



**Universitat de les  
Illes Balears**

Facultat de Filosofia i Lletres

**Memòria del Treball de Fi de Grau**

**Narrating the refugee experience: the importance  
of role, memory, and loss of identity in Clemantine  
Wamariya and Elizabeth Weil's *The Girl who  
Smiled Beads***

Miriam Hernández Seguí

**Grau d'Estudis Anglesos**

Any acadèmic 2019-20

DNI de l'alumne: 41542290N

Treball tutelat per Ana Beatriz Pérez Zapata  
Departament de Filologia Espanyola, Moderna y Clàssica

S'autoritza la Universitat a incloure aquest treball en el Repositori Institucional per a la seva consulta en accés obert i difusió en línia, amb finalitats exclusivament acadèmiques i d'investigació	Autor		Tutor	
	Sí	No	Sí	No
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Paraules clau del treball:  
Refugee, roles, memory, identity, belonging.



## **Abstract**

This undergraduate dissertation analyses the memoir whose protagonist, Clemantine Wamariya, explains her resilient transformation and awareness of the refugee crisis as she escapes from the Rwandan war and its horrors. The purpose of this study is to provide a broader examination of several concepts that are essential for the rights of refugees through a close reading of the memoir. This paper explores the several roles that the author performs without agency of decision, the dynamic influence of other narratives and genocides together with the essential but disregarded concept of identity and belonging. For this, the role of refugees is examined within every context that the protagonist encounters. The fragile and vulnerable aspects of these images are used to prove the agency and willing of the main character who reconsiders the canonical definition of genocide and how it has a detrimental effect on multidirectional memory. None of the victims of other horrors can be regarded with the same definition as the refugees do because their distinctiveness places them all in juxtaposition. Also, not every person endures losing his identity and sense of belonging as it happens with Clemantine whose wide introspection of her experience and personality provides an insight in this issue. Through this memoir, she claims her right to be the active agent of her life, to turn her story into history, and to raise awareness about the international refugee crisis.

## **Key words**

Refugee, roles, memory, identity, belonging

## Table of contents

1. Introduction .....	page 4
2. The importance of role: the caretaker, the wife, and the object of pity ....	page 5
3. Narrative, genocide, and multidirectional memory.....	page 8
4. The question of identity and belonging .....	page 11
5. Conclusion .....	page 15
6. Works cited .....	page 16

## 1. Introduction

Refugee literature has played a major role during the past years due to its immediate importance for the global refugee crisis. Humanities contribute to change the current situation by telling real stories of migration, displacement, and loss. Only by writing the truth, is this problem visible and known by everyone in the world so that a collective solution can be found. For this reason, fiction meets reality in its toughest way: giving voice to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century horrors of war, misery, and displacement. The ethnic tensions of Rwanda initiated the genocide of its inhabitants who murdered each other while some managed to escape from the brutality. As a consequence of the confrontation, millions of people seek asylum in other territories looking for survival. Clemantine Wamariya is a public speaker, human rights advocate, and a storyteller that together with Elizabeth Weil, a contributing author to several newspapers and magazines are the authors of the memoir *The Girl who Smiled Beads*, a refugee story of a Rwandan girl. At the age of six, the protagonist flees her home together with her sister Claire seeking refuge and after living in four different refugee camps and eight African countries, they are granted refugee status in the United States. Yet, that was still the beginning of an introspective work that will carry the author towards the realisation of broader realities changing the label and image assigned to refugees. As this dissertation will show, in *The Girl who Smiled Beads*, Clemantine provides an important change in the way people perceive refugees and their stereotypes through a close depiction of the various roles the author is forced to play, the understanding of other narratives and genocides, and the interrogation of identity and belonging.

This paper will analyse deeply Clemantine's memoir through a close reading and it will connect her experience to refugee theory such as trauma, multidirectional memory, and loss of identity within a cultural framework. The first part will provide an extensive examination of the different roles that the protagonist fulfils during the novel, the ones she does not choose deliberately. Everything contributes to the creation of the refugee's image, prejudices, and stereotypes. Afterwards, the concept of genocide will be placed in the spotlight as an inefficient and bloodless concept which cannot define what the author experiences. Following this critique, there will be a rethinking of the hierarchy assigned to other genocides which lead to a wrong treatment of them. Part three will study the concept of identity and belonging which is intrinsically linked to the humankind nature. Clemantine's experience emphasises the problematic dichotomy of both concepts within migration and displacement. This third section

is followed by a conclusion that will show the relevant points and further research which would open out to future analysis that may strengthen this dissertation.

## **2. The importance of role: the caretaker, the wife, and the object of pity**

Clamantine Wamariya is deeply concerned with the notion of role as a result of fulfilling different ones although none of them was freely chosen by her. The first one is unquestionably the caretaker, whose analysis cannot be made without considering that she was a child and later, an adolescent. In her childhood at home, Kigali, she was a regular infant playing with her beloved brother Pudi and being looked after by nannies like Mikamane. Playing and learning were central to her life as any other child. War and the subsequent exile supposed a turning point for her although her comprehension of the events she was going through came later. The extensive cares to Mariette, her sister's daughter, are only the basic chores she must carry out when being a refugee; she assigns herself the role of her niece's eight-year-old mother. For this reason, the protagonist is no longer a child: "I could barely remember how to enjoy pleasure [...] I was consumed with something much smaller and more banal: making it through the day" (Wamariya 2018, 76)<sup>1</sup>.

Compared to other refugee cases, Clemantine is neither directly put in charge of the new-born Mariette nor is she a parental figure for any younger siblings as frequently occurs with refugee children. However, she cannot accomplish this since the disappearance of Pudi left her being the younger sibling. Similar situations arise for vulnerable infants and adolescents in other contexts where their cognitive development and personality is influenced by the role of the caretaker. Thus, some studies provide examples of these children feeling proud and satisfied with the most difficult chores of being a caretaker, although there is an existing risk of narrowing their career prospects when growing older since many of them may be uneducated and casted out of the labour market (Dahlblom *et al.* 2009, 45). Nevertheless, Clemantine evidences the inaccuracy of the previous argument since she later becomes a writer and an activist for the rights of refugees which ironically both are the very opposite of being illiterate. She claims her right of decision and she is empowered to achieve whatever she is willing to do since overcoming her past is the evidence of her strength. This attitude of resilience is also present in the character of her sister, a strong woman who fights to survive.

---

<sup>1</sup> This relates to the book on which this dissertation is based. Henceforth, only the page number will appear in the in-text citation for further references.

Nonetheless, Claire's life differs largely from the one that Clemantine lives. As the elder sister, she performs the role of both parents, the provider of food and survival for her family. She was also a teenager before the war began but after the outbreak, she constantly looks for things to trade, because Claire's solution in order to escape from the harsh conditions of refugee camps is to exchange and sell whatever she is able to find in her daily walks, looking for opportunities. Claire's attitude bears no resemblance with other girls in Rwanda whose destiny is only the one of a mother and a housewife. As the memoir illustrates, both girls grew in a family where personal development was important whether it was the formal education or the popular tradition and little attention was given to marriage as the only future prospect of a woman.

Despite the moral values and education given to Claire, the reality that she encounters is completely different and at a given point in her journey, marriage is used as a way out. Claire refused at the beginning to get married since she did not want to become a teenager orphan with a baby in her hands, but in a refugee camp, "nothing gets better. There is no path for improvement – no effort you can make, nothing you can do, and nothing anybody else can do for you either, [...] The only way out was marriage. Marriage came with papers" (73). Claire has that opportunity beyond survival as Rob promises her a better future, a destination, and even formal education. Latest research on refugee literature refers to arranged marriages as the cause for a positive family stability and self-sufficiency (Busch Nsonwu *et al.* 2013, 130). For this reason, she has now an opportunity to keep studying in the future as she has always desired. Claire's attitude is purely related to survival and seeking better opportunities even when doing so implies an undesired troubled marriage.

Trauma digs into these beneficial marriages, inflicting the destruction of women's freedom and agency and setting women in a new framework, the one that comprises their own development inside the glass ceiling of the marriage. This situation becomes clearer when these marriages move to Western countries regardless their political status. The new culture is aware of the situation that these women are forced to live but yet it overlooks the particular struggle of the wives and casts them as victims of the inherent part of their original cultures since they "allow" these practices taking away her right of freedom and choice (Pande 2015). In the memoir, Rob systematically hits and cheats on Claire but when they both arrive to the United States, Claire is seen as a victim both of her husband and her intrinsic culture. She cannot escape from the prejudices and labels assigned by the new society even though she shows her resilience and strength after years of escaping from war with her sister.

Not to be taken lightly is the role of Clemantine and Claire as sisters, with no family affection showed between them. When they are playing at home, the author does not mention in detail their relation which is an indicator of their future emotional distance. Once they are in refugee camps, Clemantine feels like a burden, a person who needs to be fed and protected more than ever by someone close to her, someone who knows her needs and that is able to treat her with dignity. Thus, this assigned job fell on Claire's shoulders. Even when the purely everyday survival fades away, the sisters cannot even talk about the past as they are emotionally trapped in the horrors of their journey, in their trauma. Both sisters choose silence as the response of the trauma, as if by burying their feelings and nightmares of the past would change them into constructive. Both sisters end up playing a role that will heal the wounds of the trauma and eventually, the only way that Clemantine finds to release the burden of the past is to write, enabling the words to speak only in the paper.

Yet, giving her own voice to this protagonist does not resemble the widespread idea of the fragile and vulnerable refugee. The traumatic nature of the journey marks the sisters as objects of pity and charity which is particularly painful for Clemantine. She claims her right of agency and not just a person people pity. She recalls that experience: "I was nineteen, a kid but not a kid, and already the recipient of profound generosity. I did not want to become a charity. Claire, too, had never wanted to be saved" (141). Refugees are denied the right to be considered as any other common person, or even notice their formation. For instance, aid workers in the refugee camps were astonished about Clemantine being able to speak five languages just because refugees are perceived as non-educated and even unable of learning. The author states in the novel what people generally think: "To be a refugee was to be a victim – it was tautological. And not just a victim due to external forces like politics or war. You were a victim due to some inherent, irrevocable weakness in you. You were a victim because you were less worthy, less good, and less strong than all the non-victims of the world" (118).

In addition, seeing refugees only through pity is connected to how trauma is perceived in the West. Some studies like the one Fassin and Rechtman carried out examined how in other genocide contexts, victims are healed from their physical wounds just before they are immediately forgotten by the state authorities. However, the psychological trauma is never treated not because the events suffered were menial but because Western countries made them too culturally specific. For that reason, when the victims are to prove that they need to heal, also, the psychological consequences and trauma they lived, they are still "subjects to suspicion" (2009, 109) since the new society sees them as responsible for their intrinsic weakness as a part of their original culture. Hence, it is clearly stated that the author uses her



novel to reclaim her personal value against the stereotyped and popularized vision of refugees as victims, objects of pity that need to be saved. For instance, the author faces this situation again several years after both sisters have reached the United States: she was casted either as a saint or a martyr, helpless and defeated. Being labelled as object of pity made her unquestionably different from any character of the reader's imagination or assumption. As a result, Clemantine is not the victim but the narrator of a true story, her sole and unique narrative whose context may be shared with other refugees. However, she claims her right to express her experience as an empowered writer who shows her agency and control over what others think.

### **3. Narrative, genocide, and multidirectional memory**

Having begun to engage with the notion of narrator, there must be a deep consideration of memoir as a narrative, how memory gives veracity to the events and the multidirectional aspect of the genocide and refugee experience. It has emerged evident that refugee writers have been now started to be considered and explored in the field of writing. At the beginning of her career, Clemantine was considered the "Oprah girl", as she became a character to whom others could praise and feel inspired, although she only shared a second of her life compared to everything that she had experienced. Long before, whenever she had been asked at school about something associated with war, family, death or any kind of horror, people expected her to bring up her pain and channel it as if all her existence was only based on her past and suffering, not on the intelligence she was mastering during her school time.

While expressing these situations, Clementine's primary aim is clearly to map out that being a storyteller implies so much pain, being the emissary of this story turned into history would destroy her. She does not know how to cope with emotions and facts enclosed in suffering which somehow ought to become a tool to fight back. In order to do so, she urges to piece together all the events in her memory and then create a narrative of her own that would make sense. Formal education offered her the development of critical thinking, which she always uses to comprehend her past. Therefore, she is willing to create something coherent which would include feelings, facts, and cultural theory in a sole story. The scars of so many deaths and the emotions that were trapped in that moment are now included in a memoir giving herself the voice she had muted for years in a well-developed argument. This is the opposite of the stereotypes regarding refugees who are perceived as illiterate people whose own nature does not leave any room for future prospects.

Clemantine is also a victim of prejudices since everyone expects her to be defeated and demanding of help but instead, she empowers herself with a symbolic journey that combines the popular Rwandan stories with the activism for the refugee's cause. This variety attends to the ways in which both topics merge into a unique story highlighted by the title, which is a story itself. *The Girl who Smiled Beads*, a story of a thunder's magic daughter who always finds out a way to escape from those who want to catch her. For the author, this girl becomes the answer to all the questions of her never-ending jigsaw and the tale, on its own, becomes an unexplored borderland between fiction and reality. Clemantine feels identified with the strength and courage of the character, always safe and far from the world full of starvation and war. There is every likelihood that she desired this to be true for her, and the only way to achieve it was to become herself the girl who smiled beads, the one able to survive, overcome the horror and piece all the memories together to write a story of fight.

However, there is an aspect to consider when writing a memoir: the importance of structuring a string of events when the only source is memory. It should be used at a certain degree as an objective source of information, but it becomes a hard exercise when the events are so traumatic and even when they are mixed with confusion. The urgency of such structure is more evident due to the lack of comprehension of basic concepts when the events were happening. For instance, Clemantine did not understand the most basic abstract concepts in life at the beginning of her route. She expresses her feelings since: "I knew someone wanted me dead at a point in my life when I did not yet understand what death was" (93). This experience was repeated several times since death and war were too hard to cope for a child. For this purpose, there is a paradoxical relation between writing and remembering since both can be ambiguous and even dangerous. The former is expected to be objective within the literature framework whether the latter is more subjective and reflects the author's emotions. Both are essential to create a real story that covers a wide diversity of themes.

Furthermore, the writer leaves behind her paper of sole signifier to become an aspect of the narrative, playing an active role to construct present with her past as if "memory is the past made present, the notion of a 'making present'" (Rothberg 2009, 22). This dynamic concept brings back experiences of the past to create her present memoir. For this reason, Clemantine uses several stories to catalyse change and she even uses colours to express mental images of the past when no words can shed light to the events entwined deeply in trauma. Previous studies already stated that "consciousness, memory and storytelling are intrinsically linked" (Neale 2011, 954). There is a reiteration of a specific scenario where the author does not find any word to express such painful ideas that would make justice. That stems from the fact that the

traumatic experience was not consciously assimilated in its right moment and therefore when the author comes to revive the past in order to write, then the words do not find its way and only the subconscious which saved all the events is able to remember only sensorial inputs (Bond and Craps 2020, 57). For that reason, words are limited for her and for defining such atrocities.

The most remarkable illustration of how fixed the language can be is the word genocide. As Clemantine said once he was at school in the United States, “it is impersonal, inefficient and it makes no justice. The word *genocide* cannot tell you, cannot make you feel, the way I felt in Rwanda. The way I felt in Burundi. [...] cannot articulate the one-person experience – the real experience of each of the millions it purports to describe [...] cannot explain the never-ending pain, even if you live [...] the word *genocide* is clinical, overly general, bloodless, and dehumanizing (93). The book examines how Clemantine, both as a child and a teenager, rejects the definition of the word since she cannot attach herself to it. Due to its simplicity and insensitiveness, the word cannot explain what happened to the author. Her utmost desire is to understand what she experienced, to heal the wounds and continue living, not only surviving. Therefore, she rejects the word because it does not serve any explanation or a cure for her. Justice is said to be used as a tool to overcome the trauma, the pain, and the anger like a balm that would heal all her wounds. However, when she is already an activist at the end of the book, she realises that the only way to cope and learn to live with the past is telling her story, one that she can shape with her own senses. Making her own creation contributes to broaden the fixed definition of genocide as well as it provides a new perspective of it.

The point of view from which Clemantine describes her experience differs largely from other horrors and contexts. It is noteworthy that the memoir sheds light on the concept of multidirectional memory since the author is compared to victims of other genocides, such as the Nazi one or the victims of African colonial practices in the United States. She encounters people from both contexts and she draws specifically the attention to the inaccuracy of comparing herself to them in hierarchy. She emphasises that what she lived “*is not like the Holocaust. Or the killing fields in Cambodia. Or ethnic cleansing in Bosnia* [...] this is a different, specific, personal tragedy, just as each of those horrors was a different, specific, personal tragedy, [...] you cannot line up the atrocities like a matching set” (94). The literary critic Rothberg raised these questions: “What happens when different histories confront each other in the public sphere? Does the remembrance of one history erase others from view? When memories of slavery and colonialism bump up against memories of the Holocaust in contemporary multicultural societies, must a competition of victims ensue?” (2009, 21). They

become the main variable to consider when analysing the multidirectional memory and its functional aspects. Clemantine answers the question of confronting different histories by expressing that her story does not resemble with any other just because there is suffering as a common point. Each narrative works differently like a puzzle where every piece is unique and it only fits in the right context.

An important feature to consider is how collective memory follows a “logic of scarcity” (21) and a complex relation between identity and memory. On no account should only a direct line be traced between the memories of the past and the construction of the present identity of that community in particular. This would lead wrongly to a single perception of both as an endless struggle for the recognition of the losers and the winners enclosed in violence. In the midst of chaos, there must be a change of perspective: to examine each genocide from its own, regardless any other community. Therefore, multidirectional memory avoids homogenising all the traumatic experiences into a sole horror experience as well as stop confronting each other in terms of importance. The dynamic memory discourses place each suffering in different but equal positions and the wide range of memory traditions analyse each community independently and in juxtaposition.

This narrative also examines Clemantine’s attitude towards African American descendant of slaves. She did not identify with them in view of the fact that she was not born in America and since she has not a slaver-enslaved relationship with the United States. Yet, all her peers at the school or even the social surroundings of Clare, recall that non-existent kinship in which the traditional skin colour classification was inevitable. For instance, the African landscape indicates the feeling both cases have towards it. For African American people, it is always a joyful moment when they recall how beautiful was the wild nature. On the contrary, for refugees as Clementine, the African landscape is just the setting of a war where families killed each other. In addition, this relation is aligned directly with identity either in the collective or individual sense. It must be argued how identity is not an authentic or even pure concept for everyone; it may change throughout the course of the story and even more for Clemantine’s story.

#### **4. The question of identity and belonging**

Clemantine’s reflections on identity and belonging suggest that both concepts are intrinsically connected to ethnicity and they are intertwined with other aspects. Not only does she offer an

interesting development beyond these two generic and blurring ideas but also, she gives a profound analysis of the refugee's body carried as a burden, the differences regarding other types of immigration, and the family boundaries. The memoir provides an insight to these dichotomies that the protagonist encounters. For instance, being a refugee implies a constant pursue of identity even when it lies more in the margin of emotions and feelings than in legal matters. Having a passport of a certain nationality does not mean she identifies herself with it or even feels that she belongs to that place. At the beginning, the lethal connotation of identity stems from ethnic killings in the Rwandan civil war since Tutsi and Hutu chased each other in a race of death, misery, and ruins. Yet, Clemantine goes further the racial killing and she delves into the psychological and most unique of the losses, the identity.

Defining the concept of identity involves a high degree of complexity since it can reveal many variables like the body. The author describes the body as a dynamic process tied to an alienated physical entity and considered as a burden. In her childhood, Clemantine was "supposed to be reserved, contained, nearly opaque [...] my mother would try to discourage my curiosity" (12) as if being a woman implied the absence of agency. Then, the function of the body was supposed to be only the recipient of a reproductive goal seen as central to keep the notion of "racial purity" (Hindtjens 2001, 42). Politically, purity means belonging to a side in a war where women could not choose, not even regarding their own body. From the beginning of her journey, the protagonist regards the body as an expression of her inner emotions: "Our mouths, our bodies, had gone mute. Only our eyes still could speak and even then, only in bursts. I could see, and then I stopped seeing" (28). Also, the body becomes a strange entity lacking any kind of dignity, drawing special attention to children whose heads were shaved and suffered from several diseases. However, for Clare the body is a tool to survive and therefore, the survival instinct undermines any consideration regarding her integrity since projecting her body as a weapon was the only concern, regardless the scars left.

Throughout the memoir there is also a turning point for the body's development as an ethereal and dynamic image and whose protection will turn into the utmost importance to fight back the violence, sexual assaults, and war. The author ultimately describes her body as "alien, a burden. I'd had to carry that thing around with me – this body, with its dark skin, unruly hair, and narrow feet; this body with its liabilities, this body that had been vandalized, stolen. This was the hardest thing in the world: to remember the ravagement and still believe my body was magic, to remember the shattering and still believe my body was spectacular, holy, and capable of creation" (245). She evidences the several wounds left on women's body during war and even afterwards. Rape, violence, corporeal and psychological destruction are the story of

millions of women who thought that they must live with silence but did not know that silence sleeps with hate. In addition, rape holds a detonating potential within genocide, for the reason that the latter is based on razing a whole community, in a broader sense erasing the identity of thousands within the pretext of ethnic cleansing (Weitsman 2018, 563). Clemantine was the witness of several horrors and an inconceivable brutality that had its worst effects on women.

A very similar situation finds its way within the borders of the refugee camp. The protagonist reflects the burden of all women in her same situation; narrowing their identity to an object in a context where human life and its interconnections are magnified. The displacement of these women occurs when considering them as wives and bearers of children. When it comes to adapt themselves in the new community, cultural studies highlight that “integrating into a host state, resettlement state, or country of origin may equally lead to new or repeated forms of exclusion and marginalization” (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh *et al.* 2014, 318) which must be rejected and replaced with women’s empowerment and agency. For this purpose, Clemantine illustrates that women must be seen as active subjects and not only as mere sexual targets when they are seeking freedom from their context. Women feel vulnerable in refugee camps and even their notion of identity, home, belonging vanishes and an image of violence and destruction comes in the first place.

Clemantine did not hesitate about feeling Kigali as her home until suddenly one day, she felt ripped out of the ground, completely destroyed (28). Evident in this broad illustration of identity are the paradoxical ways in which the notion of belonging is active. Throughout her entire journey she changed “from being a person who is away from home to a person with no home at all. The place that is supposed to want you has pushed you out. No other place takes you in. You are unwanted, by everyone. You are a refugee” (29). Hard though it may seem the only thing she heard is that refugees belong to camps. The first variable to consider is that belongingness is an essential part for anyone who pieces together moments of her life to create her identity. The focus, then, is no longer placed in where this feeling of belonging is located but simply how it can be reconstructed and developed further deeply. This particularly ethereal concept fluctuates similarly to the situation that Rob lives at the beginning. His notion of belonging changes from being a person with a clearly defined place to call home, Zaire, towards a refugee with no home recall possible, evidencing once again the link between politics and belonging.

The inherent implication of this example builds a bridge among political nationality and sense of belonging which irremediably causes placeless people. Clemantine’s story is one of them, a single refugee who is part of a big frame, a massive network of different situations with

a common feeling: the need for a political change in national citizenship. Human rights have become such a poor protection for people like refugees which proves the increasingly worldwide situation of rightlessness. The reality is quite different from each refugee but in general terms, all of them face the loss of home and belonging while losing their most basic human right: the right to nationality. Those are all feasible approaches that can be argued when explaining the protagonist's emotions even once she has the American citizenship, the feeling of being in-between. She insisted that "it was distraction, not connection, losing, not finding myself. [...] I was not like Claire either, still enjoying her Nigerian soap operas, still wearing kitenges and cooking *ugali* [...] I wanted nothing to do with it" (211). This mindset that Clemantine develops is no other than the effect of having been stateless for a long time and therefore feeling confusion regarding her own place and her rights. According to Stonebridge, legal and political terms are entwined with cultural and historical experiences and therefore the victims set the emphasis on the fear in persecution but not in the agonizing anxiety of having nowhere to go as refugees happen to live (2018, 17). Feeling lost relates to having nowhere to belong and the relevant aspect of this anxious state is that even when Clemantine achieves a stability with her family, the feeling remains there.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy how the family bond adds a significant role to the notion of belonging. Clemantine grew up in a chaotic reality where one of her repeated hopes was to find her family and eventually make up her mind regarding what to call home. However, once she is already in the United States, she no longer feels related to her parents neither for their past experiences nor for the legal status they have. Clemantine's parents are immigrants in the American country, which differ largely from her own status as a refugee. They did not have to wander during a decade to finally reach a safe space. The protagonist had to escape from Rwanda because of a continued persecution that left her unprotected and displaced. Eventually, belonging is one of the cultural and social aspects that form this framework of political world migrations causing a new perspective where "ethnic mobilization requires a rethinking of citizenship, sovereignty, and the nation-state" (Hein 1993, 55). The relation fostered among the family members both at the beginning and after the reunion is a trace of how the lack of legal status and belonging dug into her personality and character development. Her story of displacement becomes the face of war and its aftermath, which contributes to explain the reality of many refugees and the importance of an immediate change in this international crisis.

## 5. Conclusion

This piece of work has given an extensive investigation of *The Girl who Smiled Beads*, as a masterpiece of refugee's memoir. There is an immediate need of giving voice to thousands of people who escape from civil wars and persecution. They do not have anywhere to go back to, the only way out is to move forward. For this reason, testimonies like Clemantine's raise awareness of the present situation and evidences that people who achieve a refugee status in Western countries have suffered unimaginable experiences that are difficult to overcome. After considering her experience and thoughts regarding this international problem, the thematic structure of this paper is clearly stated. It explains how several roles are embedded in herself without having taken them deliberately and therefore infantilizing the refugee as a passive subject. The purpose of these roles is to take away the protagonist's empowerment and leave her as a mere object of pity and a recipient of charity and generosity. This concept engages with the notion of narrator and how memory plays its role in this puzzle of fiction entwined with reality. In addition, Clemantine claims the right of treating the victims of different genocides in juxtaposition with each other and on no account should they be treated as stories of the same context. For this purpose, the present paper uses theoretical concepts such as trauma and multidirectional memory. Finally, the concepts of belonging and identity are also examined for the major role they have in Clemantine's life. Due to her hybridity and complex situation, the author struggles to find herself in a place where to call home which will lead her in a state of confusion that will be solved only with time.

This undergraduate dissertation also illustrates the refugee postulates such as theory of identity, object of pity, and multidirectional memory among others, embedded within the cultural studies. The author's speech evokes emotions of all kind that are related to trauma, and its psychological consequences both during the journey and after reaching the United States. Although this paper has shown a deep introspection in several key concepts, further research could be done in themes like racism. The author suffers also from racial discrimination in some episodes that she must deal with as one more obstacle in her life. For that reason, there is no doubt that *The Girl who Smiled Beads* is a riveting story that contributes to show the emotions and reality of thousands of people in the world while giving a shred of hope.



## 6. Works cited

- Bond, Lucy, and Stef Craps. 2020. *Trauma*. Abingon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Busch Nsonwy, Maura, Noël Busch-Armendariz, Laurie Cook Heffron, Neely Mahapatra, and Rowena Fong. 2013. "Marital and Familial Strengths and Needs: Refugees Speak Out." *Journal of Ethnic And Cultural Diversity in Social work* 22, no. 2 (April): 129-144. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15313204.2013.785350>
- Dahlblom, Kjerstin, Andres Rodríguez Herrera, Rodolfo Peña, and Lars Dahlgren. 2009. "Home Alone: Children as Caretakers in León, Nicaragua." *Children & Society* 23, no. 1 (January): 43 – 56. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1099-0860.2008.00141.x>
- Fassin, Didier, and Richard Rechtman. 2009. *The Empire of Trauma. An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Elena, Gil Loescher, Katy Long, and Nando Sigona. 2014. *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hein, Jeremy. 1993. "Refugees, Immigrants, and the State." *Annual Review of Sociology* 19 (1): 43 – 59. [doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.19.080193.000355](https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.19.080193.000355)
- Hintjens, H. M. 2001. "When identity becomes a knife: Reflecting on the genocide in Rwanda." *Ethnicities* 1, no. 1 (March): 25 – 55. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146879680100100109>
- Neale, Derek. 2011. "Writing and Remembering: Paradoxes of Memory, Imagination and Fiction in Stories about Lives." *Literature Compass* 8, no. 12 (December): 951 – 961. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-4113.2011.00843.x>
- Pande, Raksha. 2015. "'I arranged my own marriage': arranged marriages and post-colonial feminism." *Gender, Place & Culture* 22 no. 2 (July): 172 – 187. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2013.855630>
- Rothberg, Michael. 2009. *Multidirectional Memory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Stonebridge, Lisa. 2018. *Placeless People. Writing, Rights and Refugees*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wamariya, Clemantine, and Elizabeth Weil. 2018. *The Girl who Smiled Beads: A Story of War and What Comes After*. London: Windmill Books.
- Weitsman, Patricia A. 2008. "The Politics of Identity and Sexual Violence: A Review of Bosnia and Rwanda." *Human Rights Quarterly* 30 (3): 561 – 578. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hrq.0.0024>