

Summary: HILLS OF A THOUSAND MEMORIES. Living with the genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi of Rwanda.

This thesis deals with the extreme violence suffered by the Tutsi people of Rwanda during the genocide of 1994. I also explore the means which have been used to confront and overcome this traumatic past.

Using a phenomenological approach, the theme is introduced by means of the portraits of survivors. A first part of the work attempts to write the 'history' of the hill of Nyamagumba based on the stories and eye-witness accounts of survivors, interviews with some of those who carried out the genocide, analysis of official speeches and also of what was/is really at stake during commemoration ceremonies and the *gacaca* judicial sessions.

A second part focuses on the young – students and survivors of the genocide – on how they live with the traumatic past and the way in which they see their future. These portraits of the young are discussed in the context of a collective reconstruction, especially with regard to the ceremonies of commemoration. With the aim of meditating on suffering and the ways in which it can be overcome, this present work brings to light both the form and the content of how the traumatic experiences of genocide may be put into the words.

Words are seen as a means of transformation of the self and one's relationship with others. The power of the word is the main thread of all my reflections on the subject. In considering, one after the other, metaphors of silence and of suffering and the words pronounced in the cause of justice, collective reconciliation and the emergence of a 'shared history' which seeks to restore/renew the social fabric so affected by the genocide, this thesis works towards a reflection on the significance of poetry as a form of healing.