Embodied Ways of Listening: Oral History, Genocide and the Audio Tour

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Abstract: Building on the work of sound artists Miller and Cardiff, oral historian Butler, as well as the broader insights gleaned from the Montréal Life Stories project, this paper considers space-time dissonance in the making of Une Fleur dans le Fleuve / A Flower in the River, a 53 minute audio walk following the same commemorative path taken by the Rwandan community. The tour explores the personal meaning and legacy of mass violence through personal narratives of six Rwandan exiles and survivors. The audio tour produces for the listener the same kind of dissonance that Rwandan Montréalers live out on a day-to-day basis.

Keywords: oral history, genocide, audio walk, memoryscape, Rwanda, Montréal

Résumé: À partir des travaux des artistes sonores Graeme Miller et Janet Cardiff et du chercheur en histoire orale Toby Butler, de même que des analyses plus larges obtenues dans le cadre du projet des Histoires de vies de Montréal, cet article s'intéresse à la dissonance espace-temps dans la conception d'Une Fleur dans le Fleuve / A Flower in the River, un parcours audioguidé de 53 minutes qui suit les traces d'un défilé commémoratif annuel de la communauté rwandaise. Le parcours explore la signification personnelle et l'héritage de violence de masse à travers des récits personnels de six survivants et exilés rwandais. On a tendance à Montréal, comme ailleurs en Amérique du Nord, à percevoir le génocide rwandais de 1994 comme un moment et un lieu éloigné. Mais il est présent ici et maintenant. Le parcours avec audioguide produit, pour celui qui l'écoute, la même dissonance que vivent quotidiennement les Rwandais montréalais.

Mots-clés : histoire orale, génocide, parcours audio, memoryscape, Rwanda, Montréal

If you are in the Church, stand up. It is time to go. Go to the sidewalk in front.... We will turn left. The person at the door has a wreath of flowers. She is the one who will control the pace of the procession. The pace is slow, but necessarily so. Many generations take part in the walk—children, adults, the old. The siren of the police car that has come to accompany us marks our departure. Walk with me. 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2...

A Flower in the River Commemorative Audio Walk (English translation, Steven High).

significant proportion of Montréal's diverse immigrant population is composed of people displaced by mass violence, ranging from the Holocaust to war and atrocity crime in Rwanda, Cambodia, the Congo, Latin America, and Haiti. Quite naturally, these communities developed "their own occasions, rituals, archives, and practices of remembering" (Smith and Watson 2010:25). For almost two decades, Page-Rwanda, formed by the relatives and friends of those who died during the 1994 genocide, has organized an annual commemorative walk to the St. Lawrence River. Hundreds of Rwandan-Montréalais attend a special mass before walking in a procession behind a banner reading "Commemoration du Genocide contre les Tutsis du Rwanda." This formal commemorative ceremony ends at the base of the sailors' memorial tower, where community members throw flowers of remembrance into the river. Rivers have great ritualistic and symbolic importance in Rwandan history and culture, first under the Tutsi Monarchy and then during the genocide. In a massive ritual of purification of the body politic, Hutu génocidaires attempted to annihilate Rwanda's Tutsi minority, throwing some of the dead and dying into the Nyabarongo and Akagera Rivers. Thousands of bodies washed up downstream on the shores of Lake Victoria.

For the past seven years, the Montréal Life Stories project has been recording the life stories of Montréalais displaced by war, genocide and other human rights violations. Funded by the Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) program of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Montréal Life Stories project brought together over 300 faculty members, students, interns, artists, and community members as well as eighteen organizational partners from the city's Rwandan, Cambodian, Haitian, and Jewish communities as well as educational, heritage, new media and human rights groups. In all, 450 people were interviewed in multi-session life story interviews lasting as long as 20 hours. We endeavoured to understand the violence within the context of the remembered life, what Daniel James calls the "foundational myth of the self" (2000:186). At its core, observes Alessandro Portelli, oral history is a "dialogic discourse" that searches for connection between "biography and history; between individual experience and societal transformation" (1997:4-5). We find significance not only in the words spoken but in the form and structure of oral narratives. Even "wrong tales" tell us something important, "errors, inventions, and myths lead us through and beyond facts to their meanings" (Portelli 1990:2).

What happens after the interview is increasingly important in oral history. The life stories recorded by our project were integrated into online digital stories, live performances, art installations, animated and documentary film, museum exhibitions, pedagogical materials, an immersive bus tour, audio portraits, audio walks and a searchable research database. Who controls the process is vitally important. Interviewees were therefore invited to participate in subsequent stages of the research-creation process, co-producing online digital stories, participating in workshops, and so on. Community members authored many of the project's public outcomes. The CURA program is unusual in so far as communities become partners in research and not simply objects of study, learning with rather than simply learning about (Greenspan 2010). The intensity of the academic gaze remains undiminished in many disciplines, including my own discipline of history. Community involvement in the project was real and sustained. Interpretative power was thus shared broadly.

Building on the work of sound artists Graeme Miller and Janet Cardiff, oral historian Toby Butler, as well as the broader insights gleaned from the Montréal Life Stories project, this paper considers the notion of space-time dissonance in the making of *Une Fleur dans le Fleuve / A Flower in the River*, a 53 minute audio walk that follows the same commemorative path taken by the Rwandan community. The tour explores the personal meaning and legacy of mass violence through the personal narratives of six Rwandan exiles and survivors. There is a tendency



Photograph 1: A Google Earth image of the route of the Rwandan march and the audio walk, *A Flower in the River*.

in Montréal, like elsewhere in North America, to view Rwanda 1994 as a distant place and time. But it is here and now. There are thousands of Rwandan genocide survivors living in Canada today. Their personal stories are now part of our collective story. At its best, oral history acts as a catalyst for personal reflection, intercultural dialogue, and political action. Even Québec's Bouchard-Taylor commission into the (often nasty) public debate surrounding the reasonable accommodation of immigrants, highlighted the importance of sharing life stories in bridging cultural and political divides (Bouchard and Taylor 2008). But how might we tell stories of violence? Might the audio walk provide a corrective to voyeuristic modes of learning about people's experiences with mass violence? This paper suggests that embodied listening is a necessary first step in this direction—but the bridge analogy fails to capture the spatial and temporal dissonance experienced by audio walkers as these two worlds uncomfortably rub up against each other.

Place, Sound and Movement

According to anthropologist Katharina Schramm (2011) places and landscapes, "do not simply act as memory containers but profoundly shape and are also shaped by, the ways in which violence is experienced and performed as well as remembered"(6). Violence leaves its mark, even where you least expect it. Yet, as geographer Jon Anderson asks, "how can we, as social science researchers, harness the power of place in our methodology?" (2004:257). Until recently, oral historians have been ill positioned to respond to this intriguing question. Place has been largely treated in a "superficial, Euclidian, manner-a frame for research rather than an active part" (Riley and Harvey 2007:3-4). There have also been technological barriers, as analogue audio or video recordings are difficult to manipulate. We therefore go immediately to text, transcribing the interview and donating the recordings to an archive. The collection impulse, always strong in the field, has led us to fixate on the making of the interview to the exclusion of all else. Michael Frisch got it right when he recently observed that the "deep dark secret" of oral history is that most of us don't know what to do with the orality of the source (Frisch 2008:223-224; High 2010). Digital technologies, however, are enabling new "embodied ways of knowing" (Pink et al. 2010:1).

For years, I have been interested in the potential of audio walks to bring stories home.² Everyday landscapes are experienced in new ways, augmented not only by the stories we are hearing but by the experience of the audio walk itself. The physical act of walking, invites you "to merge your experience, your narrative, with those of the stories you hear on the headset" (Myers 2010:62). In an urban context, the surrounding environment impinges on our listening in a million different ways: the sounds of passing traffic or construction work, the need to physically negotiate space with oncoming pedestrians or automobiles, and the ongoing tension between what we are hearing on our headphones and what we are sensing otherwise. It is not so much an immersive experience as it is a liminal one (Hollerweger 2011:93; Schafer 1994). For American sound artist Noah Feehan, "this augmentation, expansion, slippage, is more than an alternative mapping or geographic canvas. This is the predominant strategy of locative art: to create and inhabit spaces of overlap and intersection between the virtual and real" (2010:37). An audio walk is a technologically mediated auditory space.

This paper draws from the interdisciplinary study of sound, mobility and walking. Sound studies emerged as a field of research in the 1970s (Kelman 2010). Many point to Simon Fraser University's R. Murray Schafer's World Soundscape Project and his 1977 landmark study The Tuning of the World as its point of origin. Sound or audio walking has since emerged as a popular practice in experimental music, urban studies, cultural geography, sociology, anthropology and oral history. Among its many contributions, sound studies reveal different modes of listening. A distinction, for example, is drawn between concentrated listening and peripheral hearing, as a way to differentiate intentional and everyday listening (Hollerweger 2011:93). Most locative public art and audio walks have, at their core, "a powerful subjectivity" (Feehan 2010:37).

The creative practice of Janet Cardiff, another Canadian, looms particularly large in this field. She created her first audio walk in 1991, using an audio cassette deck and headphones, and has since produced dozens of other audio guides, sound installations, performance art, and other site-specific works around the world (Gagnon 2007;

Ladly 2009). Her East London (England) audio walk, "The Missing Voice," has been the subject of serious scholarly engagement. Geographer David Pinder (2001), for example, observes that it "activates the imagination in the production of a different sense of space and time" (7). Similarly, Joanne Thompkins (2011) writes that, "the disembodied voice and the embodied walker, [are] stitched together via the city, its map, its history, our collective histories and futures, and, perhaps most importantly, the affect that is so associated with the headphones" (237). Audio tours are an "affective means of charting territory" (237).

It seems strange but walking itself is now a field of study with its own history and theory (Careri 2002; Lorimer 2010). For some, walking represents a distinct "mode of knowing and understanding" (Anderson 2004). For others, as an embodied and emplaced activity, walking must "always be understood as multisensory" (Pink et al. 2010:5; Myers 2010:62). In an influential essay on the rhythms of walking, Tim Edensor (2010) speaks of the wide range of walking practices that constitute a place. He invokes the differing pace and routes of school children, shoppers, commuters, tourists, the homeless, and others. "All add to the rhythmic totality of place," he writes (69). "Here it is essential to acknowledge how the specific affordances of place impact upon the walking body, guide it along certain routes, disrupt and facilitate its progress, cajole it into certain gaits and manoeuvres and in other ways produce a particular rhythmic or arrhythmic beat"(73). Walking is therefore improvised as it is "always liable to be disrupted" (73) Urban walking has received much of the attention of scholars. Walter Benjamin's notion of the flâneur—the hyper-aware male wandering the city, gazing in a detached ironic mannerhas loomed especially large (Middleton 2011:96). Guy Debord and the French Situationists of the 1950s have been a point of inspiration, as has Michel de Certeau's notion of walking as "a form of urban emancipation that opens up a range of democratic possibilities" (Middleton 2010:579).

A third field of research that is relevant to this discussion is the so-called mobilities turn in the social sciences and humanities (Kitchens 2009:241). Mobilities research is exemplified by the work of Tim Cresswell (2010) who argues that, "mobility has a wide theoretical purchase because of its centrality to what it is to be in the world" (2006:551). The mobilities paradigm refers not only to people on the move, but mobile researchers as well (Blunt 2007; Hein et al. 2008; Sheller and Urry 2006). For example, the walking interview has recently emerged as a mobile methodology in the recording of oral histories,

particularly among geographers. James Evans and Phil Jones (2011:849) maintain that what people say in a walking interview differs from what they would say sitting down. This observation makes a good deal of sense to me. As we walk, the conversation becomes a three-way one as the built or natural environment prompts remembering. Evans and Jones (2011) go so far as to suggest that the "multi-sensory stimulation of the surrounding environment" structures the resulting conversation (850).

There are, however, many ways to approach a walking interview. These range from an unstructured wandering to a structured tour "designed to elicit responses to specific, predetermined places" (Evans and Jones 2011:849). Others go further. The "go-along" method, where the researcher simply accompanies the informant in their everyday lives, for example, is a hybrid between the walking interview and ethnographic participant observation (Carpiano 2009; Pink et al. 2010). The goalong might involve walking, cycling or driving through a person's neighbourhood or home place. Who determines the route is critical (Myers 2010:59). The identities of places, as geographer Doreen Massey (1995) notes, are "very much bound up with the histories which are told of them; how these histories are told, and what history turns out to be dominant" (185-187). A sense of place would be impossible without memory.

One of the few oral historians who have thought deeply about these issues is Toby Butler, the acting director of the Raphael Samuel History Centre at the University of East London. He has developed a series of "memoryscape" audio walks that take listeners along the Thames River. In *Drifting*, he floated a skiff down the river and interviewed people wherever it touched ground. The river thus determined the route and influenced the recruitment of his 30 interviewees. His goal was to reconnect Londoners to the great river. According to Butler (2008a:223-39), he "wanted to develop the idea of the audio walk conceptually, as an active and immersive way to understand and map the cultural landscape, and more practically as a different way of presenting oral history." In Dockers, he interviewed former dockworkers about their working lives. He later dubbed those walks that augment reality using oral history recordings: "memoryscapes." These tours are best listened to in-situ, though they are also available online and on DVD (Butler 2006, 2007, 2008b, 2011).³

Butler's inaugural article on the subject, published in 2005, reflected on *Linked*, a public walk of art created by sound artist Graeme Miller. Miller was interviewed and Butler reflects on the experience of walking alongside a six-lane highway that was carved through East London.

Three hundred homes, including Miller's own, were demolished in the name of progress. In response, Miller erected 20 radio transmitters mounted on lamp poles that "continuously broadcast recorded testimonies from people who once lived and worked where the motorway now runs" (Butler and Miller 2005:79). Walkers equipped with special receivers can hear what *was* and see what *is*. There is political heat whenever past and present rub against each other in this way.

Grounding Memory in Montréal

The geo-location of stories has been an integral part of our own work at the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling (COHDS) in Montréal. Inspired by the pioneering work in the United Kingdom, COHDS affiliated faculty and students have experimented with online "memoryscapes," map mash-ups, participatory mapping techniques, audio tours, and immersive bus tours. One wonders, however, if the internet is the place for deep listening. My sense is that people surf the internet, staying nowhere for very long (Benmayor 2008; Fletcher and Cambre 2009; Burgess 2006).

In responding to this challenge, some scholars have explored the middle ground between the linearity of documentary and the infinite possibilities of the oral history database or "memoryscape." Joy Parr, Jessica Van Horssen and Jon van der Veen, for example, make the case for the playlist in digital environments (2009). Multiple tracks allow for authorial interpretation or guidance without sacrificing multi-vocality in both form and content. Parr's virtual tour of the "lostscape" of the village of Iroquois, flooded by the St. Lawrence River when the seaway was expanded in the 1950s, is a case in point. Visitors to the online memoryscape have several virtual tours to choose from. Parr has since raised important questions about what is lost when life stories are reduced to little more than digital sound bites (Parr 2010).

For me, the great advantage of *in-situ* audio tours is that it forces us to slow down and listen. The potential can be discerned in a 2006 audio walk project, created by Lisa Gasior, a Concordia University student in media studies, that took listeners into the depressed Griffintown district of the city. This formerly Irish working-class district has experienced deindustrialization, out-migration, and now, rapid gentrification. When Lisa Ndejuru, Phil Lichti and I began to develop the *A Flower in the River* audio walk, our first step had been to walk the Griffinsound tour. We discussed how Lisa Gasior set things up at the outset: providing historical and geographic context as well as logistical information about the tour itself. We then considered the ways in which she anchored what we heard



Photograph 2: Getting started. Many people on this particular walk have the translated text that we provide to walkers who are not fluent in French. We struggled with how best to make the tour accessible to Anglophones. Photograph by Lisa Graves.

in what we saw. We also discussed Gasior's use of sound effects. The Griffinsound tour ends at the former site of St. Ann's Church, demolished in 1970, now a scruffy park. Walkers are invited to sit on one of the benches positioned like pews. The foundations of the building's walls surround us, creating a highly emotive site of remembering. The sailors' memorial tower and the river would serve a similar function for our own audio walk.

Another point of departure for us was the Mapping Memories media project, undertaken by the refugee youth group within the Montréal Life Stories project. Led by digital media practitioner Elizabeth Miller and educator Michele Luchs, in partnership with the Canadian Council for Refugees, the objective of the group was "to produce creative work that will have an impact on policy, education, art and on the lives of the youth involved" (Mapping Memories 2011). Their final project, Going Places, was particularly inspiring to me. A group of young people met weekly at COHDS to develop their autobiographical stories. These stories were then integrated into a bus tour of Montréal.

The young participants took turns telling their story in spoken word, recorded story, and music. Stephanie Gasana, the daughter of Rwandan parents exiled long before the genocide, spoke of her sense of being Ethiopian: "It's where I have all my memories, it's my ground, my playground, where I feel grounded, where I yearn to be, and where I know I will ultimately end up" (Mapping Memories 2011). In comparison, Rwanda is a foreign land: "I don't speak the language, never lived there, and was never really able to visit for more than a week, simply because we don't have any family members left." Her older sister, Solange, however, has a different relationship

to place. She remembers living in Rwanda, but also in the Congo, Burundi, Ethiopia, Libya, Tunisia, France and Canada. Because she has lived here the longest, Solange feels more Canadian than Stephanie. "Could you recognize us as sisters?" asks Stephanie. With the publication of the *Mapping Memories* book and DVD, freely available online, the group led a series of school visits to build understanding of refugee rights and migration, counter harmful stereotypes, and inspire students to make history "real" by connecting personal stories to historical moments or processes.

A Flower in the River Audio Walk

A Flower in the River is narrated in French by Lisa Ndejuru, an artist, therapist and a key member of the project's Rwandan group. The tour begins with Lisa introducing herself and inviting listeners to "walk in our company." As she explains:

It is an important walk for the Rwandan community of Montréal. We do this each year, in April, in memory of our loved ones killed in 1994 during the Genocide of Rwandan Tutsi. My community is filled with people, filled with histories, of 1994 to be sure but also before and after. It comes through in the testimony: Personal memories.

We are then given some background context on the Life Stories project and on the annual commemorative walk itself.

There are three basic elements to our annual commemorative ritual: the Mass, the walk, and the vigil. This walk is a walk in space and in time. It is both here in Montréal and in Rwanda, both then and now. You will follow the pace of my footsteps, the rhythm is slower than you are used to. To cross a street please stop the recording and press pause. If you are ahead of me wait until I catch up to you. Be careful when you cross the streets.

Our pace is controlled by Lisa's rhythmic voice. 1.2.1.2.1.2.

The walk begins at the Berri-UQAM metro station, on the corner of Berri and Sainte-Catherine in the heart of downtown Montréal. Behind us is Place Émilie-Gamelin, the site of almost daily student protests against massive tuition hikes in Spring 2012. We cross the street to a small church, Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes, where the commemorative mass takes place before the annual commemorative walk. As Lisa explains,

For several years, our Mass has taken place in this Church and our walk has started here. This is part of



Photograph 3: Lisa Ndejuru leads participants on the inaugural Fleur dans le Fleuve audio walk. Photograph by Nick Kanhai.

our Montréal. Thank you for sharing this with us." If the doors are unlocked, we are invited to go into the church with headphones on to listen to the story of Abbé Callixte, himself a survivor of the genocide, who regularly leads the mass. Once his story is finished, the procession begins. We walk a half block west on Rue Sainte-Catherine, before turning South on Rue Saint-Denis, toward the Vieux Port. The urban campus of the Université de Québec à Montréal (UQAM) surrounds us. 1.2.1.2.1.2.

As we walk along the commemorative route, we are accompanied by five more Rwandan-Montréalais in succession. The second meeting is with Espérance (not her real name) beside the red mailbox at the corner of Rue Saint-Denis. When the genocide happened, she was a student at UQAM:

I lived next to the Olympic Stadium. There, my apart-



Photograph 4: Two student walkers listen to Espérance. Photograph by Lisa Graves.

ment, has a balcony over Sherbrooke Street, so I would see people walking, it was summer, right. You would see people laugh, wearing shorts, you know how people are in the spring.... For me, it was hell. It wasn't spring for me. As soon as the genocide started, I think it was on the 8th, I received a call from Bell Canada telling [me] that I owed \$1000, and that they were going to cut off my line. And I answered: "You're cutting my phone line? I'm calling the police..." I had no idea what I was talking about. The only thing I wanted, was to be able to reach people, to know what was going on back home. ... From May to October 1994, I had no news. The only person with whom I was in contact was my brother who was in Kigali and... the last time I spoke to him he told me he was hiding in the closet, and then while we were talking he said: "They're coming...."

At this point in the walk, we approach a telephone booth, and we hear a phone ring: Espérance relates two phone conversations she had in 1994. It was not until October 1994 that she got word that her brothers and sisters survived. Her brother called:

So, I found out, precisely in October, that my father and my brother [were alive]... Immediately, I hung up because I was sure he was dead, everyone said.... So you think: "It's impossible." It's like a ghost. So I hung up. He called back: "It's me, don't be afraid. I'm alive." So I tell him: "Tell me who is alive and who isn't." I then added: "Anyway, you can't tell me anything worse than what I knew. I thought you weren't alive." So then I say: "Mom?" And he doesn't say anything. "Dad?" And: "He's in bad shape now." Where we lived, it seemed my father was the first on the list. They beat him. In fact, they actually thought he was dead, so they left him there. It's when they were collecting the bodies that they saw he was still breathing. He was hospitalized. I don't really know....

Soon thereafter, she started the process of adopting her two younger sisters. They arrived in Montréal in March 1998:

So at 25 or 26 years old I became my little sisters' mother. I never, even today, really felt like my little sisters' mother. You face your responsibilities, you don't know if you're doing things properly. Sometimes I would like my Mom to see me, and tell me "you're doing well." But she doesn't say it. My emotions are a mix of joy and sadness, and I have accepted that. I will die like this. I can't fight to change it because I can't tell myself: "Espérance, stop crying." No. I want to cry for my family until the end because I always miss them! 1.2.1.2.1.2.



Photograph 5: A sitting walker (Erin Parrish) listens intently to the story of Frédéric Mugwaneza. Photograph by Lisa Graves.

After crossing René-Lévesque, a major street named after a much loved former Premier of Québec, we meet Frédéric Mugwaneza, a young father. His father was Rwandan-born, his mother was a white Belgian. Both were murdered on the genocide's first day. A flower shop prompts Lisa to tell us more about the commemorative walk.

Each April, we throw flowers into the river in memory of loved ones who were killed during the Rwandan genocide. To justify the hatred, it was said that Tutsi came from elsewhere, that they were foreigners. During the genocide, the bodies of Tutsi were thrown into the river with the objective of returning them home *chez eux*. Today, we throw the flowers in memory of those who died from this hatred. 1.2.1.2.1.2.

Frédéric Mugwaneza was still a teenager during the genocide. We are invited to sit down on some benches and concrete blocks and listen:

I was seated at the table: Dad was there, Mom and our cousins. It was as if we were going to have our last meal. Everyone felt it, and I was starting to understand myself that there was a tension, there was something going on that I just didn't grasp. But I didn't understand. No one was talking. No questions. We heard little laughs ... but we were going to eat. And, we hadn't even finished when we heard the doorbell ring, and [a servant] comes and tells us: "there are soldiers at

the door. They say they want to talk to you." So Dad went pale, he freezes, and as more time passed, more soldiers gathered at the door. There were jeeps. And now we wait. And then the soldiers surrounded the house, they came in.

They gathered us all together. There were 10 of us, and they pointed weapons at the guards, hands up and... they totally invaded the house, soldiers all over the place. They told us to get out; we went out onto the terrace. So, we obeyed. And then at that moment, nothing, a deathly atmosphere, it's the end, there are things you can feel, things you tell yourself: "This is it." ... Then the soldiers said: "Alright go into the yard and lay face-down, and don't say a word. I don't want to hear you." This is when I thought: "This is our last moment. What should we do? Should we run? Should we give ourselves a chance, maybe they're just pretending?" So many questions... I really wondered what to do.... And I'm sure the others were also asking themselves the same questions, except they knew why they were there, they knew quite well what was going to happen. I didn't know yet.

So we went down to the yard, all of us, the ten of us, we laid down. It is as if ... as if it was written that I had to lay down this way, in such a way, and that my mother would come and lie down almost over me, she laid down—she was face down—she laid over a part of me and she embraced me, as if to protect me from... from what could happen and ... We could hear the boots, left and right, a lot of hustle and bustle because there were really a lot of soldiers, I don't remember how many there were, but they were easily 30. A lot of noise... they were breaking windows and then ... they're talking amongst themselves, and I hear: "Oh yes, shoot, shoot quickly, and aim for the heads, that way it's quick, quickly and we leave." And then ... I heard the shots, it started. It was shot after shot. My mother was still embracing me, squeezing me. She wasn't talking. And they shoot, shot after shot, after shot, and I hear nothing, no moaning, nothing. They keep shooting and shooting. I can hear the shots getting closer. And I feel the earth jump. And I can feel they're getting closer, and closer. I can feel the heat, and then it reaches, it reaches my mother. I feel her body jump, two or three times, but I don't hear a thing... She doesn't make a sound... And, then I tell myself... "Now it's me, it's my turn." Then I hear something ... I feel the ground move and like heat passing by, really close to my face and then very close between my legs. I feel the ground jump, and... I get really tense... and then... then they move on to the next person. I think at that point, you know, the tension was so great that I lost consciousness.

Across the street stands a statue of Jean-Olivier Chénier, who sought shelter in a church during the 1837 rebellion only to be burned alive and his body mutilated. Lisa



Photograph 6: Two audio walkers listen to Emmanuel Habimana as they walk alongside the St. Lawrence River in the Vieux Port area of Montréal. The Memorial Tower is in the background. Photograph by Lisa Graves.

Ndejuru notes that

In Rwanda in 1994, there was also a war. But the people killed in the genocide were not combatants. They were civilians. During the genocide, many people were killed in the churches. This reminds me of the story of Marie-Josée who at the beginning of the genocide sought refuge in a church in Kigali. 1.2.1.2.1.2.

After Marie-Josée Gicali, we are accompanied by Jean-Serge Polisi and finally Emmanuel Habimana. Most audio tours present a unified community with a single storyline. We sought to avoid setting anyone up as community spokesperson. The six stories included in the walking tour were chosen to give a range of perspectives: men and women; young and old; exiles, survivors and others. The tour ends with the story of Emmanuel Habimana, a psychology professor at the Université de Québec à Trois-Rivières. He is also Hutu. He has worked closely with Page-Rwanda and is a key member of the project's Rwandan group, listen:

In the beginning, when I arrived in 1980, people asked me: "Where are you from?" I would say: 'I am from Rwanda.' And the educated people would answer "Oh, Rwanda-Urundi, that is where there are the Tutsis and the Hutus! Are you a Hutu or a Tutsi?" That was the question people often asked. Well, I never answered that question. Because I never felt like a Hutu. I never took on that identity. And also the fact of having lived outside, when I was in Belgium, it was dirtier, this identity I had, a very black identity from living in Belgium where discrimination against blacks is very strong, and wherever you're from, be it from Angola, Senegal,

or anywhere else, you are first and foremost Black. But when the genocide occurred, then they would ask me: "Are you Hutu or Tutsi?" I couldn't hide from it anymore. I would say: "I am Hutu." And this is when I started taking on this identity. Yes I saw myself as Hutu. Being Hutu after the genocide, was seen as being the bad guy, the murderer. I accepted this identity. And it is a very difficult identity to accept, especially when you are a professor and every year you greet 150, 200 or 300 students, and that at the beginning of each year, when I ask the students to introduce themselves and then it is my turn to do so, the students always ask me: "But where are you from?" And I say, "I am from Rwanda and I am a Hutu." And every time people asked, and I would answer that I am Hutu, some... some would feel uncomfortable, because in their minds, a Hutu is a murderer, is a bad guy. For many years there was a burden, a feeling of shame, of shame of being Hutu. But every time there was a commemoration, here in Montréal, I would watch the news, read the papers, and I would see the procession of Tutsis walking to the river to throw flowers and I wanted to come, but then I would tell myself: "I can't show up in the middle of the Tutsis. Me, a Hutu. What will they say? They'll think that I am there to dance around the dead. They'll think ... " And I would tell myself "I can't do that, I will live with my suffering, I will live with my distress in total privacy, on the television, but I just can't do that."

I lived with a mix of all these feelings, sadness, anger, shame...for almost ten years. Then, for the tenth anniversary... I spoke about it to a friend...a friend who was one of the organizers. I told him I wanted to go to the commemoration: "I would like to commemorate because I also lost Tutsi friends in the genocide and I lost Hutu friends in the genocide, but ... that isn't the main reason. The whole thing shook me very deeply, it was a crime against humanity, you don't need to be Rwandan to feel torn apart by what happened. I want to show my solidarity."

The walk ends with street noises, song and Lisa's voice, as she reads the public message of a survivor from the 2008 commemoration. By way of conclusion, Lisa tells us that, "there were only selected extracts that we have heard together today. Life stories are always more complex." We are invited to get in touch with Page-Rwanda and attend the annual commemorative walk with the community. The audio walk has ended.

Reflecting on the Experience

Most audio walks explore the past and present of a single locality, making our audio walk different. In our case, by contrast, transnational stories are effectively being

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Photograph 7: Walker Michael Kilburn looks out to the Jacques Cartier Bridge as he listens to narrator Lisa Ndejuru conclude the tour. Photograph by Lisa Graves.

re-grounded in Montréal. Of course, Montréal is not only a city of differences but one of shared experiences that cross seemingly disparate cultural communities and span continents. Rwandans exiled before the 1994 genocide subsisted for years in politically hostile environments in Burundi or Congo-Zaire before coming to Canada. It is a complicated process, far more involved than most North Americans realize. Most interviews contained "first impressions," small vignettes about what was different or surprisingly similar. Airport arrival stories loom large. How people speak of Montréal, and how their new lives in the city have (re)shaped their understanding of their life's journey is of course tied to individual and community contexts.

With the route already established, our next step was to identify those features of the built environment that could serve to anchor the Rwandan stories in Montréal. Phil Lichti, a student in computational arts, produced a hand-drawn map of the route with possible sites of connection: a church, a postal box, a telephone booth, the university, a flower shop, a historic statue, the river, and the memorial tower itself. Geographers Evans and Jones call these "speech objects" (Evans and Jones 2011:852). We relied most of all on the knowledge that this was the same route walked by the Rwandan community each April. It made the walk an in-situ experience. The soundscape underlying the recorded interview material bolsters this connection. We hear Rwandan community members singing as they left the church during last year's commemorative march as well as the sounds recorded during the walk itself. We also drew from the archival sound recordings of Rwandan radio broadcasts during the genocide. More generic sound effects were also incorporated into the audio track.

To further reinforce walkers' sense of being in an active commemorative space, we opted to organize the tour around six individual encounters rather than weaving these and other stories into a linear narrative. We wanted walkers to feel like they were being accompanied by the Rwandan community. This approach felt right to us, as it preserved some of the life story context and allowed people to spend some time with each person. The six stories that we hear were chosen on the basis of providing walkers with a range of stories. Oral historians rarely speak in terms of sampling and representativeness, due to the subjectivity of the oral narratives (Portelli 1990). Instead, we seek to record a wide spectrum of life stories. The sequence of stories was largely determined by the city itself, as the Abbé Callixte's story had to be tied to the church in which he gives masse and Espérance's story to the university that she attended. Frédéric's story was the longest and the most graphic, so we located it in a place where walkers could sit and listen.

In making A Flower in the River, we worked closely with our interviewees and the Rwandan group of the Montréal Life Stories project. Even though the signed consent forms allowed the use of the interviews, the interviewees were able to hear their edited stories, make suggestions, and approve or not. Lisa Ndejuru arranged for the other members of the Rwandan group to listen to the draft version, collectively. Members liked what they heard, suggesting a few small changes, but raised larger questions about the use of the interviews in this way. Specifically, there was some concern expressed about the tour being available for download on the internet. Once it was online, control would be lost. One interviewee was insistent on this point. In response, we purchased 25 mp3 players and reimagined our delivery system. The audio tour is now available at specific times or by picking up the devices at COHDS. Pedagogical material has also been produced to connect the audiowalk to the Québec high school curriculum.

It is useful to consider how the audio tour differs from the annual commemorative walk itself. The Rwandan community's collective march is highly public. Unlike a protest march, there are no noisy chants, bullhorns or the banging of kitchen utensils. Nor are there banners or signs, except for the commemorative banner at the head of the march. It is a public display of solidarity and collective remembering, an assertion that "we are here." It resembles a religious procession. The police escort pushes aside the everyday rhythm of the city; which has to make room for the Rwandan community one day a year. Though not strictly a case of "ritual re-enactment," as in the case of the Black Sunday commemoration in Northern

Ireland, the annual walk is nevertheless a collective act of embodied remembrance (Conway 2007:102-103).

By contrast, the audio walk bumps up against the city. It is an uneasy relationship. We are pedestrians, not marchers. There is no police escort. It is unofficial. In one scheduled walk in March 2012, we even had to negotiate through hundreds of student protesters dispersing after a huge assembly. We felt like salmon swimming upstream. Even when we walk as a group, we are not a group. We share an auditory space, but are separated by our headphones. Nor are we quite in sync, building tension into our forward journey.

Each time that I have walked A Flower in the River, I experienced a great deal of friction as my sense of time and space is constantly destabilized from without and from within the audio walk. We are asked to walk at a slower pace than those around us, setting us apart from those outside of the auditory space. We must also negotiate with oncoming pedestrians and cyclists as well as the many automobiles on the cross-streets. At times, the shrill sound of construction work and city traffic made it difficult to concentrate, forcing us to push back against these competing sounds. There is a built-in tension within the audio tour itself, as we wait at a corner for the voices in our ears to catch up. The life story structure of the audio tour does not fit comfortably into Montréal's street grid. It is only when the walkers reach the relative serenity of the Vieux Port, and the river, that the friction eases and a sacred "extraordinary space" is finally created (Schramm 2011:14-15). The temporal and spatial friction that we experienced, however, serves an instructive purpose as Rwandan genocide survivors living in Montréal live with this kind of dissonance every day.

Conclusion

An audio walk is an extended period of directed or intentional listening. Everyday landscapes are experienced in new ways, augmented not only by the stories we are hearing but by the experience of the audio walk itself. The physical act of walking invites us to merge our own experiences and narratives with those of the stories playing on our headphones. Audio walks activate "the imagination in the production of a different sense of space and time" (Pinder 2001:7). But it is always incomplete. Theatre studies speak of the "fourth wall" that stands between performers and their audiences which sustains the poetic illusion of another time or place. Playwright Berthold Brecht encouraged the performing arts to challenge this separation, to speak directly to audiences. In so doing, theatre becomes a medium for political action (Prentki and Preston 2009:14). Memory-based audio walks are by their nature Brechtian, as participants are not so much immersed in another world as they are confronted by two worlds experienced at once. The notion of augmented reality fails to communicate the resulting temporal and spatial friction between past and present, here and there. In my view, this tension is integral to the experience.

In one of the most insightful articles on the ethics of performing difficult knowledge, Julie Salverson relates her experience of watching a student play about Bosnian children and land-mines. In doing so, Salverson criticizes the voyeuristic appeal of watching the almost erotic performance of pain:

The students spoke "of" and not "to" the Bosnian children behind the stories; the characters were presented as familiar thematic portrayals that collapsed them into interchangeable victim portraits and did not surprise or unsettle our expectations as audience members' and, finally, we were not offered an encounter in which to respond but presented with only a narrowly prescribed obligation—to feel bad in terms tightly structured by the play. [Salverson 2010:78]

The challenge centres on how to tell stories of violence. In reflecting further on the play, she wonders what "was our obligation as witnesses to this story, to this unacknowledged pleasure? Yes, the audience was moved, but by and toward what?" (2010:78). These same questions can be posed of the audio walk. What does the experience offer us? How does it differ from more conventional listening of recorded interviews on our computer or television screens?

These very same questions can be asked of audio walks and other historical projects. Generally speaking, historians maintain their own fourth wall in the rigid separation of past and present. The present is often suppressed altogether. One wonders if mainstream historical scholarship is effectively depoliticized as a result. Oral historians, in contrast, study the relationship between past and present, or the past in the present. A Flower in the River exists at the confluence of oral history, participatory media, and the performing arts. The Rwandan audio tour is organized around the remembered experiences of individual interviewees. Walkers thus encounter a series of subjectivities. Accordingly, the perspective changes from the outward act of witness to the embodied listener, destabilizing the voyeuristic appeal of the tour idea itself. We are thereby implicated in a way that Salverson's audience members were not, as they looked "out at some exoticized and deliberately tragic other" (Salverson 2010: 78). It is my hope that the audio walk, like the Montréal Life Stories project itself, encourages us

to go beyond abstract categories like refugee, immigrant, and survivor to reach inward to discover the humanity that we share (Glassberg 2001:210).

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Notes

- 1 For more on the Montréal Life Stories project, visit www .lifestoriesmontreal.ca, accessed December 5, 2012.
- 2 I have long been interested in the relationship between recorded life stories and the built environment. During my doctoral research with displaced workers in the mid-1990s, I plotted the locations of closed factories on the city maps of Ontario and Michigan cities and visited the sites before conducting the interviews. This experience informed my subsequent questioning. Technological restraints prevented me from doing more mobile interviewing. Several interviewees nonetheless drove me around. It was only in the early 2000s that I began to experiment with mobile methodologies. I want to thank Ron Rudin, with whom I have been collaborating on geo-locating memory. Phil Lichti, Lisa Ndejuru and I co-authored the tour itself—it was the perfect team for the project.
- 3 'Drifting and Dockers—voices from the hidden history of the Thames' Double CD recording, Museum of London, (2005), www.memoryscape.org.uk; Ports of Call: Walks of Art at the Royal Docks, accessed December 5, 2012. Triple CD recording, University of East London (2008), www.portsofcall.org.uk, accessed December 5, 2012. Butler's influence is amplified further by his scholarly writings on the making of these memoryscapes. For years, his articles have been core reading for my undergraduate and graduate students in oral history.
- 4 Stacey Zembrzycki, "Sharing Authority with Baba," http://www.sudburyukrainians.ca/, accessed December 5, 2012. Steven High, "The Sturgeon Falls Mill Closing Project," http://storytelling.concordia.ca/high/sturgeon_falls/,accessed December 5, 2012. A number of student projects feature these kinds of map-mashups, see: http://storytelling.concordia.ca/memoryscapes, accessed December 5, 2012. There are now a wide range of digital tools available to us. See, for example, the Oral Historian's Toolbox developed by COHDS: http://storytelling.concordia.ca/oralhistorianstoolbox/, accessed December 5, 2012. For an exploration of wider trends in oral history and digital media, see High et al. 2012.
- 5 Megaprojects New Media website, http://megaprojects .uwo.ca/, accessed December 5, 2012.
- 6 Lisa Gasior, "Griffinsound," www.griffinsound.ca, accessed December 5, 2012.

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2008c Ports of Call: Walks of Art at the Royal Docks. Triple CD recording, University of East London. www.portsofcall.org.uk, accessed December 5, 2012

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