Conflict Bodies
The Politics of Rape Representation in the Francophone Imaginary

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INTRODUCTION

Can the Subaltern Survivor Speak?
The Global Politics of Rape Discourses

On the basis of the un-gathered evidence of millions of women all over the continent... African women have not been passive recipients of abuse, as some authorities would have us believe. The evidence that is available suggests that they have found numerous ways of resisting the humiliations meted out to them, both individually and with the help of sympathetic friends and relatives.

—Amina Mama

Feminist modes of ‘reading’ rape and its cultural inscriptions help identify and demystify the multiple manifestations, displacements, and transformations of what amounts to an insidious cultural myth. In the process, they show how feminist critique can challenge the representations that continue to hurt women.

—Lynn Higgins and Brenda Silver

ON OCTOBER 17, 2010, thousands of women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) protested the mass rapes of women that have been going on for more than a decade in the eastern region. The systematic use of rape has been a feature of the war since it began in 1996 and continues today at alarming rates. Having just ended a week-long forum on peace, gender and development in the DRC, women marched, carrying signs with titles such as “Say no to sexual terrorism.” Together, these women, decrying the daily battles waged on Congolese women’s bodies,
“Bound to Violence?”
A History of the Rape Trope in Francophone Studies

Appelons-les violences familières. Familières, parce qu’elles sont connues de tous et que personne n’ose les dénoncer comme étant des situations de violence. Familières aussi parce qu’elles sont historiques, sociales, ou économiques, que notre mémoire collective en est imprégnée, que nous ne pourrons jamais les oublier. Ces formes de violences ont, depuis des décennies, envahi le champ de la littérature.¹

Let us call them familiar forms of violence. Familiar, because they are known to everyone and yet no one dares to denounce them as situations of violence. Familiar also because they are historic, social, or economic, that our collective memory is full of these, that we can never forget them. These forms of violence have, for decades, invaded the field of literature.
—Tanella Boni

In the time it takes you to read this sentence . . . someone will be raped. Somewhere a person is being violated. One person is forcing himself on another person and leaving a mark—a bruise, a scar from a cigarette burn, some torn tissue mixed with blood, some semen, perhaps none of these. In every case of rape, whether the mark is invisible or permanent, life or death, a mark remains: the memory of a violation—force without consent. . . . The mark may only be an ineradicable memory.²
—Catherine Clinton

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²
Rethinking Political Rape
Genealogies of Sexual Violence in Haiti

. . . To think about Haitian women solely in terms of the most popular forms of visual representation is to contribute to her marginalization in a society which already forcefully and violently occludes her full participation in the workings of a country to which she loses her sweat and blood on a daily basis.¹

—Myriam Chancy

Women’s stories of sexual abuse are often subordinated to larger political narratives of the nation-state, and this is especially true of Haiti, where the nation’s political upheavals, poverty, and refugees overwhelm the global imagination.²

—Donette Francis

ONE OF THE central founding myths about the genesis of the Haitian people is a story of intimate violation that is set in motion with the rape of Sor Rose. Telling a version of this tale and citing Haitian historian Timoléon Brutus, Colin Dayan explains that:

The legend of Sor Rose or Sister Rose is a story of origins that depends for its force on rape. In this story, the Haitian nation began in the loins of a black woman. The ancestress must be ravished for the state to be born. . . . The legend of Sor Rose, like that of the land of Haiti . . . begins with a
Islands Unbound
Beyond the Rape of the Land

Depuis longtemps, je voulais parler de l’inceste, du viol, mais je ne savais jamais comment m’y prendre. Or, en ’89 j’ai vécu, comme tous les guadeloupéens, Hugo. . . . Et quand j’ai découvert la Guadeloupe au petit matin, j’ai vu une île dévastée, dénudée, comme violée par la force du vent. Ce cyclone m’a permis de faire un parallèle entre la violence des hommes et celle de la nature et j’ai enfin pu écrire sur l’inceste.

For a long time, I wanted to talk about incest, about rape, but I never knew how to do so. Then, in ’89 I lived through, like all of Guadeloupeans, Hugo. I spent nights frightened by the noises, barricading and holding the door. And when I discovered Guadeloupe the next morning at dawn, I saw an island devastated, stripped, as though it was raped by the wind. This cyclone allowed me to make a parallel between the violence of man and that of nature and finally I was able to write about incest.

—Gisèle Pineau

THE EPIGRAPH of this chapter comes from an interview conducted with Guadeloupean writer Gisèle Pineau in which she shares that she longed to write about incest and rape, but that she lacked the language to represent sexual violation, until the passing of Hurricane Hugo over Guadeloupe in 1989. Of course, in this part of the Caribbean, which Raphaël Confiant designates as bassin des ouragans [hurricane basin], these storms are a part of quotidian life. The hurricane, with all of the destruction and trauma left
Beneath the Layers of Violence
Images of Rape and the Rwandan Genocide

La communauté internationale garde le silence sur le génocide du 1994 au Rwanda. Les Rwandais aussi. Pourtant, derrière les visages se cachent des profondes blessures.¹

The international community maintains silence on the Rwandan genocide of 1994. Rwandese do as well. Nonetheless, behind the faces are profound wounds.

—Yolande Mukagosana

This is the heart of the genocide narrative: it is ultraviolent, ultrapainful, ultrapowerful because the barriers to our sympathies, typically hedged by our identifications with ordinary characters, are here resolved as in the mirror stage into . . . a Manichean Aesthetic.²

—Kenneth Harrow

ON APRIL 6, 1994, the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi were assassinated. Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana and Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira were flying together in Habyarimana’s presidential aircraft. As the jet hovered directly over Kigali national airport, unidentified missiles attacked it and brought it down. Habyarimana was returning to his homeland from neighboring Tanzania, where he had been with Ntaryamira for the signing of the Arusha Peace Accords, a United Nations–spon-
Regarding the Pain of Congolese Women

Narrative Closure, Audience Affect, and Rape as a Tool of War

Everyone speaks on behalf of Congolese women, but when do we really hear their voices?¹

— Shana Mongwanga

Where there [are] mines [in eastern Congo], there are communities. But it’s not easy for them to exploit it with the presence of the communities. That’s why they use their weapons and sexual violence to intimidate the population to move from places where there are mines. Because they know that the woman is the heart of the community, so they fight on her body, by using rape.²

— Chouchou Namegabe

IN HIS REFLECTIONS on the use of drama as a vehicle for social change, Robert Skloot writes, “plays do things to people. What the theatre can provide uniquely is a connection between human beings and among groups through the creation of empathy. It is a connection that, however brief, creates visible, remarkable humane possibilities.”³ Still, the pursuit and achievement of empathy have limitations when viewed in relation to representations of sexual violence. What is the line between the need for the empathic
EPILOGUE

Not Just
(Any) Body Can Be a Global Citizen

Rape and Human Rights Advocacy in the Twenty-First Century

... unequal distribution then and now in a country stratified as moun anwo, moun anba, ... moun lavil, moun andeyo, ... moun ki moun, moun ki pa moun, ... unequal distribution by gran manjè, ti manjè big thieves, small thieves/local exploiters, foreign moguls as our girls are raped and preyed upon/How many cups of revolution will it take to reconstruct and rebuild Haiti?/How many cups of revolution will it take for little Faila to throw away her whistle and dream of a new Haiti?

—Claudine Michel, Unequal Distribution

It bothers me when someone says raped women ... Abused women, women victims of war, find some other appropriate term. But raped women—that hurts a person, to be marked as a raped woman, as if you had no other characteristic, as if that were your sole identity.

—Nusreta Sivac, Calling the Ghosts

EARLY IN SEPTEMBER 2011, a story about an 18-year-old Haitian man who was raped in the small coastal town of Port-Salut, was revealed on the internet. Johnny Jean's perpetrators were members of the Uruguayan forces of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), who had been occupying the southwestern town for years. The incident took place