracted refugee situations do not have a clearly defined legal status," they live in a zone of indistinction where they have very little protection or recourse. They live in a zone where they might easily be fined or jailed by the state if they leave the camp without permission, and yet, within the camp, they might kill or be killed by another resident without any administrative body treating it properly as a crime (Crisp 9). Though a majority of narratives that have circulated about the Lost Boys seek to convince us that national boundaries are ever more porous and world citizenship more assured, if Agamben is right that

> "states of exception" have increasingly become the norm in Western democracies, and that we are seeing the re-emergence of sovereign power structures, not to mention the implications for the political subject and his/her legal status…then the "zones of indistinction" in which we find modern-day *homo sacer* are in need of urgent representation. (Downey 110)

A representation like Eggers' is particularly valuable because it resists the tendency to separate politics and humanitarianism; his novel draws readers' attention to the relations between power, provision, and narrative—especially parsing out how degrees of suffering and abjection attain market value in sentimental communities interested in protecting rights and providing aid; his novel sheds light on the ways in which reader expectations drive production. In the end, it is the act of reading itself—the act of growing ears for Deng's story—that will change appetite of readers and lead to genuine forms of mutual recognition. Then it will not be a question of charity to acknolwledge someone's humanity, but a right, for, as Deng puts it in his final address to the reader:

"How can I pretend that you do not exist? It would almost be as impossible as you pretending that I do not exist" (Egger 535).

APPENDIX A

WHERE RAPE IS A WEAPON OF WAR

Below a copy of the magazine article "Where Rape is a Weapon of War" has been included for reference with the express written permission of its original publisher, *Woman Alive* magazine. Publication details can be found in the Bibliography section.

Where rape is a weapon of war

The Democratic Republic of Congo is one of many countries where women bear the scars of war. **Rebecca J Cech** tells one woman's story and describes the work of an organisation which seeks to help them rebuild their lives

In a reflective moment, I notice a flower growing in the HEAL Africa medical compound, rising above the seven-foot lava-stone wall and through loops of razor wire – the protective measure which surrounds almost every NGO (non-government organisation) in the city of Goma, Eastern Congo. I have carried this snapshot with me for several days, mulling over it constantly. Since I first noticed it, the image has grown to symbolise a set of both difficulties and possibilities for vulnerable women in this area.

Until stability and peace in the Congo grow deep roots, sexual violence will continue as one of the most urgent of its national crises. HEAL Africa has consistently provided safe places for victims of sexual violence since 2002, and continues to offer a system of support for treating more than the physical tissues damaged by violent rape. Its programmes invest in healing and growth for the whole person.

It is difficult to quantify the positive effects HEAL Africa's programmes have made on its 16,000 recipients, but perhaps the most moving testament of HEAL Africa's vision and work comes from a young woman telling her story directly to an international audience.

The film, *Lumo*, tells a common story for many women in the Congo, because, in her words, soldiers "ruin her," as she makes her way home from the Masisi marketplace.

The 2008 Medica Mondial report suggests that 90% of women victimised come from rural areas in situations just like Lumo's, working by doing domestic chores or agriculture. Lumo and many women like her have suffered injuries destroying their intimate tissues, sometimes quite literally torn with implements of war like sticks and guns.

Mercifully, Lumo's story is primarily a story of repair, not of destruction, and the camera follows her everyday activities as she undertakes the tortuous process of healing. It takes five operations and two years on hospital grounds before she successfully mends, enabling her to return home to an area wracked by instability.

At the close of the film, first distributed in 2007, Lumo's whereabouts and condition remain unconfirmed, but members of HEAL Africa have since reconnected with her. In 2005, Lumo leaft HEAL Africa's hospital healed. The boy she mentions in the film, and who she says rejected her because of the rape, was reunited with her and they married shortly after. This is where we might wish to end the story, with a picture of their wedded bliss and a lasting image of Lumo's happiness, well-deserved after such protracted suffering.

But, fighting restarted just three months after their wedding, and militia attacked Lumo's village, killing her husband. She again became the target of sexual violence, returning to Heal Africa in the state she first arrived there years before. Fortunately, she didn't need to undergo a long round of new surgeries, as the first one met with success. Collections taken on Lumo's behalf have since helped her purchase a piece of land and build a house, where she now lives with her mother and with more security than she's ever before experienced.

As with many others like her, Lumo's story can only be considered fortunate if one calculates success in terms of small mercies and personal developments. Among these one should list that, during her stay at Ndosho for rest and healing, she learned to read and write. Her experience and literacy seem to have emboldened her to speak out publicly on behalf of women.

In a recent forum designed to institute a zero tolerance attitude towards sexual violence, Lumo and four other women shared their stories with a local audience. Lumo has learned to speak out against injustice with conviction and passion, and to testify in this manner indicates tremendous bravery and hope. Public witness often brings the stigma of rape and, sometimes, recriminations from those accused.

Ultimately, the flower and barbed wire remind me of Lumo's story, not because she is a delicate creature surrounded by faceless dangers, but because she has grown, despite many hazards, into a beautiful and capable woman, and because safe and supportive spaces like HEAL Africa help to make this possible.

In the local church service I attended on Sunday the preacher spoke about the importance of "giving of oneself". He used a Swahili word, *toa*, which can also describe the act of blossoming. May we all grow to give of ourselves, sometimes against self-interest, for the good of others, as Lumo has done. ■

Take it further

Worldshare, who partner with HEAL Africa, organised a tour of the award-winning film telling Lumo's story earlier this year. If you would like to arrange for the film to be shown in your area, contact *pamrose@worldshare.org.uk* or telephone the Worldshare office on 01302 710273

Note the film contains references to violence and sexual activity and is therefore not suitable for under 15s

APPENDIX B

OVERVIEW OF THE UGANDAN LRA (LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY)

The LRA is a traveling theater of violence that has operated militarily in Uganda, South Sudan, Central African Republic and the DR Congo. It originated in Uganda alongside other civil resistance groups in response to the oppressive treatment of Acholi by UPDF—the national armed forces. During the colonial period the north had comprised the majority in the country's military forces, but after Museveni's military takeover of the presidency in 1986, the new army, dominated by the south, took revenge on the Acholi in the north. The LRA formed in response to disproportionate poverty in the north, a repressive government, and military predation by the south. Its claimed objective is to overthrow the government and establish in its stead a theocratic state that follows the ten commandments and Acholi traditions. Reports in 2012 show that the group has weakened to its smallest numbers, reduced to only 250 combatants. The leader, Joseph Kony, along with several other LRA commanders, have International Criminal Court arrest warrants against them and stand charged with both crimes against humanity and war crimes, including a host of violent crimes: rape, murder, sexual slavery, and enlisting of children as combatants.

For details about the LRA and Ugandan rebellions, see:

Tripp, Aili Mari. *Museveni's Uganda: Paradoxes of Power in a Hybrid Regime*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2010.

Finnström, Sverker. *Living with Bad Surroundings: War, History and Everyday Moments in Northern Uganda*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

Allen, Tim and Koen Vlassenroot, Eds. *The Lord's Resistance Army: Myth and Reality*. London: Zed Books, 2010.

Reno, William. *Warfare in Independent Africa*: *New Approaches to African History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

APPENDIX C

OVERVIEW OF THE CONGO CONFLICT

DR Congo's conflict as it currently stands is not properly a single conflict, but a series of many, with complex and multiple local, regional and international dimensions. The collapse of the state—a state that was already weak—has created a power vacuum that fuels national infighting as well as vulnerability to outside forces. Some of the country's most persistent dynamics of regional conflict may be traced to the first and second Congo wars that followed on the heels of the Rwandan Genocide in 1994. Many of the perpetrators of genocide had fled and taken refuge in Eastern Congo and the leadership was unwilling or unable to manage the problem; security reasons tied to this threat have been consistently named by Rwandan president Paul Kagame as the legitimation for his repeated military engagement and investment in Congo's affairs. The first Congo war, 1996-1997, began when Rwanda and its ally Uganda invaded from the east, moved west into the capital of Kinshasa, and deposed then president Mobutu, installing Laurent-Désiré Kabila as the new leader. Unwilling to be seen as an instrument of foreign leaders, Laurent Kabila turned on those who put him into power and expelled all Ugandan and Rwandan forces from the country, prompting recriminations in the form of a Second Congo War, which broke out in 1998, involved nine African nations and lasted, in dispersed forms, until 2003. Laurent Kabila was assassinated in 2001 and replaced by his son, Joseph Kabila. Smaller, more localized conflicts have persisted since 2003,

principally in the Kivu provinces. Rwandan military involvement has remained strong in the East, up to the present day, and recent reports by the UN group of experts show the Rwandan government providing recruits, funding, and arms for so-called rebel forces, the most recent reincarnation of which bears the name "M23." The country's resource-richness has been a persistent source of exploitation since the days of its colonization by the Belgians in 1885. DR Congo currently has the largest and most costly UN peacekeeping mandate worldwide, MONUC, which employs approximately 19,000 peacekeepers. Despite this UN presence, studies show that somewhere between five million and eight million people have died from conflict-related causes; these are primarily civilians, and half of them are under the age of five. One of the dimensions of the conflict that has received increasing attention has been the unusually high incidence of sexual violence, which began to climb steeply in 1996, after foreign invasion; in 2011 the *American Journal of Public Health* conducted a study that estimated at the time a violation of nearly two million women and girls and a rate of nearly one per minute.

For details about the DR Congo conflict, see:

Clark, John. *The African Stakes of the Congo War*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Prunier, Gerard. *Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Stearns, Jason. *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa*. New York: Public Affairs, 2012.

Turner, Thomas. *The Congo Wars: Conflict, Myth and Reality*. London: Zed Books, 2007.

APPENDIX D

OVERVIEW OF THE LIBERIAN CIVIL WAR

There were two phases of the Liberian civil war, the first from 1989 to 1997 and the second from 1999 to 2003, sparked by Charles Taylor's bid for power that culminated in his winning the presidential election in 1997. Following President Doe's assassination, the round of rebellions and counter-rebellions that characterized the following seven years fractured groups along ethnic lines and led to an increasing scramble to control territories and the resources within them—principally timber and diamonds. The forms of poverty, political favoritism, and exclusion that helped contribute to these fractures were major factors in catalyzing second phase of the civil war. During the first set of rebellions following President Doe's assassination, Liberia had both an interim government dependent on foreign peacekeeping forces (ECOMOG) for protection and Taylor's parallel government, which enabled him to exploit not only Liberian resources but also to involve himself in the Sierra Leonean conflict for access to diamonds through proxy forces. Two years after Taylor's election conflict resurged, with two main rebel armies trying to take power: LURD which operated out of Guinea, and MODEL, which had support from the government of Cote d'Ivoire. In response to intense international pressure over the levels of violence and humanitarian disasters in the country Charles Taylor stepped down in 2003, and his signing of a comprehensive peace agreement shortly thereafter marked the end the civil war. The conflict is estimated to have taken

250,000 lives; it was characterized by sexual enslavement of girls and heavy recruitment of child soldiers. Though Charles Taylor's group was the first to recruit child soldiers, the many rebel groups that followed adopted this practice as standard. The participation of children was so significant that, in 2004 Amnesty International estimated that 21,000 child soldiers would need to be reintegrated at the end of the war.[67]

For details about the Liberian civil war, see:

Ellis, Stephen. *The Mask of Anarchy Updated Edition: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War*. New York: NYU Press, 2006.

Huband, Mark. *The Liberian Civil War*. New York: Routledge, 1998.

Levitt, Jeremy. *The Evolution of Deadly Conflict in Liberia: From 'Paternaltarianism' to State Collapse*. Durham, Carolina Academic Press, 2005.

[67] "Liberia: The promises of peace for 21,000 child soldiers." *Amnesty International*. 17 May 2004.

APPENDIX E

OVERVIEW OF THE SUDANESE CIVIL WARS

Though there is clearly an ethnoreligious dimension to this conflict (one can hardly hear about the Sudan without the mention of genocide in Darfur), it is largely a political conflict with old roots in the transition from colonial government to a postcolonial order. The British originally administrated the north and south of Sudan separately, and when they finally integrated them, they did so in a way that gave very little political representation to the south. Kasfir notes that the 1953 government set up during decolonization had a "Sudanization Committee" which included only six leaders from the south out of the approximately 800 senior administrative positions available.[68] The first civil war, from 1955 to 1972, largely centered around the south's struggle for more political representation and autonomy which culminated in the Addis Ababa Agreement. The second civil war of Sudan lasted from 1985 to 2005 and was sparked by a violation of the agreement, when the president attempted to seize control of oil fields and dismantle the representation and autonomy that had been won in the first civil war. The mass movements of "Lost Boys" across the Sudanese desert was their attempts to escape both the devastating government raids and conscription by the SPLA—the

[68] Kasfir, Nelson. 1979. *Explaining Ethnic Political Participation*. World Politics, 32: 365-388.

military group in the south fighting the northern government; records show that the SPLA "forcibly conscripted at least 10, 000 male minors."[69]

For details about the Sudanese civil war, see:

Deng, Francis M. *War of Visions: Conflict of Identities in the Sudan*. Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1995.

Johnson, Douglas. *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003.

Jok, Jok Madut. *Sudan: Race, Religion, and Violence.* Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2007.

[69] "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1991." United States Department of State, Washington-DC, 1992, p.382.

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Berkeley, Bill. *The Graves Are Not Yet Full: Race, Tribe and Power in the Heart of Africa*. New York: Basic Books, 2001. Print.

Blattman, Chris. "Visible Children." *Chris Blattman: International development, politics, economics and policy*. 4 Mar. 2009. 20 Jan. 2013.

Bouris, Erica. *Complex Political Victims*. Connecticut: Kumarian Press Inc., 2007. Print.

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