UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

SOCIAL NAVIGATION AMONG RWANDAN ARMY DESERTERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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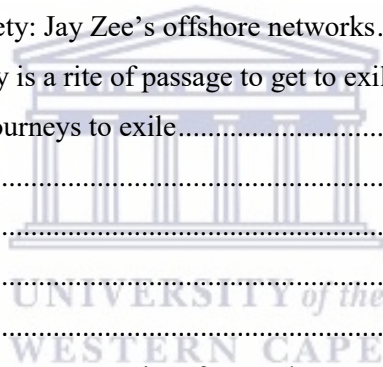
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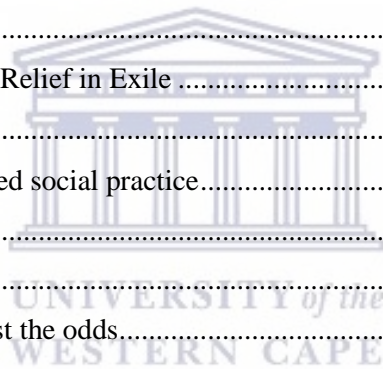DR KELLY GILLESPIE

JANUARY 2022

Table of Contents

Abstract

In this thesis, I explore the post military lives of Rwandan army deserters who served in, deserted from the post-conflict Rwandan Defence Force (RDF), and went into self-imposed exile. I sought to understand the transition from military to post military life in a context of exile. I argue that being a Rwandan army deserter in self-imposed exile conjures a complex form of post military life and being 'on the run' is the best way to navigate Rwandan state surveillance in South Africa. An ethnography conducted in Cape Town and Johannesburg over a period of eighteen months revealed that the military to post military transition of Rwandan army deserters is complicated because these former soldiers believe that they are being 'hunted' by their government. Their lived experiences were full of references to fear, uncertainty and the instability of their current lives. Existing literature privileges the post-army experiences of soldiers who left the military formally and in an honourable manner. Few exceptions that focus on army deserters living in exile have been preoccupied with understanding the ways in which a military identity is used as social and economic capital in carving out economic niches in the aggressive civilian lower economic strata in exile settings. Little is known about the post-military lives of ex-soldiers who have been labelled as dissidents and enemies of the state by their government.

Rwandan army deserters moved from a country and military setting they believed their lives were in danger. In South Africa, they expected to lead peaceful post-military lives. Instead they have to contend with multiple struggles for survival. An important reason is that they are under surveillance by the Rwandan state. In South Africa, Rwandan state surveillance is increasingly heightened because the Rwandan National Congress (RNC), the fiercest critic of President Kagame's government, is based in Johannesburg. I use, in particular, the notion of social navigation, as developed by Vigh (2010) as a lens to analyse my empirical study in showing the interactivity between the movements of army deserters and the social forces present in the spaces in which they live. The thesis attends to the constructions, experiences, practices and subjective understanding of deserters to examine how, under circumstances of perceived threat, they navigate and (re)constitute themselves in non-military settings in South Africa where they have become potential political and disciplinary targets. The uncertainty and fear of being discovered and harmed produces fluid and multiple identities and practices in Rwandan army deserters. At the same time the ex-soldiers retain military dispositions which enable them to navigate real or perceived state sponsored surveillance and threat in exile. The thesis also draws on Haggerty and Ericson's concept of surveillant assemblages: involving multiple objects, people, institutions, knowledge, signs, processes etc.

Keywords: Deserters, military, surveillance, exile, navigation, Rwanda, South Africa

Declaration

I, Florence Ncube, declare that 'Social Navigation among Rwandan Army Deserters in South Africa' is my work and that the sources used and quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it to obtain any qualification.

I declare that the necessary precautions and ethical aspects of this study that ensure the safety of participants were strictly adhered to; this includes changing the names of places and events or incidents. The narration of activities has been done in ways that do not put the lives of living participants in danger.

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Signature   January 2022

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my angel baby, Taremekedzwa Dande, you shouldn't have left me.

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to my supervisor Professor Diana Gibson for her time, rigorous intellectual guidance and her unwavering support throughout my PhD journey. To my co-supervisors Dr Kelly Gillespie, I am grateful for the time you dedicated to reading this thesis thoroughly and for the invaluable moral support you gave me when fieldwork relations went wrong. Professor Godfrey Maringira thank you for thoroughly reading this thesis back and forth and for giving me timeous feedback. Completing my PhD would not have become a reality without my supervisors' commitment and encouragement. I have been fortunate to benefit from their intellectual expertise.

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List of Acronyms

AI	Amnesty International
CIRB	Canada Immigration and Refugee Board
DMI	Department of Military Intelligence
ESO	External Security Organization
FAR	Rwandan Armed Forces
FLN	National Liberation Front (FLN).
GCRHR	Global Campaign for Rwandan Human Rights
HRW	Human Rights Watch
NISS	National Intelligence and Security Service
RDF	Rwanda Defence Force
RNC	Rwanda National Congress
RPA	Rwandan Patriotic Army
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
SAPS	South African Police Services
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Human Right

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction, Background and Literature Review

Prologue

Today was a nerve-wracking experience for me. The moment I walked into Major Ghost's flat and saw most of his belongings scattered on the floor and blood splatters on the walls and window I could not help but think "this must be what Nordstrom (1997) calls 'unsettling violence'". "Help me, help me." Major Ghost cried out weakly. He lay in a pool of blood with his hands on his bleeding chest. It looked like he had been stabbed. Dhiniwe, my Rwandan friend, and I went to see Major Ghost in Johannesburg. It was late Monday afternoon. As we ascended the stairs to his place, three skinny men, all dressed in black, rushed down, and knocking Dhiniwe down to the bottom of the stairs. My immediate response was fear. I assumed that they wanted to rob us, but they ran off quickly. Dhiniwe had a huge bulge on her forehead and it continued to swell. Shaken and concerned, I wanted us to go to a doctor with her but she, insisted that we continue to Major Ghost's flat. His door was open. We saw him lying on the floor, his T shirt in tatters. There was blood everywhere. Indeed, he had been stabbed in the chest and had several long, deep, discoloured contusions on his torso. His navel had been ripped open and was bleeding. "What happened, what happened?" I asked in shock. He groaned, then struggling to speak, he said:

I heard a knock on my door. I asked who is knocking like a fool, because I assumed that Longman was back from work and was being his usual funny self. No one answered then I opened the door. Immediately three men (suspected state agents) stormed in and one of them beat me hard on the head with a knobkerrie and pushed me to the ground. They beat me with clenched fists and they kicked me. When I stood up to fight back, one of the guys pepper-sprayed me in the face and pushed me back to the ground, I landed on my back, oh my lower back aches … They lashed me at least seven times on my torso too. I am in pain… They wanted me to tell them where Iscariot and Stix are living. I said I do not know. One of the three guys stabbed me in the chest several times with a screwdriver while the other stuffed a lit cigar in my nose. The guy who stabbed me then said "then today you are going to die on their behalf". I cried out for help each time I was stabbed in the chest and hands. The three guys rushed out just now. Did you

1

not see them on your way up here? But you would not have known, right? They were wearing black. Two of the guys spoke Kinyarwanda and the other one did not speak at all. He just beat me as he was being instructed by the guy who stuffed a lit cigar in my nose".

Ghost had difficulty breathing and coughed blood. I was terrified and on the verge of fainting. I told myself that I had to be strong. "My friend, please find a scissors or knife and tear that T-shirt we need to help stop the bleeding now," Dhiniwe instructed me as she knelt next to Ghost. We started to staunch the wounds. I told Ghost that I was calling an ambulance but he refused and said "No, hospital. No please. Take me to our doctor. They will finish me off in the hospital, I do not want to go there". "Are you serious, Ghost? With all due respect, you need to be in the hospital right now", Dhiniwe responded. But Ghost was adamant, saying he would haunt us if we insisted on taking him to the hospital and something bad happened to him there. It was apparent that he strongly believed that his attackers would find him in hospital and finish him off. Dhiniwe went outside to look for assistance. She found a man in the passage and asked him for help. Inside, Ghost was groaning in pain. The man who came to help us introduced himself as TK. He lived on the same floor as Ghost. TK was shocked to see Ghost in such a state: he had briefly chatted with Ghost about three hours earlier, TK informed us. TK carried Ghost down the stairs. Dhiniwe and I silently followed behind them. We reached Dhiniwe's car, TK, Ghost and I sat in the back while she drove. On our way to the doctor's rooms, we tried to puzzle out what had happened. We realised that Ghost's attackers had been the men who had rushed down the stairs and knocked Dhiniwe down. "I cannot imagine what they could have done to us if they had known that we are going to your apartment, Ghost! This is so horrible, man," Dhiniwe exclaimed angrily. At the consultation rooms the doctor advised Ghost to make a police report. Ghost responded, "It is pointless because the police will do nothing about it". We waited for about an hour and half while Ghost was being treated. The doctor told Ghost to return for check-up in the next three days. He gave Dhiniwe pain tablets for her head contusion. Ghost was all bandaged up, but he was in great pain when we took him home. Ghost contacted his cousin and said, "Langa, will you come back home early today? They attacked me this afternoon. I am currently with some good friends but I fear that the attackers might come back and finish me off after these guys leave... I am sure they are somewhere close by monitoring every move here". We waited for another

2

hour for Langa to arrive. We briefed him on what had happened. Then Ghost told his cousin about the attack itself. Langa responded, "So they now know where we live, we must move". It was already dark when we left (Field notes 15 July 2019).

I read an article about injuries caused by sjambokking, called "tramline" bruises. I was dismayed to realise anew that such physical punishment, if left untreated, often led to renal failure and death (Rosedale and Wood 2012). I reconnected with Ghost at Turbo's apartment two weeks after the attack. I told Ghost about the article because I feared that he might not follow through with his treatment. He said: "A soldier has many lives". This meeting with Ghost had been arranged by other deserters from the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF), all participants in this study. They were very concerned about the incident and they were convinced that "state agents" had attacked Ghost. The men in my study routinely organise what they call a 'constructive drinking session', during which they share beers and discuss important matters: including attacks on their comrades and families, as well as possible courses of action. Ghost seemed much recovered from the attack and was in high spirits (Field notes: 19 August 2019)

Introduction

The attack on Ghost, above, as well as other violent incidents I observed, brought the possibility of the presence of Rwandan state agents into focus in relation to the post military lives of Rwandan army deserters living in South Africa. There have been much publicised attacks on prominent high ranking former army staff in exile in this country: they are fierce critics of President Paul Kagame (Muhumuza 2019; Smith 2015; York and Rever 2015; Du Plessis 2019; Fabricius and Wrong 2021). However, little is known about the possible persecution by the Rwandan state of junior rank army deserters such as Ghost above, or of their tactics to navigate assumed state surveillance.

The empirical focus of this research thus concerns navigation practices. By examining the navigation practices of army deserters to evade statist forms of power in a context of exile, the thesis contributes to debates on the ways in which the 'political insecurities of authoritarian regimes' (Rupiya 2005) and past military experiences influence the post-military lives of soldiers (Higate 2000; Koehler 2016) even those who now live in another country (Ncube 2017; Maringira,2015). I try to make sense of the deserters' past experiences and to understand their

3

practices and constant mobility in the present as they try to live below the radar of the Rwandan Defence Force (RDF) in South Africa. Ghost, above, is one such man, and like all my study participants - even though far from Rwanda - he is convinced that he is being 'hunted' by the RDF or Rwandan state agents. He, as well as other men who participated in the research, believed that the aforementioned attack had a great deal to do with the RDF and with his desertion from it.

During eighteen months spent with men like Ghost, I was struck by their practices to try to make ends meet, maneuvers to be 'invisible', to be vigilant and to assist each other against the background of the apparent precarity of their everyday lives, filled with fear, suspicion, rumours and sudden violence. The men were constantly alert and on the lookout for any signs of danger, seemed highly mobile in potentially turbulent environments, yet were always trying to find opportunities to survive, most of them as undocumented immigrants in Johannesburg or Cape Town, and were full of camaraderie towards those they trusted.

I try to shed light on the social navigation of these men. I attend to their discussions about politics in Rwanda, their desertion from the Army, subsequent flight and consequent efforts to make a life in South Africa. In doing this, I draw on Vigh's (2010) ideas of social navigation which analyse how young men mobilize in situations tense with the potential for violence. The author, who has done a great deal of work in conflict areas in Guinea Bissau, argues that warfare or the possibility of violent confrontations constitute a terrain of possibility for urban youth and shows how they navigate social, political and economic spaces in order to make ends meet. Even though South Africa is not a conflict zone, it certainly seems a potentially dangerous one for the men in my study: they are deserters who had fled to another country. Himbara (2019) emphasises that Rwandan army deserters who go into exile are constructed as 'dissidents', traitors to the army and enemies of the state.

According to Fantina (2006) army desertion is the most grievous offence that a soldier can commit and warrants long jail sentences or, in some cases, death. Reyntjens (2011:1) wrote, "Rwanda is an army with a state, rather than a state with an army" and the literature indicates that in Rwanda, army desertion is not a singular military offense, but also a political crime which falls within the ambit of the national government's 'genocide ideology' (Eltringham and Hoyweghen 2000) and therefore warrants severe punishment. President Paul Kagame reportedly said: "ex-soldiers are some of the dissidents who are living freely abroad… but we

4

will catch them and kill them, it is only a matter of time" (Himbara 2019:1). Tshimba (2015:3) intimates that the Rwanda state is continuously in a high state of paranoia and pursues "even perceived slights" (Tshimba 2015:3). The deserters in my study all feared the RDF and the Rwandan state, were worried for their safety and, like Ghost, seemed to experience an extraordinary amount of violence, even as they tried to survive in South Africa.

To make sense of the above I return to Vigh (2009:419-420). His anthropological notion of social navigation,

> springs to mind when looking at how people move in uncertain circumstances and … when focusing on the way agents act in difficult situations, move under the influence of multiple forces or seek to escape confining structures… The concept, in other words, highlights motion within motion; it is the act of moving in an environment that is wavering and unsettled.

Indeed, the context of exile is unsettled and it influences the instability, but also the possibilities, that characterizes the lives of the deserters in this study. Ghost is one person whose actions resemble the epitome of manoeuvring in a hostile and unsettling terrain and latching onto opportunities this context presents to him. Even though Ghost was granted asylum in South Africa on the basis of political persecution by the Rwanda state, he has found it hard to secure good employment in the formal sector of South Africa. Therefore, he embarked into the informal economy – organising car guards at malls and parking areas in Johannesburg and in Cape Town. Through his charisma and good nature, he quickly built up strong relations with private security business owners who allowed him to oversee some sections of easy access parking lots at certain malls where they had contracts with mall management. He also had good relations with staff, as well as with customers, who frequently park in particular spaces at the malls he frequently worked at. They soon trusted him to keep a look-out on their vehicles, show them to empty parking spaces, assist them to reverse out again, sometimes he even helped people with loading their shopping. With time, Ghost became an informal overseer for certain parking areas, organising uniforms and blue or maroon bibs with reflective stripes for his 'team' as well as keeping an eye on other car guards whom he 'allowed' to operate there. He shooed away beggars and vagrants who accosted customers and soon was seen as a kind of security guard: not only for vehicles, but also for the people who parked them.

5

Ghost realised that other army deserters come to South Africa and need to survive. Since car-guarding had opened up a terrain for Ghost in the shifting South African economy, he subsequently, through a network of deserters, was able to assist newcomers by giving them an opportunity to work in 'his' parking operation area. They, in turn, gets tips and share it with Ghost. Over time Ghost was able to discreetly rent accommodation, both in Cape Town and Johannesburg. This he quietly sub-lets to others, often army deserters as well. This is for me, an example of how he navigates as well as how others navigate – they link up with other Rwandese, see an opportunity, become very good and reliable at it.

Ghost and Longman, as I indicated in the prologue, hurriedly left their abode after the attack and found a new 'safe' place. Like all the participants in my study, Ghost was extremely vigilant. He had a quick eye, and constantly and almost effortlessly checked his surroundings for suspicious people, vehicles and objects. Seeing this embodied practice of scanning the environment reminded me of what Vigh (2011) referred to as 'hypervigilance' in discerning dangers that may be embedded in the environment. In order to make sense of deserters' apparent constant alertness and surveillance of spaces, people and opportunities, their everyday experiences and understandings of their post-military circumstances, the maritime imagery of ships that move towards the shore but whose "movement happens forcibly in dangerous waters that have both underlying perils and oncoming waves" (Vigh 2009:31) seemed apt and I turned increasingly to Vigh's (2006, 2009, 2011) work to unravel the many unexpected ways my study participants "engage in the world and the way they move toward positions they perceive as being better than their current location and the possibilities within them". At the same time their limited power to delineate or control their social worlds seemed evident, yet they managed to adapt to and move under pressure, as well as to find and create possibilities to survive in the present. As a perspective that focuses on practice, social navigation enables me to understand the intersection between my participants' agency, the social forces that trigger their navigation and the resultant changes that they contend with.

According to Vigh (2009), by highlighting the interactivity of practice and the intermorphology of motion, social navigation "grants us an analytical optic which allows us to focus on how people move and manage within situations of social flux and change" (Vigh 2009:420). I am aware that Vigh's ideas of social navigation were construed in a conflict zone, and that the South African context in which my participants perceive and referred to themselves as exiles, for example saying "we are exiles" (*nous sommes des exilés*) or "I am in exile" (*je suis en exil*),

6

is not a conflict zone *per se,* although life on the margins can be threatening and violent. My participants certainly understood their condition as full of conflict: being an 'exiled' Rwandan army deserter in South Africa involved nomadism, placelessness, uncertainty and danger of all sorts - all of which are characteristic of a conflict situation. Social navigation is therefore, not just theoretically interesting, but also empirically so. Vigh asserts that "people invest a great deal of time in making sense of and predicting the movement of their social environment, in clarifying how they are able to adapt to and move in relation to oncoming change" and that they act, adjust and attune their strategies and tactics in relation to the way they experience, imagine and anticipate the movement and influence of social forces (Vigh 2009:420): this has been the life of the men in my study as will be shown throughout the thesis.

The men in my study had all abandoned their military duties without the permission of the Rwanda Defence Forces (RDF) and did not intend to return to it. They had mostly left in acrimony and fear. The army deserters in this study eventually managed to come to South Africa, a country and a place, which in their estimation, is at least geographically far from the reach of Rwanda's Department of Military Intelligence (DMI). While they hoped for free and even fulfilling lives after the military, the reality seemed quite different. The assassination of former Rwanda intelligence operator and political critic of President Kagame, Patrick Karegeya, in Johannesburg (Wrong 2019), as well as the fact that a number of Rwandan dissidents, including former soldiers, have been violently killed in South Africa (Smith 2015; York and Rever 2015; Du Plessis 2019; Fabricius and Wrong 2021), as well as in neighbouring Mozambique (Fabricius 2021), informed their apparent paranoia.

Background

In a recent book Wrong (2021) revisits the history of the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), its role in ending the genocide in Rwanda and the subsequent development of the authoritarian power of President Paul Kagame. According to Wrong (ibid) the West greatly supported Kagame, ignored the Rwanda Patriotic Army's (RPA) role in the massacre of Hutu civilians and involvement in war crimes at the time (Rever 2018; Rever, Morgan 2020; Human Rights Watch 2017). Wrong (2021) emphasises that the West advanced Rwanda's economy after the genocide through foreign aid. In the process, the author argues, the Western countries sanctioned the role the Rwandan Defence Force (RDF) played in promoting conflict in the

7

region through its support for rebels and the plundering of the minerals of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (see Prunier 2006; Reyntjens 2011).

Nonetheless, much of what is widely known about Rwandan soldiers in the post-conflict situation relates to the army's involvement in ending the 1994 genocide, nation rebuilding (Beswick 2014) and its participation in peacekeeping missions (Uvin 2001; Getteleman 2013). The RDF is generally viewed as a highly effective and disciplined force (Reder 2015). Writing about the unpleasant experiences of Rwandan army deserters living in self-banishment outside Rwanda was a difficult undertaking because of the sensitivities surrounding this issue. Rupiya (2004:90) asserts that "one of the difficulties of pointing out the errors of military involvement in politics is the healthy relationship that the armed forces have forged…" The author further notes that "to try and present the military …as carrying out repressive actions against its own goes against the grain of chivalry and contradicts the Pan Africanist image that the military has established for itself" (ibid). However, the RDF has a track record of fomenting political instability in the Great Lakes region (Hintjens 2008, Prunier 2008, Reyntjens 2011) and it has been accused of enforcing the Rwandan Patriotic Front's military ethos throughout Rwandan society (Hintjens 2008; Lovegren 2015; Purdekova 2015; Thompson 2018). The Economist of 27th May 2021, for example discusses the furious international criticism concerning the country and its autocratic President, especially from defectors.

While militaries generally do not condone army desertion (Fantina 2006), the apparent antipathy of the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) and RPF to army deserters is often represented as originating in an underlying fear that an insurrection might repeat itself at some point: given that the ruling RPF itself politically organised in exile in Uganda between 1987 and 1989 and subsequently 'invaded' Rwanda through its armed wing, the RPA, in 1990. The RPA later 'ended' the 1994 genocide (Prunier 2006; Reyntjens 2004; Hintjens 2008; Red her 2015). Some of the subsequent literature intimates that the RDF has been involved in the country's politics since 1994 and its political agenda is to rule (Purdekova et al 2017) rather than to be a 'moderator' or 'guardian' (Perlmutter 1969; Nordlinger 1977).

Once again, against the above background, Himbara (2019) emphasises that Rwandan army deserters who go into exile are seen as 'dissidents', traitors to the army and enemies of the state. Existing literature indicates that the Rwandan state deals harshly with real or perceived

threats to the current political order, even outside the country (Uvin 2001; Prunier 2006). This intolerance is extended to former members of the country's armed forces who live in exile (Muhumuza 2019; Ncube 2017) and is emphasised by the examples above, as well as the four assassination attempts on a former Intelligence Chief, Gen Faustin Kayumba Nyamwasa, in South Africa (Smith 2015; Wrong 2019).

In spite of the above, there have been only a number of attempts to understand the experiences of Rwandan soldiers (Beswick 2014) or of those who have deserted from this army (see Brock 2016). In relation to the latter, it is important because a significant number of Rwandan soldiers deserted from the military after the genocidal conflict had ended (Reyntjens 2011). Some settled in South Africa with the hope of building post-military lives. Although it is not the aim of the thesis to prove or disprove such allegations, there have previously been attacks in South Africa on ex-soldiers and dissidents as emphasised above. For example, in 2019, a former bodyguard of President Kagame was killed in Cape Town. Despite the South African government's stern stance against such aggression, attacks have increased significantly over the past few years and former junior soldiers are also being targeted (York 2017).

In South Africa, the post-military lives of the army deserters in my study are underpinned by everyday fears, but also realities of imminent harm. In light of limited contemporary ethnographic research on Rwandan army deserters living as involuntary expatriates I needed to investigate and unpack the post military experiences of these men, paying particular attention to the complexity of living as exiles, refugees and undocumented forced migrants in South Africa, and their shifting identities against the backdrop of an apparent increase in surveillance and violence against them sponsored or at least sanctioned by the Rwandan state. Rwandan state surveillance in South Africa is particularly high, because the Rwanda National Congress (RNC), the RPF's fiercest opposition party, is based in Johannesburg. The violent subcultures of South Africa (Fabricius and Wrong 2021) also provide perpetrators of Rwandan state sponsored violence much needed camouflage to hide behind.

By focusing on the insecurity and vulnerability that is associated with being a Rwandan army deserter in the context of exile, my study can contribute to debates on the ways in which the 'political insecurities of authoritarian regimes' (Rupiya 2005) and past military experiences influence the post-military lives of soldiers (Higate 2000; Koehler 2016) even those who now live in another country (Ncube 2017; Maringira 2015). Departing from Milroy's (2001) ideas

that the transition from military to civilian life could be seamless, this study argues that assuming a straightforward transition from military to civilian life is problematic in itself. Army deserters cannot easily fall back into their past civilian lives, instead they live as people who are 'on the run' (Goffman 2014) that is, being hyper-vigilant as they "look out for hidden danger before danger reveals itself to them in detrimental ways" (Vigh 2018:492). As such, the ideas that soldiers can generally return to civilian life once they leave the military (Locke 2013; Hinojosa 2010; Woodward 1998) do not sufficiently capture the experiences of 'dissident' deserters whose lives are governed by rumours and the fear of imminent harm.

I will show that the reality for Rwandan army deserters in South Africa is that they navigate precarious military identities: these are constantly unmade and remade depending on the level of threat in the various spaces these ex-soldiers find themselves. I argue that being a Rwandan army deserter in self-imposed exile conjures a complex form of post military life which is steeped in uncertainty and danger. For the deserters in my study exile has become a place and time of estrangement, uncertainty, terror and even death on the one hand, as a well as a place of relative autonomy and resilience on the other.

The need for a focus on soldiers and deserters

The need for this study stems from the dearth of scholarship on the post-military lives of Rwandan army deserters living in self-imposed exile. According to Gettlemen (2013), it is difficult for a soldier to desert the Rwandan military and lead a quiet post-military life in Rwanda; most army deserters cross the country's borders and start anew in other countries. However, given the centrality of the Rwandan military in national politics and the associated political sensitivities and the guardedness of army escapees regarding desertion, the experiences of army deserters have been silenced by the official narratives which malign these former soldiers (Himbara 2019; Ncube 2017). There is little understanding of how these former soldiers ended up in self-imposed exile in other countries. Given that such deserters actively engage in concealing their past military lives, their experiences have been shrouded in broader Rwandan refugees' and humanitarian discourses (Turner 2013; Kavuro 2015; Tshimba 2016). By investigating and analysing the post-military lives of Rwandan army deserters living as exiles in South Africa, this study can fill a gap in literature.

According to Gear (2002), it is rare for soldiers to be studied outside military institutions. Although some research has focused on the post military lives of soldiers (Hockey 2000, Higate 2001, Schuetz 1945; Adler 1975; Blackburn 2016; Dandeker et al 2003; Jolly 1996; Burkhart and Hogan 2015; Bergman et al 2014; Vargas 2017), these generally attended to soldiers who left the military honourably and reintegrated into communities in their home countries. Most of these studies were also conducted in the global North.

In Africa, such studies are few. For example, Metsola (2015) focused on reintegrating Namibian ex-combatants in independent Namibia and found that Namibia's reintegration policies are exclusive and aimed at strengthening the bond between the former liberation movement South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) and the government for purposes of retaining power, while marginalizing those ex-combatants who fought against Swapo. Consequently, tensions regarding the inequity between ex-combatants have increased in Namibia over the years. In South Africa Bandeira (2009) has focused on addressing the needs of ex-combatants because they fall within the category of vulnerable members of society given that the reintegration program in South Africa has not been a success (Everette and Jennings 2006). Gear (2002) has paid attention to the haste with which ex-combatants are implicated in acts of violence while Dzinesa (2008) set out to investigate the role of ex-combatants in violence in transition societies. Alexander (1998) focused on the post military lives of Zimbabwe's ex-combatants. Like the other studies mentioned above, Alexander's participants left the army honourably and reintegrated into Zimbabwean communities. While Alexander reveals the dangers associated with the ex-combatant identity among the ethnically defined Ndebele in the Matebeleland province of Zimbabwe, this work focuses on the vicarious liability of being constructed as ethnically 'other' as ex-combatant within Zimbabwe's borders. Maringira's work (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019) most closely resembles mine in that he asserts that soldiers can become victims of the regimes that they purportedly supported. While Maringira attends to victimhood among Zimbabwean soldiers, his analysis of such vulnerability has been confined to the military barracks and within the borders of Zimbabwe.

Less attention has been given to army deserters. Agostini (2007) focused on British soldiers who deserted during the seven-year war in America. In the Middle East, Khoeler's (2016) work on army deserters from the Syrian Army focuses on the processes, which enabled disgruntled soldiers to translate their dissatisfaction with the military to army desertion. While Koehler revealed the ways in which the Syrian military thwarted army desertion by attacking deserters'

11

immediate families and friends, the search for army deserters hardly went beyond Syrian borders. Albrecht and Koehler's (2019) papers also attend to desertion during the civil war in Syria. Richards (2018) writes about army desertion during civil conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In contrast to the above, Maringira (2017a; 2017b; Maringira & Núñez Carrasco, 2015; Maringira et al 2015) has done extensive research concerning deserters from Zimbabwe. His work on army deserters living as exiles in South Africa celebrates these former soldiers for retaining fixed military identities and dispositions and making their military identities useful social and economic capitals that allow them to carve out economic niches in the host society's aggressive informal sector. This is possibly because Zimbabwean army deserters are not regarded as a political or military threat to the ruling ZANU PF government, or that the latter seems not to be fixated on following deserters beyond its borders, co-ordinating and executing their prosecution in South Africa. The post military fears of Zimbabwe deserters were not as deeply political as those of Rwandan army deserters in self-imposed exile.

My own study focuses on soldiers who joined and deserted the Rwandan military since 1995. This year is a significant marker since the RDF became a regular national army after the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA), a military wing of the RPF, invaded Rwanda from Uganda. Tutsi refugees who had fled to Uganda during the Hutu revolution of 1959 were being persecuted in Uganda for entangling themselves in intra-Ugandan politics as well as participating in rebel activities. The refugees were also resented by Ugandan citizens for "acquiring more power and wealth than 'real' Ugandans" (Kuperman 2003:4) and for overstaying their welcome (Kamukama 1993). The RPA had to go back with force because former President Habyarimana had formally banned Tutsi refugees from returning to Rwanda in 1986. The RPA eventually merged with the Forces Armées Rwandaises (FAR), the then Rwanda's national army. The year 1995 also set the stage for army desertions in the post-conflict Rwandan army, following a failure by some soldiers to integrate into the new army.

The men in my study deserted the RDF between 2002 and 2017. They then crossed Rwanda's borders and embarked on long, sometimes dangerous journeys to exile that eventually brought them to South Africa. In a sense these former soldiers are always on the move, even in South Africa. Here they constantly navigate in relation to "violence, as an underlying possibility, an imagined oncoming event" (Vigh 2011:93), which they expect from people whom they believe

12

to be agents of the Rwandan state. Such circumstances make their lives precarious but it also offers potentialities (Vigh 210:2018), issues which I will elaborate in my thesis. Below, are the questions that the thesis seeks to answer.

Research Questions

1. What prompted Rwandan army deserters to embark on the journey to exile and how did they end up in South Africa?
2. What are the experiences of Rwandan army deserters living in self-imposed exile in South Africa?
3. How do they navigate everyday life in situations where they perceive themselves as being hunted?
4. In what ways do these army deserters reconstruct their identities in South Africa?

This study departs from existing works on ex-soldiers and offers an ethnographic account of and critically reflects on the ways in which Rwandan army deserters navigate perceived Rwandan state surveillance and their very real experiences of violence which seems politically motivated. I show how their identities are reconstituted by spatial, temporal and threatening forces that exist within the exile context of South Africa. The study argues that the belief (and often reality as in the case of Ghost above) that they are being 'hunted' by Rwandan state agents shape these ex-soldiers' interactions and practices as they navigate their own circumstances of uncertainty and difficulty as they try to survive in South Africa while also hiding from the forces that could potentially confine, injure or erase them.

A review of the literature

Rwanda's Sensitivity to dissent inside and outside the country

As a post conflict state, Rwanda has moved from being perceived as an 'epicenter of conflict' (Goodfellow and Smith 2013) to being a politically stable and peaceful country (Redher 2015). Yet, some scholars argue that the ruling RPF government is nervous about its citizens' anti-government sentiments, no matter how trivial they may seem to be (see Turner 2013; Jones and Murray 2018). This 'nervous condition' is reflected in the country's national security discourse which is founded on a 'genocide ideology' framework, i.e. laws that were put in place to suppress ideas that lead to genocide (Eltringham and Hoyweghen 2000). The genocide

13

is an important historical event in which about 800 000 Tutsi and moderate Hutus were murdered by the Hutu government following the "violent challenge to Hutu authority" (Kuperman 2003:1) by the Uganda-based RPA (see also Reyntjens 1994). The aforementioned framework is a "narrative which makes the 1994 genocide the sole producer of politically correct categories of identification and guidelines for behaviour" (Shindo 2012:1692). Dissent and opposition to government policy and the ruling party are constructed politically by the state as fostering disunity in the country and can be prosecuted (ibid). Eltringham and Hoyweghen (2000) assert that the genocide ideology is a deliberately ambiguous framework which is not concretely defined in terms of the International treaties that Rwanda is a signatory to (see also Shindo 2012:1692). Therefore the indistinct definition of the genocide ideology has over the years enabled the state to (mis)interpret any action as 'genocide ideology' and this includes deserting the RDF.

Jones and Murray (2018) state that Rwanda is particularly sensitive to the activities of Rwandan nationals who have fled the country. The RPF government has indicated that it will prosecute people, both locally and internationally, who are deemed to threaten the country (see also Lovegren 2015; Himbara 2020). Reports abound that the Rwandan state responds heavy-handedly to behaviour that is contrary to the official narrative both inside and outside Rwanda, and particularly, that of army deserters living in exile (Prunier 2008; Reyntjens 2015; Himbara 2019; DuPlessis 2019; Smith 2015; York and Rever 2015). Commenting on the centrality of national security in Rwanda, Beswick (2014) notes a somewhat exaggerated representation of threat which is used to by the state to solicit internationally for military development aid and training. This military expertise, Himbara (2019) argues, is then directed towards persecuting exiled state enemies, particularly former soldiers who now live their lives in fear of capture by Rwandan state agents deployed to 'hunt' them in other countries and have embraced navigating danger as a way of life.

Conceptualizing Social Navigation

As indicated at the start of the thesis my analysis of empirical data draws to a great extent on Vigh's (2009) concept of 'social navigation' which was developed against the background of Guinea Bissau's political conflicts: where violence was both an underlying possibility and an oncoming event. This navigation entailed *scanning* the environment; or harnessing their

perceptivity towards establishing hidden agendas and being *hypervigilant* in securing the surrounding environments (Vigh 2009, 2011, 2018) as well as moving across spaces and around norms that govern socio-political life. Vigh (ibid) tried to understand the ways in which anticipating violence influenced social life among Aguenta militias (Vigh 2011). The Aguentas were a small militia group which backed President Joao Bernardo Nino Vieira's unpopular government between 1998 and 1999 but became redundant and marginalized after losing to the Junta Militar, a section of the Bissauan national army that ousted the Partido Africano do Independencia da Guine e Cabo (PAIGC) led government in a coup (Vigh 2015). The positionality of the Aguentas during the 1998 /1999 conflict thrust the young militiamen into 'social death' (Kralova 2015) that is, a loss of social status. The Aguentas were also removed from patrimonial networks that previously sustained them. Owing to their lowly position the Aguentas construed war and conflict as presenting opportunities to ameliorate the dire situations of poverty. Social navigation thus became a central survival skill for these young men. There are striking similarities between the condition of Aguentas and Rwandan army deserters. First, both the Rwandan army deserters and Aguentas are unpopular in central nodes of power in their respective countries. Reasons for such unpopularity are however, different. Second, they both contend with an existential threat and their circumstances compel them to embrace practices that social navigation describes, as a fundamental competence for their survival. For these two groups of ex-combatants, social navigation is infused with the expectation of negative occurrences and tactics of circumventing bleak potentialities.

In theorizing social navigation, Vigh draws insights from Aristotle's ideas of 'existing potentiality' (Bleeden 2010). According to Agamben (1999:179) "an existing potentiality refers to the presence of an absent subject which has the ability to do or not to do something" (see also Bleeden 2010). In Aristotelian terms, a potentiality is "socially invisible" (Vigh 2011:93), yet present. According to Vigh, potentialities consist of a shadow world of actors and factors that may be out of sight or beyond people's immediate senses, yet they act toward that world in anticipation (see also Vigh and Turner 2006). By situating social navigation in a context which is laden with negative potentialities, Vigh illuminates the relationship between insecurity and social action. The obscurity of negative potentialities is central to social navigation because they instil anxiety and suspicion and they cause people to be deeply invested in discerning threats that are embedded in their environments. Vigh's conceptualization of social navigation in a chronically uncertain setting is strategic because he seeks to show that people engage with the world in radically attentive ways when faced with

15

uncertainty and danger (Vigh 2011, 2018). In this thesis social navigation is construed as a mechanism used by Rwandan army deserters who are anticipating brutally negative potentialities.

Having taken apprehension as a point of departure, it is not surprising that the major tenets of Vigh's social navigation theory are largely anticipatory and bent on exposing hidden motives, and dangers. For Vigh, suspicion and the urge to sniff out danger in contexts of chronic uncertainty is called 'nervous sociality' and it is a fundamental social competence. Though the Aguentas did not necessarily move around with physical scanning technologies, they relied on their vetting experience and their intuition to ascertain that the danger that they cannot see, but somehow sense, would not take them by surprise. What stands out for me in much of Vigh's work is his ability to use senses as an analytical lens in understanding social action particularly in conflict zones.

While Vigh is interested in the practices that emerge from his participants' marginal positions in the Bissauan political landscape, his focus is largely on embodied practices. In his work, Vigh deploys the 'sensory turn' (Classen 1997; Goody 2002; Howes 2021; Ingold 2011), an anthropological paradigm which privileges the use of senses such as sight, smell, hearing and intuition as central to understanding ways of life. Among the Aguenta militia of Guinea Bissau, Vigh combines intuition with the sense of smell and places these on top of the Aguentas' sensorial order: it enabled the young militia men to sniff out conflict in their surroundings before it presented itself to them in dangerous ways (Vigh 2011, 2018). The two abovementioned senses, Vigh argues, were central for the survival of the young militia men since conflict occurred sporadically.

While Vigh (2018) endeavours to decrypt hidden dangers through perceptivity and tacticality his descriptions of the actual operationalization of the tactics by the Aguentas in the Bissauan war-scapes remain abstract. My thesis goes beyond abstract descriptions of the tactics used in detecting and navigating danger. It adopts Geertz's (2008) thick descriptions in revealing the innovative interpretations of urban syntax (roads, streets, alleys and terminuses) that were used by Rwandan army deserters exiled in South Africa while evading Rwandan state surveillance and its associated violence. To achieve this, I gained insights from the military practice of 'inverted urban geometry' as it was conceptualized by Mattack-Clark (2002). According to Mattack-Clark (2002) 'inverted urban geometry' is a military tactic of ascribing meanings,

16

other than the traditional architectural meanings, to urban spatial architecture in devising tactics that will outsmart the enemy (see also Weizman 2006). For example walls may be interpreted as thoroughfares while streets are understood as spaces that must be avoided when walking in times of conflict because a weapon might be lying in wait. This military tactic allows soldiers to disregard conventional spatial boundaries and to organize their movements in ways that enable them to surprise the enemy (ibid).

The theory of social navigation is a suitable analytical tool in this study because it allows for the reading of power relations through an examination of the antagonism of strategies deployed by the powerful and powerless people. More importantly, social navigation helps in explaining the interaction between insecurity and social action (Vigh 2009, 2010, 2011, 2015, 2018). It is important to highlight that in this thesis, social navigation generally stems from an uncomfortability with existing structures of society. In this case the military institution in Rwanda and the Rwandan state, and its apparent reach into their lives in South Africa, can be said to be some of the structures that discomfit the men in my study. The theory is appropriate in this study because, like the Aguentas in Vigh's (2011) work, my participants lived with the expectation of experiencing bodily harm or being eliminated by alleged Rwandan state agents. The fact that these state agents are unknown and the violence they intend to mete out to army deserters is also not known, qualifies the former as the negative potentiality that army deserters expect to encounter.

I am inspired by Vigh's deployment of the senses as social bearings used by vulnerable militia men when moving in or trying to adapt to chronically unpredictable circumstances. The complexity of using senses as navigation mechanisms lies in their unverifiability since they are phenomenologically experienced; they are more real to the person who experiences them. Therefore, following this tradition of understanding social action through an analysis of the ways in which people rely on their senses while navigating negative potentialities, it can be argued that participants in my study gave credence to the sense of hearing and specifically hearing '*igihuha*' (Rwandan vernacular for rumours) as their radar in navigating Rwandan state surveillance and its potential for violence in the context of exile. Though the army deserters did not neglect their other senses in their navigation, their reliance on rumours as an important bearing in their social navigation endeavours stemmed from the interconnectedness of members of the Rwandan community in South Africa on the one hand and the mistrust and fear of the state that existed among members of this community, on the other hand.

17

Rumours as a radar in social navigation

The utility of rumours and gossip as analytical lenses to explain social and political phenomena has been contested in the academy. According to Petersen and Gist (1951) rumours can be understood as unverified accounts – which may or may not be true, pertaining to events, objects or issues of public concern, circulated from person to person. Some scholars argue that gossip and rumours produce distorted and exaggerated accounts and they result in paranoia and panic (Bharucha 2014; Caplow 1947). However, attempts to silence rumours have in many cases, fuelled further speculation and intensified rumour circulation (see also Fontein 2018). On the other hand, some scholars posit that rumours are responses to the social and political environments in which they exist (Shibutani 1966; Abraham 1970; Knopf 1975; Kapferer 1990; Anthony 1992; Fine 1991; Perice 1997). Greenhill and Oppenheim (2107:662) write "Moreover, the rumour-violence cycle can be self-reinforcing since rumours are known to increase distrust within and across groups". For Stewart and Strathern (2004), rumours are integral parts of social processes that lead to conflict and social change. Kapferer (1990) maintains that the distinction between information and rumours is itself not objective as it is embedded in 'belief' – which is also highly subjective. Greenhill and Oppenheim (2017) write that scholars generally believe that rumours emerge and are spread to help individuals make sense of troubling, and even seemingly incomprehensible, behaviour and events. Information conveyed in rumours enables people to cope with fear and uncertainty by generating shared explanations, often in the form of narratives (Office of Strategic Services Planning Group 1942-1943; Tesser and Rosen 1975; Heath 2007). Some scholars are of the view that these narratives (rumours) offer clarity, address anxieties, and provide rationalizations for observed behaviour as well as guides for future action (see Rosnow 1988, 2001; DiFonzo and Bordia 1997, 2002). My understanding of the function of rumours in social analysis is influenced by interpretivist thinking. Following scholars who perceive rumours and gossip as discourses which have inherent truth value and also tend to allocate responsibility (White 2000; Stewart and Strathern 2004; Fontein 2009; Mbembe 2000; Israel 2009), I construe rumours (*igihuha*) as widely spread talk whose source is difficult to discern and whose aim is to increase surveillance and counter surveillance and to inform social navigation practices.

In relation to my own study, I argue that, rather than labouring to verify or deny rumours, it is of importance to seek to understand the ways in which army deserters respond to the content of rumours. I further argue that, among Rwandan army deserters in South Africa, rumours –

18

especially those pertaining to a 'hit list' – can provide important insights into the (re)production of political subjectivities and resilience as well as resistance. Rumours helped my participants to navigate their context of exile, which, in turn, was fraught with fear. Rumours were mostly understood as explanations and the speakers were seen as commentators of the rumour content, and not mere conduits which convey rumours from one person to the other.

This framing of rumours was informed by the Foucauldian ideas of discourse as ideology which privilege the ideas of the governing or observing authority. This approach was important because the 'hit list' and its associated violence, which formed the main subject of rumours, is, so deserters believe, a creation of the ruling elites in Rwanda. Drawing on Foucault's (1977) idea of biopolitics, the hit list can be construed as a technique of power which seeks to identify bodies that should be dealt with in order to rid Rwanda of disobedient or disloyal elements. The precarity of the lives of Rwandan army deserters in exile was therefore exacerbated by this list as it aimed to haunt, silence, objectify and eliminate these former soldiers. While the hit list sought to objectify army deserters, rumours allowed them to think of ways of resisting impending forms of social control. Acting on the information drawn from rumours, the army deserters devised innovative ways of navigating the dangers associated with their being on a 'hit list'- even in exile. This corroborates with Greenhill and Oppenheim's (2017) conceptualization of rumours as an impetus for behaviour. According to Abraham (1970) rumours are not 'texts' but interpretive stances and practices that mediate social reality and performances.

The concept 'rumours', as a useful analytical tool, appealed to me because; first, the very act of deserting from the military automatically removed my participants from the official grid and placed them in the back alleys of society where they could hide from the wrath of the military. At the same time they could keep abreast of official activities through the 'pathway radio' (Fontein 2018) that is, the various social media platforms including the grapevine which gave information regarding possible attacks as well as strategies to army deserters. Rumours filled the information gap that desertion had created between these deserters and official Rwandan communication lines with regards to the execution of national security duties. This situation made rumours an important component of the survival stratagems of deserters in their host society.

Perice's (1997) examination of the volatile situation that characterized Haiti in the 1990s shows how authoritarian regimes relied heavily on rumours to spread terror and fear in order to maintain a hold on political power. A close reading of Perice's work reveals that rumours are dialogical, and that they do a great deal of ideological work insofar as they have the capacity to paralyse people with fear (Mbembe 2000) and also spread panic and paranoia to people in power (Fontein 2009, 2018). However, for the deserters in my study, rumours about state agents having attacked a deserter reminded them that they are dispensable.

The biopolitics of army desertion

Categorizing army deserters as dissidents and enemies of the state is one of the 'dividing practices' (Foucault 1982:777-778) which seeks to objectivize people by othering them. In Rwanda, such dividing practices are aimed at ridding the government, and by extension the country, of bad influences or threats. I would say that this categorization of army deserters by the Rwandan state is drawn from Foucauldian ideas of biopolitics which thrive on the extensive collection of personal and social data in order to facilitate strict monitoring, quarantining and disposal of bodies. The Foucauldian idea of biopolitics was initially used as a surveillance mechanism for identifying and quarantining diseased bodies in order to control the spread of diseases among populations. Using the metaphor of diseased bodies aptly describes the ways in which the exiled Rwandan army deserters have come to represent the epitome of bodies which are 'infected' with the contagious disease that must be stopped from spreading. In the case of Rwanda, 'genocide ideology' (Eltringham and Hoyweghen 2000) would be one such idea /'disease' that the authorities would go to any lengths to eradicate as it threatens national security. The genocide ideology framework is a "narrative which makes the 1994 genocide the sole producer of politically correct categories of identification and guidelines for behaviour" (Shindo 2012:1692). According to the genocide ideology framework, behaviour that is in line with the official narrative and policies is the only acceptable kind of behaviour in Rwanda. Army desertion is seen to pose an existential threat to the RPF government, therefore, in exile, the deserter lives with an existential threat which is mediated through the monitoring by state agents. This state of being in exile compels the former soldiers to heed Said's (1994) advice that the exiled person should always be on guard because exile is pregnant with danger.

Navigating the Rwandan state's omnipresence in the context of exile

The idea of exile is central in the work of Edward Said, and mine. Like Said, my participant's most deeply held beliefs about their current world are embedded in the condition of exile (Said 1984, 1999; Lal 2005; Zeleza 2005). Said (1984) construes exile as "an existential and epistemological condition, as a spatial and temporal state of being, belonging and becoming, and in its material and metaphorical contexts" (Zeleza 2005:3). He also views exile as being produced by human beings for other human beings (Said 1984) and as a "political condition that is especially painful and unjust…" (Babour 2007:293). Even though Said was mainly concerned about the collective exilic experiences of the Palestinian people, whom he described as being "in the terrible position of being exiles even while living in their own homeland…" (Said 2000:178), his ideas about exile seem to be applicable to some extent in the lives of the men who participated in my study: conditioned by the politics of self-banishment and being regarded as posing a threat to the ruling RPF government in Rwanda on one hand and the need to survive in the aggressive lower economic strata of the host country, on the other. By focusing on exiled army deserters I explore the ways in which military habitus and the condition of exile work together to create an "exilic mind which refuses to surrender to some transcendent force" (Lal 2005:456) in the men who participated in my study.

According to Said (1984) exile entails "the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted" (1984:159; Lumsden 1999) .This notion of exile is 'rooted', not 'fluid' (ibid:165) and involves , "an anguish" or "the compounded misery of 'undocumented' people suddenly lost, without a tellable history" (ibid: 160,161), such 'mass' exiles have "broken lives" (ibid: 163). The second 'exile' draws on the Foucauldian (1984) 'technology of the self' "provided the exile refuses to sit in the side-lines nursing a wound, there are things to be learned: he or she must cultivate a scrupulous (not indulgent or sulky) subjectivity" (Said 1984: 170), accordingly accomplishing the ability to act "as if one were at home wherever one happens to be" (1984: 172; Lumsden 1999: 30). According to Ferreira (2020) Said (2001: 483-484) proposes differentiation between emigrants, expatriates, refugees and exiles and, as indicated above, connects exile to practices "connected with expulsion and stigma and associated with feelings of loneliness and spirituality" (Ferreira 2020:22). For Said (1999) the latter kind or class of exile is laudable and enables exiles to "cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience" (1984: 170). Malkki (1995a, 1995b), an anthropologist, argues that for Said "Exile" implies an

aesthetic domain, while the notion of "refugee" is perceived to lie within the realm of bureaucracy and international humanitarianism. I use 'exile' in my own thesis because this is how my participants viewed themselves – as people driven into forced self-banishment – and try to unpack how they reconstruct not only their identity as Rwandans, but also an imaginary of "enemies" who potentially threaten them in and through their everyday life practices. For the men in my study, exile has been an orientation to uncertainty and danger. It also involves disorientation, a series of state agent induced displacements and a nomadic and decentred life which is lived on the peripheries of the established orders (Said 1984, 1999, 2000).

Owing to its real or perceived acute sensitivities to the activities of exiled Rwandan nationals (Jones and Murray 2018; Himbara 2019), the RPF government draws on legal instruments such as the 'genocide ideology framework' (Eltringham and Hoyweghen 2000; Shindo 2012) to effect a 'state of exception' (Agamben 2005), which according to Schmitt (1932), entails the temporary suspension of the law by the government (sovereign) in order to allow it (sovereign) to deal with an existential threat to its integrity. Turning to the Rwandan state's presence in the context of, e.g. exile in South Africa, I would like to draw on Schmitt's (1932) ideas about sovereignty and the 'state of exception', despite these being situated in a different geopolitical configuration from the one in which they were conceived. According to Schmitt (2005) sovereignty entails having the authority to suspend the law then act (illegally) under extraordinary circumstances. In the same vein, Agamben (2005) defines the state of exception as the temporary suspension of the law in order to allow the sovereign to deal with an existential threat to its integrity. I have highlighted earlier that army deserters are apparently viewed as dissidents and enemies of the state in Rwanda and thus as an 'exception' to the law (see also Himbara 2019). The sovereign allows the state of exception to be exercised anywhere where these army deserters or dissidents are hiding since the sovereign exception is mainly concerned with the validity and implementation of the decree rather than with social, juridical and territorial ordering (Bleeden 2010:79). The presence of army deserters in South Africa facilitates the (re)production of spaces in which Rwanda's sovereign exception can be valid (sea also Agamben 2005) and thus exercisable in this context of exile. This transcendent sovereignty allows the political insecurities of authoritarian regimes to spill over to other countries. It is the real or imagined presence of the state that forces army deserters to constantly navigate the disciplining power of the state in their host country.

Mbembe (2003) suggests that the manner in which sovereignty is construed in the postcolony is different from the traditional sense in which the term referred to administration according to reason. The postcolonial version of sovereignty allows the term to become fluid to a point that it blurs the internal and the external; public and private; and national and international binaries (Bleeden 2010). Indistinction in the realm of politics as well the reconfiguration of sovereignty makes people unsafe everywhere. This is true for Rwandan army deserters who live in South Africa.

Having deserted the military in Rwanda, a security state which subscribes to 'securitization as the normal technique of government' (see also Mbembe 2000; Agamben 2005), Rwandan army deserters can be described as 'homo sacer' (Agamben 2005) because they diverted from the norm of military loyalty. Agamben (2005), defines homo sacer as a person who can be killed after having been found guilty of a crime with the killer not being guilty of murder even though there is a law that prohibits killing. The claim that Rwandan army deserters are 'homo sacer' is underscored by utterances that were publicly made by President Paul Kagame that "ex-soldiers are some of the dissidents who are living freely abroad… but we will catch them and kill them, it is only a matter of time" (Himbara 2019:1; see also Lovegren 2015).

Making sense of surveillance
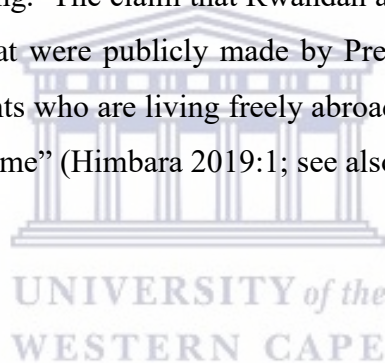
As the case of Ghost in the Prologue indicates, the army deserters in my study are seemingly in some or other way surveilled by the state and its agents or informants in South Africa. The thesis is accordingly informed by a number of theoretical approaches concerning surveillance, none of which have a perfect 'fit' for my particular empirical work. I first draw on Foucault's (1977) 'micro-physics' of panoptic disciplinary techniques/power such as surveillance. Foucauldian *panoptic discipline* helps us to illuminate the ways in which the *omnipresence* of the Rwandan state's surveillance techniques and discourses exercise a hold on the politico-economic and physical comportment of the exiled army deserters. Foucault's (1977) metaphor of panopticism draws from Bentham's ideas of the Panopticon – a prison model whose architectural setting enables discipline through the ubiquitous visibility of the inmates and the universal invisibility of the prison guard. To this effect, Foucauldian panoptic discipline aims to "ingrain a sense of permanent and conscious visibility among subjects as well as to avert any bad reciprocal influences" (Foucault 1977:6). The notion of panoptic surveillance is

premised on the organisation of bodies in space so that the see/being seen dyad is separated. The guard in the central tower of the Panopticon sees all the inmates in the cells that surround the tower but is not seem by the inmates. In this way perception is extended beyond visible settings, while temporal relations are reduced to spatial ones, thereby extending the panoptical possibilities. Thus, to make sense of Foucault's (1977) metaphoric deployment of panopticism into the current study, disciplinary techniques such as surveillance by the Rwandan RPF, would exercise both repressive and productive restraint on the army deserters.

I initially theorised that Rwandan state agents can possibly be construed as 'mobile panopticons'. The latter I understand as a modified, empirics-specific notion as it acknowledges the *motion*-based surveillance by geographically dispersed Rwandan state agents who monitor, harass and 'hunt down' the army dissidents in several urban spaces, albeit in another country. This is unlike the original panopticon (prison model) which has a *fixed* central watchtower. Thus, Rwandan state agents are 'mobile panopticons' who act as extensions of the purview of the state. Army deserters were certainly convinced that the Rwandan state tries to surveille them through agents, informers, and even by tracking their cell phone activities on a grid. There thus is arguably a level of Foucauldian surveillance involved. Even in South Africa Rwandans also remain marked and subject to biopolitical interventions and control of their movement through, for example the necessity to deliver and obtain a range of documents which can 'fix' them as Rwandan exiles. They sometimes do online transactions, use cell phones and have at least some activity in cyberspace. In all, the idea of 'mobile panopticon' could be understood as a conceptual development of Foucault's original conceptualization of the state's 'gaze' which sees but cannot be seen. The original idea was developed in a confined context of a prison. It instilled a strong sense of being watched among inmates and it generally produced *self-surveillance* in the prison setting. The 'mobile panopticon' modifies and develops the Foucauldian panopticism in two main ways; first, it represents a *dialectical gaze* between the state and the dissident exiles, unlike the uni-directional gaze in Bentham's Panopticon. I say this because as the observable injured or mutilated bodies *move* across spaces, they send the message of the Rwandan state's intolerance of dissent. Accordingly, as the exiles hear about or see these embodied transcripts of violence, they are likely to 'self-correct'. Second, the panopticon transcends the confined prison setting to include some ubiquitous movement across time and space thereby broadening the area in which the message of the Rwandan state's intolerance of dissent is spread. The 'mobile panopticon' is mainly predicated on subjugation born mechanically from a fictitious set of

relations of separating the see/being seen dyad. Yet, I felt that Foucault's panopticism could not fully address the kind of surveillance experienced and avoidance thereof by the army deserters in my study.

Unlike Foucault's panoptic grid, Deleuze and Guatarri (1988:377) use the concept of 'nomadic war machine'. The notion of the nomadic war machine was derived from the Prussian military. It is a military tactic which was predicated on free movement, autonomous thought and 'following' when dealing with an ever-moving target. This approach ceded the power of the state to smaller military units working towards crushing the enemy, but this was done with little or no influence of state orders in terms of operations. Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 351, 380) write that the "war machine is exterior to the State apparatus" and also that the "war machine is the invention of the nomads (insofar as it is exterior to the State apparatus and distinct from the military institution)". The nomadic war machine is arguably assemblages of, for example, ways of thinking and being in opposition or contrary to the apparatus or mechanism of state power. In my study, Rwandan state agents had arguably been deterritorialized from the Rwandan military and geographical space and reterritorialized in similar dimensions of the South African space. Nevertheless, for Deleuze and Guattari (ibid) the deserters themselves, rather than the state or its agents who surveille them, would constitute a nomadic war machine. According to Weizman (2006), nomadism and metamorphosis are important strategies when dealing with the enemy in 'smooth spaces', that is urban and non-battle settlings. Yet Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concepts are very specific, quite philosophical and Western, and relates to freedom and creativity intertwined in a complex interplay with the power of the state in the same spaces and at the same time. The war machine resists and cannot be fixed on a grid in a Foucaultian sense, not even by the great number of codes embodied in the apparatus of the state.

Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) nomadism is also somewhat different from the reality of the army deserters in my study: they are refugees, forced migrants, sometimes homeless itinerants trying to survive. Yet my participants were very convinced that the Rwandan state and its extension, the RDF has a 'hit list' and 'hitmen' who operate outside Rwandan borders. I then turned to Haggerty and Ericson (2000) who, inspired by the concept of "assemblages" of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), as well as their notion of control societies, proposed the concept of "surveillant assemblage". Assemblages are made up of multiple objects, people, institutions, knowledge, signs, processes etc. Haggerty and Ericson (2000) utilise this concept, because

they understand present-day surveillance as always emerging, unstable and without easily identifiable boundaries, governments or their departments that can be held accountable. The possible usefulness of the idea of surveillant assemblages for making sense of my own empirical work was heightened when recently Van Eysen (2021) revealed that the Rwandan government uses "Pegasus spyware, which can record phone calls and read texts and emails, access photographs and passwords, and secretly activate microphones and cameras to make audio and video recordings." More than 3,500 phone numbers of activists, journalists, exiles, foreign politicians, and diplomats had been identified as having been targeted from Rwanda with Israeli NSO Pegasus spyware since 2016. This list has the names of a number of Rwandans who are reported as exiles in South Africa (ibid).

Chapter Outline

Chapter Two: Doing Research among the 'hunted': Methodological reflections

In this chapter I reflect on my experiences of doing research on a politically sensitive topic, among people who are perceived as political dissidents and enemies of the state by their government. The chapter outlines the complexities of doing research on closed topics where the participants are not only guarded but they are endangered and on the run. The methodology chapter is important because it reveals the degree of uncertainty, danger and fear that my participants live with in exile. More importantly, it contributes to anthropological method in that it adopts a 'moving ethnography' by allowing people and the theme of being 'hunted' to replace locale then following these participants around as they do life in exile. This is somewhat counter to conventional ethnographic research which is normally fixed in particular locales. It is also 'moving' because much of the narratives of brutal violence being meted to army deserters by state security agents raise critical questions of human morality and insecurity. These methodological reflections further reveal the various hazards that I encountered in the field and it highlights the implications for women who set out to do such kinds of studies.

Chapter three: Deserting the military: Journeys to exile

This chapter will give a detailed description of the experiences of army deserters in the RDF as well as their reasons for leaving the army in acrimony. It takes us through the long and

somewhat terrifying journeys that these former soldiers embarked on, in search for freedom and security. Focusing on the journey was important because it not only sets the scene for the ongoing problems that accompany the dissident army deserter identity but it also gives an appreciation of the coordination and resilience that is required for ex-soldiers to navigate and survive state surveillance and state sponsored violence in self-imposed exile. This thread of danger and resilience runs throughout the thesis.

Chapter four: Surveillance, rumour and injury: The hit list

The deserters in my study firmly believe that they have been earmarked for harm or elimination by the Rwandan state and that their names are on a hit list somewhere. The chapter highlights the fears of army deserters and it uses rumours as an important lens to understand the minds and activities of the army deserters and state security agents as they prepare for a subtle but lethal showdown in the host society. It further examines the ways in which rumours about being on the 'hit list' shape the army deserters' ideas and practices of evading their 'hunters' in exile. The chapter takes a historical look at the use of the hit list as a calamitous mechanism of last resort in the hands of powerful politicians and it argues that rumours about the hit list present an opportunity to understand the critical responses to the political environment in which these rumours are circulated.

Chapter five: 'Hunting': 'Death squad activities' and Army Deserters

The deserter identity is precarious and it increasingly puts the lives of army deserters in danger. In this chapter I pay attention to the ways in which the dissident army deserter identity enabled the 'hit list' to be operationalized through attacks on army deserters by alleged state agents and their accomplices. It highlights the crevices within Rwanda's hostile diaspora can be manipulated to allow state security agents and informers to infiltrate Rwanda's 'hostile diaspora' as well as to harm the targeted people and those believed to be sympathetic to 'hunted' people. The chapter describes the forms and nature of violence that was meted to the body of army deserters and the ways in which such attacks are separated from the violent crimes, which characterized South African society, but are arguably used as a camouflage by Rwandan state agents. This chapter further reveals the policing challenges that the host society contends with in relation to violent attacks on the deserters and it sets the scene for innovative responses to state sponsored terror by my participants.

Chapter six: Navigating exile: fluidity of army deserter identities in exile

This chapter is about the evasion of state surveillance and alleged state sponsored violence by Rwandan army deserters in South Africa. It describes the innovative spaces and ways (mostly drawn from their military disposition) deployed by these former soldiers to evade and survive state surveillance that is, through identity shifting tactics on the one hand and to engage in massive counter surveillance work while they are in those unfamiliar spaces, on the other hand. In describing this, I make reference to the case of Iscariot who embraced *gusara* (mental illness) as a strategy of evading state surveillance yet he also engaged in intelligence gathering; following state agents in the host society. The chapter reveals the ways in which threatening, spatial and temporal factors worked to reconstruct the supposedly fixed military identity resulting in fluid military identities. The chapter further upholds the argument that transition from military to post-military life is generally problematic.

Chapter seven: Beer Consumption: Moments of relief in exile

Even though the context of exile is replete with daunting challenges for the deserters, they still make time to relax and reflect on their post-army lives while imbibing beer in their host societies. This chapter explored the drinking practices among Rwandan army deserters living in self-imposed exile in South Africa. It revealed that when viewed through the socio-therapeutic dimension, beer could provide an understanding of the individual and collective crises that these former soldiers experienced. It argues that an analysis of beer drinking practices helps in understanding the army deserters' responses to state sponsored terror in the host society. In addition to that, beer presented the 'hunted' ex-soldiers the much needed emotional relief and reviving power in a context which closely resembled combat settings where uncertainty, danger and fear generally shaped their day to day experiences. By exploring the army deserters' drinking practices, the chapter simultaneously speaks about the ever strengthening resistance to Rwandan state control that was characteristic of the army deserters who participated in this study.

Chapter eight: Conclusion
This chapter ties up the arguments made in this thesis and shows the ways in which this study has contributed to anthropological understandings of post military lives of soldiers who leave

the military in acrimony. It reaffirms the argument that being a Rwandan army deserter in self-imposed exile in South Africa conjures a complex post military life which is steeped in uncertainty and danger. Surviving in the host society is predicated on the ability of army deserters to navigate exile and its associated challenges.

CHAPTER TWO

Doing Research among the 'Hunted': Methodological Reflections

Introduction

It is extremely complex, but fascinating, to do research among army deserters and those who are probably 'hunted' by their government. The process of fieldwork is infused with many hazards – I had to tread carefully. However, this kind of study also opens up the uncharted world of post-military experiences that would otherwise have remained subsumed in broad official discourses that tend to vilify army deserters without attending to or trying to understand how and why they ended up in exile. This chapter reflects on the complexities of doing such research with these former soldiers. I discuss how I landed in the closed network of Rwandan army deserters in Cape Town and Johannesburg. I also address issues of reflexivity, positionality and risk in the field and further discuss the possible implications of doing research on politically sensitive topics such as this one, particularly for female researchers.

The research bargain

In June 2018, I received a call from Sirikare, who had assisted me greatly with my previous research on Rwandan army deserters in Cape Town. He told me that he had read my Master's dissertation and thought it was good. He surprised me by telling me that he had printed my dissertation and was circulating it among his comrades. Sirikare urged me to do further research on this topic because of the increased attacks on Rwandan army deserters in South Africa. His compatriots felt that an academic study on their situation would afford them the opportunity to present an emic view of their experiences to the outside world. Such a perspective would, according to them, offer an antidote to the official Rwandan government's narrative that vilifies these army deserters (see Introduction). Sirikare said the army deserters were convinced that further research about their situation in exile would carry academic authority and their stories would not be easily dismissed as propaganda. According to Sirikare, the army deserters believed that as an aspect of their healing strategies, the study would re-humanize them since their government had dehumanized them in many ways. I proposed that we meet in person to discuss the expectations and conditions of the study, to which Sirikare agreed.

One month later I met with Sirikare and Major Ghost on campus to discuss the proposed project. Because of the political sensitivities surrounding the topic of RDF deserters, UWC Campus seemed the safest place. I reminded Sirikare of the difficulties that I had experienced in accessing participants and the many restrictions that had been imposed on me previously in terms of the number of participants, questions I could ask and constraints in terms of whom to associate with. I told him that as an anthropologist, I wanted to exercise some academic independence in relation to doing research. My previous encounter with these army deserters had been difficult. I had to go through a rigorous vetting process. I had to provide these army deserters with copies of my identification document, student card, and my ethical clearance letter from my university. I was also required to submit an interview guide, after which I was not "allowed to ask political questions and questions about the army deserters' military experiences".

This time, Sirikare and Major Ghost told me that they would 'open' all the avenues necessary for me to gather data for the new project. They said that I could freely ask questions to as many participants as I wanted. I was allowed to move with them in their spaces, participate in, as well as attend, their social gatherings such as weddings, funerals, parties and hangouts or joints as they called them. I was also allowed to visit their homes, families, places of work and churches if I chose to. Their main conditions were that I would allow them to review the empirical chapters - particularly those in which I would have written about their desertion and journeys into exile as well as the sections of my dissertation that discussed the 'hit list', if I decided to write about it. Reviewing the empirical chapters was particularly important and sensitive for them because if written carelessly, they would possibly expose army deserters and put their lives in more danger.

Pre- research literature review

My previous encounter with the few Rwandan army deserters had alerted me to the difficulties of doing such research, especially since I came to care about the 'world' I had stepped into: feeling the horror the army deserters experienced and worrying whether their families back home were at risk because of their (army deserter's) decision to escape to South Africa. I sympathised with the army deserters' trauma, witnessed their scars and wounds, all of which are now inscribed in my mind.

Because of my past experience in this field, I found it important to familiarize myself with literature on reflexivity and multi-si(gh)tedness (McLean and Leibing 2007) while engaging in meaningful analysis of the army deserters' situation. Being a female who would conduct fieldwork among hard-core 'hunted military escapees' in potentially violent and politically charged spaces, I decided that a good starting point would be to familiarize myself even more with ethnographic approaches to fieldwork. I did not really find many texts that were specific to army deserters in exile *per se*, however, much of the reviewed literature addressed inequality, race and class in the researcher - participant relationship (Wolf 1996: Williams 1996; Warren 1996). These studies generally spoke to the hierarchical and political nature of knowledge production and emphasized the need for one to be mindful of such issues (Moss 2002). For Verweijen (2014) 'ethnographic seduction', wherein the researcher is led 'astray' without noticing it by interlocutors in their attempt to have the researcher adopt their interpretations was the most concerning, given my positionality. Another body of literature that was relevant to my research dealt with the need for researchers to recognize the different and layered realities that are integrated in making the epistemologies of (African) participants (Velthuizen 2012) and thus "break out of the stifling constraints of linear processes that characterize scientific research and venture into the inner space… (Ibid: 51). I found Velthuizen's methodological advice to be instructive because it helped me to understand the dynamics of the conflict that characterized the post military live of deserters in South Africa. However, conducting research conducting fieldwork on highly politicized topics such as the one I studied was relatively dangerous. Nordstrom (1997:8-9) notes that, to conduct research at the epicentres of violence involves a number of responsibilities above and beyond those associated with more traditional ethnography: responsibility to the fieldworkers' safety and to that of her research participants and to the reality of violence both expressed and experienced.

My research falls squarely within the category of highly charged political fields of study and I conducted the study in dangerous environments at a time when it was also very risky to do so. Cognizant of the nature of risk associated with this study, the University of the Western Cape Research Ethics board raised similar concerns prior to granting ethical clearance for this study. I accordingly extensively reflected on these issues before embarking on field work.

At the time I conducted fieldwork, my interlocutors believed that a Rwandan 'hit squad' was operating in South Africa. These assertions were premised on the murder in South Africa of Camir Nkurunziza, Kagame's former bodyguard turned critic. Competing 'official' narratives

– from South Africa Police Services (SAPS) and the Rwandan government, regarding Nkurunziza and his colleague's deaths strengthened my participants' intimation the study could be dangerous during the period of field work. While it seemed hazardous, it was also the most opportune time because I could "witness some of the things that are sometimes difficult to articulate" (comment by my participant Sirikare). I was thus very concerned about my safety and that of my participants.

Even though I was psychologically prepared for this study, the realities in the field, as described in the Prologue, were quite distressing. Nordstrom (1997:8-9) argues that the reality of violence in the field can be unsettling and that violence in whatever form possibly burdens the researcher in terms of ensuring that participants' lives are preserved. It had never occurred to me that I would encounter a 'defenceless' soldier. Yet, in time I engaged with a number of vulnerable former soldiers in different situations of possible jeopardy. My naivety regarding soldiers' invincibility probably stemmed from my subconscious essentialist conceptualization of soldiers which was influenced by my own socialization and by the literature (Higate 2000; Woodward 2000; Lande 2007; Maringira 2017) which presents soldiers as indomitable, so to speak. As I intimated above, the incident above with the attack on Major Ghost highlighted Nordstrom's (1997) notion of 'unsettling violence' for me. This event, as well as others that I encountered during fieldwork, appealed to morality and the need to assist participants in certain situations because "which ethnographer would leave their research participants to die or in distress?" (Nordstrom 1997:9).

My methodological inquiry further led me to literature produced by African scholars in the field of military studies in Africa and their nuanced analysis of the African military (Maringira 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017,2018,2019; Mbembe 2001; Brock 2016). This literature presented general understandings of the evolving natures, structures and functions of the military in contemporary Africa.

Finally, I was informed by literature on the ethical challenges of data collection, protection of research participants, confidentiality, the anonymity of respondents and my safety in the field (Goodhand 2000; Mertus 2009). This body of literature sensitized me to the gendered security concerns of women conducting research in dangerous spaces. I learned that an increasing number of ethnographers were addressing the risk of sexual harassment, rape, abduction or even death (Bleen 2002; Winkler 1995). I subsequently made it a point to regularly inform my

supervisor, co-supervisor and family about my exact location as my participants and I navigated the field.

Ethnographic design

The sensitivity of my research topic as well as my research questions demanded different and flexible field techniques from those that are normally associated with anthropological enquiries which would be set in specific locales as propounded by, e.g. Malinowski in 1922 (Gobo 2008). Following Nordstrom's (1994) approach of 'ethnography of a warzone', where the researcher does not situate their study in a particular locale because of the dangers of encampment in war zones but follows the participants using the theme of war; and drawing on Vigh's (2009) concept of social navigation, I worked with what I called 'ethnography of the hunted' where the theme of being 'hunted' rather than a specific place situated my study. Navigation activities and people replaced the place as an ethnographic 'site' and produced what can be referred to as 'moving ethnography'. Secondly, the army deserters in my study do not live together or in a particular place as a collective, like the Somalis of Mayfair, Johannesburg would do, for example (Jinnah 2010). Because of being frequently on the run they do not really ground their 'selves' – their lives, and their livelihoods in a single place.

Therefore, using a 'deep hangouts' (Brown 1991, 2002) ethnographic method I engaged in eighteen months of deep interaction and engagement with thirty Rwandan army deserters in Cape Town and Johannesburg, I was, to all intents, included in their life-worlds - beyond their spoken narratives. Such interaction also involved visits to cemeteries, the deserters' homes, work stations, memorial spaces where their colleagues had been murdered, funerals, weddings and braai parties. These spaces provided natural, authentic settings where I captured emic insights, biographies and experiences of the Rwandan army deserters from the time they joined the military to the time they left. This approach further enabled me to gain an understanding of the way in which they live their lives constantly alert and on the move.

We also had time to talk and I was able to elicit rich emic narratives of the army deserters' post-military lives – particularly their fear-laden and precarious journeys into exile and the ways in which they navigated Rwandan state surveillance, its associated uncertainties in South Africa. Repeated social engagements with my participants enabled me to observe part of their hidden lives and to experience some of their world as I walked and drove around with them

34

settings where they were trying to make a living, be social and to blend in. Similar to traditional participant observation, 'deep hangout' allowed for an engrossed observation of my participant's life-worlds and for the subsequent 'thick' and nuanced description of the army deserters' circumstances and experiences and other practices expressed through ideas, attitudes, and behaviours with regards to navigating state surveillance in South Africa. It is on the basis of such deep engagements and the richness of the data I gathered using life histories, in-depth interviews, group discussions (in Johannesburg only) and interactive observation methods that I argue that my study was indeed an ethnography.

One of my major ethical challenges was that most of my research participants refused to sign consent forms or to be audio recorded. In fact, one of the ground rules was that I should not have any recording devices on while I was with these ex-soldiers. This 'rule' was put in place because they worried that the recordings might be stolen somehow. This rule stemmed from a previous attack that I encountered during fieldwork for my Master's dissertation: I was with an army deserter, we were busy with an interview when we were mugged. My cell phone and money was grabbed.   After this incident I would never use a recorder, or my phone to record. I carried a small notebook and pens. I wrote down as much as possible, but at times I used words or short sentences, mnemonics or even the memory of visual images, sounds, feelings etc. as tools to jog my memory as I often had to sit down and write up fieldnotes only once I reached my own accommodation. I constantly returned to my participants for clarification and verification of accounts, observations and interpretations. This reiterative processes allowed me to validate the research material I had gathered.

 Ethnographic Navigation

Vigh's (2009) concept of social navigation was particularly important as a methodological tool in this study. My study participants do interact with each other at times, yet they live their lives with the ongoing anticipation of potential discovery and violence: the assumed presence of Rwandan state agents represented an underlying current that my participants responded to in their daily lives. Thus, guided by the theme of 'being hunted' which entailed movement; it was necessary for me to move my study towards more flexible methodologies given that my participants were not only highly mobile but they were in difficult and uncertain situations too.

My key interlocutors, Sirikare, Soda and Major Ghost worked hard to contact their compatriots who were spread throughout Cape Town and in Johannesburg once it became apparent that I would have problems to get a large number of participants in Cape Town. Moreover, these two cities were regarded as the 'red' spots for attacks on Rwandan army deserters in South Africa. Yet, the for my interlocutors, the diversity of population in both Cape Town and Johannesburg, as well as the somewhat normativity and dialiness of violence in these cities, provide camouflage both for army deserters as well as for their 'hunters'. These cities further enriched my study with the much needed diverse spatial experiences of exile in the host society.

In addition to Soda, Sirikare and Major Ghost, I was assisted by Dhiniwe. She had close ties with some Rwandan army deserters. With the help of these four people I was able to identify and recruit thirty (30) army deserters, 16 in Johannesburg and 14 Cape Town. I used snowball and purposive sampling techniques (Klassen et al 2012). These sampling methods enabled me to access the closed and deeply suspicious networks of army deserters in both cities. During my MA research I had to go through an arduous vetting processes and prove my reliability in order to earn the army deserters' trust. They believed that they were in a vulnerable position: as a result the invested much effort in scanning their social environments for perilous potentialities that could be embedded in their surroundings (see also Vigh 2018: 487). Sirikare vouched for my trustworthiness and also assured others that I was not a member of any government agency and that the study was purely for academic purposes. Cognisant of the sensitivity of my study and in the interest of security for myself and my participants, Sergeant Sirikare advised me to keep Rwandan political-speak to minimum. Being seen as politically neutral enabled me to learn a great dealt about army deserters' subjective experiences in both the RDF and in exile.

Nevertheless, the apparent ease with which I accessed the field at times gave me a false sense of 'incorporation' into this closed network. However, when incidents of violence happened, as described in the Prologue, I was reminded that hanging out with the army deserters for extended periods did not necessarily grant me insider status: it nevertheless allowed me to gain privileged knowledge about their lives. I understood that I could not participate in some of their activities. My positionality as an outsider was constituted in terms of the following categories; I was a female, civilian, non-Rwandan researcher. Indeed, my participants viewed me in the same light. However, spending a lot of time within their circles and participating in some of their social activities such as being there when violence had occurred, drinking, smoking weed, visiting

36

their families in times of distress earned me a 'friend' status which enabled me to build up a level of 'intersubjectivity' with them (Tankink and Vysma 2006, 1): the shared subjective experiences of participants and researcher which enabled our interactions to happen, for us to "construct meaning" together, in context and on a non-judgmental basis.

Because I was an outsider my participants felt free to share intense, personal experiences with me: despite being uncomfortable to talk about it with some of their compatriots. I never broke such confidences. During these fraught conversations, participants often said, "I have never told anyone this." They nonetheless stressed that they found such conversations therapeutic. It would be deceiving to think that I was told virtually everything about these army deserters' experiences in the RDF or here in South Africa. Even though they opened up to me, these men were still actively engaged in concealing their past military lives and experiences because that was the best way for them to remain safe in exile. The army deserters were often cagey, nervous and fearful that state agents would keep track of us and apprehend or attack them when we sat done somewhere to have interviews. I know that this nervousness probably limited my ability to access some information.

In doing this research, I entered the 'I' world – the backstage, the 'covert world', the 'silenced world', yet was able to explore salient aspects of Rwandan army deserters' 'living' experiences in South Africa. My desire to understand my research participants' post-military lives in the host society took me on roller coaster ride; fun at times, fast-paced, dangerous, terrifying and constraining. My engagements with the army deserters were guided by their own efforts to maintain safety. Some of the army deserters were attacked during the time that I was conducting fieldwork. The study revealed in many ways the hard realities of the army deserters' post military lives in South Africa: being on the run, living with conflict, fear and uncertainty which, in turn, have (re)produced an extremely fluid military identity.

The field: a 'sensory environment'

The volatility of my field sites required the greatest degree of flexibility on my part and coordination with my participants. Logistical plans were an ongoing process and I had to constantly reconsider ethics and conceptual decisions which were appropriate to the demands of the field. I also developed the art of 'scanning' and navigating the field just as the army deserters did. It was the best way to navigate hazards in the field. My participants taught me

to engage all my senses as we navigated spaces of fun, spaces of suffering (Kalema 2017), spaces of death and dangerous spaces.

I must say that my '*being there*' (Geertz 1988) as a researcher had confining effects for some of my participants. I realized that in some instances my participants would try hard to conceal their dire economic circumstances. A case in point was when Iscariot told us that one of my participants, Ishmael, had been chased out of the house because he had been unable to pay his rent. A Mozambican friend, who was renting a balcony space, offered to share it with Ishmael. When asked, Ishmael said everything was fine. I also learned that, despite being far from the Rwandan opposition political epicentre, participants in Cape Town were more paranoid and secretive than those in Johannesburg. The latter were quite open and spoke quite freely. I will unpack this difference later in the thesis.

Whereas I could not hold group discussions in Cape Town, focus group discussions were a good tool in Johannesburg because the army deserters there were much younger and they seemed to have a stronger bond compared to their Cape Town based compatriots. In addition to that, they pointed out that Johannesburg was big and enabled them to hide in many places.

According to Simmone (2016) the field is a 'sensory environment': in both cities I felt that my participants observed, scanned and scrutinized their environments with great regularity with the aim of establishing any threats. In Cape Town there is quite a large population of former Rwandese, who are rumoured to have perpetrated violence during the genocide. Rumours of spies having been 'inserted' into the group and in the setting circulated constantly. For example, once I met a deserter in Cape Town. We spent a bit of time together, but he suddenly said, in the middle of a conversation "We must leave immediately". We quickly moved away in opposite directions. I suddenly felt exposed and vulnerable. In Cape Town I would sometimes arrange to meet a participant at a certain time and place. The he would call me at the last moment to tersely inform me that the location had been changed. Once we were able to meet up I would be told that this disruption of plans had been necessitated by potential danger or because of rumours about spies knowing where we are supposed to meet. It was deeply unsettling and frightening for me.

The field in Johannesburg was also marked by systematic vigilance but participants seemed to be less paranoid than in Cape Town. In Johannesburg army deserters emphasised that Rwandan

38

people were dispersed over the large city. This allowed deserters some degree of freedom to 'mess around' - as long as they stayed vigilant and the places they went to, stayed in or worked, or the people they interacted with, did not pose a threat. Deserters in Johannesburg spoke and acted apparently more freely, yet it was simultaneously evident that they lived with an acute sense that they are in potential danger and they remained hyper-vigilant.

Ethnographic hazards

During field work, I engaged with people who bore deep physical and emotional wounds that could be seen and felt. Some of the violence that these army deserters have experienced could not be articulated but it was inscribed in their silences (Alexander 2007). The study certainly invoked memories of past traumatic experiences - an issue for which I had to be prepared and about which I was continuously concerned. However, none of my participants acknowledged to me that they were traumatized (in a psychological sense), let alone accepted my stated willingness and pre-arrangement to be able to refer them to professionals for counselling if necessary: they all associated seeking such help with weakness. Over time I realised that such refusal to seek professional help for emotional stress can be understood as 'mortification of the emotional self' imbued into them through military training (Lande 2007). All the men in the study had been deeply socialized by the army in this way. It also is linked to common conceptualizations of military masculinities which emphasize emotional and physical strength in men. The general feeling was that trained soldiers do not need counselling.

The question of how I could even begin to deal with other people's devastating circumstances of human violation when nothing in my experience had prepared me for traumatic fieldwork, troubled me. As Bloch (2012) suggests, despite having left violent spaces, people often carry the violence of such spaces with them. During conversations with my participants, I could feel their deep-seated hurt when they opened up and shared intense and harrowing narrations and physical manifestations concerning their lives (both present and past). The emotional wounding of their depressing experiences was in a way transferred to me: to this day I carry the images of unsettling scars, wounds and fear that I saw during fieldwork. These injuries and lesions of my research participants were very visceral, stuck in my mind and made the writing process most aggravating for me. Therefore, I opted to start by writing up the study methodology as a way of letting out this hurt. I also witnessed some hazardous moments when some of my participants were physically attacked but did not report it to the police for fear of

exposing themselves in the process. I found it hard to accept their choices in this regard, especially when they were harmed and brutalized.

In *Surviving fieldwork*, Howel (1990) emphasizes that anthropologists sometimes suffer interpersonal attacks during research. Of all hazards that I had read about, I feared the risk of disappearance the most - and having no one who knows about my whereabouts. It was a possibility because I was dealing with a fraught, highly politicised topic. This was highlighted for me during the early days of doing fieldwork when I interviewed and worked with Espion and Iscariot. These men had given me what can be regarded as emic accounts of the Rwandan external security organization which is a part of the RDF's spy wing (Prunier 2006). However, these two men subsequently fell out because of allegations of 'crossing the floor'. Espion was accused of spying on army deserters and of giving information to the pro-government's positive diaspora. My lead interlocutors Soda, Sirikare and Iscariot became convinced that Espion was tracking me.

This suspicion was intensified when we observed Espion in most of the places where we had confidentially agreed to meet. Sirikare was deeply suspicious and concerned. The thought of being followed frightened me immensely. I became overly worried about my safety. I informed my supervisors and they suggested that I stay out of the field for a while. In August 2019, Sirikare, who was adamant that he would "get to the bottom of this" constant appearance of Espion in places which we had thought were 'safe' and 'confidential', showed me a photograph of Tensen, who allegedly had been trailing me. I had briefly met Tensen once with Espion (who, in turn, was now under suspicion). I was especially terrified when Tensen walked through our department one day. He was not a student and according to my Rwandan colleagues he had no business being at the university. I informed Sirikare that I had seen Tensen in my department on campus. Sirikare decided to call Espion immediately, inform him that he (Sirikare) was aware that Espion and Tensen were trying to get to other deserters through me. In the telephone conversation, Sirikare said "stop following innocent people around. If you're a man, go for the real targets, what are you afraid of?" Sirikare, Iscariot and I subsequently decided that I should open a case with the South African Police Services (SAPS) once we had ascertained that Espion and Tensen were most likely tracking me (and thereby trailing them).

I knew I could not possibly pose a threat to the Rwandan state and yet I felt stalked and exposed because I was conducting research in 'closed contexts' where the topic and spaces are not easily

accessible or have the character of closure, intimidation and incarceration (Koch 2013). I read a great deal about Rwandese politics and according to Tshimba (2015) the Rwanda state is continuously in a high state of paranoia and normally expends energy on pursuing 'even perceived slights' (Tshimba 2015:3). This resonated with my situation towards the end of 2019. I later established that there was a steadily growing '*prying economy*' among Rwandans in Cape Town, in which people eked out a living by spying on their compatriots then passing on information mainly to those in the perceived 'positive diaspora'. This was fast becoming a normal state of affairs in Cape Town.

Because of this, I made it a point to regularly inform my family and supervisors about my whereabouts and safety. This became a standard procedure each time I went to the field. My supervisor shared with me a tracking software app. to use when I went to the field so that she could have an idea of my exact location, in case something went wrong - then she would know where to start searching for me. Although committed to maintain confidentiality and research ethics, my supervisors were also becoming alarmed and concerned about my safety. Since my interlocutors were always looking over their shoulders I also became apprehensive and this, in turn, affected those close to me. My six year old niece, Amanda, hated it each time I told her that I was going to the field. *Kufield kwenyu kunondityisa tete* Flo, *hamuna kumwe here kwekuenda kufield kwacho?* (Your field terrifies me aunt Flo, don't you have another field to go to?). Amanda angrily made this remark whenever I told her that I was leaving for the field.

Fear striking blackmail by interlocutor

As indicated above, prior to doing fieldwork, I became more aware of the potential risks posed to ethnographers in certain fields (Bleen 2002; Winkler 1995). Nonetheless I naïvely only anticipated potential problems from people I did not know.

One night in September 2019, I received a call from my study participant, Soda. He had been able to arrange for a meeting with another possible participant the following day at 12noon. He indicated that we would meet with the prospective interviewee on our campus. I have known Soda since 2017 when I was doing fieldwork for my Masters dissertation and I trusted him. The following morning, I made my way to campus where I met with Sergeant Soda. He said that the person we would be meeting was in the CHS (Community and Health Sciences) Building, so we would go there to meet him.

41

When we entered the CHS building I was shocked when I realized that we were not meeting a potential participant: instead Soda had, under the misrepresentation that we were sexual partners, booked for HIV tests for both of us without my knowledge or consent. For a moment I froze as I tried to understand what was going on. I asked why Soda had done this and his response was most offensive to me. He said that he had done it because he "wants me" and he felt that I owed him "a bit of gratitude in the form of sex" for assisting me to find research participants. I could not believe what I was hearing. Disturbed by this I reminded him that I was not his girlfriend or partner and that I had no business testing for anything with him. He shamelessly stated, "we are not in any intimate relationship however, I am of the view that my contribution in your research needs to be recognized somehow". I told him that his behaviour was sexual harassment, but he did not see it in that light.

I had never expected that he would think that I owed him any sexual compensation for assisting me. I would have understood if he had charged money for helping me. I felt betrayed and dishonoured and I was very disturbed for quite a long time. Thoughts of the large number of women who had been brutally murdered and raped in Cape Town, during the time I was doing fieldwork, crossed my mind and I shuddered at the thought of ever being in the company of Sergeant Soda again. I informed Iscariot and Sirikare because these were two people who were closest to Sergeant Soda. I also informed my mentee, my colleague, my supervisor and co-supervisor and my family in case something bad happened to me and I would not be there to give an account of what would have happened to me. I reported the matter to the Gender unit. However when I approached the campus Wellness Centre to retrieve information about the aforementioned booking for an HIV test, I could not get any assistance because Soda had booked for such tests for him and his "partner", the record did not state that I was the latter. The Centre could not, in line with the clinical ethics and confidentiality associated with HIV testing, assist me further in my need to provide 'evidence' of what had happened. I found comfort in the fact that there were some people who knew about the matter. When Sergeant Soda found out that I had told people who knew and trusted him, he was furious and started threatening me. He said he would tell my research participants that I was in fact a spy in order to endanger me and to harm my study. I severed all ties with Soda and I continued with my study without his help. Yet the potential threat to female researchers is known in anthropology and during fieldwork (Clancy et al 2014; Howell 1992; Schmerler 2017). Cognizant of such dangers, especially since Henrietta Schmerler, a student of Ruth Benedict, was raped and murdered during fieldwork, Franz Boas stated "It is dreadful. How shall we now dare to send

42

a young woman after this? And still. Is it not necessary and right?" (Mead 1958:408). Indeed, doing research among army deserters was threatening in many ways and there were moments when I felt helpless and wanted to abandon the study, but I had strong academic, social and emotional support systems that enabled me to weather the ethnographic hazards that I have highlighted in this section.

Reflexivity: rethinking snowballing

Even though I was reflexive during fieldwork, the fallout with Soda, one of my long-time participants, gave me an urge to revisit some of those participants who had been initially forthcoming and helpful participants but had suddenly been labelled as 'state security agents'. In my earlier encounters with them I had mainly used life histories as a research tool since it allowed them to tell me about their life stories. However, in my follow up interviews with them I was more curious and sought to understand how they had earned labels such as 'informer' or 'state agent' even though they denied this. The result was insightful as I was able to elicit what Stoler (2009: 20) referred to as 'emergent and awkward, sometimes suspended and unfulfilled narratives' that, from time to time, competed with what Soda had told me about these same people. There were variants between the accounts shared when I was alone with the army deserters and some of the narratives elicited when Soda had acted as translator for me (even though I had 'trained' him beforehand to translate 'literally"). In subsequent analysis I found that some of these 'minor' stories provided another way of understanding the participants' being in exile. When these contradictions were read together, they produced a complex picture of army deserters in exile. Revisiting my participants after the incident with Soda revealed that 'ethnographic seduction' can actually be embedded in the snowballing method and in the process of translation. I learned to check and double check when asking questions.

Conclusion

By focusing on 'hunted' and mobile army deserters in a politically charged and violent field, this study contributes to anthropological methodology in that it departs from conventional ethnography which situates studies in particular locales and in situated practices that are somehow fixed. Allowing the theme of 'being hunted' to replace locale resulted in what I call the 'moving ethnography' because the study always moved with my participants who were constantly on the run as they evaded Rwandan state security agents in South Africa. 'Moving

43

ethnography' can also be understood for its theoretical and ethical undercurrents in that it engages with the sensory aspects of ethnography especially after having witnessed, at close range, the violence, vulnerability and squalid conditions that the army deserters experienced as they navigated state surveillance and state sponsored terror in the host society.

Doing research amongst Rwandan army deserters was perplexing but worthwhile. These people are not an easily accessible group largely because of the animosity between the army deserters living in exile and the current government in Rwanda which perceives them as a military and political threat. Drawing on the cordial relations that I maintained with participants in past projects and with the assistance of colleagues who are connected to Rwandan army deserters I was able to access thirty army deserters for this study. Deeply hanging out with these former soldiers inserted me into their daily settings and I was able to interview, discuss informally, and to participate in some of their activities and also observe them as they navigated exile. The various ethnographic methods used in this study enabled me to traverse the textual, the spoken, the lived, the imagined or surreal, the silenced and the hidden worlds of my participants. These methods also enabled me to draw comparisons between the spoken narratives and the ways in which my research participants did life as exiles in South Africa.

The violence that I witnessed and heard about in the field was sickening but I was determined to explore it and to write about it because at the heart of this thesis is the need to show the ways in which Rwandan army deserters navigate the post-military life through shifting military identities in the context of exile where they contend with alleged state sponsored terror. Far from 'sensationalizing violence' (Ruchi 2019) in the host society, the various forms of violence discussed are a salient part of the survival processes therefore, it had to be written, sometimes in thick descriptions as opposed to 'thin descriptions' or 'ethnographic refusal' (ibid) which for me, are tantamount to 'field or ethnographic repression'. Indeed, at times I felt like I was doing militant ethnography which sought to illuminate the bad experiences of Rwandan army deserters living in South Africa and I got my inspiration from Scheper-Hughes' (2004) work on which her study led to the uncovering of the illicit body parts industry in Brazil, South Africa and India.

While being a non-Rwandan female researcher enabled my participants to share deeply and speak freely about their experiences, some people were convinced that I was spying on them or were in contact with others whom they regarded as a threat. As a result I was at some point

44

followed during fieldwork. My positionality at a certain point made me susceptible to sexual harassment by a study participant who was tempted to take advantage of his privileged position of knowing army deserters. I must reiterate that the risk of conducting research in politically charged topics in South Africa is real and female researchers need to conduct such studies being mindful of the acute dangers of harm and harassment in the field by interlocutors or even non-participants for that matter.

Conducting research in closed contexts is akin to working with a 'self' or a sensory environment wherein a researcher needs to be as flexible and judicious as they possibly can largely because they constantly have to make conceptual decisions in an almost ad-hoc manner. Some of the decisions made during filed work included having focus group discussions in addition to in –depth interviews, tagging along with my research participants to outings and funerals. Decisions about the numbers of people to have discussions with, where these were to be held and for how long were a constant feature of my engagements with participants. The field pretty much dictated how I engaged with it. And in the case of 'secretive' Cape Town, I was largely stuck with life histories and in –depth interviews. I had tried to follow de Castro's (2002) argument that nativity is mutual between the researcher and the participants, also I endeavoured to understand my research participants' lives in the host society, they, in turn, expertly examined my being around them as they scanned for threats that I could possibly pose to them. What was important was the manner in which we attained intersubjectivity (Tankink and Vysma 2006). While some of participants and I would contribute towards the buying of whiskey such as Jack Daniels, Ciroc or Glenfiddich and weed, my poise and open mindedness earned me a friend status which enabled me to gather a lot of information.

Finally, conducting fieldwork among Rwandan army deserters where violence and the certainty of uncertainty characterized social interaction this study found that being in exile did not guarantee these former military men the ontological security they expected to find in the host society. Rather they are in a constant struggle of evading state surveillance by all means even though they sometimes fail and are injured, maimed or killed. These conversations are discussed in greater detail throughout the dissertation.

CHAPTER THREE

Deserting the Military: Journeying into exile

Introduction

This chapter examines the narratives of army deserters concerning their journeys into exile to South Africa. I use social navigation as an analytical lens. I sought to understand the following: first, their reasons for deserting the Rwandan military, as well as to get a sense of their experiences of the journey to South Africa. It is worth noting that the narratives given by participants in this study do not necessarily provide a complete account of the Rwandan military. Their reflections on and representations of their experiences in the army provide an entry point from which to understand what deserters perceived as a departure from the ethics of 'military professionalism' (Huntington 1957; Harries-Jenkins 1990; Maringira 2017) by the RDF. Secondly, the journey itself gives me a unique frame of analysis to understand the ambiguities of army desertion and helps in understanding the risks taken and spaces navigated in the process. The aim is to analyse the complexity of desertion from the RDF as well as to give insight into the vulnerabilities and resilience of these deserters. Ultimately, such understandings help me to tease out the multi-layered and multi-si(gh)ted (Kulligwoski 2012) process of transitioning from military to post-military life in a context of becoming an exile. While exile is a form of forced mobility or migration it has particular historical, biographical, psychological, socio-economic and even embodied realities for those forced into this state.

When the men in this study deserted from the army, they navigated many associated dangers. The journey became a dark experience of loss of social ties, social identity and connectedness, as well an emotional death (Králová 2015). The notion of a journey indicates that it is not a simple linear movement from one space to the other. Instead, it "moves and it stalls" (Innes 2016; 265), and as Vigh (2009) indicates, it is more like navigating and wayfaring.

The journey of flight to another country is at times interspersed by a temporary sense of relief and an imagination of a new 'future', yet paradoxically, a beginning of other struggles. I argue that the journey to exile is an on-going process: it is subjective and constituted through varied experiences of identity reconstruction, social interactions and violence (sometimes) and it only ends when or if the army deserter attains a subjective sense of peace or lack of fear of possible discovery and prosecution or persecution.

This study engages with debates that see the soldier not only as bearing operative obligations but as a citizen who has agency - the capacity to chart their own way out of the military institution when their relationship with the army ceases being mutually beneficial (see Woodward 2008). It further develops the somewhat essentialist conceptualization of army desertion as the physical absence of a soldier from their appointed work station (Fantina 2006; Koehler et al 2016). I do so by using Koehler et al's concept of 'networks' in analyzing the desertion process and to infer that Rwandan military institution has '*quasi-deserters*' that is, soldiers operating within the system to facilitate other soldiers' physical desertion using military resources. I draw on Tim's (2005) ideas of the 'great escape' to show that though the RDF has a sterling reputation of being one of the finest and toughest military institutions in Africa (Beswick 2014), it is not escape-proof.

Use of theoretical insights in this chapter

Since army deserters view and experience their journey as one of going into exile, or of being forced into exile, I want to pause first on the work of Edward Said (2001) again. He largely links exile to expulsion, stigma, feelings of loneliness and spirituality (Ferreira 2019). In anthropology Malkki (1995) and Ferreira (2019) argue that exile and refugee are not clear or demarcated domains since people may experience a variety of political and historical issues which contribute to their being in exile. Their subsequent circumstances and realities might also vary. Nevertheless, the issue of exile has often been submerged in anthropology into a focus on diaspora (Ferreira 2019). For the purpose of my own thesis, and as indicated before, since the deserters see themselves as exiles, I will, like Ferreira (2019:22) use this concept more anthropologically to attend to the deserters' narratives and experiences of "flows, mobilities, identity (re)configurations and hybridizations...and engagements in a multitude of territories". As indicated above, I also draw extensively on Vigh's (2009; 2011; 2018) work on social navigation to make sense of the practices of the army deserters. I argue that, once they have deserted, their lives are underpinned by the perpetual anticipation of violence. The expectation of unpleasant eventualities breeds fear, mistrust, insecurity, hyper-sensitivity, and vigilance (Ibid), and these all determine how deserters traverse physical and social spaces in their journey into exile. It makes them engage with the world as if it were a celestial configuration since they act upon the invisible and absent as if it were palpable (Vigh & Turner 2006; Vigh 2011). I borrow the deserters' concept of *igihuha* (rumours) and locate it in the theory of social navigation to demonstrate how 'intelligence' shared within deserter circles influences how they

frame and conceptualize their world. I also make use of Foucault's (1977) panoptical discipline in exploring Vigh's vision of social action and what underlies it. I specifically deploy Foucault to show that surveillance by Rwandan state agents is effective because it creates subjectivities among the deserters: subjectivities which heighten hyper-vigilance and determine social action. I will also demonstrate how surveillance is dialectical in that 'the eye that sees' is also seen by the deserters, either physically or experientially. Lastly, I do not view deserters as helpless victims, yet I also try to show that the vulnerabilities of these deserters probably result from and reflect the Rwandan government's own insecurities.

The 'great escape'

In Rwanda, army desertion is not a singular military offense but also very political and falls, as discussed before, within the ambit of the government's framework of countering 'genocide ideology' (Eltringham and Hoyweghen 2002). Desertion warrants punishment of the highest order.

The men who participated in my study joined the military as teenagers or young adults between late 1994 and 2016. Some of my study participants joined the army from fear of the RPF, as a result of familial pressure or because they wanted retribution for the genocide. Others wished to defend the country from politicians and external threats and basically did not want a repeat of the genocide. Some joined the military as an opportunity to ameliorate their dire economic circumstances.

All of them said they had a change of heart when they realized that the RDF was embedded in politics and was founded on 'military patrimonialism' (Lutterbeck 2013). The RDF allegedly had a patronage driven institutional culture which promoted unfairness, divisions, exploitation, vindictiveness and violations of soldiers' human rights (see Brock 2016). This is perhaps what Maringira (2017) meant when he stated that the military in postcolonial Africa has trended towards unprofessionalism. Army deserters in this study contend that moving from the Rwanda Defence Forces (RDF) to exile can be understood as a 'great escape' (Tim 2005). The idea of the great escape emanated from the March 1944 escape of 76 allied aviators (prisoners of war) from the Stalag Luft III prison which the Nazi's thought to be escape-proof. It is the enterprise in planning, coordinating the escape, courage and the few stories of having successfully moved from Stalag Luft III prison that drew me to this idea. While the RDF is nothing close to the

48

Stalag Luft III prison, I am of the view that the documented evidence about the diligence, efficiency, effectiveness and disciplined (Red her 2015; Beswick 2014; Reyntjens 2011) nature of the RDF gave me a picture of an escape-proof military. Yet the existence of Rwandan army deserters in South Africa pointed seemingly to something to the contrary. I speak of the 'great escape' in my thesis because deserting the RDF, then moving to exile, required a particular courage, resilience and coordination that was on another level.

In this section, I highlight accounts of the journeys taken by army deserters from Rwanda to South Africa. I decided that the narratives presented in this chapter are some of the momentous stories of persecution and resilience that shape the argument that I make in this chapter, i.e. that the journey to exile is an on-going circular process which is simultaneously subjective while being constituted through varied experiences of identity reconstruction, social interactions and violence. It is a state of being and not necessarily just a passage from one country to another (Johnson 2013). The graphic descriptions of the spaces navigated, the near-death encounters along the way, and the negotiations for freedom by participants in this study essentially describe the proverbial 'great escape'. The selected narratives further enable us to understand the precarity that, throughout this thesis, hovers over the lives of army deserters. For Woodward (2008:2), narratives told by soldiers are useful sources because the "soldiers tell us what they think we should know" and often these are narratives that otherwise would have remained ingrained in their minds.

Turbo's escape

While chronicling the reasons and/or historical imperatives for Turbo's escape from the military, and eventually from Rwanda, I highlight the apparent exercise of 'nervous sociality', hypersensitivity and perceptivity (Vigh 2009; 2011; 2018) on the part of the state and army deserters and how these reflect the relationship between social insecurity and social action. I aim to demonstrate the bi-directionality of social navigation i.e. the seeds in the army deserters' social action in being in constant suspicion and fear of the government and the army reflect the state's insecurities about its own citizens' perceived political action. Turbo is a survivor of the 1994 genocide. He had lived in Rwanda all his life. According to Turbot people like him are referred to as *sokepia:* a genocide survivor of Tutsi origin, but who had never left Rwanda. People like him have to answer the question of how they survived the genocide if they were not collaborators with *genocidaires* (people who perpetrated the genocide)? Rather than being

honoured as survivors, *sokepia* carry a burden: they have to prove how they managed to do so without being complicit (see also Mamdani 2002; Kuradusenge 2016). While disturbing, the question about the so-called *sokepia* having survived the genocide without necessarily having participated in the genocidal killings reveals the continued insecurities of that seem to characterise state as is held by (Jones and Murray2018).

A brief explanation of Rwanda's politicization of identities is important here. According to Mamdani (2002), after the genocide, the Rwandan government embarked on a national identity (re)construction project in which it sought to unify the nation by doing away with ethnic identities (see also Hintjens 2015). The post-conflict Rwandan national identity was, however, underpinned by the 'genocide framework' (see chapter 1, *Rwanda's Sensitivity to dissent inside and outside the country*) which replaced previous ethnic identities with a singular national identity (ibid) which nonetheless had underlying 'political identities' such as perpetrators (Hutus) and victims (Tutsi). Such identities burden Hutus with perpetual 'perpetrator' identities on the one hand while perpetuating victimhood among the Tutsis on the other (Kuradusenge 2016). It also justifies or ignores the atrocities perpetrated by Tutsis against the Hutu and Twa. While the victim or survivor identity would generally be thought to mean anyone who survived the genocide in Rwanda, Turbo, a participant in my study, was of the opinion that in everyday Rwandan speak, it has become a hyphenated identity with two broad categories i.e. 'victim-survivor' and 'survivor-suspect'. Victim-survivor labels are for those Tutsis who have a Ugandan diasporic background. The 'survivor-suspect' are those Tutsis who never left Rwanda but survived the genocide either by fleeing into the mountains or hiding. The latter is the category where Turbo fits. According to Turbo, the *sokepia* are conceptually bundled together with the 'perpetrator' more than they are aligned to the 'victim' categories.

While serving in the army, Turbo experienced serious health problems, particularly during his deployment at Rwanda's border with the DRC. After contracting Ebola on the border, and being hospitalised, Turbo learnt in 2013 that he would be redeployed to the same area. He stated that:

> When I heard that I would be redeployed to the Rwanda – DRC border where I had previously fallen ill from Ebola a few years prior, I approached my commander whom I expected to understand my request for redeployment on medical grounds. When he rejected my request for redeployment somewhere else, I started planning my escape…

I could not risk getting Ebola, again. The DRC has Ebola, you know. So I went ahead with pre-deployment training but I knew that I was going to run away… (Personal Interview, 25 August 2019, Johannesburg).

For Turbo, deserting from the Rwandan army was not only taking flight from the military, but also an escape from deployment towards an area of disease. Turbo's case shows how past experiences of suffering influenced his sensitivity to negative potentialities (see Vigh 2010). Turbo's actions also corroborate Good's (1990) assertion that narratives of illness are joined with bodily experience in shaping responses to human suffering. I find Vigh's (2006) ideas concerning the relationship between the structure of an organization and the agency of members useful when trying to understand Turbo's decision to desert from the military in order to preserve his health. I say this because, according to the Canada Immigration and Refugee Board (2016), the RDF vests a lot of power in unit commanders, who arbitrarily determine the deployment and disciplining of human resources in their units. When misappropriated, the power vested in unit commanders reportedly makes them insensitive to the plight of their men, leading to disaffection and insubordination by soldiers. Turbo stated that:

I simply did not report for duty on the day of deployment. But before that, I planned the escape with my younger brother who had done a lot of research for me regarding escape routes. When I left the army, I lived in the forest for some days because I was waiting for my helpers to give me a green light to proceed to Burundi (Personal Interview, 25 August 2019, Johannesburg).

Even though Turbo suggests, in his excerpt, that he 'simply' did not report for duty on the day he was supposed to be deployed, the fact that he did not move immediately into Burundi despite having information about escape routes, drew my attention to the complexity of army desertion. It is a process which is mediated by deserter guides, strong networks and 'helpers' who give deserters signals as they embark on this journey. Thus far, Turbo's narratives on what necessitated his decision to desert the military teach us three lessons regarding social navigation. Firstly, we see pre-emptive measures on his part. Pre-emption is a very important concept in social navigation raised by Vigh (2011) in his analysis of the Bissau and Belfast cases. He states that the vulnerable, because of their chronic expectation of negative potentialities (existing potentiality), see the seeds of their future demise in a seemingly non-volatile present. This 'existing potentiality' is defined by Agamben (1999) as an absent subject

51

which has the ability to do something. Turbo, and others as we will see, was able to see the absent in the present and engaged in pre-emptive action i.e. his desertion and how he actualized it. His escape is underlined by his ability to turn a potentiality into an actuality (Vigh 2011, 2018). Secondly, we start to see the importance of rumours - *igihuha* (through networks and 'helpers'), in this case 'intelligence' on escape routes, as a vehicle for social navigation.

A detailed discussion on the ways in which the journeys of the army deserters were mediated will follow. In the meantime, I give accounts of the great 'escape' from torture and death according to Hunk, Jay Zee and Iscariot. While detailing these escapes, the chapter continues to draw on social navigation: anticipation of negative potentialities, ability to see the absent in the present, suspicion, rumours and pre-emption. The following narratives and discussion foreground the importance of rumours (*igihuha*) as a radar in navigating negative potentialities. It also continues to show constant fear and suspicion among deserters in a context where the seemingly obvious is less evident as potentialities (Vigh & Turner 2006; Agamben 1999; Vigh 2011). We will see the world through the eyes of the deserters where the absent is more palpable than the present and manifest.

Hunk's escape

Members of Hunk's family lived in Uganda before the genocide, while others were in the diaspora in Uganda (and joined the Rwandan Patriotic Army or RPA). Survivors from his family fled to Uganda where they stayed in a refugee camp. They eventually returned to Rwanda afterwards. Hunk was 16 years old when he joined the RPA. According to him the RPA demanded at the time that one person from each family – those who had returned from exile in Uganda - had to join the army. Hunk understood this as a form of conscription, and as the only male child, his family decided that he had to take this responsibility. By doing so, they wished to protect his sister from having to join the military. Hunk was first stationed as part of the local defence troops.

Between 1998 and 1999 he was moved to the infantry and was later deployed to the DRC during the second Congo war, which is part of what has come to be known as 'Africa's world war' (Prunier 2008). After the DRC war, he was deployed on peace keeping missions in other countries. According to Hunk, movement within military units was initially easy because "my Ugandan diasporic background gave me automatic access to promotion and privilege". He also

used every possible opportunity to improve his academic and military qualifications while in service.

Despite his privilege, Hunk had a poor relationship with his commanding officer. The latter, Hunk thought, deliberately mistreated non-Tutsi soldiers. Hunk stated:

> My commander overdid things, man. He was very cruel. He regularly insulted, beat up and punished soldiers even when it was not necessary, especially soldiers of Hutu origin and the *sopekia*. It pained me. My comrades resisted him and they complained about this abuse every day… So one day I decided to speak to my commander since I had a closer relationship with him. We used to meet in other important circles outside the context of work because of our Ugandan background. Man I was wrong, the guy did not like me either. I got myself into deep trouble (Personal interview, 20 October 2019, Johannesburg)

According to Hunk, ethnic identities have remained alive in the army because of patrimonial networks. This was in contradiction to new laws that prohibited the use or ascription of such identities in Rwanda (Hintjens 2015). Hunk said that he had a 'hearty' discussion with his commander in which he highlighted his colleagues' complaints and respectfully 'cautioned' his immediate boss. What Hunk did here was reminiscent of Woodward's (2008) argument that soldiers fight for one another. However, Hunk quickly found that life became unbearable for him in the military as he was left out of the several circles of privilege. Hunk had over-estimated the influence and perceived cohesion in patronage networks he thought he was part of. These apparently rather served the interests of the commanders and high ranking members of the army and not necessarily the rank and file (see Verweijein 2015). Hunk was excluded from several privileges such as brainstorming dinners at expensive hotels and his name was removed from the peacekeeping missions list of which he was once a part. Hunk recalled that querying his removal from the peacekeeping missions list landed him in even more trouble.

> I had been scheduled to go on a peace keeping mission but my name was removed from the list without any explanation, following the talk with my commander. When I asked my commander what was going on he told me that I would get answers from the boss. At that moment I knew that patronage had gone toxic… About three months after my initial conversation with the commander, my life in the army became very stressful, I

53

then got an order to go to the Military Hospital where I was to meet with our main patron. When I met him, we drove to our military camp. I knew that I was in trouble but I did not expect to get tortured for five days… I do not even want to think or talk about it. I endured electric shocking, being suffocated by having my head covered in plastic while being lashed at the same time. It was a horrific experience. Yet my commander felt that I had neither been punished enough nor learned from that experience. I could tell that he wanted me out of the military, totally. My suspicions were confirmed seven months later when my cousin who works in the intelligence hinted that I might be investigated for allegedly associating with a rebel group, the National Liberation Front (FLN). This could have severe implications for me, given that the main patron had chosen to side with my commander. I could actually have been killed (Personal interview 20 October 2019, Johannesburg)

From the above, I locate three basic ingredients of social navigation starting to take shape in Hunk's life: rumour, suspicion and pre-emption. The 'intelligence' (*igihuha*) regarding a potential investigation on him had heightened his suspicion and anticipation of future violence and informed his movement across the spaces that governed his social life (Vigh 2011). Whilst the veracity of the rumour, for example that Hunk was to be investigated, could not be ascertained the *igihuha*, nevertheless shaped his world view and action. Having already been tortured, death became a present social invisibility (Agamben 1999) for Hunk. Henceforth, any social action he is to take is a pre-emptive: a journey into the future to mitigate the effects of an invisible tide in the recesses of the present times. The excerpt above also intimates ways in which power wielding individuals could manipulate the system in order to settle personal scores.

Hunk's cousin, who worked in intelligence, subsequently informed Hunk that he was in life threatening danger and needed to move fast. Hunk did not have time to plan his escape: he headed for Burundi. Although this route was extremely dangerous, it was the closest country and Hunk knew that some deserters had successfully traversed it. I argue therefore that in Hunk's case *igihuha* framed action. The anticipated violence spawned by rumours was an existential threat that called for vigilance through pre-emption. Hunk engaged with the world in a radically attentive way by discerning threats and fleeing. Thus rumours became a tool in his navigation of subjectively experienced violence. Hunk's action brings to the fore Vigh's (2011) argument that social navigation is a reflection of a strong relationship between

54

insecurity and social action. For Hunk, Commanders in the RDF can make soldiers pay dearly if they wish. This also happened to Jay Zee, as discussed in the following section.

Jay Zee's escape

Jay Zee, a soldier of Hutu origin, joined the military in 2000. He worked in the local Defence Forces. One night, while on sentry duty at a military hospital, Jay Zee encountered an army commander who was moving huge amounts of medical supplies with his personal vehicle. Jay Zee said he had heard of this issue before; that "a certain military boss channelled enormous consignments of drugs from the military hospital to the pharmacies of friends". Jay Zee said he 'foolishly' asked this Commander for the documentation required to remove such supplies from the hospital.

> The Commander had no documents and told me in French "*occupe-toi de tes oignons*" (mind your own business) before commanding me to "open the gate and get out of my way" (Personal interview 11 August 2019, Johannesburg).

According to Jay Zee, about two weeks later, his unit Commander called for him and informed him that the "Military boss", whose documentation he had demanded at the hospital, was furious and that Jay Zee needed to tread carefully. Three days later Jay Zee was on duty again. He was attacked by other soldiers. Jay Zee said that:

> During my turn to patrol the surrounding area, I was hazed with lights of a vehicle. Then soldiers whom I was working with beat me on my forehead with the butt of a firearm. I was blindfolded and thrown into the back of the truck. I was then taken to a detention centre where I was kept for a week and tortured every day. Three times a day I was made to drink brackish water. I was beaten thoroughly and was sometimes tied to a steel chair which was placed in a pool of human urine. Electric cables were connected to the chair. I remember passing out... Maybe I died, I don't know. My body got to a point where I could not feel pain. They peeled my private parts, it felt as if I was being circumcised again (Personal interview, 11 August 2019 Johannesburg).

55

Jay Zee's commander eventually facilitated his removal from the detention camp. Jay Zee was dropped off in Ngororero and told to "get out and go to Goma (in the DRC) immediately". He fled to Goma.

> My Commander saved my life. I walked for three days; that was the fasted, I could go in that condition. I was not in good shape, otherwise it is a very short journey on foot for an infantry man (Personal interview, 11 August 2019, Johannesburg).

Yet, the proximity of DRC to Rwanda made it impossible for Jay Zee to remain in that country because;

> When you are in Goma you are in Rwanda. It's not different at all (Personal interview 11 August 2019, Johannesburg).

The above narrative by Jay Zee corroborates findings by Amnesty International (2017) that it is not uncommon for Rwandan soldiers to be tortured in military detention camps without formal consequences. While Rwandan soldiers are generally represented as a highly disciplined force which does all in its power to serve the Rwandan state (Redher 2008), the 2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Rwanda (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor 2021) indicate that abuses such as torture of and reprisal against individuals, threats of violence etc. by members of state security forces remains problematic.

Participants in my own research opined that the RDF does not serve the country per se but rather the interests of certain military and political elites. Jay Zee had this to say;

> Let me tell you one thing, that we served the nation of Rwanda is a blatant lie. Soldiers in Rwanda serve the interests of the political elites. The majority of the population, including our immediate families do not really benefit from our sweat and blood. They are co-slaves with us, labouring for the luxury of the military's High Command or top brass such as Senior Defence and Security Advisor in the Office of the President; Minister for Defence, and Chief of Defence Staff and the Chief of staff of the army. It is painful… What pains me the most is you realize this fallacy when you are in there and it is quite difficult to exit the military back home. It is like a cult and we are like

56

the sacrifices who have their blood sucked. For me, the longer I stayed in the army, the more disenfranchised I became, the more I became angry with the system and the more I wanted to leave. But because the commanding officers decide who leaves and when they can leave, one can be stuck in there for a long time. Others commit suicide whilst the brave ones like us skive and leave. It is not an easy decision. It is a sacrifice; a matter of life and death (Personal Interview, 02 August 2019 Johannesburg).

The excerpt above is important in that it de-centres conventional (mis)conceptualizations of military participation as being consistent with national service (see Woodward 2008). Woodward (ibid), for example, unpacks the involvement of individual soldiers in the British military and demystifies the commonly held assumptions that soldiers generally serve in armies for their countries. A close engagement with soldiers revealed that the allegiance of most servicemen was to their comrades rather than to the flag or the president. Similarly, Jay Zee's excerpt (above) seems to concur with articles that alleged that the RDF is monopolised and manipulated by a few military-politico elites who benefit from the relationship of convenience that exists between military and politics in Rwanda (Purdekova et al 2017). Jay Zee also rejects the everyday portrayals of Rwandan soldiers as enablers of an autocratic regime (Sidiropolous 2002; Beswick 2014). His narrative further corroborates Maringira's (2017:94) claims that in most postcolonial armies, "the military hierarchy has deviated from professional ethics" and that "the disappointed soldiers in fact subscribed to Huntington's ideals of what constitutes a professional military corps" (ibid). For Jay Zee, members of the RDF had behaved in unprofessional ways.

Jay Zee's narrative also draws our attention to critical questions about the meanings that former soldiers like himself attach to Rwandan military service. Such understandings assist in untangling soldiers' subjective experiences and meanings they attach to their participation in the RDF from "national consciousness and the patriotic discourses that have always been projected onto the mind of the soldier by politicians" (Gibson and Abell 2004: 873). While stories of desertion from the Rwandan army may not appear in the Rwandan public discourse, this does not mean that military discontentment is absent; rather, a soldier like Jay Zee is silenced by dominant narratives of military loyalty and professionalism.

Viewing Jay Zee's escape from a theoretical viewpoint, it is clear that his initial naivety in trying to respond professionally by asking for documentation from a commander. He also

overestimated his own position with patrimonial networks in the RDF and the state. As I will show in the succeeding chapters, properties of scanning the environment, perceptivity towards establishing hidden agendas and hyper-vigilance (Vigh; 2009, 2011; 2018) quickly developed in Jay Zee after the fact, that is after his release from the military detention camp - when he embarked on his journey into exile.

Iscariot's escape

Iscariot grew up in the diaspora in Uganda. His uncle, who was a member of the RPA, encouraged Iscariot to join the military in 1998. According to Iscariot, he became an intelligence operative and marksman in the military for approximately eight years. According to him, he skilfully navigated these spaces even though their operations are very different. His moment of desertion came when he was given an assignment which he did not agree with. Iscariot stated that;

> The unit that I worked in mainly deals with 'internal' threats – as in, those individuals who pose a threat to the presidency. Whenever there are reasonable grounds to believe that you are posing a threat to the presidency, that's it, you go. (Personal interview, 24 August 2019, Cape Town).

Iscariot had a patron, a man who was believed to be a presidential hopeful, but was outside the army. According to Iscariot, he was given information that this person "who was close to the central nodes of power was perceived to pose an existential threat to the political life of the President and it had been decided that he should be stopped in his tracks". Iscariot alerted his unit Commander of the threat to his patron. They both agreed that they were going to thwart this "assignment" because "the targeted person was a very good person who deserved to go to heaven without having tasted death" (Iscariot, comment during an interview). According to Iscariot, his superior, in turn informed the "target". The latter fled the country.

Iscariot had arguably been navigating the possibilities that his networks and allegiances had opened for him, but he was also attentive to the potential dangers for him of uncovering, or upsetting, the competition and contestation amongst networks (Vigh 2021). Iscariot intuited that his action had exposed him to negative potentialities. His response was dynamic, as Vigh (2021:253) writes "a movement where there is movement, which requires both an assessment of the dangers and

58

possibilities *immediate* as well as the ability to anticipate the unfolding of the social terrain and trace and specify that movement from the present to the future *imagined"*.

Iscariot pre-empted the government by engaging in social action (escape) because he understood that, as Vigh (2011: 12) puts it, "situations that appear to be non-conflictual contain a partial focus on latent or dormant instability". Iscariot's quick escape from Rwanda was facilitated by other members of the network he was part of. Iscariot's immediate escape from the military and from Rwanda corroborates Deaton's (2013:25) claim that "the greatest escape for, humanity, is the escape from death". Iscariot further reveals the ways in which military patrimonialism (Lutterberg 2013) and politicization of the military (Maringira 2018) apparently compromise professionalism in the military. The RDF has a unique strand of professionalism which allows for army desertion to be interpreted or construed in ways that enable deserters to be labelled enemies of the state and for them to be pursued (even in self-imposed exile) with vindictive vigour as will be shown in the sections below (see Himbara 2019).
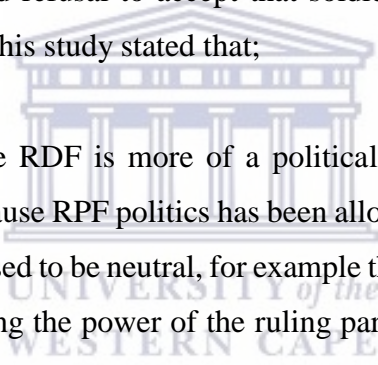
Constructing desertion

According to Beswick (2014), the RDF is the nerve centre of the Rwandan government. It has contributed significantly to infrastructural development and economic growth of post-conflict Rwanda by providing manpower for huge projects and through several organizations owned by the military. The RDF has further participated in regional and international peacekeeping missions (ibid). It has also contributed significantly to the creation and maintenance of political subjectivities (Lovegren 2014: Sidiropolous 2002) in Rwandan society as well as ensuring that the RPF retains political power (Prunier 2008; Hintjens 2015; Purdekova et al 2017).

Like most armies in post-colonial Africa, the RDF has effectively become an 'armed appendage' (Maringira 2017) of the ruling RPF party, in Rwanda (see Brock 2016; Reyntjens 2009) and it has become more ruthless towards citizens (Himbara 2019) as well as members of the armed force who are believed to be dislike the RPF government (War Resisters 2016). The Rwandan military has, as a result, experienced many petty acts of insubordination and undeclared defections (Gettlemen 2013). A striking characteristic of the Rwandan Army is that deserters are frequently pursued and, if caught, punished even in the countries where they have sought refuge (Prunier 2008; Reyntjens 2009). Ex-soldiers who participated in this study

highlighted that their major problems with the RDF stemmed from what they perceived as unfair treatment in the military. For instance, soldiers who came from a Ugandan diasporic Tutsi background apparently received preferential treatment and were, so it is argued, promoted ahead of all others.

While soldiers who desert from the US military are generally regarded as cowards and traitors (Fantina 2006), post-conflict Rwanda has a much stronger response to t deserters. When it becomes clear that a soldier has deserted from the RDF, he (all my research participants are men) officially becomes an enemy of the state, a fugitive, a dissident, a threat to national security, a traitor to the army and a probable terrorist (Himbara 2019). Deserters are vigorously pursued by the military police and or state security agents as they are viewed as posing a serious threat to national security. According to Purdekova et al (2017) the RDF is a hybrid politico-military organization – a military wing of the ruling party, whose functions and operations are coloured by political fervour and refusal to accept that soldiers will desert for non-political reasons. Ghost, a participant in this study stated that;

> In Rwanda, deserting the RDF is more of a political offense than it is a breach of military oath. This is because RPF politics has been allowed to permeate all institutions even those that are supposed to be neutral, for example the army. Everything now seems to revolve around retaining the power of the ruling party at all costs, especially in the military. (Personal Interview, 10 August 2019, Johannesburg).

Despite having codified guidelines to deal with military grievances and offenses (CIRB 2016), the institution vests a lot of power in unit commanders, who arbitrarily determine the charges and penalties for breaching military codes. According to my participants, unit commanders simply sum up all desertion into three sections of the military code (RWA105693.E) which bear the strictest punishments. This categorization of army desertion usually does not take into account the circumstances surrounding specific acts of desertion, Major Ghost continued saying:

It's either Article 738, Article 742 or Article 743[1] (Personal Interview, 10 August 2019, Johannesburg)

My research participants strongly alleged that if army deserters are caught in Rwanda they may be tortured and sometimes maimed. Offenders who are arrested are sent to detention camps where they are starved, denied medical care, isolated, court martialled and imprisoned for terms longer than those stipulated in the military code of conduct. Ghost alleged that some soldiers have 'disappeared' while in military custody (Broch 2016; Human Rights Watch 2017). Turbo, a participant in my study stated that "in other instances, offenders are taken to military detention camps - usually in Mulindi or Lake Kivu (also a detention camp which is disguised as a vocational and rehabilitation centre) - where they will be 'rehabilitated', i.e. tortured and then 're-educated' about the country's values" (Lovegren 2015; Amnesty International 2012; Niyibizi et al 2018). As part of re-education, deserters attend classes where the country's (reinterpreted) history and current political ideologies are taught. Time spent on Kivu Island can range from six months to five years. In very few instances deserters who are close to political and military elites are readmitted into the military. If readmission happens, they are demoted and they forfeit their pensions if they held any rank. These penalties are apparently arbitrarily determined and are not in keeping with the RDF's military court guidelines (see also Broch 2016). According to my participants, army deserters who are apprehended outside

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[1]Rwandan Military Service Laws (RWA105693.E) which detail recruitment, service conditions and penalties for failure to report for duty and desertion states in Article 742 8.Aggravating circumstances for desertion of a soldier with a lower rank than an officer
1.   If the offender was sentenced for desertion
2.   Deserts in concert with a comrade
3.   Crosses the boundaries of the Rwandan territory
4.   Deserts for more than 6 months;
He/she will be liable for a term of imprisonment of 1 year to 2 years
If a soldier deserts;
1.   With military aircraft, firearm, boat or vehicle;
2.   When he/she is on patrol, watch, guards a post or carries out any armed service;
The penalty under paragraph one of this article shall be double

Article 742 Deserting in the face of the enemy
Any soldier who deserts in the face of the enemy shall be liable to a term of imprisonment of 7years to 10 years if he/she is an officer and more than 5 years to seven years if he/she is a non-officer.

Article 743: Deserting to the enemy
Any soldier who deserts to the enemy shall be liable to a term of imprisonment of 10 years to 15 years

Global Campaign for Rwandan's Human Rights is a Civic organization which speaks against the gross Human rights violations that have been perpetrated by the Kagame regime in and outside of Rwanda from 1994 to the present

61

Rwanda are sometimes abducted and maimed or assassinated since it is difficult to force them to return to Rwanda if they resist, or if the 'harbouring' country will not collaborate in the extradition process (See also Prunier 2008; GCRHR[2] 2018). It is therefore a given that my respondents see the government in a very negative light. Some of the narratives cannot be factually proven or disproved, but this shadow nature of clandestine government operations are recorded (Himbara 2019; Wrong 2019; Tshimba 2015; Frabricius 2021) and necessitates insecurities and deep rooted suspicions towards the government. It is a shadow world of actions/actors and factors that may be socially invisible that people act towards that world in anticipation (Vigh & Turner 2006). The 'word has it that' phenomenon is steeped in *igihuha*. This, coupled with the deserters' own experiences of government brutality becomes a basis for social navigation.

The tendency of most unit commanders to determine charges and punishment outside of standard rules and regulations produces a discordant and vindictive system which reinforces rather than deters the growing practice of desertion among Rwandan soldiers (CIRB 2016). Even though the RDF is guided by Rwanda Military Legislation and Codes, which theoretically are in keeping with international human rights standards, in practice, the law is reportedly undermined, despite reports of abuses by soldiers and human rights organizations (Amnesty International 2016; Human rights watch 2017).
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For my respondents, the military institution became an uncertain space in which military patrimonialism (Lutterberg 2013) replaced military professionalism (Harries-Jenkins 1990: Maringira 2017; Huntington 1957). Patronage networks apparently have a long history in Rwandan military (Uvin 2001). For Sidiropoulos (2002), patronage networks – *akazus* – do not only impede professional military functioning, they also lead to cleavages in the military. Hunk's and Jay Zee's narratives show that privileging extra-military relations over formal institutional hierarchies seemingly hollow out military cohesion. It can also lead to mistrust among troops. According to Jay Zee;

It doesn't make sense to be in an army where I cannot trust my colleagues. Many of my colleagues disappeared from the barracks. Their fate is unknown. If you're disliked by the commander then you are in for it. It is a professional force on paper. It is a monster in reality. If you are just suspected of being sympathetic with your commander's perceived 'enemy' then you're a dead man walking. Things are done whimsically and arbitrarily (Personal Interview with Jayzee, 11 August 2020, Johannesburg).

Thinking with Hall's (1997) notion of the 'other', is important to make sense of the construction of fellow soldiers as 'the enemy', albeit in the same combat unit and uniform. For Ghost, the practice of 'othering' is not an uncommon phenomenon in the military in Rwanda. He stated that:

Discrimination happens every time, depending on your class, sex, ethnicity, whether you are from diasporic Tutsi or not, according to regions because there are some regions that if you come from there, no-matter how good you are as a soldier, you might not be recognised and also it happens based on political connections, who you know and who they are in the political arena (Personal Interview, 15 December 2019, Johannesburg)

The excerpt above corroborates Sidiropolous' (2002) claim that the practice of *Tutsification* (reserving influential positions in government and in public institutions) is widespread in Rwanda. According to my study participants, ethnic and political othering are widespread in the military and is seen as justification for the use of excessive violence, and sometimes 'somatic violence' (see also Appadurai 1996) against fellow soldiers.

It is important to note that deserting from the military can be variously understood. In the RDF, it seems to be happening on two levels; first, at the level of ideas when a soldier conditions their mind and body to deliberately disobey orders and assist fellow soldiers in desertion from the army. The second level involves the physical act of leaving the army with the intention of never returning.

President Kagame, as Commander in Chief of the Rwanda Defence Forces, is perceived as a saviour in the country (Beswick 2014). This idea reportedly permeates Rwandan society to the point of having an uneasy conflation of Rwanda the state and Kagame the person. This is

63

evident in Iscariot's concluding remarks in his narrative in which Kagame reminded his compatriots that

> When you desert from the military you betray Rwanda... So you cannot betray Rwanda and not get punished for it… Regardless of who you are, you will face the consequences. God gave us the strength to protect what we have built. Whoever it is, even those still alive will bear the consequences; it is just a matter of time[3]

When I discussed the Kagame quote later on with Spark and Iscariot, this deliberate conflation of the president and the country struck us all. It appeared as if 'Rwanda' in this case was a metaphor for Kagame the person. My study participants opined that, when the president spoke about betraying the country, he could as well have said that one cannot betray *him* and not bear the consequences of such actions. The conflation of the country with the person of the president explains why army deserters are persecuted wherever they are hiding.

Conceptually, the pre-eminence of Kagame arguably has a panoptical effect on the military men. The effect of panopticism and panoptical discipline, could be made sense of in terms of Foucault (1977), according to whom it ingrains "a sense of permanent and conscious visibility among subjects" (Foucault 1977:6).   For the deserters in my study, Kagame is represented like an ever present eye that fashions their social actions based on what they know, think and have heard about him. Even in his physical absence, he lives in their mind. Kagame is represented as more than a man; an idea – an institution that becomes the pretext for any social action (violent confrontation or avoidance), either within Rwanda or beyond.

Surveillance an important concept in panopticism as it moulds and reshapes the competencies of individuals e.g. record-keeping and listing. Like Foucault's disciplining power, Kagame cannot be seen, but could potentially see everything, he seems omnipresent. Foucault (1998) went beyond the concept of disciplinary society referring to control societies – these involve

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[3] President Kagame said this on 12 January 2014 when he was responding to allegations that his government might be linked to the murder of former Spy Chief General Patrick Karegeya in his hotel room, on the eve of 2014, in Johannesburg, South Africa.

 Personal Communication with a former senior army Gen. from the RDF

new surveillance technologies and methods of surveillance where power lies also with representation and informal or ad hoc networks (Galič et al 2016). In a critique of Foucault's panopticism as metaphor to make sense of surveillance Haggerty and Ericson (2000), as discussed above, elaborated the notion of a 'surveillant assemblage' (ibid) to analyse different forms and practices of surveillance. I will draw on their work in my own analysis.

Journeying into exile

According to Koehler (2016), desertion from the military is usually underpinned by a collage of networks operating within and outside the institution to facilitate the movement of disgruntled soldiers. It is thus not easy to attribute desertion to a group or individuals, even though an escapee's personal identity is known. The narratives highlighted in this section reveal that in planning their exit routes, the men who participated in this study relied on both intra military networks as well as networks that were 'outside' the military. While detailing the empirics of the usefulness of social networks in facilitating deserters' journeys into exile, I continue to theoretically foreground the idea that within these networks, we see how rumours play a critical role in heightening chronic fears and uncertainty, creating hyper-sensitivity, sharpening perceptivity and generating social action.

'Networks' is thus construed as an analytical lens to understand army desertion, not only in terms of the processes (McLaughlin 2011), but also in showing that the military system produces deserters (Fantina 2006) as well as what I call '*quasi deserters*': that is, soldiers whose loyalty to the military has diminished to the extent that they use military resources to facilitate the physical movement of disgruntled colleagues out of the country. I thus view army desertion not only in terms of the physical absence of a soldier from his or her work station (Rich 2019; Koehler et al 2015); I also include members of covert intra military networks who facilitate the successful physical desertion of their colleagues. Though physically present, these facilitators have 'deserted' from military ideologies and their roles of serving the state. In my study, *quasi deserter* networks were very often talked about and it seemed apparent that these are crucial in providing the intelligence required by deserters for successful escape: for example information about patrols, plans and ways to track, apprehend or attack army deserters, identities of members of military intelligence, state agents and others who may assist. According to Iscariot, *quasi deserters* play an important role in the survival of army deserters. He stated that;

I have maintained relatively close ties with a few of my former colleagues in the Intelligence. These people have been crucial for my own survival as well as that of other army deserters here in South Africa. We get credible information about the Kigali administration's schemes against the so called dissidents (Personal Interview 12 December 2019, Johannesburg)

This 'intelligence' are rumours on existing potentialities. They make the hidden present, what Agamben (1999) calls 'present social invisibility'. They enable pre-emption by deserters as they act upon the socially invisible (Vigh 2011). In addition to providing deserters with information that pertains to their survival, networks are also reportedly important in directing absconders to 'helpers' along their various journeys into exile. Study participants often referred to 'deserter guides', that is, local people who have profound knowledge about the terrain and of rebel activities in the border area between Rwanda and Burundi. This space is generally understood as a zone of armed conflict between rebel groups and RDF soldiers. Therefore, even the most experienced soldiers fleeing Rwanda via this route would require the servicers of 'deserter guides' in one way or another. Hunk and several other deserters in this study attest to having used the Burundi route. Hunk stated that:

I used the Nyungwe route because I had been directed to the expert 'deserter guides' to take me to the other side. (Personal interview, 20 October 2019, Johannesburg)

Hunk told me:

When I arrived at my pick up point, that was, at around 6pm, I was surprised to see some familiar faces that I had met at work, six of them. Let me call them France, Jamaica, Bruno, Michael, Girabo and Jonathan. At first I did not trust these guys because I had seen them at work so I assumed that they were on a spying mission… I felt relieved when the 'deserter guides' that is, four teenage boys who looked like they were aged between 16 and 19 years showed up and signalled us to gather around them. The young guys wore old but neatly ironed clothes and worn out sneakers. They introduced themselves as members of the Nyungwe guides then they each showed us an identification card that bore their name, a picture of their face and it was written Nyungwe A1. Everything was being done quickly but in a discreet manner. They then called out our names and each of us responded with codes that each person received

66

when we contacted the helpers who are in Kigali. At this point I realized that the familiar faces were also headed for the other side. We all paid our money and we got a bit of orientation on the risks and liabilities that are associated with the journey we were about to embark on. We were told that we are doing this at our own risk, that in the event of unfortunate events such as arrests or fights with either the RDF soldiers, Burundi soldiers or rebels, and robbers, the guides would not be liable and if possible they would prefer it if we fought the 'enemy' together. I felt sick on hearing this but I could not go back (Personal interview, 20 October 2019, Johannesburg)

The excerpt above reveals that there are possibly a number of networks that enable Rwandan army deserters to illegally cross their country's border into Burundi. One interesting reading of this excerpt is that Hunk trusted the guides (pure strangers in relative terms) more than the other military men he had seen in the barracks. We see chronic insecurity and vigilance (Vigh 2011) here. While these fellow military men had no ill intent, Hunk has developed strong perceptivity in which everyone, especially so called fellow military men, should be treated with suspicion. Anticipation of negative potentialities forms the basis of his worldview.

Another reading of the above orientation given to Hunk and his fellow army deserters by their guides intimates that they were about to venture into both a 'landscape of conflict' (Muir 1999) and a 'landscape of defence' (Gold and Revill 2000). The Nyungwe forest can actually be understood as a 'militarized landscape' which is characterized by 'military–security apparatuses of surveillance and control' (Woodward 2014:41) that are operated through the Rwandan and Burundian states. I will return to a detailed discussion of why the Nyungwe forest fits the description of a militarized landscape. For now I focus on the discussion on networks. According to Hunk, the men he met at the pick-up point told him that they had deserted because they had, after a heated argument over a Barcelona – Real Madrid match, thrashed a Major at a bar. The Major allegedly pulled an okapi and stabbed France in the chest during the brawl. Other junior soldiers intervened and badly assaulted the Major. "This kind of indiscipline is totally unacceptable in the RDF and these soldiers could actually spend the larger part of their lives in prison if they had remained in the army, so they had to flee", Hunk added.

'Sometimes unorthodox networks do the trick'

After deserting Turbo was arrested by members of military intelligence while on his way to Uganda. He was taken to a military detention centre. He stated that:

> When I left the army I headed for Uganda. I wanted to go to Kampala for a bit, then decide where to go from there. After walking for approximately 15 hours in the forests. I decided to go to the highway in order to find transport because I was not only exhausted but also needed to get away real fast. Unfortunately, I hopped onto the wrong vehicle because after driving a few kilometres, the driver made a U-turn and told me that I was under arrest for deserting the army.   I was taken to the DB (detention base) where I stayed for two weeks… the punishment! I do not want to think about it. I was later taken to Iwawa at Lake Kivu where I lived with other captured deserters and young men who were rounded up and arrested for standing on street corners or roaming the streets aimlessly as well as those whose relatives had approached the local authorities to intervene because the young men were reportedly 'social misfits' who had very 'bad attitudes'. It was not easy; it's like another detention centre. We were receiving military style trainings, attending classes where we were reoriented on good behaviour for Rwandans. The punishments (Turbo whistled while shaking his head and repositioned himself in his couch before continuing), the punishments were deadly. You cannot complain or say anything bad about the treatment there otherwise you stay there for very long. I was there for two years but others were there for longer. I got used to the operations at Iwawa. I was a good student you know (he chuckled then continued) because I knew that obedience was my licence out of that place. I was released and went back to the military but this time I worked at a farm which belonged to one of the army bosses. (Personal Interview, 25 August 2019, Johannesburg).

The narrative that Turbo presents reveals that some deserters were apprehended and punished. Because of his patrimonial networks, Turbo was readmitted into the army on the recommendation of a relative who, in turn, was close to a particular commanding officer in the RDF. The ways in which Turbo's patrimonial networks enabled him to be readmitted into the army whereas he could have been punished and discharged speak to Vigh's (2010) claims that in times of distress young men are cushioned from hardship by their existing social ties or 'economies of affection' which have obligations to help the young men.

68

Turbo deserted from the military again a year later. This happened in concert with four other soldiers: they were sent to the farm of a high-ranking army official. They were allocated accommodation on the farm and their soldierly duties were transformed to that of guards on the farm. They had to accompany farm trucks to collect seed and fertilizers, to assemble irrigation pipes and drive the tractor on the farm and to do farm work. He stated;

> Each time we went out on inputs procurement errands we would load lorries full of inputs and then offload them when we got back to the farm with other farm workers, it was sad that we quickly became cheap labour at the farm (Personal interview 25 August 2019, Johannesburg).

Their daily tasks came to resemble those of the farm employees. According to Turbo, he became even more alarmed when they (the soldiers) were summoned and informed that they would continue to work on the farm until the end of the following year's harvesting season. Turbo said he would not have minded doing both farm labour and security duty if they had been paid for both jobs. They were, however, on the payroll of the military and were expected to do the farm labour for free because "they did not have a clean military record, after all". Turbo realised that his re-engagement in the RDF was deeply complicated and probably corrupt. These soldiers became thoroughly demotivated; their social status as soldiers diminished and they were ridiculed by colleagues in the military and on the farm.

While working on the farm, Turbo and his colleagues plotted an escape, for Turbo, "sometimes unorthodox networks help you do the trick". According to Turbo, a group of seven unemployed youths from the surrounding communities were instrumental in facilitating their escape from the farm. Turbo said that;

> Three Burundian farm employees orchestrated this move by finding young men who would break into the farm workshop and steal whatever they could get from there. This would enable me and my fellow soldiers to 'follow' the robbers into the bushes and in the process also run away.

Turbo was assisted by a somewhat illicit network to get away from farm work and the military, by extension. The preceding case of Turbo points to the vindictiveness of senior military personnel, the usefulness of networks in providing practical assistance through rumours and

aiding escapes, and the desire to keep supposed enemies at check. Conceptually, the capabilities of 'offenders', who are the deserters, to foresee the future and engage in pre-emptive action as a form of navigation potential eventualities could be understood as social navigation. Turbo's escape points to his ability to anticipate unpleasant eventualities: whilst a farm is seemingly a less volatile environment, there were no guarantees his safety since the label of insubordination was ever there and could potentially lead to demise. This suspicion and ability to see the end of the road before it ends made Turbo escape. He navigated existential harm and invisible eventualities.

Sustenance and the final ride to safety: Jay Zee's offshore networks

When Jay Zee arrived in Goma, he realized that "it would have been easy for the spies working in DR Congo to abduct me and send me back home". Jay Zee quickly moved from the DRC further south to Zambia. There he worked at a car wash which was owned by a Rwandan army deserter. He converted to Islam and grew a long beard because he did not want to be identified. According to Jay Zee, being a Muslim opened job opportunities for him and linked him up to business networks. Jay Zee received many job offers, but decided to work as a porter at a Hotel in Livingstone, Zambia. After two years at the hotel, Jay Zee was shocked when a commander from the RDF showed up there. This Rwandan guest at the hotel where Jay Zee was working managed to recognize Jay Zee the army deserter. As Jay Zee wheeled the porters' trolley full of the guests' bags the Commander said:

> Oh so this is where you are hiding, small world is it not? So after messing up my friend in Rwanda you came to hide here (Personal interview, 11 August 2019, Johannesburg).

Jay Zee said that;
> I knew that I was no longer safe because three men who accompanied this Colonel looked interested in the story and they seemed ready to attack "just like Napoleon's dogs" (Personal interview, 11 August 2019, Johannesburg)

There are theoretical lessons that can be learnt from the above. Firstly, the ever-present Rwandan eye in other sovereignties, and secondly, the hypervigilance of deserters demonstrated in their perceptivity and ability to chronically scan their surroundings. Regarding the latter, the conversion to Islam by Jay Zee highlights pre-emption and anticipation of

70

unpleasant eventualities (Vigh 2011). His insecurities led him to engage in a cautious response. Muslim adornment and paraphernalia shows Turbo's active effort to live in the realm beyond the obvious. This staged authenticity highlights hypervigilance and caution.

Regarding ever-present surveillance, it makes sense to understand the apparent Rwandese panoptical eye as manifesting physically and also its existence in the minds of deserters. They 'know' that there is an eye watching over them, and this fear is not devoid of substance. Yet, the social control was in actuality de-territorialised and could be seen as post-Panoptic (Bogard 2006). As indicated above Haggerty and Ericson (2000) draw on Deleuze and Guattari's assemblages which function more-or-less as an entity and involves an ongoing flow between institutions, people, technology, knowledge, signs etc. According to Galič et al (2017:21):

> These fluid and mobile flows become fixed into more or less stable and asymmetrical arrangements … hosting opaque flows of auditory, olfactory, visual and informational stimuli. These assemblages turn into systems of domination allowing someone or something to direct or govern actions of others; the inevitability of transformation is key to thinking in terms of assemblage.

At the same time the aforementioned commander's (above) apparent ability to see beyond Jay Zee's beard and religious camouflage shows how life of the hunters and the hunted is characterised by living in the realm of the beyond. Social navigation requires the deployment of all senses i.e. the 'sensory turn' (Classen 1997; Goody 2002) and requires that one sees that which is not obviously visible (Vigh 2011).

In the above narrative, Jay Zee draws on Orwell's Animal Farm. By likening the security operatives to Napoleon's dogs, Jay Zee is suggesting a lot of things. The dogs were Napoleon's (in this case the Rwandese Colonel's) guards. They were also enforcers and were used to instil not only fear, but also to control the actions and thoughts of others. In Orwell's book, the dogs functioned to undermine the social order as well. Jay Zee was thus commenting on the ways in which military and security elites in Rwanda maintain power and can oppress those who disagree with their agendas.

Jay Zee did not feel safe at the hotel anymore. He immediately asked his shift manager for permission to leave, saying there had been an emergency at home. Jay Zee stated that he did

not even return to his accommodation as he was not sure what could happen to him there. Here we again see the ability to see beneath and beyond the obvious. The obvious is that the commander did not threaten Jay Zee, and the beyond is the fact that in this seemingly less volatile encounter, Jay Zee was able to act on the socially invisible – he discerned the presence of an absent yet potentially negative eventuality (Agamben 1999; Vigh 2011).

More so, we also see the domination and ability to control and discipline of the Rwandan (Kagame's) surveillant assemblage (Haggerty and Ericson 2000) in action in Zambia. Jay Zee fled from Zambia and crossed into Zimbabwe that night via the Victoria Falls border. In Zimbabwe, he made contact with several Rwandan businessmen and one of them facilitated his onward journey to Johannesburg. Since he did not have travelling documents, the businessman had to pay a bus driver who smuggled Jay Zee into South Africa. The above narratives have shown the importance of networks when deserting the military. However, the availability of networks did not insulate the deserters from the actual dangers that characterize the physical journey from the barracks to South Africa. In the following section, I discuss the dangers that were encountered by some of my participants on their journeys to South Africa.

'Encountering danger along the way is a rite of passage to get to exile'

In this section I see 'rite of passage' as a school of many faculties in the curriculum of social navigation. These faculties are: sharpening of skills and abilities to always perceive the world beyond what can physically be seen; learning to use intuition; appreciating the perpetual presence of the Rwandan government's assemblage; and the need for more pre-emption, hypervigilance and the deployment of all senses. The journeys that the army deserters in this study embarked on were not only long and physically and emotionally draining, they were dangerous and traumatizing too.

According to Major Ghost, 'encountering danger along the way is a rite of passage to get to exile'. As indicated above, Gettlemen (2013) asserts that deserters from the RDF face great difficulty if they try to remain in their country. Yet embarking on long journeys into exile did not guarantee safety either. The narratives given by the deserters who exited Rwanda via Burundi were chilling. Turbo recalled his ordeal in the forest as follows:

When we ran away from the farm, we were five. But two of the comrades I was travelling with were shot and they died on the spot when we encountered soldiers who were on patrol in the Nyungwe forest. I do not know whether they mistook us for armed rebels but what I remember is that they opened fire at us when we did not expect it and we frantically signalled to them that we were not rebels but Rwandans who were on their way to the other side. We were detained for a few hours in the forest while we negotiated with the patrolling officers for mercy and for easier passage. For some time, I felt like I was a prisoner of war, you know. I cursed myself because I worried about the possible punishment that I would be exposed to if these soldiers decided to be hard on us. I had been previously arrested while running away from the army, remember. They later released us after we had paid a passage fee. The firearm that we had was confiscated by the soldiers (Personal interview 25 August 2019, Johannesburg).

From the above, it can be argued that the landscape between Rwanda and Burundi is one of conflict (Muir 1999), a militarized landscape (Woodward 2014) in that armies from both states seem to utilize that terrain in defending their countries. Participants who had knowledge about the conflict between the RDF, rebels, the Burundian army and army deserters in the forest, stated that deserters who use this route to escape from Rwanda have to be armed. Hunk, for example, stated that the 'deserter guides' had warned them of the likelihood of encountering real danger in the forest. Hunk recalled his ordeal:

Two very bad things happened in that forest. I heard gunshots and I saw people running in our direction. The young guides shouted run, run! We did not see them again. We then took cover but I reached for my combat knife because I had no firearm. Another gunshot was fired, and a few more shots followed. The soldiers I had met at the pick-up point also started returning fire. One of the guys called Jonathan, whom we were traveling with did not survive the shoot-out. He had been hit in the back of his head by members of the Rwandan border patrol unit. The command in that terrain is 'shoot to kill'… (Hunk remained silent for a few minutes. His anguish could be felt in his silence, his sniffs and the deep sigh that he eventually took before continuing with his story). We ran, leaving his lifeless body in the forest. I have no idea what happened to him since I did not know him that much (Personal interview, 13 October 2019, Johannesburg.)

According to Hunk, as the deserters continued on their journey, they were almost apprehended by a group of five militias or rebels. During this encounter Bruno and Michael were stabbed. "Bruno eventually died", Hunk stated. "He had lost a lot of blood", Hunk told me, visibly distressed. France carried Bruno's lifeless body because he wanted to leave him somewhere where his family could locate him for burial. It was at this point that Hunk realised that Bruno and France were nephew and uncle. Hunk said:

> As we walked through the Nyungwe forest, we encountered a several dead bodies. Some were decomposing and others had been recently killed. The heart of the forest 'smelled of death' (Personal interview 13 October 2019, Johannesburg)

As Hunk recollected his ordeal in the forest, the pain, suffering and emotions that he felt at the moment of the attack became very real to me, the listener. This resonates with Kalema's (2019) claim that when violence occurs, it finds permanent accommodation in the body through scars and memory. And when narratives of violent incidents are retold, the moment of harming is reconstructed and the violence is temporarily brought back to life. Many of the narratives that my participants told me were harrowing.

Iscariot, for example, fled from Rwanda to Uganda where he briefly hid with family. During that period Iscariot constantly received information that he was being vigorously sought. Therefore he focused only on his own safety. He did not work nor had a social life. He felt unsafe and became concerned that his presence was not only burdening, but also endangering his relatives. The latter had taken good care of him and kept him hidden as well.

> While in Uganda, I kept in touch with former colleagues who now informed me about threats and concerted efforts to find and eliminate me by both the national intelligence and the military intelligence. One evening in 2016 I disguised myself then I went to the barbershop with my teenage nephew. My timing was wrong because that very day, I was shot and wounded in the arm. Although I did not see the shooter, I spotted a former colleague in a crowd that was gathering around me. The guy winked at me and signalled me to leave Uganda then he disappeared into the crowds… They sent my close colleagues. They could never eliminate me.
> (Personal interview 24 August 2019, Cape Town).

The narrative that Iscariot presents here speaks a lot about the ways in which army deserters navigate potential harm, using the good relationships that they have with family, friends and former colleagues. More so, we see how *igihuha* (rumours) are a very important tool in both heightening suspicion, anticipating evil and in triggering pre-emptive social action. This navigation of relations is similar to what Vigh's (2009) participants in Guinea Bissau did during the times when they were totally dependent on family and friends for sustenance and for protection from the police. Iscariot quickly left Uganda. He did not seek medical attention for fear of being reported and killed while in hospital;

> I was not paranoid, my life was in real danger and I felt highly unsafe in that country. Rwandan surveillance is quite intense in the Great Lakes Region so one has to be hyper vigilant in ensuring their safety. When I was there, I paid so much attention on being safe and alive. It was too much I decided to leave the country because it was the same as being in prison. I felt like I was going insane. I needed to regain my sanity and a bit of freedom (Personal interview, 24 August 2019, Cape Town).

The words 'paranoid' and 'real danger' are interesting. The unseen and anticipated social invisibilities (Agamben 1999) are more palpable. Because of rumours, Iscariot saw the invisible as tangible. Within *igihuha*, existential threats that need vigilance are foregrounded. Anticipation of violence regulates social life and/or action (Vigh 2011). From Uganda Iscariot went to Kenya where he worked as an auto electrician at a workshop in Mombasa. Here he embedded himself in Kenyan-ness as he spoke fluent KiSwahili and was acquainted with the general cultural etiquette. Iscariot was proud of his abilities to conceal the soldier in him, to learn and to assimilate fast. He, like Jay Zee who converted to Islam, pre-empted his hunters by delving into the realm of the beyond. His mistrust and sense of fear resurfaced when people started to refer to him as *askari* (soldier).

He was particularly disconcerted because he had never revealed his past as a soldier to anyone in Mombasa. Iscariot became convinced that the surveilling assemblage of Rwandan Intelligence might have spotted him. The fact that people suddenly referred to him as *askari* warned him that he had been detected. He was disturbed that the identity that he had worked hard to conceal had resurfaced. He thought it would only be a matter of time before the net closed in on him. By this time he did not trust his Kenyan and Rwandan friends anymore and quickly decided to travel on to South Africa. Here we see that in a context of chronic insecurity,

friendship is fluid. No one is trusted. Survival instinct causes a deployment of all senses (Claassen 1997, Goody 2002, Howes 2008, Ingold 2011, Low 2018) and anticipation of harm disrupts relations within one's networks. Socially navigating a hostile terrain makes an individual his own best friend.

What stood out for me while interacting with the army deserters was that the power of the Rwandan state seemed to be ubiquitous in that it did not only exist in the minds of the hunted deserters who later engaged in self-policing. Rather, it seemed ubiquitous in the physical territories, and even in the wilderness such as in the Nyungwe forest that are traversed by the 'hunted' deserters. As discussed above, and unlike in Foucault's understanding of the panopticon, the physical observation tower in the prison, the power in this case ubiquitously exists in other physical geographies (DRC, Burundi etc.) beyond the prison (Rwanda). The preceding also highlights that violence is always an underlying possibility and an ongoing event (Vigh 2009) and that the anticipation of violence regulates social life at every turn (Vigh 2011). Whether imagined or 'really' existing, the eye of the Rwandan state was experienced as omnipresent by the deserters. They ran away or recessed underneath veils of staged authenticity. They adopted identities that masked their 'truer' personhoods. The ability to deploy senses, to be always curious and suspicious, to be hyper vigilant and tap into *igihuha* shows highest levels of ability to navigate circumstances.

Reflection on the army deserters' journeys to exile

Telling stories about their escape made my participants and I feel gloomy and frightened. Despite this harrowing revisiting of traumatic events, my research participants shared their narratives with great enthusiasm. Notwithstanding, most of them became emotional while narrating their ordeals. It is in line with the foregoing that Chakravarty (2012:252) asks: How does a researcher begin to collect data in settings where respondents are fearful, guarded, and actively engaged in hiding or deliberately distorting information to protect themselves?

Throughout my study, I was faced with a similar dilemma. Secretiveness and a general sense of being under threat generally characterized this study. Participants would unexpectedly change a meeting place, or simply not arrive; they seemed paranoid - which in turn made me feel uncomfortable and sometimes even afraid. Thus social navigation as a conceptual lens can

also be used to look into the experiences of the researcher who interacts continuously with people whose lives are underlined by uncertainty.

Chakravarty (2012) cautions people doing research on Rwandans to be careful of 'stage setting' i.e. exaggerated narratives or performances that may be presented by participants. Chakravarty's word of caution is informed by the belief that most Rwandans are perceived as being generally guarded and actively seeking sympathy. The author therefore urges researchers to go a step further and seek the reality behind 'stage set' versions. Inasmuch as the word of caution by Chakravarty might seem persuasive, I was reluctant to venture into the politics of the reality and stage setting. Instead rumours are an important lens to analyse social and political phenomena (Shibutani 1966; Abraham 1970; Knopf 1975; Kapferer 1990). I took my clues from Kapferer's (1990) argument that the so-called watershed between information and rumours or reality and stage set is itself not objective as it is embedded in 'belief' which is also highly subjective. Kapferer states that often times, people take as information what they believe to be true and as rumours what they believe to be false. (ibid).

This study asserts that the study participants felt coerced by distinct or not clearly articulated forces that operate and have influence within the military milieu. According to McLaughlin (2011), a military environment can be characterized by force and the creation of fear. The author argues that in generating fear, the military also produces anti-fear in its members. It is this anti-fear and its associated canons that later results in rule breaking. Desertion can thus be understood as a tactic used by disgruntled soldiers to demonstrate that power is not absolute, even in military settings. As a 'weapon of the weak' (Scott 1985) army desertion has a decisive role in exposing the oppression that soldiers sometimes experience in the military. According to Scott (1985), army desertion sometimes achieves something that mutiny may not. The narratives I draw on in this chapter further show that army desertion is interactional. Even though soldiers may desert individually, the success of army desertion largely depends on interactions that provide support rather than condemning it. Hence it is important to understand the importance of the role of vast, strong, covert networks that transcend national borders and enable deserters to leave Rwanda.

Inspired by feminist conceptualizations of security as an ongoing "subjective, temporally and contextually constituted" process (Innes 2016:269), it becomes apparent why and how army deserters who succeeded in crossing Rwandan borders still constantly feel insecure. As has

been shown, although they initially escaped to neighbouring countries in the Great Lakes region, these army deserters still felt unsafe. This was mostly because they believed that there is a high level of infiltration by Rwandan security agents of those states (Moore 1998). I argue that for my participants, the fear instilled by both the military and the state in Rwanda resurges once they had overtly or covertly challenged it, for example, by disobeying orders or deserting. This constant fear can be read through the lens of social navigation. In social navigation as envisioned by Vigh (2009; 2011; 2018), those outside the central nodes of power always see violence as an underlying possibility. Violence is an existing potentiality (Agamben 1999) in every sphere of their lives. They scan the environment to see what is beneath the obvious. As I will discuss below, this mistrust, insecurity and hypervigilance are also heightened by the fact that the Rwandan government eye exists in jurisdictions beyond its physical borders.

This fear stems from the army deserters' understanding of the abilities of the Rwandan military to act outside its jurisdictions (Berswick 2012; Sidiropoulous 2012; Prunier 2006) as well as its lack of tolerance for army deserters who go into exile (Gettlemen 2013; Ncube 2017). Cases of attacks, assassinations and violence against Rwandan exiles and army deserters have been documented in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, DRC, Uganda, Kenya, Burundi and Gabon (GCRHR 2018). It is important to highlight that the ruling RPF was itself founded on armed repatriation. The dread of being discovered or caught thus haunts deserters, and like people trying to escape a ghost, they continue restlessly on this journey to security. Hintjens (2008) posits that the Rwandan state is present even when it is absent. This means that the Rwandan military, which is an 'armed appendage' (Maringira 2017) of the ruling party, has succeeded in doing the political /ideological work of creating political subjectivities in that it still manages to control or monitor those who defy it.

My own study intimates that military surveillance produces 'security anxieties' – normally healthy responses to uncertainty and danger - which prompt army deserters to keep moving further away from Rwanda. As I discussed in the Introduction the Rwandan state had greatly increased its capacity for surveillance, thereby expand its governance, governance, security and control. It can monitor people outside its borders (Haggerty and Ericson 2000).

Prunier (2006) argues that the Rwandan military has a well-resourced external security organization which can effectively sniff out army deserters wherever they might be hiding in exile. This feeling of being constantly being watched feeds into and contribute to deserters'

78

chronic feeling of insecurity and the ever-present need to pre-empt the government. The ever-existing surveillant assemblage seems to enable the RDF and the state to hunt deserters and dissidents in other countries. This behaviour by most post-colonial states, Mbembe (2003) argues, is a departure from traditional administration of states according to reason. It is more of a show of despotic power to transgress the law and to demonstrate the state's sense of being entitled to expose others to death. Disregarding territorial jurisdiction, the Rwandan state arguably displays its necropower (ibid) – its ability to not only destroy persons but also to create death spaces in other countries. Based on the narratives in this chapter, it can be seen that my participants understand themselves, and perhaps the RPF understands them, as "walking dead" – people who have been written out of existence and now await their 'promotion' to the realm of the non-living bodies (Mbembe 2005).

Earlier on, I posed the question of how authoritarian regimes are capable of creating subjectivities even in members of the military who presumably sustain such political formations. Insights drawn from Maringira (2016) point to the coercive power of such institutions operated through military training where the civilian body is remoulded and soldier-hood deposited into the members' being. In another instance, the author decries how, in most instances, soldiers become victims of the system they allegedly sustain (Maringira 2017). A close reading of Iscariot's fears, and of the extensive literature, indicates that the RPF can reach into neighbouring countries. Such reach renders national geographical borders as porous, and as Hansen and Stepputat (2005) aptly argue, the debate on sovereignty has moved from territoriality and abiding by formal rules of engagement towards the exercise of acutely depressing violence on human bodies irrespective of where these bodies are.

In South Africa, cases of refugees and migrants who are known to pose political threats to their home governments and have been assassinated or physically attacked have risen significantly over the years with cases such as General Patrick Karegeya, Camir Nkurunziza (both from Rwanda) and Gezahegn 'Nebro' Gebremeskel of Ethiopia serving as some of the most common examples of the neo-sovereignty discourses that substantiate Mbembe's (2003) thesis on necropower. Understanding (and becoming involved in) the violence of military punishment and the work of subduing citizens create politico-ideological subjectivities in the minds of members of the military (Reyntjens 2011; Sidiropolous 2002).

The narratives of my study's participants further show that the consequences of army desertion are usually borne communally, that is, by the deserters' close family and friends. This is meant to deter people from giving assistance to those who break military rules. This is effective because at some point most army deserters make contact with home and family again (McLaughlin 2011). According to McLaughlin (ibid), to manage desertion in Syria, the Syrian army beat up close relatives of deserters. This isolates both the families and the deserters and serves as warnings to those who might harbour the latter. Controlling the 'rear-guard' that is, threatening or beating up as well as monitoring the activities of people in communities where soldiers come from serves as an important deterrent measure. These tactics are not unique to Syria; many militaries use this strategy (see also Belkin 2012; Wadham 2015). In an interview in Johannesburg in 2019, a high-ranking former army Chief told me that his relatives (close and remote) have been tortured on his behalf and his close cousin died in military custody while serving a jail term on behalf of the exiled army chief.

Conclusion

This chapter revealed that army desertion is a complex and onerous exercise and experience which is largely political. The chapter asserted that soldiers are not passive; they have political agency. Despite warranting the harshest punishments, desertion remains the most common way of exiting military service for disgruntled or fearful Rwandan soldiers. The tracking of army deserters beyond the country's geographical borders shows that the relationship between Rwandan soldiers and their military institution only matters when it has broken down. The journey to exile is not a simplistic movement from one country to the next; it is a long, winding and taxing journey in which the resolve of the deserters to begin new lives outside the military setting, in other countries is tested and strengthened. It is important to highlight that despite being subordinated to institutional will, soldiers have affective instrumental objectives to fulfil towards their immediate families and they have the duty to ensure their personal safety. In light of this, the relationship between the soldier and his employer is only tenable to a point where mutual interests are derived. When a disjuncture occurs, members of the military exercise desertion as an act of resistance.

I have also shown that the phenomena of desertion, networks and patronage are not new in the RDF. These *akazus* have been perfected over the past twenty-five years and seem to be at the heart of the problems that bedevil the RDF. The abovementioned patronage networks

apparently compete intensely over resources and power. According to Verweijein (2015), patronage networks in the military are 'time bombs' waiting to explode. I have shown that the journeys embarked on by army deserters in a bid to attain freedom from the military are gruesome and they usually travel in uncertainty, with death hovering over them as they navigate spaces of suffering and spaces of death. Conceptually, and most importantly, I have demonstrated the importance of *igihuha* in navigating the brute force of the Rwandan government. I have shown how mistrust, curiosity, insecurity, hypervigilance, pre-emption and perceptivity are central in how military deserters view their spheres of contact. Lastly, the chapter has also shown how that which ills the deserters also ills the government. It is therefore a noble conclusion worth of acceptance that both the pursuer and the pursued are stuck in a world of insecurity and pre-emption.

<center>**CHAPTER FOUR**</center>

Rumours and the "Hit List"

Introduction

The trailing and harming of army deserters in the context of exile through extra-legal means can be said to be an extension of the enduring disciplinary project of the Rwandan military through a surveillance assemblage, which in turn is rhizomatic (Delueze and Guatarri 1988). The hit list, informers and cyber spyware make up part of the surveillance assemblage that is used by the Rwandan state to monitor the activities of its exiled nationals. While the Rwandan state dismisses claims about the hit list as unfounded rumours, there have been evidence showing that the Rwandan government indeed uses Pegasus spyware to monitor its citizens (Wrong 2021) and even Presidents of some African countries have their phone numbers on the list (ibid). This kind of surveillance is however not surprising given that modern states dominate through insecurity (Mbembe 2003).

Commenting on the political involvement of militaries in the Middle East, Bill (1969) avers that the military is usually at the centre of thwarting political change, or as is probable with the RDF, to maintain the status quo. Proceeding from the understanding that surveillance is more effective when it can be localized and also present in the small details of diurnal life (Ball et al 2012: i), I turn first to the injured bodies (for example Ghost) of army deserters and rumours about the violence meted to them as a lens to reveal the ways in which the effects of Rwandan state surveillance find permanent accommodation among army deserters. I argue that the bruised and battered bodies of army deserters are themselves at once part and outcome of the surveillance assemblage I referred to in the Introduction. As hurt and or scarred army deserters move and interact with each other, the injuries serve as signs or inscriptions of power written on bodies. At the same time it is a coming together of an apparent network of informers, state agents, and technology and cyber-tracking at certain moments to interrupt, apprehend or injure deserters in South Africa.

I need to backtrack briefly here to Foucault. His work on surveillance (1977) and (1975) exploration of power, the military, the disciplining of the body through surveillance, drilling, as well as the 'docile body' still resonates with my own research. Foucault's ideas about

<center>82</center>

military discipline could arguably be extended to wider geopolitical settings. Higate (2012:369), for example refers to the "embodied legacy of military training" and its implications in international settings when soldiers are deployed in other countries. Although Higate is writing about military contractors, the point is that ex-soldiers, whether agents of the Rwandan state operating in South Africa, or deserters who try to evade them, apparently do not simply shed such deeply ingrained practices and behaviour. Researchers like Higate (ibid) Basham (2013) and McSorley (2014) have in some or other manner linked and expanded ideas of Foucault concerning military discipline and disciplinary practices, the body, performativity etc. to wider geopolitical settings (Powel 2019. Foucault argues (1977) that panoptic discipline also produces docile but efficient bodies that end up exercising self-discipline even when surveillance is discontinued. I will show that deserters are in a sense very disciplined, but they try at all cost to camouflage the military comportment, skills and practices from the purview of the surveillance assemblage. At the same time they draw on the aforementioned to survive, navigate socially and to evade becoming targets of the "hit list".

The existence of the above very much permeates into all aspects of the lives of Rwandan army deserters in South Africa. There was a strong belief that they are earmarked for harm and that their names are on a 'hit list'. The list is understood as an invisible and impersonal mechanism used to monitor the activities of persons that the Rwandan government has classified as 'enemies of the state', in this case, army deserters. This chapter explores the ways in which the 'hit list' was understood by exiled Rwandan army deserters. According to my participants, information about who was on the 'hit list' was occasionally leaked to deserters by *quasi-deserters* who sympathize with them. Using rumours as an analytical lens, the chapter analyses the meanings that deserters attach to being on the 'hit list'.

Understanding the 'hit list' from the vantage point of Rwandan army deserters

Cases in which high rank former Rwandan soldiers were either injured or assassinated for political reasons have been reported in South Africa (Wrong 2019; Smith 2015). Despite the South African government's stern stance against such attacks and notwithstanding the prosecution of people who killed in South Africa, attacks on deserters continue.

Sirikare, a participant in this study, was deeply concerned about an apparent increase in the number of such incidents. Sirikare stated that:

We are in trouble. The guys who have been sent here to deal with dissent abroad do not only target the former army bosses, no! They are attacking what they believe to be the opposition's support base, even more. Based on the most recent attacks in the community, it has been anyone who is vocal in denouncing the government in Rwanda and the ex-soldiers. Yhoooo, especially former soldiers (whistles and shakes his head) as long as you are known to have been a soldier in Rwanda and you are in exile, you are not safe. The attacks on soldiers have actually increased (Personal interview, 01 August 2019, Cape Town)

As highlighted earlier on, the hit list was one of the most discussed mechanisms of Rwandan state power among exiled army deserters. Sirikare said;

The 'hit list' is one of the sensitive rumours that circulates in the community. I believe that it is an idea which is associated with physically eliminating or torturing and psychologically attacking the morale of people here in exile. Remember the Rwandan state regards us former soldiers as its sworn enemies. I understand that there are some state agents here who have been sent to effect the hits and that as part of the targeted group I need to be extra cautious in my movements here (Personal Interview, 01 August 2019).

The use of 'hit lists' is not a new phenomenon in Africa. According to Purdekova et al (2017) and Jones and Murray (2017) the practice of 'hitting' targeted enemies of the ruling elite dates back to the precolonial period. Such practices also existed during the colonial period; colonial administrations were believed to have compiled lists of nationalists who they perceived as threats to colonial rule. Anthony (1986) avers that around 1976, the South African right wing drew up a list of 66 prominent black and white people it perceived as threats, and thus earmarked them for elimination. Analysing the death of 'kingmaker' retired General Solomon Mujuru in a mysterious inferno in 2011 in Zimbabwe, Fontein (2018:44) shows that he, as well as other individuals who were believed to pose an existential threat to the Mugabe Presidency, died in "political accidents". 'Hit lists' have however remained one of the highly guarded secrets of many governments while also becoming a subject of great speculation because they are usually associated with extra judicial killings.

Hardin (2000) defines the 'hit list' as a list of hated people or things against which unpleasant action must be taken. Existing literature on 'hit lists' reveals a near universal application of the phrase 'hit list' across academic disciplines to refer to elements that have been earmarked for reduction or elimination. The use of 'hit lists' in the political sphere has been more profound and widespread. According to Belzer and Wayne (2012; 2016), the 'hit list' contains names of people whose continued existence might jeopardise the aspirations or careers of certain individuals, particularly in the political sphere. The authors give as examples how key witnesses to the assassination of President JF Kennedy were systematically eliminated in the United States of America (see also Laizer 2017).

The excerpt above reflects how Sirikare understood the 'hit list' as a mechanism of power and force in various forms. According to Sirikare, the hit list is an *idea* that manifests itself in surveillance, fear mongering and also through physical attacks that some of his comrades experienced in Cape Town or Johannesburg.

Before information about the Rwandan state's use of Pegasus spyware emerged (Wrong 2021), I thought of the hit list as an idea and subject of rumours. Freedom House (2021:22) reported:

> Rwandan transnational repression is exceptionally broad in terms of tactics, targets, and geographic reach. Rwandans abroad experience digital threats, spyware attacks, family intimidation and harassment, mobility controls, physical intimidation, assault, detention, rendition, and assassination.

I had originally tried to make sense of, e.g. Sirikare's understanding of the hit list, as corroborating Greenhill and Oppenheim's (2017) argument that rumours emerge and are spread to help individuals make sense of troubling, and even seemingly incomprehensible, behaviour and events. Information conveyed in rumours enables army deserters to not only cope with fear and uncertainty by generating shared explanations, but it also guides their actions (see Rosnow 1988, 2001; DiFonzo and Bordia 1997, 2002). The rumour's capacity to guide actions of exiled deserters actualizes Vigh's (2010) argument that there is interactivity between social action and forces that are hidden in the environment.

Yet the deserters in this study understood the hit list not as a normative concept but as an existential model that was embedded in the political sphere (Ojakanga 2004). The 'hit list' was

further known to be a document containing the names of people who had been categorized as enemies of the state (mainly army deserters) and were therefore earmarked for elimination or at the very least, grievous bodily harm by state security agents. Both conceptualizations of the 'hit list' were important in explaining the varying forms in which the 'hit list' manifested itself during the course of this study.

It is important to highlight that, at the time of the research, I did not have the opportunity to see the alleged 'hit list' or the parallel ones that were believed to have been compiled by people in the 'hostile diaspora' – those who are radically opposed to the RPF government. This failure to set my eyes on both lists explains my conceptualization of these lists as indefinable as well as my use of rumours as a lens to understand the tensions that characterised the exiled army deserter – state relationship. I however interacted with people who claimed to have seen the list when they were members of the Rwandan state's intelligence organs. Thus the 'hit list' that circulated among Rwandan army deserters was, as Erasmus (2010) would say, everywhere and nowhere. Yet my participants sought to free this idea from time and place and from its historical circumstances and in so doing they actualized it. Though the actual contents of the list appeared to be unconfirmed and though they remained strictly guarded, the ways in which the 'hit list' was spoken about in army deserter circles gave it a somewhat immanent presence in the lives of these exiled soldiers.

As I indicated above, the emergence of reports concerning the Rwandan government's surveillance and efforts to control people even in the diaspora cannot be ignored. In this regard Freedom House (2021:22) reports that Rwandan authorities:

> take an extremely broad view of what constitutes dissent and seek to exert control over the totality of the diaspora, including through its embassies and official diaspora organizations. Even communicating with fellow Rwandans who have run afoul of the government poses a risk.

All of the above contribute to the ongoing concern, fear, incidents of very real harm and efforts to remain unobtrusive by my study participants.

Imagining the 'hit list' as an 'inventory' of 'enemies'

Ghost, alleged that people who were regarded as posing an existential threat to the presidency of Paul Kagame were on the 'hit list'. He said:

> Everyone who dared to speak publicly against the president gets on the 'hit list'; that I can assure you. It is not new. We have seen such people being attacked one by one. That is why you see that most people just keep (places his index finger on his mouth, a sign that the people keep quiet) and pretend to agree with the government. They know that the list is there and they know what being on the list entails. So in order to remain safe, they keep quiet. (Personal interview, 16 December 2019, Johannesburg)

The reality of hit lists is apparently confirmed by a report by Freedom House (2021:26);

> Lists of dissidents allegedly on Kagame's "kill list" circulate among Rwandans on social media and messaging platforms. Some Rwandans report avoiding other Rwandans, or remaining very guarded with each other.

Writing about systematic marginalization of people believed to have fallen out of favour with President Kagame, Rudasingwa (2019) states that many founding political and military members of the RPF - who had helped President Kagame to gain political power – have been discredited, harassed, killed, jailed or have fled into exile. To further make sense of the way in which the 'hit list' is understood among deserters, and why they s allegedly constitute a large number of targeted persons in South Africa, I refer to Iscariot, a former member of the Department of Military Intelligence (DMI). He stated that:

> …get me right my sister, normally, not everyone qualifies to be on the 'hit list'. There are only a few persons who get targeted. You know, Intelligence organizations usually think and function strategically. So, ideally, targeted persons are those who go against the government's ideologies in very radical ways… By the state interests I mean the integrity and well-being of its citizens, the economy, the state's sovereignty and national security and the Constitution. So if your activities directly or indirectly threaten these pillars of the state then you can be sure to be on the 'hit list'... Now what I have highlighted happens in a normal situation. However, the problem we now have as

87

Rwandans in relation to identifying elements that potentially threaten state interests is that of partisan politics… The state is not the state as we all know it… because of patronage, certain 'special' individuals in the military, government and industry, a group that operates like a mafia, has become the so-called state. It is no longer about the nation. I tell you the 'hit list' has been personalized and it is underpinned by poisonous politics in Rwanda. (Personal Interview, Johannesburg, 16 December 2019).

Iscariot's narrative underscores Freedom House's (2021: 22) contention that the Rwandan government and its operatives have a "broad view of what constitutes dissent". For Iscariot the aforementioned is nevertheless an indication that the Rwandan government has departed from the RPF's founding principles (Rudasingwa 2019) and that patrimonialism is growing (Reyntjens 2008). The alleged aforementioned insecurities inform the pre-emptive actions that the state engages in (see Jones and Murray 2018) by, for example spreading rumours about real or imagined hit lists.

White's (2000) idea of rumours as discourses is interesting to think with in terms of and army deserters. They assume that state agents rely on rumours for 'hunting' 'dissidents', while the deserters themselves view and engage with rumours to counter and evade surveillance and violence. Following Vigh's (2018) ideas of orientation, it can be argued that both the deserters and state agents respond to rumours in ways that actualize them. Even though a sizeable number of participants in this study claim to have actually seen the 'hit list' much of the actions taken by deserters were shaped by rumours.

Iscariot's excerpt illuminates the power to transcend geographical and juridical boundaries that is inherent in the 'hit list'. It also confirms Ojakangas (2004) arguments that political violence in contemporary Africa is characterized by blurred boundaries whereby "an exterior no longer exists, only an inland (Ibid: 12). This can be said to be applicable in the current case where clandestine activities that are associated with the hit list have been seen to occur even beyond Rwanda's borders (see also Wrong 2019). Mbembe (2003) asserts that violence is inscribed in the way the modern state functions. In highlighting the personalization of the list, Iscariot reveals the proclivity to a culture of violence among the RPF's top military officials who sometimes manipulate the 'hit list' to settle personal vendettas (see also Rudasingwa 2019).

According to Iscariot, being an enemy of the state is a process. Once it has been established that one's activities are radically opposed to the interests of the state then the process of crystalizing such enmity which also sets the scene for hunting essentially begins. Iscariot stated that:

> …So, usually personal historical and current information about targeted persons, their relatives, their friends, and all other associations, their interests, the activities they engage in, their strengths, their weaknesses, their fears etc. every spec of information is usually gathered and thoroughly scrutinized to establish patterns, inconsistencies or lapses because we have to ascertain everything before the powers that be certify enmity. Utmost care is specifically emphasized when drawing up such lists because of the deadly implications that accompany being on the 'hit list'.

The processes mentioned above by Iscariot could also be understood as a process of reifying enmity through 'biopolitics' (Foucault 1978), that is, extensive gathering of information with the aim of monitoring and controlling real or perceived enemies in order to save the interests of the state.   To further explore Iscariot's claims of enemy making, I draw on the ideas of Schmitt (1932) who aptly illustrates the distinction between a friend and an enemy in the sphere of politics. Schmitt's work provides a space in which the critical question of politics and ethics arises. His ideas on the making of "enemies for state legitimation" (Schmitt 1932:425; 2005) are profound for my findings because they speak to the ultimate expression of sovereign power, that is, the power to decide who lives and who must die (Li 2007) which, in turn, is closely linked to the 'hit list' which is the object of discussion in this chapter. For Schmitt, (1932: 12), the enemy is;

> Not a natural given but anyone ("other strange") who is concretely disclosed (at the miraculous moment of revealing) as a threat to the existence of a political order; one who has a threatening otherness. The ultimate manifestation of enmity in the political realm is the killing of the opponent. On the other hand, friends are all those who share the feeling of threat – those who are shaken by the otherness of the other and whose collective identity depends on its threat. The enemy must not be seen as a metaphor or a symbol or as an individualistic expression of private emotions.

For Schmitt, the enemy lies at the core of the political threat. According to Mbembe (2003), perceiving the other as a mortal threat is embedded in the political economy of the 'biopower' where people are systematically grouped in order to realise the calamitous function of the state. While Schmitt cautions people from conceptualizing the enemy as a metaphor or a symbol or as an individualistic expression of private emotions, it is apparent that Rwandan army deserters muddy the author's straightforward conceptualization of 'the enemy'. Iscariot intimates instead above that the "other strange" can be very "personalized" and "underpinned by poisonous politics".   In *'Theorizing State's Emotions'*, Sasey (2011) advances an interesting argument in which scholars of politics are challenged to unpack the 'reactionary' decisions made by states in order to understand the embeddedness of emotions in political decisions. It is on the basis of this argument that my disagreement with the Schmitt's 'objective' understanding of the enemy rises. More importantly, the ideas of threat and 'otherness' which formed the basis of Schmitt's understanding of the enemy were themselves intricately connected to emotions. That is why I am of the opinion that Schmitt's conceptualization does not properly capture the apparent rage that lies at the heart of 'enemy' making in Rwanda (Wrong 2021).

According to Purdekova et al (2017), the RDF is a hybrid politico-military organization, and this makes army desertion to be regarded as both a military and political offence. Consequently, all army deserters who I had conversations with suspected that they might be regarded as 'enemy' by the Rwandan state. However, they all emphasised that their activities in South Africa were not political.

Authority embedded in obscurity

As highlighted earlier, at the time of the research the list was not in the public domain; only five of my participants attested to having set their eyes on it. Yet the existence of such a list was generally accepted by the Rwandan refugee community. It terrified them. According to Mbembe (2003), modern states dominate through uncertainty and insecurity which, in the case of Rwandan army deserters, was apparently mediated through the belief in (and ultimately the reality of) 'hit lists'. Who was on the list was obscure and this uncertainty contributed to fear mongering. Turbo was of the opinion that the Kagame administration deliberately allowed versions of the 'hit list' to multiply because allowing these to stabilise into a singular account would reduce uncertainty, which, according to Fontein (2018), has become the fundamental feature of political power in the post-colonial state. Turbo stated that; "they arguably wanted

everyone in the 'hostile diaspora' to suspect that they were on their 'hit list'". It is this unverifiability of the hit list and its targets that mainly provoked deserters' e military habitus (Pendlebury 2019; Maringira 2015) of being hypervigilant and suspicious. Additionally, rumours about the hit list, Rwandan state agents and informers in South Africa became an impetus for what Vigh (2010) refers to as 'motion squared' – movement that happens as a result of threatening forces that exist in environments that are believed to be nests for negative potentialities.

In further exploring the authority this list had in my participants' post-military lives, I asked what the 'hit list' or being named on it, meant to them. Vividly moved by the invisible threat that hovered over his life, Ghost took a long pull on his weed as if to take a deep breath in the process, then violently coughed out smoke like one who had choked on both smoke and anger that had welled inside of him. After coughing for a while he said;

> For me, and for most of my comrades, the 'hit list' means that our sour relationship with the Kagame dictatorship has irretrievably broken down; we are now earmarked for assassination. Therefore we must be ready to defend ourselves and our dignity all the time, otherwise we are dead man walking. In the regime's eyes, we are a threat that cannot be tolerated. That is misguided of course, because not all of my comrades are involved in politics here. It also means that we must also see the regime as an intolerable threat, I think (Personal Interview, 20 December 2019, Johannesburg).

Even though Ghost constantly reminded me of the ex-soldiers' ability to defend themselves as highly trained military men, he seemed very distressed when talking about it. Army deserters took the hit list seriously, they assumed their names were on it and responded with various social navigation tactics such as camouflaging or nesting their military identities and being constantly on the move.

Even as they believed that they were in mortal danger, the army deserters' survival largely depended on their ability to tap into their enduring military 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1990) which became a very useful survival capital in the host society. This dependence on their military disposition validates Maringira's (2015) argument that soldier-hood becomes ingrained in certain settings. Higate (2000) asserts that military training is for life. One striking observation drawn from Ghost's excerpt was that both army deserters and the Rwandan state occupied

positions of threat. This resonates with De Castro's (2002) argument about the 'relative native' in which he demonstrates that two persons engaged in conversation occupy the same position (in this case the position of threat) relative to their different perceptions. Iscariot was convinced that all exiled ex- soldiers were eligible candidates for the 'hit list'. He stated that,

> Even though utmost care is taken in drawing up the hit list, the Rwandan government's current stance on army deserters is collective. All ex-soldiers qualified to be on the 'hit list' since they are believed to have deserted to the enemy and are therefore a serious threat to national security. So they are targeted regardless of their non-involvement in Rwandan opposition politics. They think we left them because we want to work for the RNC (Personal interview, Johannesburg, 16 December 2019).

Army deserters thus believed that they occupied a profoundly precarious position in post military life because of the ways in which the RPF government had stigmatized them as critics of the Kagame led government.

Unmasking both the most hunted and the hunter

After the deaths of six junior rank Rwandan army deserters between 2012 and 2016 in Johannesburg and Cape Town, there was great deal of suspicion that former military men in the diaspora were being eliminated through 'convenient deaths' (Jones and Murray 2017 Sirikare stated:

> It was just impossible for such a large number of army deserters to die or be attacked by coincidence here in South Africa. No! From our thorough investigations and a very careful analysis of the circumstances surrounding these and other unfortunate incidents, we are sure that our actual enemy is hiding behind the mask of South Africa's violence (Personal interview, 02 August 2019, Cape Town).

Sirikare's 'investigations' above refer to the efforts by deserters to get to the bottom of their comrades' deaths. This was also a way to confront their own angst, described by Vigh (2018:487) as moving from "abstract disquiet to a search for causes of distress…"

My study participants were convinced that "One soldier's death, under suspicious circumstances, is one too many" (Ishmael). They decided to investigate. By relying on the intelligence skills they acquired during military training and service, they analysed the circumstances surrounding each death and they painstakingly searched for as many clues as possible within South Africa, in other countries and in Rwanda. Iscariot highlighted that their investigations revealed a pattern that was consistent attacks on deserters hiding in the Great Lakes region especially in Uganda, the DRC, as well as Mozambique during the same period. Iscariot stated that:

> So since that time, we carefully analyse each case of violence and each death and I can tell you now that the government has not relented. They are working to eliminate us behind the scenes (Personal interview, 02 August 2019, Cape Town).

The wide search for clues across borders revealed deserters' growing understanding of the Rwandan state's reach beyond its geographical boundaries. The transnational investigation supports Jones and Murray's (2017) argument that actions of the Rwandan state cannot be understood in isolation, particularly outside the regional politics of the Great Lakes Region. Here, the claims that Iscariot and his comrades made, corresponded, to some degree, with the Global Campaign for Rwanda's Human Rights (2018) reports which shows that about 30 former Rwandan soldiers were assassinated between 2013 and 2016[4]. My participants concluded that the deliberate targeting of soldiers went beyond restoring national security and that attacks also on junior rank army deserters were meant to demonstrate the RPF's capacity for fatal violence against its real or perceived enemies. Major Ghost and Iscariot generally believed that given the growing political tensions in the RPF and RDF, the government was working towards systematically eliminating soldiers because the government fears that these former military men might mobilize to oust the Kagame rule.

The arguments presented by Iscariot seem to verify Mbembe's (2001) notion of 'necropolitics' which argues that states in the post-colony injure, maim and kill their enemies (usually their citizens) in order to maintain a hold on political power (See also Fontein 2018). The present

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[4] The Global Campaign for Rwanda's Human Rights is a civic organization which advocates for the Human Rights of Rwandans. The organization argues that there have been gross Human rights violations by the RPF government within Rwanda and beyond its borders over the years. This civic organization has detailed a list of the people who have been murdered, allegedly by the RPF since 2003

case of alleged violence against rank-and-file army deserters, the inconclusiveness of most of the cases and the rumours related to all this violence are constitutive of what Fontein (2018) aptly refers to as the 'politics of uncertainty'.

According to Fontein (2018) death is difficult to understand and provokes questions about culpability and motivation. The author stresses the "unfinished nature of death" (Fontein 2018; 47) it leaves an uncertainty that defies material, semantic and temporal closure (ibid). The response to the death of fellow deserters is further rooted in traditional African practices: death is not easily believed to be 'natural'. As a result, the bereaved were determined to find killers and reasons for the demise of their beloved relatives and comrades-in-arms (Ekore 2016). Western science also has an equivalent for this practice in autopsies (Weedn 2018), that is, the desire to scientifically know the reasons behind the death of a person.

Like rumours about the brutality of state agents, the investigations carried out by these former soldiers in relation to their comrades' deaths can also be understood as ways of contextualizing, coping with and contesting the extra judicial violence against army deserters in exile. Fontein (2018) refers to such kinds of politically motivated deaths as 'political accidents' or to borrow from Jones and Murray (2017), 'convenient deaths'. According to Sirikare, the deaths of people from the 'hostile' diaspora were normally attributed to homicide (strangling, gunfire, poisoning, torture wounds and motor accidents), 'suicide' and 'natural causes' (heart attack and cancer). My participants however alleged that all their comrades were murdered by state security agents who were sent to deal with real or perceived threats to the Kagame presidency. Ghost claimed that some of the deceased army deserters died not because they were involved in opposition politics in exile, but because they probably held sensitive information. He stated that:

> Some of those late guys are believed to have had extremely sensitive information about the operations of some people in high places in in Rwanda. (Personal interview, 20 October 2019, Johannesburg).

Ghost further asserted that the deceased soldiers had previously moved in power circles in Rwanda and knew they would die at the hands of state security agents because "they had broken their oath (*omerta*) by repenting" (Comment by Ghost). Iscariot, my participant, made reference to mafia-like operations within the RPF party. Similarly, Ghost attributed the deaths

of some of the army deserters to "paying an ultimate price of having broken *ormeta*". Ormeta is a Sicilian oath of silence which is used by members of a mafia group (mafialife.com 2011). In the circles of the Sicilian mafia groups, nobody is allowed to defect or repent and no one is supposed to speak about or against what would have happened in those circles, even in defence of oneself. Given that the absolute tenet of the oath is loyalty, anyone who defected was bound to receive the ultimate penalty which is death.

As such, the 'hit list' came to be understood among exiled army deserters as a 'clean up' mechanism to wipe up the evidence of political assassinations in which top government officials could be implicated. The 'hit list' also served the purpose of enforcing what these former soldiers referred to as the 'sicilian code of silence' / omerta (see also Belzer and Wayne 2013). Given the apparent militarization of politics in Rwanda (Purdekova et al 2018; Himbara 2019) the assumption by army deserters that most of the people on the list were once affiliated to the military seems to be actualized.

Political biography of the Rwandan 'hit list'

Purdekova et al (2017) assert that studies on post-conflict Rwanda need to invest in understanding the operations of the state from the vantage point of the country's history. I have highlighted that participants in this study subjectively felt that the violence they experienced in South Africa, their host society, was somehow linked to them being on the 'hit list'. Following Purdekova et al's advice (above), I traced the use of violence to Rwanda's pre-colonial period to trace a continuity between that time and the post-conflict period. Similarities between these epochs are evident in the structure, attitude and operation of the state which include centralization, militarization and expansionism (see also Jones and Murray 2017). The 'hit list' is operationalized even beyond Rwanda's geographic borders (Wrong 2019).

This is reflective of the pre-colonial period when "militarism lay at the core of statecraft" (Purdekova et al 2017: 161). The precolonial kingdom/state was premised on centralized power, warrior ideologies and territorial expansion through conquest (ibid). Somewhat similarly, the post-conflict Rwandan state has shown a military stance which has engendered conflict, not only with its neighbours, but with its nationals who live in exile. Implementing the hit list beyond the borders of Rwanda signifies the heightened vulnerabilities of the state and it begs critical question about the fluidity if not stubbornness of sovereignty.

According to Jones and Murray (2017), the history of Rwanda is replete with cases of power constellations and the systematic elimination of people who posed real or perceived political threats to those in power. Citing the works of Kagame (1972), the authors reveal that rulers often sanctioned the elimination of individuals whose loyalty was in doubt. Such eliminations were generally linked to clientship systems in which political power was anchored. For example, the *ubuhake* (patron-client) cliques were responsible for dealing with royal succession struggles among the ruling circles during the reigns of king Rujugira and king Rwabugiri around the 1750s and 1895 (ibid). In carrying out its 'royal' mandate, the *ubhake* cliques massacred princely families and those of chiefs whose loyalty was questioned. This targeting of specific individuals suggests the existence of a 'hit list' during the precolonial period. The authors further note the centrality of rumour mongering in these conflicts during the said periods. For Rusagara et al (2009), the colonial period cemented enmity between the major ethnically defined groups in Rwanda and led to the wave of conflict that characterises the country during this period. It is plausible to surmise that the targeting of specific individuals also hinged on rumours and the creation of death lists.

The responsibility for eliminating real or perceived political opponents continued in post-independent Rwanda on much the same principles of patronage, rumours and revenge: the *amasasu* and *akazu* systems basically replaced the *ubuhake* (Jones and Murray 2017). According to Prunier (2008), after the genocide, the RPF perfected the art of repression and it instituted an unprecedented powerful militaristic presence in Rwandan society through state security and military organs such as the External Security Organization (ESO). The ESO is a military organ which is known for systematically eliminating real or perceived military or political threats to Tutsi power (see also Sidiropolous 2002; Longman 2013). The existence of the 'hit list' in Rwandan history over a long period of time is the basis on which my participants claim that the RPF has taken advantage of the murderous relics of the precolonial, colonial, post-colonial and genocidal regimes to maintain its hold on political power even if it meant following defectors in foreign lands. Munro and Thanem (2017) assert that modern states are often underpinned by continuous forms of free-floating control which pervade the social fabric.

The rumoured existence of 'hit lists' sent a strong message to enemies and friends alike that the state did not tolerate security threats, real or perceived. Gauging from the interactions that I had with Rwandan army deserters who took part in this study, the assumed presence of a 'hit list' as an authoritative artefact of the Rwandan state functioned to threaten and sometimes

eliminate critics of the current government. The former soldiers alleged that while the 'hit list' was normally drawn up by the military intelligence department (DMI), it derived its authority from the President.   One of the participants, Soda, maintained that as he understood the Rwandan hit list, it was imbued with a relatively universal, albeit sovereign mandate;

> The President may not have personally compiled the 'hit list' but he obviously knows about its existence and he has given the list a mandate. He also commissions those who operationalize it, almost anywhere. Do you know Kagame? He is so in charge, he knows about almost everything good and bad that happens in his government. So, me, I do not buy the nonsense that he is unaware of something that potentially tarnishes his image; he knows (Personal Interview, 5 September 2019, Cape Town).

Soda's excerpt above can best be explained through Mueller's (2003:23) argument that "it mattered not so much how and which decisions are made on behalf of a sovereign, but that they are made at all." In similar cases of vicarious liability, it is argued that he who acts through another does the act himself (*qui facit per alium facit per se*). Drawing on Rupiya's (2004) examination of the executive presidency viz-a-vis national security problematic, it can be argued that army deserters in exile pay the price for blurry political formulations.

Laizer (2017) suggests that one of the many cases in which 'hit lists' were known to have been sanctioned at the highest level of the state concerns Mehmet Eymur, a former chief of the Turkish intelligence. He testified as witness to extra judicial killings carried out by the Turkish state in the 1990s. As part of his testimony, Eymur produced a list with 54 names to the Number One High Court in Ankara in 2014. Eymur alluded that the President, Suleyman Demirel, had ordered the list.

In the Rwandan case, recent reports (Wrong 2021, Freedom House 2021, Vasn Eysen 2021) confirm the existence of hit lists. As indicated before, the murder of exiled former Intelligence Chief, General Patrick Karegeya, in Johannesburg South Africa on 01 January 2014 at the Michelangelo Hotel, the assassination attempts on General Faustin Kayumba Nyamwasa and several other attacks on Rwandans exiled in South Africa also serve as evidence that some people may have been marked for death (see also Wrong 2020). According to Himbara (2019), the Rwandan state closely follows the attacks of those labelled enemies of the state and it is sometimes quick to give contradictory or unverified statements when the high profile critics are attacked (see Du Plessis 2019). The claims made by my participants that attacks on army

deserters are generally sanctioned by the RPF government are substantiated by the government's reticence to denounce these actions. In fact, President Kagame himself suggested that his government was seeking to revenge 'dissident' ex-soldiers who now lived in exile; "soldiers are some of the dissidents who live freely in exile… we will get you, where ever you are, it is only a matter of time" (Himbara 2019:1). His foreign minister repeated the same words in May of 2019 while responding to allegations that a former member of the Presidential guard, Camir Nkurunziza, was murdered by alleged Rwandan state security agents in May of 2019 in Cape Town (Himbara 2019; Du Plesiss 2019). More importantly, the authority of the hit list can further be understood through the history of the RPF government itself. It originated outside the country, and the state is keenly aware that Rwandan refugees across Rwanda's borders may oppose the state and try to oust the current government (see also Purdekova et al 2017).

Based on this history, refugees, and especially deserters, are seen as constituting a serious security threat (Fisher and Anderson 2015; Jones and Murray 2017). The security spill-overs that happened among Rwandan army deserters in South Africa were in line with the Rwandan government's policy that "punishment for misdeeds would be universal" (Jones and Murray 2017:17). Moreover, it was noted that under the unusually able and committed leadership of President Kagame, the RPF government had reinvented their strategies from conventional justice to guerrilla 'hit and run' attacks (Prunier 2008; Sidiropolous 2012). Ultimately, as at once former military men and people living on the margins and in hiding, my study participants assured me that they had themselves become tenacious and creative in evading this security risk that they now live with through social navigation tactics.

Rumours and 'hit list' transmission

It is quite rare for targeted people to have access to a 'hit list' unless they have some connections or sympathisers who are inside the system that wants to eliminate them. Names on the 'hit list' were mainly transmitted through the grapevine (Laizer 2017) as warnings from those who would have had the privilege to see it. There were however instances where state agents inadvertently divulged the names of their targets while torturing another targeted person. This was the case in Hunk's encounter with some state security agents in South Africa. Hunk, an ex-member of the Rwandan Presidential Guard, alleged that he "physically" learned of his comrades' existence on the 'hit list'. This is Hunk's story:

Early one Friday morning in mid - 2016, while on my way to work, I was hit with an iron bar in the back of my head. When I turned to see who had attacked me, I saw a very tall, medium built man, whom I often met on my way to work every day. He tasered me and I lost consciousness. When I eventually came to my senses again I was on the floor in a very cold room. My shirt and jacket were thrown in the corner close to the door, my arms and legs were tied together and a cloth tightly covered my mouth. Three men, including the one who had attacked me on the road, were sitting on bar stools and each of them held a whip.

Hunk said these men spoke in French and Kinyarwanda. His attackers had apparently received conflicting instructions regarding him as a particular target. Hunk assumed that he was initially meant to be eliminated since he had previously been a member of the presidential guard. He learned that all deserters from this unit were to be eliminated. Carefully listening to Hunk's narrative, I realised that his sense of hearing was acute, verifying Vigh's (2010) privileging of senses as a radar for navigation. In much of my discussion in the next chapters I will also emphasise the importance of the senses and the 'sensory turn' (Classen 1997; Goody 2002; Howes 2008; Ingold 2011; Low 2018)

According to Hunk he heard that orders to turn him 'into a human cabbage' were given to his attackers over the phone. Meanwhile the freshly painted room felt heavy, as if there was a ghostly presence in it. Hunk said,

I spotted some blood trails on the edges of one side of the wall. I was sure that it was not my blood because my own blood had coagulated close to me. (Frowning as if he felt the exact pain he felt on the day of the attack Hunk continued saying; my ribs ached and I had difficulty breathing). As I lay there, one of the three men removed the blue cloth from my mouth. I felt relieved and I took very long deep breaths. The guy who removed the cloth from my mouth spoke to me in French; "*Parlons! Ou sont tes compagnons criminels? Ou est Iscariote et Turbo?*" (Let's talk! Where are your fellow criminals? Where is Iscariot and Turbo?).

Hunk said each name was accompanied by a stinging whipping of his body. The three men allegedly called out a lot of names which Hunk lost count of. According to Hunk, he knew

99

some of the people who were named; two of them were the deceased army deserters. That is how Hunk 'physically' knew about the contents of the 'hit list'. Hunk opined that playing dead saved his life that day. He credited his survival to his rigorous, 'hard punch' military training, which made him master the art of holding his breath for long intervals. Hunk recalled how he pretended to be dead;

> I was tortured badly and I had to pretend to be dead otherwise the devils were never going to leave me alive. So I held my breath for many three minute intervals then breathed very slowly as I lay motionless on the floor. I also silently passed wind through silent farts. After about an hour and half of very restricted breathing, I started sweating badly and I knew I could not handle breath holding any longer. I pretended to have convulsions then urinated and shat in my pants then I lay still again. When my tormentors saw this, they dragged me out of the room, threw me into the back of their white Isuzu which did not have a number plate, then they dumped me in a bush somewhere near Krugersdorp. When I eventually recovered from the torture, I wrote down all the names that I could remember from my encounter with the state agents. Remembering the names was not difficult for me because the whips registered the names in my mind and body. So having physically learned of the list, I had to warn my comrades (Personal interview, Johannesburg, 19 August 2019).

Hunk's ordeal made me cringe. Yet as I listened to how he remembered the names that had been written into his body by the several whippings administered to him during his torture and how he had succeeded in making his assailants believe that he had died, the narrative resonated with Lande's (2007) description of how the militarized body was disciplined through military training to 'breathe like a soldier'. The embedded military practices apparently saved this man from what would have otherwise been a case of imminent death. This further corroborates with Green's (1994) contention that survival usually depends on an array of responses to a seemingly intractable situation. The narrative given by Hunk resonates with the Bourdieu's (1990) ideas of transposing skills that were learned in one field to another field in which such skills become useful capital.

Even though most people had not actually set their eyes on a hit list, they talked about it with conviction. While the 'hit list' existed in the shadow world of most of these army deserters, most of their activities were organized in response to the stories they heard about the 'hit list'.

Acting towards the invisible hit list, reveals that senses play an important role in sniffing out hidden dangers (Vigh 2010, 2018). Commenting on the power of rumour to not only inscribe but also describe the world of fear in individual bodies and collective imagination, Green (1994) notes that the climate of fear that existed in Guatemala during the 1990s mainly resulted from stories of torture, death and disappearance of certain members of vulnerable communities (ibid). Indeed, this study found that rumours about the contents of the 'hit list' and stories of the violence that would have been meted out to those who were supposedly on it gave the 'hit list' an immanent presence in the post military lives of these ex-soldiers.

One of my colleagues at our university, Lorna, approached me and asked, "Have you heard that your best friend Petros is on the list? You must be careful otherwise very soon you will be on that list by association." I responded, "But I am not from Rwanda, so how do I fit into the Rwandan puzzle?" Patting my braided head, she repeated, "By association my dear, don't say we did not tell you." Imagining myself on the hit list made me sick because I too had lost a close relative to this 'hit list' crossfire. There were a series of 'hit list' mazes, various meanings as well as messy epistemologies embodied in every fearsome narrative concerning it.

For example, Lorna (highlighted above) asked Sirikare, my interlocutor, whether he had heard about Philip's experiences during his kidnapping. These two Rwandans had a brief conversation in French which they later translated to me even though I had understood them;

> *J'ai entendu ca quand Philip a ete kidnappe, il est revenue sans son penis*" (I heard that when Philip was kidnapped, he returned without his penis). *"Non J'ai antendu dire qu'ils avaient decolle son prepuce et fendu un des ses testicules*. (No. I heard that they peeled off his foreskin and slit out one of his testicles).

Such rumours had social and political purchase and made people (like myself) afraid. It increased uncertainty, fed further by political actors, which (re)produce political subjectivities among the Rwandan refugees in the host society. Such stories sent shivers through those who heard them.

To make sense of the ever-swirling rumours, I took cues from White's (2000:7) work *Speaking with Vampires: rumour and History in Colonial Africa*, to "let the maze be the maze, [and to] let ethnographic narratives be as messy and meandering as they needed to be." Rather than

getting lost in the confusing and multiple versions of the many stories about the Rwandan 'hit list', I decided that these stories were actually useful ethnographic sources in that they exposed the emic vulnerabilities among my participants. According to Abraham (1970), rumours are not 'texts' but interpretive stances and practices that mediate social reality and performances. One thing that rumours effectively did among Rwandan army deserters was to keep passions at fever pitch insofar as the various versions of stories sometimes went beyond acceptable levels of verbal abuse of both the army deserters or the government and its security agents. By so doing, rumours generally raised the bar of hate-mongering. Insights gained from the interpretive paradigm helped me to move from contextualizing the narratives I had gathered to allowing them to comment on the political climate and the ways in which Rwandan army deserters navigated the extension of Rwandan state surveillance into South Africa. In addition to offering me an analytical lens, rumours gave me a methodological tool in terms of data collection since the stories were, for me, responses to the social and political environments in which they existed (Shibutani 1966; Kapferer 1990; Perice 1997).

Writing about the volatile situation that characterized Haiti in the 1990s, Perice (1997) shows that the authoritarian regimes of that time relied heavily on rumours to spread terror and fear in order to maintain political power. A close reading of Perice's work and the emotional climate of dread that exists among my participants revealed that rumours were dialogical, and that they did a great deal of ideological work insofar as they had the capacity to paralyse people with fear, as well as enabling my participants to devise robust counter surveillance strategies. Rumours were also construed as the radar that was used by army deserters in navigating state surveillance.

Rumours probably also communicate panic and paranoia to people in power (Perice 1997). It was interesting to find that these army deserters had their own parallel lists of dangerous state security agents. My reading of the idea of having parallel lists was that a stage had been set for the possibility of retaliation. Arguably, there is a subtle theatre of lethal conflict happening between army deserters and their 'hunters' in the shadows of South African refuge. Against this backdrop, I argue that the enmity between the Rwandan government and its exiled army deserters has created a conducive environment for the peddling of 'unverified accounts' or rumours which ingrain the belief that harassment, torture and murder could befall any army deserter at any time. Arguably, the 'hit list' dehumanizes Rwandan army deserters in many ways.

We are not people but just things, maybe nothings too'

Iscariot and most of the Rwandan army deserters living in South Africa had a profound feeling of disappointment in their government because it did not perceive them as people with genuine concerns. They said they were saddened by the fact that they had been classified as 'things' that must be disposed of. When read together with the state's attitude towards the deserters, as well as the violent experiences of exiled Rwandan ex-soldiers, the very act of labelling them as 'dissidents' means that these former military men have been conferred the status of 'living dead' (Mbembe 2003). I could sense the intensity of the feud between the army deserters and their government in Iscariot's tone of voice when he expressed that:

> The RPF government does not consider its enemies as people, no!! Why would they treat their enemy like a person? The attitude is even worse towards former soldiers whom they have labelled dissidents. Believe me, we are not seen as human beings, in those people's eyes. We are just things, maybe nothings too. (Iscariot disappointedly clicked his tongue when he finished speaking). (Personal interview, 19 December 2019, Johannesburg)

The excerpt reveals some of the meanings that army deserters attached to being on the 'hit list'. The deserters believe that they are regarded as 'things' or that the RPF government had 'thingified' them to borrow from Brown's (2001) thing theory which posits that an object becomes a thing when it ceases to serve its purpose . According to my participants, these feelings stemmed from the brutality that they and their compatriots experienced at the hands of Rwandan state security and military agents in exile. Examples of such state sponsored brutality abound (See Peters 2015; Gould 2015; Du Plessis 2019). The pervasive presence of state agents and informers produced a dehumanizing instability which saw most of them being regarded as failures and liabilities by their family members. Whereas these ex-soldiers sought stability in refuge, exile did not give them that at all. They were threatened and always 'on the run' (Goffman 2014), looking out for danger because the state's presence was interwoven in their daily settings in many ways. The volatility that characterized their lives led my participants to think of themselves as totally undervalued 'things'.

Even though my participants perceived their 'thingification' in terms of their experiences in exile, I am of the view that it should be understood historically. I do so by using their 'desertion'

as an analytical lens in order to show that this characterization did not begin with 'horrible' exile experiences, but was embedded in the idea of desertion and its associated processes as much as it was aligned to the Rwandan states' perception of such actions.

In all militaries, soldiers who desert lose their respectable social status and become eligible for military punishment (Fantina 2012). Evidence from my study was corroborated by the literature which highlights the negative light in which contemporary Rwandan army deserters are understood by the RPF government, that is, as a 'threat' (thing likely thought to present harm) to national security. This understanding of army deserters by the state is the fundamental level where deserters have been 'thingified' (Brown 2001) in their post military life. For the state, all other engagements with deserters were underpinned by the immediate need to eliminate this 'thing' / 'threat'. The reported identification of deserters by the military's High Command using undesirable categorizations like 'dissidents', 'walking corpses', 'demons', 'wild animals', 'dogs' and 'cowards' was in a way secondary and sought to justify the associated violence that would be meted to these ex-soldiers in future. Thus, when the army deserter journeyed into exile, they had already been stripped of their social status, constructed as a non-person and emplaced into a particular social niche of the 'hunted' or 'threats'. Meanwhile, 'thingification' did not only ensue but it was coupled with a reward system in which the ex-soldiers acquired various monetary values on the 'prying' market where Rwandan state agents are allegedly paying people for leads that enable them to 'catch' army deserters. The following chapter reveals the ferocity of alleged Rwandan state agents in reducing the army deserters from 'things' to 'nothings' as they hunt them down in their host society, South Africa.

Conclusion

The 'hit list' transcends national boundaries. I have shown that as a technology of power the operationalization of the hit list transcends territorial jurisdictions. Rwandan army deserters living in self-imposed exile in South Africa are convinced that they have been earmarked for elimination by their government because it fears that they might be planning to oust the Kagame led administration. Though the Rwandan state does not acknowledge the existence of the 'hit-list', it explains the heightened surveillance and attacks on army deserters as a way of redressing military deviance through military disciplinary channels. Stories about the 'hit list' however give a counter narrative to the to the official discourse as the targeted deserters maintain that they are being persecuted because in the RDF, deserting then going to exile is

more of a political offense than military deviance; punishment of exiled deserters thus includes military and political means.

The chapter re-centres the 'hit list' through the lens of rumours. I assert that the 'hit list' is real even though its operations are understood through the lens of rumours with the intention of creating subjects and objects who are susceptible to easy and effective elimination by the Rwandan state agents and their hired associates. Interestingly, the reading of the 'hit list' as rumour and through the lens of rumours also obtains from below (localized rumours), resulting in its entanglement with the hegemonic rumour thereby mitigating the intended subjugation of the hegemonic rumour. Suffice to say that, the obscurity of the 'hit list' as rumours and through rumours is contested and complex. Its intended hegemonic effects of total domination are inherently susceptible to counter hegemonic influences from below (that is, the hunted and their sympathisers in the context of exile. This is all the truer in that the obscurity of the hit list is initially meant to conceal identities of the hunted and the dynamics of its operations so as to increase its efficacy in eliminating the threat to the Rwandan state. However, it can be concluded that such obscurity incidentally eliminates civilians who would have been rumoured to be warming up to 'hunted' army deserters.

Inasmuch as the 'hit list' is understood to be imbued with a sovereign mandate its implementation in the South African context is complex and it certainly does not achieve totalitarian subjugation of exiled army deserters. While state agents may succeed in some missions, they face huge challenges on other missions. This will be shown in the following chapter where the hunting expeditions of state agents and their hired accomplices as well as the navigation struggles of army deserters are discussed in greater detail.

CHAPTER FIVE

Army Deserters as prey

Introduction

Studies on migrants and violence in South Africa primarily focus on spectacular overt violence like xenophobic attacks (Classen 2017; Hickel 2014; Matsinhe 2011) whilst giving less attention to subtle yet lethal violence meted on the bodies of migrants who are considered political threats by the state security agents of their home countries. I argue that that such discourses often miss the nuanced and recurring violent practices experienced by deserters, yet cloaked by the violent subcultures of South Africa. By focusing on the narratives of army deserters about being 'hunted' the chapter interrogates the complexities of navigating traps and hidden danger in contexts which are pregnant with negative potentialities. This chapter is therefore an account of men 'on the run' (Goffman 2014). Analysis of data is drawn from Vigh's (2010) concept of social navigation, coupled with Mbembe's (2001) ideas of 'necropolitics' and Foucault's (1977) panoptic discipline.

'Hunted' Ex-Soldiers

Some scholarship and Rwandan state narrative argue that pursuing and purging of Rwandan army deserters who are in exile was motivated by the need to ensure national security (Fisher and Anderson 2015). As argued before, Ghost, for example, was convinced that they were 'hunted' because they are perceived as political dissidents. Major Ghost, stated:

> Forget the national security shit. Most of our men who have been attacked are not politicians. We, army deserters, are being hunted like animals in a jungle. We are being caught and killed in cold blood by death squads because we refuse to continue being used as politicians' 'dirty workers' or their personal property… It's too much, it's too much. We are being kidnapped, we are being tortured, and we are being disabled. It's too much and we cannot take it any longer (Personal Interview, 21 September 2019, Johannesburg)

The lives of Rwandan army deserters is unpleasant and fraught. I quickly became accustomed to the ways in which they were always orientating themselves in space, time and social relations

in anticipating of negative potentialities: their embodied vigilance would suddenly yet subtly shift and seem to increase. However, despite having the necessary skill to navigate potential violence against themselves, being acutely attentive to people's actions, envisioning pre-emptive measures, scanning social environments for danger and identifying potential threats, they were also exposed and vulnerable.

To make sense of the deserters' use of the notion of 'hunting' I take clues from Weizman's (2006) claim that military operations in urban spaces, generally thrive on deconstructing conventional architectural uses of certain spaces and interpreting such spaces in unique and strategic ways that alarm the enemy. Given that army deserters interpreted South Africa as a 'jungle' in which Rwandan state security agents and informers pursue, track, ambush or injure prey (army deserters), South Africa's violent cities could also be seen as providing camouflage. The ever-violent (perceived) city environment, supposedly enables the 'hunters' to sometimes perpetrate violence and leave 'the hunted' uncertain and confused as to who was actually responsible for the attack.

At the same time South Africa's dense cosmopolitan areas allowed army deserters to 'disguise' and camouflage themselves within the complex and ambiguous urban spaces and contexts in which identity changes can occur quite quickly. Therefore, in terms of the hunting analogue, what happens between Rwandan state security agents and army deserters in South Africa can be understood as a display of military strategy and tactics of *smoothing spaces* (Weizman 2006) and surprising the enemy. The South African state apparently are aware, or at least suspect that such operations happen: Justice Minister Jeff Radebe's warned in 2014 that Rwandan security agents use South Africa's violent crime record as a camouflage within which they perpetrate violence against Rwandan exiles in South Africa (timeslive 2014).

As indicated before, the failed assassination of General Kayumba Nyamwasa, (news24.com 2014) and the murder of another vocal critic of the RPF government, former soldier Camir Nkurunziza (Du Plessis 2019), was linked to Rwandan state agents. Sirikare, one of my participants stated that,

> The media is only concerned about attacks of high rank ex-soldiers; only those stories that generate money for them. All other cases of abduction, torture and murder of us the ordinary low ranking, 'low key' ex-soldiers pass as if nothing happened and our

107

cases are not taken seriously. We are considered as victims of common South African crime, and even when we tell the police that we suspect the involvement of the Rwandan state in certain attacks, the police do *fokol* [nothing] about it (Personal interview, 07 September 2019, Cape Town).

As I have written previously, Ncube (2017), low ranking Rwandan deserters had become targets of sporadic attacks irrespective of whether they were involved in opposition politics or not. Yet, when they were assaulted the South African police seemed unable to assist or investigate: either because they were overwhelmed by local crime, or SAPS could not locate assailants who had fled the country. However, the deserters were very aware of the power of the surveillance assemblage, especially the informers and sometimes hired enforcers. Ananias highlighted:

I know that the people involved mainly included Rwandans, East Africans and South Africans. They have also been working with some Asians... I heard that the composition of the squads varies depending on the targets. There are male and female, old and young, Christian and non-Christian, black, brown, white, everything in those squads... They are gullible… (Personal Interview, 07 September 2019, Cape Town).

Analyzing the state's *'necropower'* in the post-colony, Mbembe (2003) argues that rumours about state sponsored terror reinforce its all-powerful presence in the lives of citizens and instil a certain fear in them. Findings in this study corroborate Mbembe's argument in that rumours about any act of violence that is believed to be linked to the Rwandan state was sure to increase suspicion.

I have shown, in Chapter 4 that rumours were an important navigation tool for the army deserters yet rumours also seeded serious mistrust within the Rwandan community of exiles. The climate of mistrust activated heightened *perceptivity* and *hyper-vigilance* (Vigh 2018) among my participants who engaged all their senses in trying to detect danger that could have been hidden in their environments. Life in South Africa, for most of my research participants, has been lived looking over their shoulders and being careful, vigilant, and suspicious of people and objects which may be lying in wait to capture these former soldiers. I assert that army deserters living in exile in South Africa live their lives as people who are *'on the run'* , which in turn, has the effect of modulation, rather than disciplining (Goffman 2009). In her book, '*On*

108

the run', Goffman (2009) examines the impact of the American criminal justice system on the lives of young black men who have pending court cases and are not prepared to turn themselves in. The daily practices of the young men are characterised by avoiding contact with formal institutions which might lead them to jail. Like the young black men in Goffman's work, the lives of the deserters in my study are compromised by the precarious military identity that they bear and they do their best to avoid detection by the Rwandan state which hunts them. To follow Foucault's (1977) panoptic surveillance, this is all the truer, given that the *ubiquitous invisibility* (and therefore *unverifiability*) of the 'hit list' and the 'death squads' viz a viz the *universal visibility* of the 'hunted' (deserters) gives the 'hunting' (violence) a permanent and anonymous presence. There are no apparent perpetrators but the fear and sense of being followed or surveilled instil a sense of uncertainty and fear resulting in deserters. They do not only live with the concern of being discovered by Rwandan state security agents or their hired associates, but the expectation of being attacked generally underpins their everyday interactions.

Alleged State-Sanctioned 'Hunters': Alleged 'Death Squads' and their modus operandi

Campbell and Brenner (2002:viii) posit that when political power is threatened and governments see a need to silence political opponents, they 'subcontract' killers in the form of mercenaries, assassins, or death squads. For Campbell (2000:16), death squads can be understood as;

> paramilitary groups that are contracted to carry out extrajudicial killings and to perpetrate violence against clearly defined individuals or groups of people with the aim of maintaining the status quo."

Death squads accordingly pose a "crisis of the modern state" (ibid: 17).

Major Ghost was convinced that the people who are 'hunting' down exiled army deserters are linked to the current government in Rwanda. He stated that;

> '…we are being caught and killed in cold blood by death squads who infiltrate the Rwandan community … it is done to make sure that Kagame remains in power' (Field notes, 16 December 2019, Johannesburg)

According to army deserters in this study, the External Security Organisation (ESO) is believed to be at the heart of clandestine state terrorism. Prunier's (2006) claim that the RPF has a lethal

state organ that is responsible for thwarting any political opposition to the Kagame led government, outside Rwanda's borders, seems to make such a situation possible.

Other states have certainly in the past used extra legal means to persecute political opponents. Examples of civilian volunteer groups were found in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide (Appadurai 1998; Hintjens 2008) and in the Philippines during Marco's presidency in 1986 (Hedmen 2002) Schroeder (2000) shows, for example, the ways in which hired gangs, mercenaries and private armies terrorized supporters of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) in Nicaragua in the 1930s., Gottschalk (2002) revealed that during apartheid rule in South Africa, the Bureau of State Security also conducted murders against blacks and coloureds who were opposed to the Apartheid regime between 1969 and 1993.

Soda, a participant in this study tried to explain why the people in the surveillance assemblage of the Rwandan state were so difficult to identify:

> They do their best to look and act like normal civilians. They get people's trust and they exploit it. They can actually be 'off grid' here for as long as six months or more doing some surveillance work… When they acquire people's trust, then they strike. (Personal interview, 01 August 2019, Cape Town).

I want to turn to Deleuze and Guattari (1987) here. The authors do not explicitly dismiss Foucualt's panopticism, but argue that disciplining can be present in forms of control such as continuous monitoring, which in turn, has a modulating effect. According to Deleuze (1992) modulations cannot be perceived by individuals: they occur "in invisible or opaque networks" (Galič et al 2016:19). For these authors surveillance is accordingly more abstract. The infiltration highlighted above complements *infestation* as a battlefield strategy (see Weizman 2006). I would say that the Deleuzian (1988) notions of *deterritorialization* and *nomadism* could contribute to understanding the claims made by participants in this study. Ultimately though, the concept of surveillance assemblages (Haggerty and Ericson 2000) seemed to better fit my material.

Citizen to citizen monitoring as a hunting strategy

Deleuze and Guattari (1987), as well as Haggerty and Ericson (2000) "move away from panoptic metaphors and shifts the focus from institutions to networks, from relatively ostensible forms of discipline to relatively opaque forms of control" (Galič et al 2016:32). Surveillance, watching and monitoring are distributed and those who are being watched are dispersed. Citizen to citizen monitoring has been one of the main strategies alluded to by participants in this study: monitoring the 'targets' but also the activities of the targeted people's friends, girlfriends, and relatives. Sirikari, for example, was approached by a man (whom he subsequently pointed out to me when we were together) who asked him about the whereabouts and activities of Mace, a fellow deserter. The partner of another deserter, Samora, told me she had also been approached by a man who claimed to be from Burundi, who told her he would pay her for information about Samora. This study indicates a steadily growing '*prying economy*' in which people are recruited and paid from as little as ZAR 100 to ZAR 5000 (five hundred to five thousand rand) for detailed information about deserters/ dissidents. Among Rwandans, candidates for such monitoring are generally recruited from the 'positive' and 'sceptical' diaspora (Turner 2013; Kuradusenge 2016) –people who are pro-RPF government and those who are not aligned to either the RPF-regime or the 'hostile diaspora' (those who are radically opposed to the Kagame led government), respectively. Soda stated that:

> They are paying our compatriots and they also get into most of the networks where people from the Great Lakes region orbit. They offer lots of money and people are falling prey to this bait. Our brothers and sisters are selling us out. Life is increasingly becoming dangerous here (Personal Interview with a participant, Soda, 19 August, Cape Town).

In 2021 Seif Bamporiki, a Rwandan exile and dissident was shot in Cape Town when he delivered a bed for sale to a client. According to news reports the 'client' had done extensive enquiries about Bamporiki's whereabouts beforehand. The Rwandan exile community believe that the former had been tracked and assassinated.

The results of infiltration by state agents has led to reconfigurations of relationships between army deserters, friends of friends and distant relatives or acquaintances because most of the times, the relations that the deserters once relied on for survival upon arriving in South Africa,

for example, transform to easy paths for their capture (see Goffman 2014). According to Goffman the networks that young black men relied on for protection sometimes become easy paths for their capture when the people they trusted release information to law enforcement agents who seek to arrest them.

Most of my research participants preferred to stick to their soldier friends with whom they had developed 'emotional bonds of friendship' (Siebold 2007): they are exposed to common hardship and threats and are likely to protect or fight for each other (see Woodward 2008). Yet some deserters still tried to have good relations with others, sometimes with very negative results, as narrated by Iscariot; One day, the two Congolese men whom I occasionally sat with during weekends were attacked by three men whom they met while walking from the mall. The attackers allegedly asked, in KiSwahili, where I was. One of my two abovementioned acquintances, RC, tried to fight back and was shot in the arm. Then the attackers disappeared into the dark. Koehler (2016) describes similar encounters in Syria during the civil war where the *rear guard,* that is, communities believed to habour deserters, was attacked.

Counter-strategies

I was struck early in my research by the fact that study participants never ate or drank anything at public gatherings such as funerals, parties, church ceremonies and braais. It is also very rare for them to share home- prepared meals or food that has been bought in their absence. It became apparent that they all feared being surreptitiously poisoned. Ntwari a participant in this study informed me that: "A close friend of mine (a deserter) died a 'slow but very painful death' after ingesting poisoned water".
Sirikare explained,

> If it is a party, I buy my own beer. If it is a funeral I don't drink even the bottled water. If it is a braai, I carry my own braai pack. It is very normal and everyone understands why it is like that (Personal Interview, 30 October 2019, Cape Town).

Study participants were thus also fearful of 'slow violence' - harm that happens gradually and often invisibly (Nixon 2011), Refusing communal meals is underpinned by suspicion and heightened *perceptivity* which are central to avoiding hidden danger (Vigh 2018). Ghost, one

112

of my participants, said that he relied heavily on his intuition in determining which public function among Rwandans to attend because of the uncertainty that underlies such gatherings. "You never know when these *spooks* will strike you", Ghost argued. Relying on intuition as a bearing for social navigation corroborates Vigh's (2018) deployment of the *'sensory turn'* in social navigation. Thinking of the state agents as *spooks* gives the navigation discourse and practices a dimension which involves extra-terrestrial spiritual beings: a seemingly powerful and threatening ghostly presence (Tutuola 1954; White 2000), it situates informers in the 'more than human' (Gibson and Ellis 2016) world and serves as a way to mentally terrorise army deserters.

It further multiplies the understandings of the influence of the suspected presence of informants and operators in the lives of army deserters as well as strengthening the claims that the Rwandan state is *omnipresent* (Uvin 2001; Lovegren 2015). For Foucault (1977, 1979) the notion of the *ubiquitous invisibility*, which reportedly imbues the Rwandese panoptic poisoners, as well as the *unverifiable* state agents or co-opted civilians reproduces a sense of omnipresence that ,"ingrains a sense of *permanent* and *conscious* visibility" (Foucault, 1977: 6), for example in the deserters. They, in response, renew their resolve and tact in navigating negative potentialities. A similar case in which negative potentialities embolden contentious resolve and the tact of the 'hunted,,' rather than weaken them is demonstrated in White's (2000) work, *Speaking with vampires: Rumour and history in colonial Africa.* The author demonstrates the ways in which rumours about Europeans who employed Africans at fire stations in Uganda, Kenya and Zambia, during the colonial period, were rumoured to suck out their blood to be reportedly used for a range of somewhat strange purposes (ibid:155). Such rumours, however incongruous, terrified communities. Ultimately their fear of vampires fuelled community protests against the institutions that were believed to be practising blood sucking. Similarly, Rwandan deserters find ways to evade and navigate such landscapes and realities filled with sometimes uncanny rumours, but also realities as discussed in the next section.

Brown's story

> I saw Brown today. I knew he had recently attended the funeral of a friend, but he
> seemed particularly upset, unsettled and out of sorts. When I asked, he told me;

My car was the last in a convoy of twelve vehicles (in the funeral motorcade). A white VW Amarok suddenly swerved in front of me and blocked my car. I had seen the three men before. They had been at the cemetery. We were suspicious and we actually discussed them. We suspected them to be 'new arrivals' (people whose faces were new or unfamiliar to members of the Rwandan community of refugees) from the 'positive diaspora' (pro- government Rwandans). I sensed danger, swerved away and attempted to flee the 'hunters' but they followed me and about a kilometre further they shot my tire out. I had to stop. The moment I stepped out of my car, I made peace with death. The three gentlemen had guns; they dragged me into the nearby bush. Man there is nothing I could have done to save my ass… See this scar here (pointing to a huge scarred injury on his shin), it's a result of that incident. When they tied my hands and my legs I knew I was going to meet my maker. What saved me was that they had decided to take me to another place so two of the men carried me but when we got to the roadside where their truck was, other vehicles were approaching the scene so one of the man stabbed me four times in the chest. See these (pointing to the three healing wounds on his chest), it's them, then they sped off. They probably hoped that I would drop dead. They did not steal anything from my car. Two of the gentlemen spoke Kinyarwanda and the third person spoke Kirundi (Burundi popular language) (Field notes 19 October 2019 Johannesburg).

Brown's comrades, who realised that his car had disappeared, went to look for, and found him. Army deserters did not always escape danger. Brown's claim that he made peace with death reveals an eventual acceptance of the negative potentiality being actualized in his life. As Brown narrated his story through his bodily scars, the continuity of the violence could be sensed in his voice; his tone sent the message that his pain had not ended. Indeed the moments and experiences of violence contributed to the army deserters' forms of everyday life in exile (see Ochs 2013). Brown's narration of his pain through the scars and injuries inflicted on his body reminded me of the work of Scarry (1987). The pain and scars on Brown's body, can arguably be understood as signs of the attackers' (and by extension the Rwandan state) power over him. The marks, lesions and scars on Brown's body also corroborate, in many ways, Kalema's (2018:2) contention that scars "arrest past time" through the freezing of violent moments and through inscribing every bit of the experience permanently into the victim's body and mind thereby solidifying the form of life that violence would have created. It can also be said that scars transpose the violence of past times into the future and as texts, scars have the

114

capacity to reproduce past suffering and vulnerabilities for as long as the person lives (Cole 2015; Scheper-Hughes (1992).

Vigh (2009) argues that in unstable situations, turbulent occurrences, like those described above, become part of the assumed and anticipated continuity of social environment in which, for example Rwandan deserters, find themselves in Cape Town and Johannesburg. Here life is full of uncertainty, lurking danger and possible hardship. Vigh (ibid:421) draws on Taussig's (1992) 'the nervous system' to show that in uncertain situations;

> movement becomes motion without progress and social life is characterized by a constant unease and attention towards change in the shape of possible acts of power and social forces.

Taussig's 'nervous system' has to do with a tense, out-of-balance system. It also is;
> a sensory faculty, constantly focused on movement and necessarily feeling its way through unsettled environments. In this manner Taussig succeeds in illuminating the general social characteristics of situations of prolonged distress and uncertainty… to see how chronic social crisis creates an unsettled social orientation and awareness that is hyper-attentive to real and imaginary stimuli (ibid).

Brown and his comrades were suspicious of the three unknown men at the funeral. When Brown was attacked, his comrades sensed that he was suddenly absent and went to look for him. Sometimes, as discussed in the next section, such embodied vigilance erupts into more violence, but instigated by the deserters themselves against those they believe are pursuing and threatening them.

Fireman's story

I went to see Private Fireman, but found he had apparently vacated his room. When I finally got hold of him he told me why he had moved away so unexpectedly. He was at his home when a group of masked men had attacked him and his friends. He told me;
> Information that the 'spooks' were in town had reached us but we did not think that we would be discovered in the heart of the ghetto where we were drinking peacefully. An unknown disrupted our drinking/ She knocked the door and opened it. Everyone noticed

that her face was unfamiliar. We were suspicious and asked what she was looking for. She said that she had heard us play her favourite song by Diamond Platinumz , 'A boy from Tandale'. So she decided to pop in. The lady spoke KiSwahili. I asked her to leave, she was acting suspiciously. She was busy on her cell phone. She did not even pay attention to the song she claimed to like and she was not even answering the questions she was being asked. All she did was constantly look around the room and type on her cell phone. So Franklin stood up, took hold of the lady's hand, showed her out and then he closed the door… And our suspicion that she could be a snitch was confirmed when about thirty minutes after Franklin led the lady out of the house we heard footsteps outside and there were two unidentifiable faces by the window. The door was being knocked vigorously. Immediately I pulled my duffel bag from under the bed and gave each of my colleagues a sjambock. Franklin pulled out an iron bar that I keep in the trusses of my roof. There were also okapi knives and pepper sprays ready for 'close combat'…. Before any of us could reach for the door, it was been kicked open and the attackers fired two shots into the wall. There was a serious close combat fight between us and the three attackers. Massive fight, I tell you. But we were in our backyard so we beat them thoroughly. There was a lot of blood; every one of us was bleeding. These attackers were one guy from Congo, one from Rwanda and one Burundi (Fieldnotes 17 December 2019, Johannesburg).

The excerpt above shows a surprising degree of preparedness by army deserters to defend themselves from their attackers. According to Ncube (2017), the hostile exile context necessitated the hardening of Rwandan army deserters in relation to responding to real or perceived threats. The question that kept troubling me was the apparent involvement of people from other countries in the attacks against Fireman and his comrades. Fireman opined that;

People from the Great Lakes region are much preferred by Rwandan state security agents because we generally move in the same circles… They are likely to have accurate information about our whereabouts… Also same languages, French, KiSwahili and Kirundi. (Field notes, 17 December 2019, Johannesburg)

Fireman continued to tell me;

We beat the truth out of our attackers and that is when we learned that they had been paid to Bezel (a deserter and former Flight Lieutenant). He had been drinking with Franklin and I. There seemed to be a get-away car as well, but it drove off during the

fight. We called the police, the attackers were arrested but they were released without going to court. I suspect some corrupt dealings between the police and the three men. (Field notes 17 December 2019, Johannesburg).

Fireman's story, above, reveals their general nervousness and bodily attentiveness to all kinds of stimuli: the woman who kept typing on her cell-phone and looked around too much, her speaking in KiSwahili, the sounds of movement outside, unfamiliar faces, all made them prepare for the worst, taking out hidden sjambocks and an iron bar. They had been thus simultaneously been alert to possible acts against them. They responded to this unease by taking out defensive weapons. Even though the army deserters defeated their attackers in this case, there are several cases in which army deserters lost their lives as a result of attacks by alleged hired killers and my participants were keen to show me what Iscariot, referred to as *buried evidence* of the attacks by Rwandan state agents in South Africa.

Mythico history: Invoking of injured bodies of the living and dead victims as evidence

My participants took me to cemeteries in both Cape Town and Johannesburg to see the 'buried evidence' (Chatterji 2009), that is, four graves of fallen comrades. They had all allegedly died due to Rwandan state security operations. Even though I cannot prove these allegations, the courage and apparent distress of army deserters who took me to these sites made their accounts very real for me. Being a believer in traditional cultural values, I understood that in most African traditions graveyards are sacred and the dead are revered (Bollig 1997). Therefore, it was difficult to imagine such acts as performances or 'staging' (Turner 2013). Being in the graveyard was always sombre and depressing. I understood that our visits were seen as grievous representations of the state's violence and its sovereignty (Mbembe 2003).

Malkki (1995, 2012) asserts the centrality of using 'mythico-history' as admissible evidence in giving credibility to narratives. According to Malkki, 'mythico-history' entails invoking of injured bodies of the living and dead victims as evidence of the genocide and of the international community's complicity and the necessity of the RPF leadership for preventing further bloodshed (ibid). My reading of the invoking of injured bodies of the living and visits to cemeteries was that 'mythico-history' did an immense ideological / political (re)construction of victimhood or vulnerability among the deserters. It was also a powerful technique to expose

the impunity of the Rwandan state in relation to exiles in South Africa. The cemeteries and graves are memorial sites for army deserters.

The visits to graves and cemeteries were also a reminders that South Africa had indeed become a 'space of death' for them (see Taussig 1984). Mbembe (2003), through his concept of 'necropolitics', problematizes actions when a post-colonial state engages in the actual killing of its citizens in order to thwart political dissent. In the context of Rwanda, the state presents a unique 'necropolitical' case in that it has a chequered history of such activities in many countries in Africa and beyond. The Global Campaign for Rwandans' Human Rights (2016) presents a detailed record of the murderous actions of the post-conflict Rwandan state since mid-1994. The Rwandan state is on record for harming any person, including those who once worked very closely with them. In this research, I had the opportunity of engaging with one such person. Below is the story of Iscariot, an army deserter who is commonly believed to be one of the most wanted 'dissidents'.

Iscariot's story

Iscariot's body is criss- crossed with scars. According to him army deserters are hunted' because of the nature of the roles they played in the military before they deserted. Iscariot is one such deserter whose presence in South Africa is believed, by other army deserters, to be attracting the watchful gaze of the Rwandan state (Field notes 16 December 2019, Johannesburg).

Iscariot told me;

> I am an ex-member of Rwanda's military intelligence and I also worked in the national intelligence for a long time. The circumstances under which I left the military forced me to sneak out of Rwanda otherwise I would have been history by now. I know that they are looking for me. It is only a matter of time. Having worked in the military intelligence (DMI) for a long time I the trust of my bosses and was given the ominous task of dealing with a real threat to the presidency (Field notes, 16 December 2019, Johannesburg).

Iscariot decided to desert without having accomplished his tasks. He took advantage of the parallel command structures orchestrated through patrimonial networks in the RDF to disobey

118

an order: the targeted person was his patron in other circles. Having decided not to execute the task, Iscariot informed the target and fled Rwanda. Iscariot survived three violent attacks while in exile in South Africa.

> Three times here in South Africa, I have been left for dead… Twice in Johannesburg and once here, in Cape Town. Can you see this (he was pointing to the scars on his chest, arms and leg)… This thing saved me, (he said this pulling out a black bullet proof vest from the backpack that was on his lap. My sister, *kunzima* (IsiXhosa meaning it is hard) (Field notes, 16 December 2019, Johannesburg).

Once, when I was spending time with Iscariot and Ishmael, the former explained;
> I maintain my connections with Kigali and I have information, almost to the minute details, about the regime's plans regarding myself. Being hunted is not a joke. I know that they are looking for me (Field notes, 16 December 2019, Johannesburg)

Iscariot's deserter network   felt that he was endangering them by remaining in South Africa. Pointing at Iscariot, an irate Ishmael, stated that;

> This man's (he was pointing at Iscariot) continued presence here in South Africa is causing problems for us. I think we will be in less danger if the DMI knows that this guy is no longer in South Africa (Field notes, 16 December 2021, Johannesburg).

The excerpt above reveals that the army deserters sometimes felt endangered by the presence of their 'most wanted colleague'. Responding to Ishmael Iscariot calmly stated:

> Focus, Corporal. Focus. Why do you speak like you do not know the thing that is being targeted here? I am not the bigger threat to the state here. A united force is what threatens the RPF… Iscariot is not the target, our unity is (Field notes, 16 December 2019, Johannesburg).

Having been in "the business of producing knowledge for the RPF government for a long time", Iscariot tried to unpack issues for his comrades so that they get a better understanding of the hidden operations of the Rwandan state. However, Ishmael blamed Iscariot for his own misfortunes and violent encounters with attackers.

Iscariot nevertheless intimated that he was a vital cog in the survival of most of his compatriots because he kept them informed about the plans Kigali Iscariot angrily turned on his comrades. He stood up and removed his shirt to show us the scars on his chest, stomach, back, his head, and his arms. Some of the wounds looked like they had been sutured many times. This very quiet middle-aged man did not appear to be intimidated by the sentiments of the larger army deserter group. He retorted to Ishmael above;

> Shut up all of you, do you think that any of you would still be standing if I had been on a mission to 'hunt' you down? I don't like those kinds of rubbish statements. (Field, 16 December 2019, Johannesburg)

In thinking through Iscariot's narrative, I grew anxious, I was burdened with the task of critically engaging with this narrative. It is an established fact that Iscariot had worked in two government departments where he amassed a lot of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1986). He had contacts within National Intelligence Security Services as well as the Department for military intelligence. Iscariot had once been privy sensitive state secrets from both departments. The realness of Iscariot's fears of being caught and possibly killed in South Africa cannot be downplayed. One thing that I found striking about this introverted person was his ability to utilize his military and intellectual intelligence skills to navigate exile. Iscariot has been trailed and physically attacked. Despite sustaining serious injuries during the several attacks, as a soldier, he possesses a strong will and survives.

'Keeping silence'

Not everything that these army deserters experienced or witnessed can be articulated or is say-able. Samora, for example, said he "Felt sick at the all too real memories of torture and insecurity in their present lives in South Africa". Most of violent experiences are thus 'inscribed in silences' (Alexander 1997). An intense visceral sense of vulnerability seemingly grips deserters when they talk about violence against themselves. Their narratives were not only frightening stories, but about violations of individual bodies; images of physical torture, emotional pain and disfiguration. In line with Scarry (1987) I understand Iscariot's scars as a manifestation of the experience of pain and of the act having pain inflicted on him as a technique to show and gain power over him, however illegitimate. Cautioning me about speaking openly about my study, Soda stated that,

120

To speak openly against this violence in such situations where we are not really protected, is to make one a target (Personal Interview, 06 September 2019, Cape Town).

My participants identified Rwandan state security agents as their primary source of insecurity in South Africa society. A close reading of these deserters' accounts speaks about their realization that even in exile, peace remains elusive. Stories of them being attacked are very rea, not cases of 'ostentation' where people act out themes found in folk narratives (Degh and Vaszonyi 1983). .

Even though my participants felt persecuted and at risk I could sense an aura of respect for his intelligence in some of their statements;

Kagame is a man of distinctive intellectual disposition who has fallen from the rank of respectable nationalist to a crown tyrant (Comment by Sirikare, 19 August 2019, Cape Town)

He is a reader, a revolutionary thinker; that is how we managed to end the genocide. Most of all he is more of a manipulator than a leader. He is calculative and operates stealthily when dealing with threats to his hold on power, but his outcomes are murderous. (Comment by Major Ghost, 09 September 2019, Johannesburg)

Lovegren (2014) asserts that it is at times difficult to exonerate President Kagame from the clandestine activities of his state security agents because he is on record for having angrily made incriminating comments while responding to questions about human rights violations and the alleged disappearance of political opponents in Rwanda (see Uvin 2001; Purdekova et al 2017; Sidiropolous 2002; Lovegren 2015). For President Kagame, violence seemed to be the best way to handle political dissent and to ensure national security;

We will continue to arrest suspects, and when needed, kill in broad day light, those threatening to destabilize the country (Kagame 2014)[5].

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[5] President Kagame was quoted in The Guardian newspaper threatening to kill his political those he believed to be threatening to destabilize the country. President Kagame said this on 05 June 2014 while addressing villagers in Nyabihu district.

121

Kagame has spoken quite angrily enemies in neighbouring countries and have vowed to 'finish' them without mercy (Himbara 2019). In analyzing the source of the violence that is experienced by the subaltern communities in society, Auyero et al (2015:3) argue that violence generally has its origins in the "…actions of established political actors." President Kagame probably views himself as the only person able to lead the country (Baaz and Verweijen 2013). According to Theis (2016), such views are common among leaders who would have ascended to power through violence or those leading the first generations of liberation movements.

Problematic Police in South Africa

Earscar, a lanky man who could be mistaken for a Somalian, was told by his boss that South Africa, and particularly Cape Town and Johannesburg, were among the leading danger capitals "With a well-resourced but very complicit police force. Hundreds of murders, real violence and kidnappings happen quite easily" (Comment from Earscar).

Earscar is one of the increasing number of 'hunters' who had been assigned to 'hunt down' certain low rank former soldiers who were believed to be involved in political mobilizations for Rwandan based opposition parties in South Africa's cosmopolitan hunting 'jungles'. According to Earscar, he had grown tired of the secret services system in his home country (Rwanda) and defected, went off-grid and never touched base with Kigali. Earscar said he found the prey (army deserters) he had been assigned to track, but most of them were actually suffering here, working as security guards and food deliveries persons. He decided to register as an asylum seeker and started a new life in South Africa. Earscar alleged that he had also been subjected to physical attacks in South Africa by people he once worked with in Rwanda. He says at first, he used to report to the police, but he grew tired of reporting because,

> Nothing ever really happens to these people, you know. You can actually carry your attackers to the police station but a few hours later you will meet them on the streets again. It's pointless (Personal interview, September 2019, Cape Town).

Earscar says he always remembers what his former bosses told him about the ineptitude and complicity of the South African Police Services (SAPS) while he was still in Rwanda. Police inaction therefore does not surprise him anymore. In South Africa, there is a general feeling

that despite being well equipped compared to their counterparts in Southern Africa and beyond, South African Police Services (SAPS) do not effectively deal with violent crime against exiles.

The people who participated in this study expressed displeasure at the ways in which SAPS seemed unconcerned to come to their rescue. The army deserters believed that lack of interest by the police was because of institutionalized xenophobia. It is because "we are non-South Africans", charged Earscar. As a result people did report violence but dealt with it in their own ways. As discussed above, deserters were actively engaged in concealing their identities and they also had little or no faith in SAPS and were unwilling to report criminal attacks on them. It is therefore possible that the SAPS seldom had to deal with reports from army deserters, except in cases of death. In informal conversations police officers at a police station in an area where deserters lived, said although they had heard of attacks on deserters, reports were never filed by them. SAPS did deal with a few cases involving "a few Rwandan uber drivers" but "they were not linked to politics". Mzozozo, a police officer, said;

> I have heard about Rwandans being attacked, *ntoni, ntoni,* (what, what), in the townships and *eDelft* mostly (and there in Delft), but me as a police officer, I have not dealt with any such cases at work. So I cannot say it happens or that it does not happen *yaz* (you know). (Fieldnotes 03 July 2020, Cape Town).

It is however important to point out that complaints against police complicity are not limited to migrants in the host country. There has been an outcry by South African citizens concerning the ineffectiveness of SAPS. Many studies on violence in South Africa have further shown that members of SAPS generally have a culture of corruption and 'in-action' (Hornberger 2014; Yesufu 2014; Vilakazi 2015; Newham 2002). Cases of police complicity are however not unique to South Africa. Several studies have shown that though policing in the ghettoes and townships has evolved over time, such evolution has hardly resulted in police efficacy in densely populated residential areas where crime is rife.

In an analysis of street *corner men* in Chicago in the early 1970's for example, Anderson (1972: 2) reported that "the police glance over and slow down, but they seldom stop and do anything…they casually move on leaving street corner men to settle their own differences." Writing twenty years later about the same phenomenon of *corner men* in Chicago, Venkatesh (2008) noted that police simply do not come when called.

123

My research participants highlighted that they did not involve the police in cases where there are no deaths because they strongly believed that some corrupt members of the police force had firm knowledge about the Rwandan death squads and their operations in the host society, but they deliberately did nothing to protect or assist victims. Therefore, without the help of local police, Rwandan army deserters have to rely on their military skills to navigate and counter danger and threat in South Africa. One of the most common ways of navigating was keeping in close contact with their comrades in order to get information that may be useful to them. They also always have something (weapons) to defend themselves with, on their person. They are also hyper-vigilant in looking out for danger.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the ways in which Rwandan army deserters experience violence in exile. The narratives in this chapter help in understanding how the state can do violence beyond its real national borders as well as beyond perceived and acceptable moral boundaries. The complexities of South Africa's cosmopolitan cities of Cape Town and Johannesburg make the task of tracking Rwandan army deserters complicated; it is not a simple task of following and catching, it is 'hunting'. Participants in this study were of the view that despite not being involved in Rwandan opposition politics in the host society, they are surveilled and attacked for political reasons and this makes them live as a community that is 'on the run' (Goffman 2009).

CHAPTER SIX

Military identities among army deserters in South Africa

Introduction

In this chapter, I focus on the military identities of junior rank Rwandan army deserters, in contexts and circumstances different from those of other groups of former soldiers who, for example were retired, discharged or made redundant. I examine the reconstitution of army deserters' identities in South Africa, a context where they constantly labour to escape the gaze and ferocity of the Rwandan state. The chapter demonstrates how the deserters' identities are in a constant state of flux and hybridity, and how convenient selfhoods and ambulant personalities are the order of the day in navigating the perceived and real ever-present surveillance of the Rwandan government as shown in chapters 4 and 5. To understand the consequences of being an exiled army deserter from Rwanda, I wished to interrogate the experience of social and existential uncertainty that being categorized as a dissident produces. Koehler et al (2016), as well as Agostini (2007), stress the riskiness and potential costs of desertion: defectors are often constantly on the move to avoid being apprehended and simultaneously try to hide their military identities. I argue that the uncertainty and fear of being detected and eliminated by Rwandan state security agents produces fluid and multiple identities among Rwandan army deserters. These identities enable the ex-soldiers to evade and survive political persecution. I assert that, for my study participants, the deserter identity was full of uncertainties and conjured up a complex state of being in exile.

Escaping the 'spoilt' military identity: Kay's story

As highlighted earlier on, in South Africa, deserters try to survive as people who are 'on the run' (Goffman 2009). Here they obfuscate and hide their acquired military identities and endeavour to "pass" as civilians (Goffman 1963; Edmunds et al 2019; Higate et al 2021) by reconstructing and performing a multiplicity of alternative identities as camouflage. Yet they are faced with a dilemma. They are haunted by, as Brubaker and Cooper (2000) write, a "sometimes coercive force of external identifications": in this case the "fixed" identities ascribed to them by the RDF and state of Rwanda: as military, as deserters and political "other". Military identity is arguably relatively resilient, but in the case of deserters, spoilt (Gofman 1963). To survive in South Africa deserters actively "work" to construct new and convincing

125

identities (Douglas et al 2015) as self-protection, in the process they both "enact and act upon their identities" (ibid:12). The process "forces the military identity narrative to change in order to address both who and where the former soldiers are" (Grimell 2015:135), including a reconfiguration of identity in an effort to connect a past in the military to a present in civilian life. Kay highlighted that he was in a constant struggle of hiding whom he is in order to 'pass' as a civilian. He told me that:

> The most difficult thing that I have had to do here in South Africa is to suppress the soldier that I am. It is very hard because now I have to pretend to be someone else. It feels strange but that strangeness is important for my survival here. So to be safe I prefer to switch my hustle as often as I possibly can (Field notes, Cape Town 20 August 2019).

Because the South African economy is not doing well and employment is scarce, army deserters did jobs like being uber drivers, delivering food, working as gardeners, handy-men and car guards. Kay said he escaped his spoilt and precarious military identity by changing his hustle (what he did for a living) when he felt that people were becoming too familiar with his routine. Kay continued:

> I learned that doing the same hustle increased chances of spies studying my routine and that is not good. Many of my comrades have been attacked because the spies were accustomed to their jobs. I believe that jobs pattern people's lives and that is why I always change my hustle. One week I am an uber driver, next week I am selling balloons or fruits by the traffic lights, the next moment I am a living statue. I like to do all that because I do not want people to know the exact details about my life. I do it to safeguard myself and it works for me. These comrades think it is not wise because it exposes me to more danger but I beg to differ. I am an expert at camouflaging myself. (Field notes, 20 August 2019, Cape Town)

Changing one's hustle is, as revealed in the excerpt above, one of the tactics used by some deserters in constantly navigating identities as they try to extricate themselves from the confining structure of the military and their past identification as members of the RDF. In this regard it is necessary to return to the literature on identity again and in particular Brubaker and Cooper's (2000:1) contention that the emphasis on fluidity draws attention away from the "hard" dynamics of politics surrounding identity, how identities can be congealed through the sometimes oppressive power of external identification. It is established that the RDF and by

extension the state, apparently perceive military identity as somewhat intractably attributed to its soldiers. Yet for the deserters these identities have become spoilt, because they have tried to shed and negate it (Gofman 1963). The identity of deserter, enemy and traitor is nested within a military identity and highly situational. What initially drew the study participants together in South Africa was a military identity, they had all been in the RDF. Yet their subsequent desertion and flight not only tainted this identity, but also necessitated the construction, performance and doing of a range of other identities. Whilst these are mostly open and fluid there are moments, for example when they are together and feel safe, that they perform a military identity: their bodily dispositions suddenly become those of soldiers, they even call each other by their former ranks. The contradictory identity of having been a part of the military, having been trained and habituated into and operating within the army creates a form of inter-group cohesion for the men. Because they are also deserters they share such identification, while trying to simultaneously hide it from others.

Indeed the army deserter identity was tied to uncertainty and danger and the men in this study did their best to hide it from others but the ways in which Moza hid his deserter identity was on another level. Moza had escaped a physical attack by suspected informers a few weeks after arriving in South Africa in 2019. Because of this, he decided that he would not work but live with and depend on his family and friends: despite being guaranteed a spot as a car guard at a mall. This is what Moza said:

> You know, I almost died in April. Oh, this place is not as safe as I thought it would be. Never… I do not like the idea of having to worry about my safety every day. I think I should have stayed in Zimbabwe, it was safer than here. So to be safe here, I move from province to province, you know, (he laughed)… I live with friends and sometimes with my cousins because I have family members in 5 provinces here in South Africa. They do not really like my presence in their homes because they believe it puts them in danger but they have to help me you know (Personal interview 15 December 2019, Johannesburg).

Moza's excerpt above reveals the ways in which the fear of being detected can sometimes become burdensome for those who assist army deserters. Even though the life chances of deserters seem to be diminished in situations of heightened surveillance and social death (Kralova 2015), Moza tactically manoeuvred within social ties (Vigh 2010) and capitalize on what Heyden (1983:8) referred to as "economies of affection" that is, "informal networks of

127

support, communication and interaction among structurally defined groups connected by blood, kin, community or other affinities" (Ibid). I am of the view that the extent to which Moza takes his dependence on friends and family during times of distress is rather extreme and it explains why friends and relatives sometimes refuse to assist the deserters just like what happened to the Auguentas in Vigh's (2010) work when economic pressures increased and food became scarce within the social networks. Moza's nomadism so to speak, also resonates with Said's (1994) notion of 'uprootedness' as a central feature of the exile experience. For Said, the 'uprootedness' of exile is both historic, present and persistent. Historic in the sense that the exiles are no longer in their original homes were they probably would have built lives for themselves and for future generations. The notion of uprootedness is interesting to think with, especially in the case of Rwandan army deserters because they are in a place of non-belonging, they are 'in between' (Bolatagici 2004), the Rwandan army does not want them, if it does, it is not in a good way, and their compatriots also do not want them as will be shown later on. In addition to shifting places of residence and changing hustles in order to evade Rwandan state surveillance, deserters in this study also construed exile as a context that enabled a multiplicity of statuses and a fluidity of identity that is situationally dependent. In the section that follows, I discuss how the deserters navigate being 'in between' (Bolatagici 2004) the ferocious state and indifferent compatriots who could otherwise sell them out to those hunting them.

 'Being 'in between' is how we live here': Army deserter dual statuses

> I believe that as an army deserter living in South Africa, I am 'in between'. Between identities, between relations, between life and death and between jobs. It is a difficult situation to be in but what can we do? I think you know that some of our countrymen think that we are deserve the persecution we face here and others think we do not. (Personal interview, 19 December 2019)

The excerpt reveals that Rwandan army deserters in exile are generally burdened by the dilemma of what can be understood as a dual status which, I presume, is embedded in the political roles that the RDF played in Rwanda. While some civilians were empathetic to the army deserters and gave them the benefit of doubt because they escaped from the military, many civilian Rwandan refugees found it difficult to place the army deserters in a single category of either victims or perpetrators because of the positive and negative roles played by

soldiers in their country. Outside the official Rwandan discourses where the Rwandan army was said to be a highly disciplined 'people's army' (Beswick 2014), the RDF was believed to have bolstered the current repressive RPF government (Sidiropolous et al 2017). The persecution of army deserters by Rwandan state agents in a foreign country was evidence that militarism and exile had intersected to create different understandings of ex-soldiers and their post-military behaviour. Analysing the perpetrator – victim dual status of soldiers in Yugoslavia, Skjelsbæk (2015:47) perceives militarism as an abnormal structure where

> normal persons sometimes respond inadequately to what is seen as an abnormal (or extreme) situation…therefore it is not surprising that they are misunderstood outside the settings of conflict.

Despite having witnessed or heard about the deaths or physical attacks of their ex-military compatriots, some of the civilian Rwandan refugees who I interacted with generally perceived Rwandan army deserters as remorseful perpetrators and not as possible victims of the Kagame regime. Viewing these army deserters as regretful perpetrators and not as victims of the repressive system was a reflection of what generally happens in Rwanda where the state systematically denies that Hutus can be victims of genocidal violence, even those who did not perpetrate the genocide (Kuradusenge 2016), while Tutsi's are automatically regarded as victims, including those who perpetrated revenge killings immediately after the genocide. This apportionment of victimhood and perpetrator-hood is rife in post-conflict Rwanda (ibid). Army deserters in South Africa faced similar stigmatization from their civilian compatriots who did not understand that soldiers can actually be victims of the regimes that they once 'supported' (Maringira 2017).

Sometimes civilian Rwandan refugees regarded army deserters as being 'mentally ill'. While my participants wholeheartedly perceived themselves as endangered heroes who had managed to escape the grip of the RDF and survived harrowing experiences while they were on their journeys to exile, other Rwandans did not see them in that light. The former soldiers' self-identification as heroes tapped into official RPF discourses about the Rwandan army as a "people's army and heroes at home and abroad" (Kuehnel and Wilen 2017:154). While associating themselves with the official discourse of heroism, the army deserters also self-identified as being 'endangered'. This was because the army deserter identity was increasingly precarious: it could only be a matter of time before the net of the Kagame regime closed up on them. A few of their civilian compatriots however agreed with the endangered aspect of these

129

former soldiers' self-identification. Owing to the politicised nature of the Rwandan military identity, most Rwandans in South Africa saw army deserters as a liability or menace to the community of Rwandan refugees in exile. This was particularly so because civilian refuges alleged that they were often caught in the crossfire of conflict between state security agents and army deserters. Some civilians were directly attacked for allegedly hosting, associating with or harbouring army deserters in South Africa. (Roelf 2014). These ex-soldiers were in a dilemma because of the negative connotations that were attached to the Rwandan military identity in general and to that of the army deserter in particular. Spark pointed out the dilemma saying,

> I have seen that being in the RDF makes you special in Rwanda only. Outside the country people judge us harshly. The army is associated with ruthlessness, corruption, criminality and all sorts of bad things. Those bad images are not of our own making. It is because civilians see bad deeds of politicians in us. They do not understand the work of soldiers or the military's operations. It is not easy being an army deserter my sister. Worse, having run away from the RDF we are literally on death row now (Interview with Spark, 20 October 2020, Johannesburg).

The army deserters' idea of heroism was therefore popularised only within their safe spaces. Outside these spaces they carried any other statuses accorded to them by their government, state security agents and Rwandan civilians. They also took on various identities depending on threat, space and time. Identity was thus fluid, multiple and highly contextual. This situation resembled Feinstein's (2015) analysis of American veterans who suffered from mental illness and oscillated between their identities as 'heroes' and mental patients - one positive and the other quite negative. My own study underscores Feinstein's in that in their 'safe' spaces, former soldiers in both studies shared and enjoyed their 'heroism', but outside these spaces, they were seriously stigmatized. Interestingly, some of my participants said that their civilian compatriots sometimes regarded them as being 'mentally ill' because of the ways in which these army deserters handled the violent spill-over of their past military lives into their current post-military settings in exile which their civilian compatriots found to be too complex to understand. Viewing Rwandan army deserters as *abasazi / gusara* (terms used to refer to people who are losing their minds or 'mentally ill') can be understood as being imbued with stigma and fear to some extent because none of my participants had been diagnosed with any mental disorder, both in the past or present. Rather than becoming upset by such negative perceptions,

my participants said they sometimes drew on such negative and stereotypical identities to evade state surveillance, for example by performing 'mental illness' when the need to hide arose.

In their own safe circles, these former soldiers usually reverted to self-identifying as soldiers. They referred to each other by their military titles and they very much respected their military ranks and hierarchies. They however closed ranks when brainstorming counter-surveillance tactics because they believed that each member contributed meaningfully to such discussions. The military identities of my participants can be said to be semi-fixed in a way. To their RPF persecutors, these former soldiers always remained military men, even though they had absconded and were rebellious. Yet a close reading of the 'deserter' identity allowed the deserters themselves to oscillate between their 'revoked' soldierly identities when they were in their safe spaces while also allowing them to take on several other identities when they ventured into unsafe spaces. My understanding of this 'identity hopping' was that they strategically allowed the context to determine their identities. This quandary further corroborates Cooper and Brubaker (2000) and Becker (2010) in which an analysis of peoples' everyday practices is called for.

Therefore, unlike Zimbabwean army deserters who openly displayed their military identities because of the various capitals associated with it in South Africa (commanding respect from fellow compatriots, instilling fear in people who owe them money, easily accessing vending spots, security jobs) (Maringira, 2015), Rwandan army deserters were actively engaged in concealing their military identities. The Rwandan state's transnational reach as well as its capacity and readiness to deploy 'somatic' violence against real or perceived enemies (and such cases abound) underpinned the assumption of various identities by Rwandan army deserters living in South Africa. These findings suggest an alternative perspective on post-military identities in threatening post-military settings.

In South Africa, Rwandan army deserters had normalized abandoning their homes and sometimes their work places each time they were reliably informed that state agents were spotted in their respective residential and or work areas. This was because their deserter identity was potentially dangerous and they knew that the Rwandan state made it clear that it was not going to relent in 'hunting' them down (Himbara 2019). In order to ensure a relative degree of safety as well as a bit of stability especially with regards to economic survival in the host society, the army deserters adopted mundane navigation tactics in which they would shift from

one identity to the other. These tactics at times enabled them to outmanoeuvre state surveillance.

Despite deploying creative navigation tactics, these army deserters did not always succeed in evading state surveillance or retribution. During fieldwork, I was burdened by depressing narratives about many ex-soldiers who had fallen victim to their 'hunters' in South Africa. If someone was not talking about their own experiences of violence, they spoke about the encounters that their comrades had had with state agents. It was unusual to hear about stories of such attacks in public discourses; they were a legend in the grapevine among civilian Rwandan refugee communities in South Africa. The increasing number of attacks that happened in enclosed spaces such as houses, cars (particularly ubers), churches and in clubs entrenched a fear of such spaces during the times when state agents were rumoured to be on patrol. These attacks were discussed in detail in chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation. According to Green (1994), the goal of terror is for people to routinize it because such routinization forces them to live in chronic fear with a facade of normalcy. Although fear is quite an elusive concept, it is very real to the person experiencing it (Green 1994). Drawing on the narratives that I heard during fieldwork and also having at some point witnessed depressing cases of violence, I was convinced that the state of fear that most of my participants described somewhat resembled what Taussig described as a state of "stringing out the nervous system, one way toward hysteria, the other way numbing and apparent acceptance" (Taussig 1992:11). However, despite acknowledging that they were afraid of their 'hunters', my participants did not accept what could otherwise be thought of as their fate. They were actively engaged in evading their 'hunters' even to the point of deserting their homes at some point. My participants highlighted that when the need to hide arose, they would carry a few necessities in their backpacks and leave everything else. This nomadism also explains why most of my participants did not have many items of household furniture in their 'homes'. Sometimes these army deserters found shelter in the open (See also Weizman 2006).

Camouflaged in 'homelessness'

Although all study participants above stressed their agency in relation to homelessness, it does not mean that this issue, or even the choice to do so, is unproblematic. Higate (2001), for example, found that the harrowing effect of military experiences often contributed towards homelessness among soldiers who had left the British armed services. He (ibid) argues that

traumatic military encounters made it difficult for veterans to easily coexist with civilians. As a result homeless veterans chose to live on the streets with fellow ex-soldiers. In an earlier study Adler (1975) found that ex-soldiers became homeless when they perceived non-military settings such as civilian homes and work environments as disorderly and therefore uninhabitable.

While these studies point to some of the difficulties associated with post-military life the above analyses do not capture the necessity for Rwandan deserters to also hide their military identities by shifting into homelessness and vagrancy. The aim is to un-make military identity as a public marker; by hiding, resisting, staying safe and "passing" (Goffman 1963; Higate et al 2021): in this case as homeless people. Yet it was not merely pretense either. Living on the streets is very much embodied, difficult, physically and mentally exhausting. For the study participants it is also performative.

To make sense of such identity performances the work of Turner (1986) is useful. He emphasises not only the agency of subjects, such as deserters, to actively un-make or make their identities and social worlds, but equally the dynamic processual aspects of doing so. While the Rwandan state endeavours to socially construct deserters' identities as simultaneously military and dissident in rather fixed ways, the performances of homelessness were more open, contingent and "susceptible to unrehearsed actions" (Askew 2002:15). When rumours or news about a so-called "hunting tide" became known, study participants who felt particularly vulnerable would suddenly "disappear" like Ghost and Longman above, for days or even weeks.

Afterwards, once they could be contacted again, Mbare, one of the participants, told me of how he had slipped into destitute-hood and to all intents lived in crowded bus terminuses. Another, Brick, said he had lived and slept among homeless drug addicts often in marginal spaces reeking of urine. Kwita reported erecting and living in makeshift shelters until the "tide receded". One participant, Iscariot, believed to be one of the most "hunted" deserters, - and his colleagues attested to this- said;

> I lived on the streets. I disguised myself as *gusara* (mentally ill man)… I wore greasy and very dirty sacks and a very old afro wig which covered the large scar on my head. I secured the wig on with a chain (dog leash) and lock. I wore no underwear and I deliberately let my private parts dangle through the unzipped trousers which also had

holes at the back and my buttocks showed. I would urinate in my pants to spruce up the mad-man apparel by reeking of urine. I also drank a lot of alcohol and I smoked a lot of weed as these two stimulated my mind while evading state surveillance on the streets… I often patrolled in the CBD, including the surrounding areas and sometimes went to city outskirts to stalk the "hunters". During that time, I was not only on the run but also at 'work'. (Personal interview, 19 October 2019, Johannesburg).

Iscariot's comrades said he was "unrecognizable" when he was camouflaged in such a way. Under the guise of "homelessness" or "mental illness", Iscariot gathered intelligence to enable him, and other deserters who felt threatened, to identify their "hunters". He ascertained, for example, the places frequented by them. By keeping an eye on them he also ascertained their routines as well as who they were working with. Here Brubaker and Cooper's (2000) reminder that "identity" is not just a category of analysis, but also one of practice, is helpful. It is in moments such as these that the military habitus of a deserter like Iscariot was very useful capital insofar as it enabled him to not only endure rough living (Higate 2001:333), but also to stay in camouflage and observe without calling attention to himself.

Grimmel (2015) emphasises the importance of self-reorganization in post-military life which entailed accepting new identities or statuses when adapting to new life circumstances. For Lomsky and Rapoport (2003), post-military identification was an ongoing process of negotiation between ex-soldiers and their civilian counterparts. Writing about migrant identities, Innes (2016) added spatial and temporal dimensions to the identity 'negotiations' that exiles contended with in transnational contexts. It is these ideas that had the most influence during my exploration of the complexity of Rwandan army deserters' military identities in South Africa: as both constructed but also deeply sedimented and habitually practised. For the RDF the identities of deserters were fixed: as military men, albeit deserter/dissidents. The study participants tried to hide such an identity, while simultaneously drawing on the embodied skills gained through having been trained and having worked in the armed forces, for example the military dispositions (Maringira et al 2014) used to evade surveillance. Rwandan army deserters could shift into other identities while covertly relying on some of the ingrained practices of the military to avoid surveillance and being caught.

Most of the people who participated in this study attested to having lived on the streets at some point: not because of failing to reintegrate into civilian society per se but because of the necessity to avoid, dodge and escape from Rwandan state security agents and their associates. The homes of study participants, or any kind of enclosed shelter for that matter, could become 'death traps' and 'death scapes'. As highlighted earlier on, deserters, as demonstrated by Mbare, Ghost, Longman, Brick, and Kwita above, often abandoned their dwelling places when they were attacked, were being followed or when they became suspicious that they might have been discovered. Drawing from Bourdieu, the capacity to endure the rough life of homelessness that these army deserters exhibited while navigating state surveillance can be understood as a 'product of history' (Bourdieu 1990). This further showed the durability and transposability of military practices in that the ex-soldiers immediately inscribed it in the present in order to address the potentiality of capture or elimination.

> There always comes a time when it is quite dangerous to live in a house. Your chances of being killed in homes are very high, you know. We also go to the streets as a way of protecting our families and friends. (Herd: Personal interview, 21 December 2019, Johannesburg)

Drawing on KoKhavi's (2004) argument that military operations in urban spaces are better understood when conventional architectural ideas and uses of certain spaces have been deconstructed, it can be argued that the streets provided a better camouflage for the ex-soldiers in situations where conventional homes failed to provide safety. While the streets of South Africa are generally understood as dangerous spaces (Gibson and Maringira 2019), the former soldiers interpreted these spaces in unique and strategic ways which allowed them to not only evade surveillance and violence but allowed them to engage in counter surveillance activities from the vantage point of the streets. Hiding in the open shows how study participants understood the significance of engaging state surveillance at an ideological level through the strategic re-articulation of architectural uses of certain spaces in the cities with the aim of camouflaging themselves. In such instances, the army deserters relied on what Woodward (2000) called 'field-crafting'. This is a survival skill in which soldiers are expected to understand their surroundings and fit in with relative ease almost instantaneously. Accordingly, homelessness was one of the tactics used by participants to navigate state surveillance. Findings in this study thus broaden the understanding of homelessness among former soldiers by providing a political dimension to such analysis. When it happens,

135

homelessness among Rwandan army deserters living in self-imposed exile in South Africa can be understood as also being a politically motivated move.

The uncertainty that RDF deserters experienced in Cape Town and Johannesburg, was underpinned by the fixed, ascribed identity of 'belonging' to a military, whilst having simultaneously having "betrayed" or denied it. For most of them South Africa is "the end of the line" (Mbare), yet they do not look like South Africans, speak with an accent, fear discovery and persecution and are 'other'. They had all initially fled to countries in the Great Lakes region but soon felt unsafe because the RDF is active and influential there (Otafire 2021). In South Africa most of the deserters are undocumented, unemployed, marginalised and struggle to survive. They are also mistrustful of other Rwandans: whom they fear might expose them as army deserters.

Hogg (2007) asserts that when people experience identity related uncertainty, they increasingly adopt 'nested-identities'. This is done to ensure the complementarity of identities where the limits of one identity is complemented by the strengths of another identity. According to Abrahams and Hogg (2010) self-enhancement and self-uncertainty generally motivated social identification. Some of the army deserters embedded themselves in Somaliness, Ethiopianess and Rastaness because these identities seemed to be safer than Rwandaness in South Africa (Ncube 2017). Elder Spencer, affectionately known as Elder, was one such person who, despite being a Rwandan national, self-identified as an Ethiopian and Rastafari. He said he chose this identity because "phenotypically", he closely resembled Ethiopians. I am aware of the dangers of such "biocultural" (Matsinhe 2011:297) categorization of individuals particularly as it relates to somatic violence in cases such as the Rwandan genocide and xenophobia in South Africa. I make reference to it because that was Elders' explanation for nesting his Rwandan army deserter identity in Ethiopinanness and Rastafariness. Secondly, these identities allowed him to live in relative peace and safety, at least until the watchful eye of Rwandan state surveillance detected him after three years of living a quiet life in Johannesburg.

Elder Spencer is a lanky, middle-aged man with a long greying beard, always had a tam or Rasta cap on his head, he always wore brown hand-made sandals. He had a small but vibrant business under a tree where he sold leather bags, batiks, Rastafari necklaces and small wooden *nyahbinghi* drums. He always played loud reggae music as if he was in competition with the Gqom music played in the club across the street. Who would have thought that this man was an army deserter from Rwanda? During our conversations, the soft-spoken Elder constantly

pulled long puffs off his cannabis, squinting his red eyes when he blew the smoke slowly out of his mouth, sometimes he would choke on the smoke a little and cough deliberately. He said he loved the tranquillity that he found in this identity as "no one really bothers you". Even though Elder sold his wares on the streets, he was in constant touch with his "comrades" as he too did information gathering for Rwandan ex-soldiers.

While most Rwandan army deserters shifted identities out of the need to deal with the uncertainty that accompanied their army deserter identity and did not really enjoy being chameleons so to speak, Elder said he loved being both army deserter and Rasta because the two identities laced his post military life with an interesting contrast and a protective ambiguity. While the former identity is dangerous, he found safety in the latter identity. Given the fact that most Rwandan army deserters had maintained the clean-shaven military look, it was quite unusual to find an army deserter with dreadlocks and a beard as long as Elder's, unless it was a wig (as used by Iscariot). Elder laughed out loud when asked where he got the idea of embedding himself in a Rasta identity. His response was simple yet thought provoking;

> Unlike in Rwanda where I really had to go into hiding in the forest for a long time when I left the army, here we hide them in the open, like so. Simply change your outlook and appearance, it will take them years to sniff you out I tell you. But if you are going to hold on to what they knew [about you], then you are guaranteed of being pounced on when you least expect it. (Interview with Elder, 19 December 2019, Johannesburg)

Elder reiterated the fact that performing a Rastafari identity (a group who are generally known to be non-violent people) was a "my camouflage", yet did not mean that he was "not prepared to be violent towards hostile security agents. I just needed to lead a peaceful life but I am quite dangerous. I trained for combat". Even as he was hiding his military identity and experienced it as spoilt, he could nevertheless draw on his military habitus (Higate 2000; Lande 2007; Maringira et al 2015) for self-defence.

Scanning the environment, being sensorially "switched-on" (Hockey 2009; 2013), was central to the survival of study participants in Cape Town and Johannesburg. Like most of his army deserter colleagues, Elder had mastered the art of carefully scrutinizing his surroundings for potentially dangerous people, hazardous objects, threats and hiding-places (see also Vigh 2015). One Friday evening, while Elder was winding up his business for the day, a clean shaven and formally dressed tall and thin man walked into Friday's barbershop. Friday was a young

Nigerian man who owned the barbershop opposite Elder's 'tree-stall' where he hung his previously mentioned wares for sale. Elder was immediately on the alert when he saw this "clean-looking" man. He followed him into Fridays' barbershop because he recognized him as 'Neza': from a photograph sent to him on a closed WhatsApp group consisting only of deserters. They post pictures of suspected state agents, news about suspicious movements, warnings etc. to each other. Elder explained, "this gentleman's Rwandese kind of clean further sold him out". The notion of 'selling out' here was embedded in political discourses of betraying a cause to which one should actually pay allegiance. According to Elder, Neza, the suspected Rwandan state security informant, was dressed "in properly ironed formal clothes, he wore a charcoal grey trousers, a light blue shirt, navy blue jacket, a red tie and well-polished boots". Elder added that this man's attire was unsuitable for the extremely hot weather in Johannesburg on the day in question , yet "he had to look smart, as if he was entering the CBD [Central Business District] in Kigali". Elder represented this Rwandan "informer's" "clean" look as contrast to the "clandestine and heinous work that these clean men do" in South Africa. When Neza walked into Friday's barbershop, he ignored Elder and requested a haircut. Elder remained suspicious, Neza seemed to be in unfamiliar territory and his head and face were clean shaven.

Elder, assisted by Lungi and Hailie (both Rastafarai), started to move bags to the back of the barbershop for overnight storage. He overheard Neza speaking on his cell phone in Kinyarwanda. Neza said that he thought he had found one of the people on the 'list' but was not so sure because the suspected man "**is** a Rasta". Neza went on to describe what seemed to be Elder's appearance. According to Elder, Neza started to give verbal directions of where he was making the call from. "You see how dumb this Neza was. He could have simply sent whoever he was talking to, a live location of WhatsApp" (Elder chuckled). Alarmed, Elder rushed over, grabbed Neza's cell phone and threw it to the ground. He stamped on it with his feet until it broke. Shocked, agitated and suspicious, Friday and Lungi grabbed hold of Neza. At the behest of, and assisted by Elder, they blindfolded Neza and tied him to a chair. Elder said "I then pepper sprayed Neza in the eyes and left him at the back of the shop for a few minutes". After Elder had finished packing his stuff away in the back of the shop he, with the assistance of Lungi and Friday, "packed the spy into the boot" of his car. Elder drove about 100 kilometres away, hauled Neza out of the boot and left him stranded there. Defending his attack on Neza, Elder said;

When we beat up these straying state security agents, we do it to defend the honour of army deserters who have been forced to be nomads and reduced to graves here in SA. You see, we're in a dog-eat-dog situation my sister. Attacking is the best form of defence sometimes (Personal Interview, 19 December 2019, Johannesburg).

Reflecting on Elder's sudden shift into a military disposition we were reminded of Woodward and Jenkings' (2011) argument that the formation of military identities involve many acts and is transformative, as well as Cooper et al's (2016) reasoning that military identities can act both for and on an individual. At the same time Elder, like other study participants, had to survive in local settings and "blend in" with local people. They generally had cordial relations with people whom they lived and worked with. Building and maintaining good relations with locals enabled them to "hide and camouflage" effectively, to gain information, surveille potential threats and find reinforcements or a backup team when a situation turned nasty. What was also interesting about this incident was that Rastafari are generally perceived as being peaceful and nonviolent people: yet both Lungi and Hailie immediately responded to an apparent threat to Elder. They assumed he had been targeted because he was a Rastafari and was seen by Neza as an easy target.

Lungi and Hailie apparently never suspected that Elder had not only been in the army but was a deserter. Since he had fled from the RDF, moved from Rwanda to Uganda and ultimately South Africa, he had performed multiple identities. In Johannesburg Elder's "Ethiopian Ras" identity provided him with some flexibility in terms of behaviour and was arguably nested within and necessitated by his military and deserter identities. While the former was contingent and malleable, the latter were ascribed and "fixed" as such by the Rwandan state and the RDF, albeit concealed. At the same time Elder's military habitus was quite enduring.

'Detectives' made in exile

Most Rwandan army deserters in South Africa live on the edge where counter surveillance and intelligence gathering characterize their daily practices because the 'spooks' were assumed to always being present. In addition to being constantly alert, my participants highlighted that they had become masters of intelligence gathering including scenes where their comrades would have been attacked. I always wondered how they did intelligence gathering until I accompanied Iscariot, Major Ghost, Spark and Hunk to a scene at one of their comrade's house

(Ishmael). We had been chilling at a club in central Johannesburg late one Friday night in December when Iscariot received a distress call from Ishmael. He reported that he had been attacked while sleeping. These four men decided to go to Ishmael's house immediately because "the guy sounded like he's dying", Iscariot said in a concerned voice. I opted to be dropped at home first because I had previously experienced a speed chase in Cape Town while I was doing fieldwork with my participants and I was not ready for other risky engagements with these former soldiers. However, Major Ghost and Iscariot insisted that I go with them and be with Ishmael's girlfriend. I reluctantly agreed but as we drove there I was in my own fearful world, envisaging myself dead at the end of the night. Spark drove really fast and no one spoke.

After driving for about twenty minutes, we pulled up in front of a red shop where some merrymakers were drinking while others were dancing to loud music that was playing in the shop. Iscariot told Hunk and Spark to go into the shop and do 'suspect profiling'. This entailed a holistic investigative approach which involved having casual conversations with people as well as predicting or analysing behavioural characteristics of suspicious persons. Experience had taught these former soldiers that Rwandan assailants usually stayed within the vicinity of the scene for a while to see which other people would visit the scene; they might just find the next person on 'the list'. I found this idea to be contrary to the commonly held belief that perpetrators fled the scene of attack.

Major Ghost, Iscariot and I walked to Ishmael's house. In a single-file, we fumbled in the dark alley behind Ishmael's landlord's house and security wall at the back of the shop. At the end of this narrow stretch were several wooden, tin and brick shelters. Ishmael lived in the yellow shelter. It looked much bigger than the rest but it was quite a dilapidated room. The paint was peeling off from the wooden planks and it was leaning heavily towards the back. The tiny windows were also broken and there were shattered pieces of glass on the ground. While it was easy to attribute the broken glasses to the immediate attack, it was clear to me that the room was old and very shabby. The other shelters were deserted. There were two gunshot holes on the boards / wall and one on his window which greeted us. Iscariot and Major Ghost drew closer to inspect the holes. The door looked as if it had once been detached from the door frame; it was wide open and about to fall off. Inside the room everything was scattered. The few items of household property, cooking utensils, clothes and documents were all mixed up on the worn-out plastic mat. Major Ghost called out to Ishmael and he answered faintly from behind the blood-stained off-white curtain which separated the first section of his room from the sleeping

space. When Major Ghost opened the curtain, we saw Ishmael lying on a very thin mattress which was on the floor and not on a base of a bed. His girlfriend was busy tying up his left thigh which had been slashed open, reportedly by a knife. Ishmael also had a deep wound at the back of his head which looked similar to the one that was on Iscariot's head. Blood splatters were all over the room. This was the second time during the course of my fieldwork that I had seen a human being so gruesomely injured. His girlfriend's right eye was red with blood, her upper lip cracked and one of her canines was missing. She said she had been smacked with the butt of a firearm, fell to the ground and was kicked until she lost consciousness. Ishmael said he recognized his assailants and he whispered their names. His cell phone was damaged but his girlfriend's was untouched. Nothing was stolen from this room. Neither the police nor ambulance was called because they feared that taking Ishmael to hospital was more dangerous because he could actually be finished off there. From the moment we arrived, Iscariot started to record the scene on his cell phone. He surprised me with his ability to remain composed in this stressful situation. Meanwhile, Major Ghost approached this tangled skein of information like a detective. For him, the scene (the messed up room) spoke in excruciating detail about motives and the attackers' actions. He narrated as well as made notes as he went through the scattered room absorbing the long trail of evidence such as blood splatters on the walls, clothes and surfaces. Even as I was standing there watching in fear, my mind fled to the edges of this awful scene thinking that if the attackers were to return I would probably be a victim of my research.

The puzzle of the scene was complicated when Major Ghost picked up a national identity card (Rwandan). It bore the face of an old woman, an indigenous male name, European surname, and a date of birth which did not tally with the apparent age of the face of the person in the photograph. None of the former soldiers recognized the face in the picture and Ishmael said there had been no woman amongst their assailants. He also did not know whose identity card it was. The room was tense. I could sense fear and the ex-soldiers also looked overwhelmed. Major Ghost put the card with Ishmaels' blood-stained clothes to take to their 'museum' for safe keeping. Whether the museum was a house or cabinet somewhere was not divulged to me, but I understood that these former soldiers collected these items for their future use.

Immediately, Malkki's (1998) idea of 'mythico-history' crossed my mind and I did not ask more questions. The notion of mythico-history entails the collection of mutilated body parts of humans and or their blood stained clothes for use as evidence that indeed people were being

141

attacked yet the world watched. This was a common practice in Rwanda immediately after the genocide. It seemed to my participants that the national identity card had been 'dropped' at the scene. By the time we left Ishmael's place after ensuring that he had stabilized, Major Ghost, Spark, Hunk and Iscariot were convinced that Ishmael had been attacked by state security agents because nobody else had the wherewithal to 'manufacture' a Rwandan national identity card (even a flawed one). Secondly, these army deserters insinuated that their comrade had been attacked for exposing a high ranking military official's corrupt, abusive and incestuous relationships with younger women he was closely related to. Ishmael had allegedly deserted the RDF because the army chief implicated in his attack wanted him dead for exposing him in the military back in Rwanda. This was the first time that my participants had encountered a Rwandan national identity card in their investigations but the details on it left them with more confusion than relief. However, it was clear to them that the regime and its agents had adopted a new way of claiming responsibility for attacks.

Meanwhile, Hunk and Spark had spoken to two elderly men who gave them information about a group of French speaking, beautifully clean and wealthy looking men who always came and sat in the bar for a long time, buying alcohol for almost anyone who cared to give them attention. Yet they hardly drank themselves. Hunk and Spark elicited further details about the two men from the conversations they had had in the shop and these matched Ishmaels' description of his assailants, but the latter were nowhere to be seen anymore. According to Iscariot, this absence meant that the attackers probably were inexperienced.

Nakamura (2005:23) asserts that "objectified persons are fluid and ever-changing in terms of their status, commodity value and cultural meaning in the social world and they are never stable beings…" This was equally the case for most of my participants whose lives are lived on the edge. So, other than revealing that Rwandan army deserters take on detective roles when the situation requires them to do so, the above narrative shows that intelligence gathering is central to their survival because their counter surveillance strategies are generally derived from the information that they have about their 'hunters', their government's latest stance towards them (because their government's position towards them seemed to toughen with each passing minute), and also the anticipated tactics that the 'hunters' are rumoured to use at different moments.

The account further reveals the ways in which state repression could actually be manipulated by individual patrons and agents by using state resources to settle personal scores even beyond Rwanda's borders. Though these army deserters generally relied on clearly set communication channels and codes, they were open to all sorts of information that they received from their compatriots, enemies and friends. They then filtered and verified the information without dismissing any intelligence gathered. They also took turns to conduct 'intelligence or research' each time they got some leading information. As I spent time with them I began to see their intelligence gathering, scanning the environment for dangerous people and objects, and filtering of information. Although, under such circumstances they were drawing on their military training, they worked as a team, without any emphasis on the military hierarchies and ranks they would sometimes use when they were relaxed and feeling safe.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that threat, space and time are important social and political vectors in reconstituting deserter identities when soldiers believe that they are being hunted for leaving the army in acrimony. It has revealed that the army deserter identity is a precarious identity which necessitates the hiding, shifting and nesting of the military identity as the best way to stay alive in exile. In so doing, the chapter further argued for a situational approach in the analysis of military identities particularly in cases where fixed military identities are seen to endanger service leavers. The chapter has shown the tensions that exist between the Rwandan army deserters and the Rwandan state regarding their identification especially as dissidents or enemies of the state that must be eliminated even as they transit between the Rwandan state and the host state. The chapter has further shown that the violent conditions of exile seemed to blur the identities of Rwandan army deserters living in self-imposed exile in South Africa. The narratives in this chapter provide vital insights into lived experiences of state surveillance and the strategies that the army deserters deployed in traversing surveillance   in exile. The art of identity shifting practised by my participants presented a complex understanding of military identities because they constantly oscillated between fixed military identities and several other identities in response to danger in different times and spaces. This case of Rwandan army deserters' fluid military identities corroborates with contemporary identity theorizing which contends that identity binaries can no longer be relied on since there are diverse identities between the binaries.

Alcohol[6]Consumption: Moments of Relief in Exile

Introduction

Drinking is a deeply social and cultural practice (Wilson 2004; SIRC 1998). This chapter explores the drinking practices of my study participants and I argue that beer drinking offered emotional relief to my haunted and 'hunted' study participants.   The chapter asserts that an analysis of alcohol consumption practices contributes to a more nuanced understanding of army deserters' various responses to ever-circulating rumours of persecution and violence, the consequent fear and sense of danger the latter diffused, and the ways it generally shaped my study participants' day-to-day experiences.

The military as an institution has a unique culture with specific principles which determine when and where alcohol can be used. Although it is recognised that many soldiers drink to cope with, for example battle stress or to "mediate the transition from the heightened experience of combat to routine safety" (Jones & Fear 2011:166), alcohol use in the military is increasingly portrayed as negative and inherently destructive. There currently is a gap in literature with regards to the socio-therapeutic (Gately 2008; Hanson 2013) and strategic uses of alcohol and of social drinking by ex-soldiers (see Holmes 2003). Drawing on narratives of alcohol consumption that are told by participants and on my experiences with the deserters' drinking excursions during field work, this chapter explores the meanings that the deserters attach to alcohol drinking. It also shows the risks that the deserters likely expose themselves to in their pursuit of alcohol outside 'safe spaces' and how the deserters manage risky alcohol induced behaviours among themselves. I illuminate the reportedly beneficial aspects of imbibing alcohol among Rwandan army deserters who live in self-imposed exile in Johannesburg and Cape Town, South Africa.

Alcohol has long been imbibed in the military as part of bonding and the creation of social cohesion (Browne et al 2008). Some scholars suggest that alcohol(ism) is a threat to military effectiveness, impedes combat readiness (Mattiko et al 2011) and must be curtailed because of

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[6] I use alcohol and beer interchangeably

its adverse effects on military operations (Raju et al 2002). According to Gibbs et al (2011), alcohol consumption can exacerbate cases of mental illness within the military in the UK. Hanwella et al (2012) argue that alcohol consumption generally led to soldiers engaging in hazardous casual sex therefore leading to higher prevalence rates of HIV among members of the Sri Lankan army compared to other occupations. Generally, works produced on the consumption of alcohol by soldiers and ex-soldiers affirm medical assumptions about it being potentially damaging (Waller et al 2015). This approach is reflected in the growing influence of medical findings that alcohol is problematic and that there are times when drinking should be medicalized (Hanwella et al 2012; Raju et al 2011; Gibbs et al 2011). However, scholars such as Andreas (2019) scrutinize the long history of alcohol use by soldiers and armies. Jones and Fear (2011:166) argue that over time, alcohol has had a significant role in the military because it enabled soldiers to cope with intense battlefield related stress. They further assert that alcohol boosts morale among soldiers, which, in turn, improves effectiveness within military units.

Others like Chewe (2014) elaborate the high prevalence of alcohol use in the Zambian military. This, the author argues, is because in many military traditions, junior officers were required to patronise the mess. Research on alcohol use in the military has largely focused on serving members of army because of the institutional goals and operational duties that soldiers were expected carry out. Without highlighting any effects (positive or negative) of alcohol consumption in the military, Lobnibe (2018) revealed that the consumption of traditional Ghanaian alcoholic drinks was profound in the Ghanaian military from the late 1950s to the present. Fewer studies have sought to understand the role that alcohol play in the post military lives of soldiers (Vest et al 2018). Investigating homelessness among veterans in the UK, Higate (2000) noted that his participants had resorted to alcohol(ism) after having failed to reintegrate into civilian society hence they decided to 'live rough' on the streets. Most of the studies highlighted above present alcohol use and abuse among soldiers and ex-soldiers as being problematic.

Following Higate (2000), my study focused on the drinking practices of ex-soldiers in trying to understand their post-military lives. In this regard, it became apparent that drinking was regarded by my participants as a way to cope with the stress that came with their lives outside their native country and with consequent struggles for survival in South Africa. However, unlike Higate's participants, the army deserters who participated in my study did not resort to

145

alcohol because they were unable to reintegrate into their local civilian communities. They were in self-imposed exile, had been labelled dissidents, believed that they were being hunted and were exposed to apparent (Rwandan) state-sponsored violence in foreign (South Africa) communities. Drinking alcohol had multiple meanings for them. For instance as a socially bonding practice, as therapeutic and as an integral part of their strategic planning as they acted in arduous, uncertain situations, evade threats and thus navigate (Vigh 2006) towards improved positions. My participants indicated that in the midst of stressful exile conditions of South Africa, alcohol gave them much-needed relief and revived their will and power to continue living in South Africa.

Alcohol consumption: An entrenched social practice

> Where I come from, beer is offered as a gesture of welcoming visitors even the regular ones. But here in South Africa, when my comrades and I get down to drinking together, it is for social bonding and to get some relief, you know, from all that shit that we go through here; the lowly lifestyles, the attacks, the stress of not being able to properly support our families back home, you know, it is a lot (Personal interview, 05 November 2019, Johannesburg)

According to Spark, the deserters' recourse to alcohol in a troubling context of exile was embedded in their traditions back home given that beer brewing was an important economic activity and various forms of sociality were based on it in their hometowns in Rwanda. Another participant Sirikare, was unreservedly fond of his drink, stressed that "in Rwandan culture, no ceremony is complete without *urwagwa* (traditional banana brew) or *ikigage* (traditional sorghum brew)". Spark's excerpt, above, corroborates Gaidashova et al's (2005) assertion that alcohol consumption was a mainstay in many Rwandan cultural settings and it played a significant role in social gatherings, rites of passage and local economies. Rukazambuga (2008) posits that serving or sharing alcoholic drinks essentially strengthened relationships in Rwandan traditions. Analyzing the centrality of alcohol consumption in traditional settings Mfecane (2011) asserts that it is one of the most entrenched practices in African culture. According to Akyeampong (1996), in most cultural settings in Africa, serving alcohol was a symbol used in mediating conflicts among neighbours, relatives and friends. In other sinister cases, beer was used as a vehicle through which treacherous acts of sorcery wherein real or perceived enemies were eliminated through beer poisoning. Mfecane (2011) suggests that

amongst Zulu-speakers of South Africa, alcohol is one of the markers of hegemonic masculinities (see also Akyeampong 1996b, 2002; Krige 2010; Fumanti 2010). For Douglas (1987), alcohol is not only a social marker but an important ritual object, social good and economic commodity whose meanings differ from one social group to the next. Analyzing the role of alcoholic drinking among the Akan of Ghana, Akyeampong (1995:266) highlights that "alcohol has acquired a social life, important uses and meanings…" over a long period. For Akyeampong, alcohol facilitates communication between the spiritual and physical worlds (ibid). Shale et al (2014) note that consuming alcohol has been integral to African people's social, economic and political activities for a very long time. Van Wolputte and Fumanti (2010) argue that alcohol consumption continues to play a significant role in the more recent political past of Africa. Gadaga et al (1999) notes that traditional brews were important ritual artefacts in rainmaking ceremonies among the Shona of Zimbabwe. It is important to note that alcohol consumption is not limited to traditional or non-western traditional practices. Holt (1993) highlights that sacramental wine played a pivotal role in the rituals of the Eucharist in the Christian faith. Owing to the diverse uses of alcohol in various contexts, I assert that alcohol can be understood as an elastic drink. I have shown, in chapter 5 how certain army deserters were cautious about not allowing anyone to come close to their alcohol at social gatherings such as weddings, parties or funerals because they feared that their beer might be poisoned.

Prior to doing fieldwork, I assumed that Rwandan army deserters who lived in constant fear of being 'hunted' would draw on religion to enable them to cope. Commenting on the strategies adopted by Zimbabwean army deserters living in exile in South Africa, Maringira (2015), for example, states that his participants generally saw religious institutions as helpful relief centres where they were sure of getting some spiritual, economic and social support when they needed it. Contrary to Maringira's participants, Rwandan army deserters who participated in my study did not frequent churches. I had also, somewhat naively, thought that the former soldiers would need to be constantly sober to remain safe from the alleged state sponsored attacks. Yet, even though the study participants affirmed that they were religious, they avoided congregations and churches because they had the strong conviction that these groups and spaces were dangerous: Rwandan state security agents had thoroughly infiltrated such settings, they believed, as shown in Chapters 4 and 5.

Hunk opined that spending a lot of time drinking alcohol during his spare times was more helpful for him and for his deserter comrades;

Those church guys seem to set us up for capture in their churches through their increasingly intrusive church programs. So we drink and paint the city black (he lifted a bottle of black label lager), or green and silver (he added lifting a bottle and a can of Castle lite beer at the same time) in order to remain safe in South Africa. If I do not drink beer, I could actually die of high blood pressure... I am positive because Mmmmmm. Being a Rwandan ex-soldier here is hard enough, but being one who does not drink alcohol must be even harder (Hunk laughed as he took a sip of his Black Label once more). Beer clears my head. In any case I am in South Africa, the only country that I know of in Africa with the widest variety of affordable alcohol so why not? (Personal interview, 19 October 2019, Johannesburg).

For Hunk, clarifying his insecurities and mistrust for church was very important he maintained that this had to be reflected in the dissertation. Hunk said that:

Also, the churches have an obsession with and they highly respect members of their congregations who pay large sums of money towards church programs. Usually such high contributors are on Kagame's payroll. Therefore, intentionally or naively, churches facilitate our discovery and capture. We know that it has been happening even though they deny it. We are not safe, even at church! They can pray for us in our absence, it is fine. Instead of turning ourselves in through churches, we would rather spend those many hours drinking beer and strategizing on how to remain safe (Personal interview with Hunk, 19 October 2019, Johannesburg).

The excerpt above reveals mistrust of the church which, as the presumed locus for social, economic and spiritual resources, would be expected to assist people who are in distress or those dealing with social situations such as the ones that were being experienced by Rwandan army deserters (see also Court 2016). The excerpt further shows some of the suspicions by army deserters that churches with a predominantly Rwandan membership had cultivated political influence and because of infiltration, they were seen to be predicated towards sustaining the political authority of the RPF at the expense of the safety of real or perceived dissidents. For the army deserters, such churches are dangerous spaces that they should avoid. Thinking of the Rwandan church in exile as a dangerous space was intriguing for me because the church is generally understood as being founded on principles of socio-economic and spiritual relief and protection of members, yet the presence and reverence of state agents in the

148

church gives the institution the character of a snare. It becomes a space where navigating danger continues regardless. Hunk raised critical questions about the moral responsibility of churches - if indeed state agents used their influence in religious organizations as avenues to capture and harm people. According to Court (2016), the growing political influence among churches is not a new phenomenon amongst Rwandans. Instead, the practice dates back to the colonial period and it was carried over into the first and second republics of independent Rwanda. Attempts to continuously subordinate the church to the state have continued in post-conflict Rwanda (See Longman 2010).

Like Hunk above, the participants in my study preferred to drink alcohol socially, rather than attend church. The reasons they gave were first that beer is relatively cheap in South Africa. According to Rogerson and Collins (2015:3), of late South Africa has presented itself as a gastronomic tourism (Bujdoso & Szucs, 2012a) destination of choice: participants are motivated to drink different types of beer in particular atmospheric settings (Jablonska et al., 2013: 67). At the same time the price of beer in South Africa is low (Head 2021). Not only are various kinds of beer available, it is also affordable, as emphasised above.

Hunk opined that drinking was common among Rwandan army deserters, first as a remnant of military culture (of which ex-soldiers had previously been part), and secondly as a response to Rwandan state surveillance in the host country. Some of my participants' civilian relatives understood the former soldiers' mistrust of religious institutions and the associated drinking practices as ways of coping with the socio-economic and political stresses related to the difficult conditions of being 'hunted'. For the study participants themselves, by avoiding some of the spaces that their 'hunters' supposedly had control over, they stayed away from danger. I argue that drinking beer can also be understood as a tactic used by army deserters to evade perceived state surveillance and even violence. Drawing from Bourdieu's (1990) notion of habitus or the 'structuring structure', the practice of drinking alcohol as a collective and treating it as social event could further be understood as an enduring product of enculturation by the military institution. It also facilitates the structuring of resistance strategies among exiled Rwandan army deserters.

Jones and Fear (2011) state that drinking alcohol in the military is one tradition that is as old as the military itself. Chewe (2014) reveals that most militaries mandated junior officers to be

149

patrons at the mess. According to Higate (2000), ex-servicemen find it difficult to get over their military experience, including drinking beer. Given that alcohol use is known to be one of the entrenched military practices believed to have relieving powers during combat, it was not surprising that imbibing alcoholic drinks became an imbedded practice among Rwandan army deserters. I had the opportunity to observe and participate in drinking sessions with my participants during fieldwork but some of the deserters preferred to drink on their own. Below, I discuss what the deserters referred to as solitary drinking.

Solitary drinking

Even though the army deserters in this study often drank beer as a collective, their different economic backgrounds, tastes or preferences and their different temperaments at times separated them. The majority of my study participants came from the lower socio-economic class of South Africa's migrant populations often characterized by informal employment because they do not have the requisite documentation to find formal employment in the country (see Nattrass and Seekings 2015; Kavuro 2017; Nzabamwita 2015; Uwimphuhwe 2015; Uwimphuhwe et al 2020, Sebakwiye 2020, Ncube 017). Making ends meet was challenging and was exacerbated by the fact that the study participants could not really base their lives and livelihoods in specific locales: the necessity to evade perceived state agents made them highly mobile as shown in chapter 6. They normally used their low incomes to get basic shelter, electricity and food expenses. Most of them spent the month in penury and they had increasing debt because they relied on *umumeshi* or *matshonisa* (predatory creditors) who charged exorbitant interest rates on loaned money. The patterns of their everyday life were therefore hand-to-mouth.

According to Nzabamwita (2015), the income and expenditure patterns of most South African-based Rwandan migrants were more complex than is usually shown in studies that analyse Rwandan refugees' economic patterns. Despite being faced with financial challenges, my participants drank beer – often home-made, sometimes cheap or potentially dangerous brews and mixes sold in local shebeens. Ishmael, whose financial situation is dire (a detailed description of his home was outlined in Chapter 6 under the section titled *'Detectives made in Exile'*) said,

Sometimes I don't care what it is that I am drinking as long as it makes me drunk and forget my problems, even if temporarily, it's fine. I usually drink on my own because my comrades like expensive beer, which I cannot afford. I only drink expensive alcohol when we have our meetings together, you see, I do not even contribute much money like buying six packs like my fellow comrades do. I am a guard and I am not so much after the quality but effects of having taken a drink because life is hard for me. (Personal Interview with Ishmael, 19 January 2020, Johannesburg)

The excerpt above corroborates Hanwella et al's (2012) claim that veterans engaged in beer drinking in order to deal with combat stress. In the case of my study participants, they were dealing with memories of it, constant fear and the possibility of danger. In chapters 4, 5 and 6 I showed that they lived within contexts that closely resembled combat situations which also produced high stress levels. In the above quote, Ishmael affirmed the importance of alcohol as a source of relaxation (Jones and Fear 2011). It did not matter whether Ishmael and his colleagues had money to buy lagers in the townships such as Black Label, Castle, Castle Lite, Heineken, *urwagwa* (traditional Rwandan brew), *mqombothi* (traditional South African brew), 'punch' (mixed wines and whiskeys), or Mozambican distilled alcoholic drinks that were only sold to customers who brought their own container or bottle. For him, drinking whatever he could get and afford alleviated his stress and worries. The Mozambican types of alcohol had strong odours, gave Ishmael a runny nose and made him sneeze and tear up. At times Ishmael's face looked swollen and his colleagues warned him against the cheap strong stuff that he drank excessively. One of Ishmael's best friends, Alfonso, a Mozambican migrant, was said to have died after gulping some toxic brew in 2018. The deserters however, did their best to look out for each other to make sure that their comrade, Ishmael in particular, did not go down the same way his friend from Mozambique had died.

In chapter 6, I highlighted that Rwandan army deserters did their best to maintain discipline through the recognition of their hierarchical military ranks when they were in their own safe spaces. Drunkenness was never accepted as an excuse for bad behaviour and they would castigate and isolate those they believed to be going against group expectations, that is, discipline, camaraderie, honesty and respect. Espion was banished from the circle of army deserters because he was accused of selling them out to state security agents. The army deserters also closely monitored such people as they perceived them as an existential threat. After having been banned from associating with ex-soldiers, there were rumours about Espion

having been dumped by the regime's sympathizers as well, apparently because he did not have easy access to the army deserters anymore. Sirikare, who prides himself as the chief disciplinarian as he held the highest rank in the military among his comrades, stated that:

> After we chased Espion from the group, I often saw him being very drunk. He now hangs around with the homeless people in town. I can assure you, he has become useless and I tell you that it is only a matter of time before 'the regime' attacks Espion (Personal interview, 12 January 2020, Cape Town).

It is quite rare for ex-soldiers who have shared the same military experience and hardship to treat each other in a manner as extreme as being chased out of the group unless there is evidence that the actions of the comrade put the lives of the other comrades in danger; this was the case in Espion's exclusion.

In his study of homelessness amongst ex-serviceman in the UK, Higate (2000) asserts that ex-soldiers sometimes became alcoholics because they failed to fit within the normal or mainstream society. Espion was suspected of being a traitor to his former comrades, he did not fit into the group of deserters anymore, had become an outcast and subsequently lived rough on the streets.

While alcohol use by army deserters can be understood as a continuation of a culturally sanctioned military practice, I am of the view that local ideas about manhood also played a role in South Africa: the study participants highlighted the belief that a Rwandan man should endure pain and grief quietly over a drink (Rukazambuga 2008). The drinking practices exhibited by my participants also spoke to evolving masculinities discourses which sought to re-socialize men to express pain and grief to people who are close to them rather than bearing pain and grief individually (see also Mfecane 2011, 2016; Connell 2005; Morrell et al 2012).

Constructive Drinking

According to Himbara (2019), the Rwandan state firmly believes that soldiers who have deserted from the RDF are able to mobilize others in exile with the aim of destabilizing the Rwandan government. In Chapter 2, I highlighted that the army deserters formed a closed group whose members did their best to watch out for each other. Yet, they believed that their

cohesion did not stop state security agents from 'hunting' or attacking them. Such attacks were constantly discussed by my study participants as shown throughout the thesis.

During fieldwork, I witnessed a couple of incidents where my participants grieved and tried to heal together through 'constructive drinking' (Van Wolputte and Fumanti 2010). According to Van Wolputte and Fumanti, constructive drinking was particularly common in rural African societies where the gatherings were characterized by men-to-men discussions about political, life-building as well as strategic leadership matters. During the constructive drinking sessions that I attended, my participants intimately revealed their fears, uncertainty and pain. It was evident that the experience of violence against them – believed to be perpetrated by Rwandan state agents – affected their morale. I attended one such drinking session after Soda had been involved in an accident after speeding away from suspected Rwandan state agents. He was driving a client in his uber at the time. Soda stated that:

> It all started when I stopped at the traffic lights. When the occupants in the Fortuner that pulled up next to me shouted 'we got you, son of a bitch' then they called out my real name and the driver lifted a firearm as if to show me that they were going to shoot me that day. I recognized the driver and immediately I took off. Thank God I was right in front at the traffic lights. It was suicidal but I had to run with my life and that of my customer. They followed me but I got into an accident and they shot at my vehicle and drove off from the scene of the accident. (Comment made while explaining incident to fellow deserters 30 October 2019, Cape Town)

Expressing his disgust and fears that he could have easily lost a comrade in that incident, Gozden, Soda's best friend and participant in my study stated that:

> Gentlemen, the incident that we are gathered here to discuss, terrifies me. If we are not careful, these spooks will finish us. A month ago we were gathered here, discussing this same issue, when Ghandi was attacked in the same manner. I do not like this soft, soft stance that we have been maintaining towards these guys. Honestly… (Comment made by Gozden to fellow deserters 30 October 2019, Cape Town)

Together, drinking socially and with camaraderie in what they regarded as safe spaces, they revealed their vulnerabilities, expressed pain and reaffirmed their solidarity as a group.

153

Speaking of the attacks in a group was also a call for collective empathy and defensive action, where possible. It was also clear that the reality for a Rwandan army deserter in South Africa was a difficult state of *being* in exile which required constant negotiations within personal, political and moral spheres of interaction. In this regard, drinking together was constructive and positive for them. Such 'constructive drinking' gatherings were common in both Cape Town and in Johannesburg.

Following physical attacks on one of their comrades, the army deserters would visit their injured comrade with cooler boxes full of beer and they would drink, reflect and strategize together. Similar to the Cape Town gatherings, constructive drinking meetings in Johannesburg were deeply emotional; the men's feelings sometimes reached fever-pitch because existential matters were discussed at these gatherings. Gefou-Madianou (1992:11) emphasises that a strong "masculine solidarity" emerged during all-male assemblages. I argue that such group-drinking by Rwandan army deserters was at once constructive and deeply masculine, and it brought about a sense of cohesion and mutual support. My participants viewed beer and alcohol as therapeutic and powerful. According to one of the participants, Major Ghost,

> Without alcohol, it is difficult for one to release the internal anger of having been defiled
> by the enemy (Personal interview, 21 January 2020, Johannesburg).

From the above, Major Ghost seemed to imply that the Rwandan state (and its agents) were enemies whose physical and brutal contact with the army deserters defiled the ex-soldiers' bodies. The idea of defilement in Major Ghost's quote (above) reveals the ongoing conflictual relationship between deserters and Rwandan state agents.

By viewing state agents as the enemy, a stage is set for 'social vigilance', that is, the need to identify threats by examining hidden intentions in order to adjust their practices towards such threats (Vigh 2010). It also potentially activates retaliation. The excerpt further imbued alcoholic drink with spiritual power to 'cleanse' the army deserters of the defilement that came after being physically attacked by state agents. This view corroborates the assertion that alcoholic drinks carry cleansing powers (Holt 1993; Akyeampong 1996). By gathering to discuss counter-surveillance and navigation strategies over bottles of beer, the army deserters gave credence to the assertion that beer was crucial in shaping ideas at personal, political and

collective levels and that strategic action was made or unmade during beer drinking sessions (Ambler and Crush 1992; Moodie 1992). The excerpt further speaks to the Durkheiman religious characterization of practices (and bodies) as sacred and profane. For Major Ghost, the bodies of army deserters are uncontaminated before they get in the view of the deserters, polluted or defiled by the violent acts perpetrated on them by state security agents. In Chapter 4, I showed how the Rwandan state reportedly identified enemies and earmarked them for harm (or defilement).

Beer drinking is also said to have 'religious and cultural' (Akyeampong 1996) undercurrents. Study participants almost always gathered to drink, discuss events and make plans immediately after a fellow army deserter had been physically attacked. It seemed to me that these assemblages were geared towards resolving the internal crisis of defilement as well as restoring both the individual and social or collective body of army deserters to normal mental, physical and social health. Such gatherings after an attack also served as important reflection and brainstorming sessions where navigation and counter-surveillance strategies are re-evaluated. Talton (2011) asserts that when beer is shared in conversation, it draws certain forms of knowledge which are conveyed in greater richness of depth and detail. Such were the kinds of conversations that I had the opportunity to witness after two of my participants had been physically attacked by alleged state agents.

Social drinking and clubbing against the odds

Even though the study participants construe their deserter identity as a locus for agency from which hiding and navigating state surveillance follows, having a real good time in exile is associated with being in convivial spaces that are outside their usual closed drinking spaces. As seen above, drinking together after attacks is often productive for the study participants. They discuss important issues, possible protective strategies and enhance their sense of cohesion. In addition to drinking together after a comrade had been attacked, the younger deserters go to nearby clubs in search of a good time outside their usual closed drinking spaces. Social drinking is informed by these younger deserters' belief that certain spaces have the capacity to make people drunk (see also Colson and Scudder 1988). For the deserters, very loud music and being in the same space with many different merry makers were important factors to their enjoyment. Therefore army deserters who are close friends go to clubs, taverns

155

and shebeens together though this is deemed to be dangerous. In many cases, the happy times would be narrated to their compatriots who would have been absent.

"*Umsirikare, ejo twe kumurika*" (Soldier, yesterday we shined) is what my participants would say to each other in reference to a successful night out. They would go on to give thick descriptions about particular highlights of the night in question. Examples of this descriptions are those given by Spark Hunk and Murakoze:

> Spark: "after winning many successive pool games, Murakoze hopped onto the pool table, lifting his snooker cue and shouted on top of his voice that he was the only real man in the club",
>
> Hunk: "Spark got so drunk he felt like he had wings to fly then he jumped from the stairs and broke his arm" or
>
> Murakoze: "Man, you should have seen how Hunk *twerked* (a dance move where one swerves their butt sideways at times shaking them in sync with the musical rhythm) all the other people off the dancefloor".

These recollections usually recreated the convivial atmosphere that was in the club or pub. According to Fumanti (2007), briefing people about events that would have happened during their absence has inclusionary effects. Therefore, reminiscences of the good times that my participants had had at the club were meant to include, albeit after the fact, their comrades who were not present at the time. Discussions during such social drinking outings usually revolved around football, movies, cars and material acquisitions. However, sexual prowess took much of the time where these young army deserters discussed their relationships with their girlfriends, sometimes giving out the most intimate details. According to my participants, these discussions brought soothing memories and they were some of the few precious moments that they could hold on to because clubbing did not happen regularly. Successful nights out were usually those in which the army deserters would not have ended up in any form of trouble.

Wrede (2015) highlights multiple conceptualizations of space, that is, as a form of control, as limiting, as sites for actualization and also as a space for breaking out of constraints. Participants in this study who took the risk of going out to clubs explained their going out as breaking out of the constraints that the deserter or dissident identity placed on their lives, though such action was very dangerous. These smaller army deserter cliques emerged as an

156

expression of freedom from the larger structured body of army deserters whose drinking conventions mainly centred on serious deliberations. Contrary to constructive drinking which normally happened at one of the army deserters' homes and where the participation of women was very restricted, convivial drinking was more relaxed and jovial. These breakaway groups were evidence that, despite being exposed to the same threats in exile, the army deserters are not a homogenous group. Beer can therefore be a useful tool in articulating the ambivalences that exist within the army deserter corps (see also Mager 2010). While beer united them at some point, it also divided them especially in cases where one's drinking practices were potential hazards to collective group interests. This also confirms Krige's (2010) claim that beer consumption is indeed a site for struggle. This piece of evidence revealed the limits of Henderson's (1985) claim that the military 'community of experience' was a glue that bound soldiers together and that soldiers were generally inseparable on the basis of having the same experiences.

The younger and ambitious army deserters who took part in clubbing are aware that the distinction between safe and unsafe spaces is illusive and open to uncertainties, therefore they become hyper sensitive to their surroundings in such spaces and they practice what Vigh (2018:491) calls 'social suspicion' which entails heightened mistrust for people because "we can never be sure that we truly understand the act of another person" (ibid). Vigh's argument was applicable in this case because of the prying economy that targets army deserters and other real or perceived threats to the current Rwandan government in the context of exile in South Africa. Social drinking was thus a highly negotiated practice. To ensure a successful drinking night out, my participants avoided pitfalls or downfalls through strategic avoidance of certain spaces and certain people. Explaining how social drinking was a negotiated practice, Hunk, one of my participants, stated that:

> Even though clubs are spaces for socializing and relaxation, we hardly forge close relationships with strangers in clubs. We prefer drinking in clubs within our familiar territories where we know how to escape quickly in case we encounter a state agent (Personal interview, 02 October 2019, Johannesburg).

These former soldiers have mastered the art of easily disappearing into the crowds or back alleys if the need arose. According to Hunk, people were an important shield as they provided much needed camouflage if and when trouble started. These army deserters said they had been

157

saved from their 'hunters' by members of the public on many occasions. Hunk continued saying:

> People are an ambivalent but very important resource. When we encounter danger, they provide us with cover and many times they rescue us. However, sometimes they obstruct us or they might facilitate our capture, you know. So I try to be tactful and I am always ready for fight or flight when I am in public spaces such as clubs (Personal interview, 02 October 2019, Johannesburg).

During fieldwork, I watched as Iscariot and a few of my other participants sometimes disappeared into the crowds after detecting trouble. Even though I was grateful for having been part of this amazing group of young army deserters, I often felt hesitant to accompany them to clubs for beer drinking. However, seeing my participants in a jovial frame of mind when they were enjoying themselves in this way starkly contrasted to the disconsolate lives they seemed to lead. Nonetheless, even in such settings, my study participants took turns to be on high alert; these former soldiers took turns to scan the environment even as they enjoyed themselves. In being hyper vigilant, the deserters prove to be proactive in safeguarding their present and future wellbeing (Vigh 2011).

My participants got imbibed at times but most of them were able to contain themselves. This however has not been the case for Spark. One night we had to leave the club very early after spending less than two and half hours in the club because Spark had broken his arm after falling off the stairs where he had been dancing. Hunk and JayZee had to carry Spark, angrily, out of the club to the car because he kept crying out so loud the other patrons in the club were getting agitated. An irate JayZee shoved Spark into the back seat and warned that he would beat Spark up if the latter continued to be a nuisance in the car. Spark was undeterred and increasingly called out "Mama, mama, mamaaaa". He was lifting his injured right arm which had started to swell. Soon he started to vomit. Jayzee immediately switched on the light in the car and I was disgusted when I saw tiny bits of polony, carrots, tomatoes, brownish things that looked like meat and yellowish porridge like stuff that felt warm on my lap. The smell was unbearable. Hunk pulled up at the nearest filling station and JayZee dragged Spark out of the car then he pulled him towards the restroom. I went to clean myself up. We were parked at the filling station for approximately one hour. Hunk would not drive until Spark felt better. Upon hearing of our ordeal, Mercy, Spark's ever-laughing wife apologized profusely to us and said that her

158

husband had won several health, spiritual, financial and socio-political battles in his life yet he had "fallen to the bottle". This seemed to disappoint her very much. After Spark had changed into clean clothes, we accompanied him to the hospital where his broken arm was treated.

During fieldwork, I experienced several other encounters with an inebriated Spark. Drunkenness was regarded as dangerous to both the individual army deserter and the collective army deserter corps.   The army deserters constantly reprimanded Spark about drinking too much. They opined that it was bad, not only for his health, but for the reputation of the army deserters who still subscribe to principles of discipline which they learned in the military. Most of my participants felt that they had a corporate responsibility to check Spark's drunkenness. At times his colleagues would physically discipline him for his giving them problems when he was drunk. Yet Spark never agreed to remain behind when he was told that he should not go to the club. It was possible that if unchecked, Spark's drunken conduct could result in a tragedy. In the case of my participants, ideas of a dangerous potentiality triggered anxiety and apprehension and any behaviour that was seen to be harmful was summarily dealt with. I have highlighted that my participants sometimes relied on their military toolkits to ensure discipline among their members, particularly in relation to beer drinking. While physically disciplining somebody like Spark seemed to be an inadequate measure, the ex-soldiers mostly invoked moral and existential reminders such as kinship, ethnicity and belonging when trying to ensure that comrades stayed sober enough to act within the parameters of collective safety.

Fear of the state and social drinking

Drawing on Foucault's ideas of surveillance, Van Wollputte (2010) asserts that pubs or clubs have always been the focus of governmentality and efforts of state policing. One issue that came out strongly during fieldwork was the idea that Rwandan state agents occasionally pop into pubs, clubs, taverns and shebeens in South Africa hunting for army deserters, which is why social drinking was highly unadvisable. Their idea of being safe in exile was to ensure that they remained hidden from the agents for as long as they could. In chapter 4, I discussed how the Rwandan state had reportedly managed to stretch its policing activities beyond its geographical jurisdiction. Armed with historical and cultural understandings of the sociality of beer drinking by exiled army deserters, Rwandan state agents apparently frequent public drinking spaces. This made social drinking quite risky for my participants.   Yet Sirikare had this to say;

159

I know that it is dangerous but being in the house all the time means that the people who have been sent to kill me would have succeeded in killing the social, emotional and psychological aspects of my life before killing me physically. I can't do that. I go, but I am always mindful of my surroundings (Personal Interview with Sirikare, 12 August 2019, Cape Town).

The quote above shows that the rumoured presence of Rwandese state agents in South Africa constructed real and imagined boundaries within the lives of army deserters in self-imposed exile. By insisting on going out for social drinking, these former soldiers refused to be 'domesticated' from afar by the regime in Kigali. My participants' insistence on going out can also be understood as a form of rebellion against continued subjectification by the state even when they had long left the military. The excerpt above also corroborate Van Wolputte and Fumanti's (2010:8) assertion that "beer drinking explores and morphs the contours of social space, state and the self thereby reaffirming or challenging boundaries and identification categories" that may have been constructed.

For me, the stoicism and courage that was ingrained in soldiers during military training was the best way to explain their audacity and insistence on being happy at the pub, club or tavern despite their circumstances in exile. Contrary to claims that ex-soldiers were "hapless institutionalized squaddies who cannot make their own decisions outside the military institution" (Higate 2000:333), the ex-soldiers who participated in my study demonstrated that they had become 'free subjects' (Foucault 1977) and they seemed to make good use of the conceptual and physical skills such as 'field-crafting' (Woodward 2008) and 'environmental scanning' (Vigh 2009) which they acquired during training. Lock and Scheper Hughes's (1990) concept of the 'mindful body' which emphasizes equilibrium in all body forms (the body social, the body politic and the individual body) can also be used to explain the former soldiers' need for a more jovial social life. This analysis is premised on the army deserters' resilience and endurance in escaping and surviving state surveillance and state sponsored violence in the host society which happened against a background of strenuous and highly insecure work.

Safety, conviviality and their budgets for alcoholic drinks were the primary factors that influenced their choice of drinking venues. As shown elsewhere, Rwandan army deserters sometimes took up security work as car guards, security guards and as 'bouncers' at night clubs because of their training (Ncube 2017). My participants preferred going to clubs where their

160

colleagues worked because that way they were assured of enjoying themselves without having to be overly vigilant as they would do in unfamiliar spaces. On my second social drinking excursion with these former soldiers, I recall asking Sirikare why they kept walking in and out of the club in pairs. Sirikare told me that they usually took turns to do some random checks outside. Unlike other 'normal' patrons who periodically left their drinking spots to visit restrooms, my participants seemed to have an entrenched uneasiness which was mediated through these constant perimeter checks, looking around the club and trying to detect potential threats. This uneasiness corroborates Hintjens' (2008) claim that the Rwandan state seemed to be omnipresent in the lives of Rwandan citizens. In the same vein, Lovegren (2015) asserts that the fear of the state was so pervasive in Rwanda that people whispered when talking about the state even in their homes because the 'walls have ears'. My participants had an ingrained fear of the state which led them to normalize looking out for the state everywhere they went.

Beer: a currency for sexual exchange

Being suspicious of people seemed to offer a way to traverse the invisible social boundaries that the exile context imposed on my participants. While most of my participants chose to be as careful as they could in public spaces, Soda transgressed group rules and boundaries for the sake of women. According to Netting (1964:382), the "convivial atmosphere of beer drinking is conducive for sexual approaches. Humorously bawdy talk and courting language based on innuendo also features in such environments." For these ex-soldiers, an ideal drinking spot was one that was safe, had smart, beautiful women and had a good sound system. I observed that my participants seemed to have a soft spot for good looking women, though they usually held back when it came to entertaining them because of financial and security reasons. On several occasions, I witnessed my participants making overtures to female patrons and female waitresses but they always reined each other in when they felt that a colleague was going beyond 'secure' flirting. Soda 'transgressed' what seemed to me to be a mutually understood 'rule' when we were at a club in Cape Town late one Saturday night in August 2019. Soda, who seemed tipsy, invited a woman to join us for drinks. The pair ended up almost undressed in public. Sirikare slapped Soda hard in the face in order to stop them. This is how it happened:

> Sirikare, Murakoze, Brown, Soda and I had been drinking and chatting in our group but Soda's attention was divided between the group conversations and a middle aged woman who was seated three tables away from us. Brown tried to get Soda's attention

161

to the football discussion but failed. A few minutes later, Soda walked to where the woman was sitting with her two acquaintances. When he returned to the table Soda said, "We have a new friend, tell them your name." As he said this, he was signalling her to sit down. The woman said her name was Beyonce and she took a seat. Even though my participants did not approve of Soda's behaviour of picking on random women to join us while drinking, they seemed to tolerate him because each time he extended invitations to women, he would end up buying alcohol for everyone. The ex-soldiers would stop buying beer because they did not believe in spending their hard earned money on 'wayward gold diggers'. My other participants and I did not really pay attention to what Soda and 'his woman' were doing as we were engrossed in the dissing that was going on between Gisenyi and Sirikare. This removed attention from Soda and Beyonce, despite the fact that Soda constantly bought beer for all of us. After having received the third round of beers, Murakoze's stern look at Soda drew the group's attention: we saw that Beyonce, who was wearing a tiny black skirt and a blue crop top which only covered her breasts, was sliding from the table where she was then sat and landed on Soda's lap. The two immediately started to cuddle. Beyonce unbuttoned Soda's shirt and Sirikare angrily got out of his seat and slapped Soda hard in the face (Field notes 2019).

The idea that it was not wise to buy beer for 'random' women stemmed from stereotypical views that "women always wanted to drink cheaply", that is, drinking without having bought beer for themselves (Helmfrid 2010:214). The female companions that Soda invited usually asked for relatively expensive drinks and the few that I had observed required at least six 300ml bottles of Belgravia Lemon and dry gin, Smirnoff Storm, Savana Dry, Savana Light and Brutal Fruit, beverages which are relatively expensive. Some of them would order Ciroc, Johnnie Walker and Jack Daniels which were more expensive. The deserters were not willing to spoil women with expensive beers because they bought ordinary lagers for themselves. By buying more beers for his friends, and by also paying for expensive alcohol for a woman like Beyonce, Soda seemed to assert his masculinity and (imaginary) financial muscle. Soda's actions underscore Van Wolputte and Fumanti's (2010:15) claim that beer was an icon of identity and that drinking spaces and drinking times sometimes "redefined contours of masculinity, power and self-identity." Notwithstanding, Soda's behaviour also potentially made everyone conspicuous and vulnerable. Soda and Beyonce's behaviour at the club exposed other army deserters to discovery and physical attacks by state agents. Study participants strongly

disapproved of liaisons which could put others in danger, for instance Beyonce, who could also be spying on them.

Such concerns were based in past experiences where some of their compatriots had either been attacked or sold out by women whom they met at a club and had afterwards taken home (Ncube 2017). Sirikare, for example, had almost been strangled during the night by a woman he had met at the club a couple of times and had developed a sexual relationship with. Sirikare said, after having taken the woman home on four different occasions, she tried to strangle him in his sleep. Sirikare said he managed to overpower the woman, who then disappeared into the dark. According to Sirikare, he had bought the woman beers and paid her for sex. He was convinced that her subsequent effort to strangle him indicated that she had been hired to assassinate him because they had not had any problems that might have caused the woman to act in that manner.

Sirikare's aforementioned experience was commonly used as a warning to army deserter who went revelling. According to Ncube (2017), most attacks on army deserters by Rwandese state agents happened after the former had consumed alcohol. Ncube notes that women often had unsuspectingly released information to informers and state agents, leading to the capture or attack of Rwandan army deserters. In this study, I was consistently told that Rwandan state agents recruited beautiful local and migrant women to trap the army deserters. While male informers were reportedly paid in cash, women were allegedly given gifts such as cell phones, expensive weaves and vouchers to buy clothes and make-up. Commenting on the increasing number of women in informing activities, Hunk's had this to say;

> It's a pity that some women who come from economically challenged backgrounds are lured by glittery material things like Brazillian hair, I-phones, gift vouchers to go to spas, expensive clothes, shoes and handbags, you know. It's sad, some do it deliberately, some are tricked but it is happening. I wish these young women could just start thinking clearly about what they are doing (Personal Interview, 19 August 2019, Johannesburg).

The above excerpt shows the import of 'things' (Brown 2000) in the scheme of spying among Rwandans in South Africa. Rwandan state agents allegedly take advantage of the poor backgrounds of young impressionable women and use them to get leads to their targets using material things. In Chapter 5, I showed the various payments that informers were paid by

alleged state agents in exchange for information. The payment of informers showed a gendered, sexist and stereotypical pattern of remuneration which is embedded in patriarchal thinking which regard women as undeserving of money but gifts that would enhance their beauty for continued use by these state agents in luring their targeted people.

Conclusion

Alcohol consumption is an important lens to illuminate the post military lives of Rwandan army deserters living in self-imposed exile in South Africa. This chapter has provided an ethnographically informed perspective on the energizing powers that the army deserters believe to be potent in beer and the accompanying tensions that sometimes arose from beer consumption within this group. 'Dissident' deserters use beer as a way of dealing with their past and present social and political circumstances in the context of exile. State agents and their accomplices go everywhere, including in clubs, taverns and shebeens in search for exiled army deserters. This chapter has provided a socio-therapeutic explanation of the vibrant drinking culture that is central to the post-military lives of Rwandan army deserters living in self-imposed exile. I have situated drinking in the interface of alcohol's religious or therapeutic links, military and traditional Rwandan drinking cultures and the army deserters' subjective understandings of anxiety, fear and uncertainty. I have shown the ways in which societal and individual perceptions of uncertainty and threat greatly influenced drinking among my participants. In this chapter I aimed to present an understanding of widespread drinking activities among Rwandan army deserters that would weave with the different meanings that were attached to drinking alcohol by ordinary people. My hope was that this exploration would aid the demystification of this practice by army deserters. I have shown that convivial drinking can be read as an expression of the increasing refusal by army deserters to be remotely confined to domestic spaces by the Kagame regime. This too is a sign of continued rebellion by these exiled former soldiers. Constructive drinking was said to be an important political activity in which important decisions pertaining to counter surveillance and navigation strategies were discussed while solitary drinking was influenced by either a dire lack of financial resources to meet the standards of compatriots who are better off, in Ishmael's case or by the failure of a comrade to abide by group codes of conduct as was the case of Espion. Drinking is accepted as long as it does not endanger individuals or the collective group. Physical punishments drawn from military practice are essential in ensuring safety from risky drunkenness such as in the case of Spark.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to explore the ways in which Rwandan army deserters who live in self-imposed exile in South Africa navigate state surveillance and potential violence, which is reportedly sponsored or at least sanctioned by the RPF government.

To achieve the above aim I asked the following questions:

1. What prompted Rwandan army deserters to embark on the journey to exile and how did they end up in South Africa?
2. What are the experiences of Rwandan army deserters living in self-imposed exile in South Africa?
3. How do they navigate everyday life in situations where they perceive themselves as being hunted?
4. In what ways do these army deserters reconstruct their identities in South Africa?

The overarching argument that I make in this thesis is that being a Rwandan army deserter in in South Africa results in a complex form of post military life. For deserters, being 'on the run' is the best way to navigate Rwandan state surveillance in this country. In light of the above background, my thesis makes the following conclusions:

Military studies have traditionally not given much attention to army deserters. One reason for this is that the latter are difficult to access for research purposes. Army deserters fear being caught and prosecuted. As a result   they navigate to become increasingly invisible as they immerse themselves in civilian contexts and lifestyles in order to 'pass' as civilians.

By choosing to study army deserters and particularly those living in self- exile, my thesis re-centres the deserter as an important unit of empirical and theoretical analysis in military and security studies. In the discipline of Anthropology and in Africa, such studies are few. By unpacking the experiences of Rwandan army deserters trying to live 'under the radar' in South Africa, this thesis makes a novel contribution to the dynamics and understanding of the political economy of army desertion in particular from the perspective of 'hunted' junior rank army deserters. The thesis intimates that in addition to understanding desertion as being physically absent from a soldier's designated position in the military; there are some who sanction and

even aid desertion while continuing to serve in the military. I have called such soldiers '*quasi deserters*' because they seem committed to facilitating the movement of colleagues to escape from the army. I assert that the facilitators (quasi deserters) have themselves departed from military ideals and have placed camaraderie above institutional interests (see Woodward 2008, Koehler 2015). The thesis argues for a broader and more inclusive conceptualization of army desertion which will capture its nuanced, social dynamics. Such inclusive conceptualizations could contribute to attract reflexivity and possibly reinvention in 'total' institutions such as the military.

I have shown that my study participants were convinced that the cost of staying in the military outweighed the risk of desertion. In this thesis, army desertion was also used as a lens through which the RDF can be understood, particularly in relation to politicization of the military and militarization of Rwandan politics. Rupiya (2005), Mbembe (2003) and Maringira (2017) all criticize the scale and scope of deprofessionalization of African militaries which has resulted from the historical, albeit deepening involvement of the military in national politics in the post colony. Although the RDF is deemed very professional, the narratives and experiences of my study participants, as well as recent literature, unsettle this taken-for-granted notion (Himbara 2019; 2020; DuPlessis 2019).

As I showed in chapter 3 army desertion is constructed as political dissidence and can be persecuted (Himbara 2019) beyond Rwanda's geographical borders. The deserters in my study accordingly deemed themselves to be in relative danger, even in South Africa. War Resisters International for example, reported the following in 2016:

> Some deserters and other former members of the military… claim that whilst in exile, they have been subject to constant harassment and assassination attempts whilst in exile from squads sent by the Rwandan government (ibid)

I used the army deserters' narratives and situations observed during fieldwork to scrutinize lives lived actively, yet in the shadow of trepidation, uneasiness, distrust, probable surveillance, injury and even death. According to Vigh (2010:425) the perspective of social navigation, "encompasses both the assessment of the dangers and possibilities of one's present position as well as the process of plotting and attempting to actualize routes into an uncertain and changeable future". The thesis is accordingly also about practices, agency and identity construction, the impact of a ceaseless concern about the goings-on in a government apparently

far away, yet seemingly always on the periphery of the unsettling environment and context of the lives of my study participants in exile.

The men in this study are almost always fearful and or suspicious, believe that they are being 'hunted', whilst simultaneously being exposed to a great deal of violence, are forever in motion as they deal with life as immigrants (sometimes undocumented) in South Africa. They engage and move along in complex, potentially dangerous, changeable social environments (Vigh 2010). In relation to the latter, my study provides novel nuanced thick descriptions of the stratagems which are pregnant with tactical wisdom in evading state agents. Accordingly, the thesis adapted the theory of social navigation to the study of army desertion in Anthropology and Military studies. As discussed above, I particularly drew on the notion of social navigation, as developed by Vigh (2010) as a lens to analyse my empirical study. According to Vigh, social environments are not hardened surfaces. Instead, they are unsettled contexts which are in a constant state of flux. Those living in such contexts need to be perceptive and tactful in order to survive there. The setting in which the deserters in my study find themselves, is as uncertain as Vigh suggests. This is not, however, as a result of the high crime rate in South Africa (South African Police Services 2021; Gibson and Maringira 2020). Instead, apparent surveillance, physical attacks by alleged state agents and insecure jobs all produce forces that set the army deserters in motion. For Vigh (2010:240);

> social navigation highlights motion within motion; it is the act of moving in an environment that is wavering and unsettled, and when used to illuminate social life it directs our attention to the fact that we move in social environments of actors and actants, individuals and institutions, that engage and move us as we move along.

The thesis has shown the various tactics embraced by army deserters to ensure that they remain alive in their host society; for example hiding in homelessness, nesting their identities in real or perceived safer identities and sitting together to discuss counter surveillance or resistance strategies in extreme cases. The deserters are hypervigilant and continuously on the look-out for hidden danger, scan and probe their environments. Doing so allows the ex-soldiers to navigate state surveillance and its associated dangers and this has become a way of life. I assert that the practices of army deserters in my study are shaped by, situated and expressed at the intersection of their history biography and present experiences.

In the course of the thesis I make six major arguments:

Firstly, deserting from the RDF leads military escapees on long and painful journeys in search for peaceful and more fulfilling lives. The thesis has shown that when Rwandan soldiers leave the RDF in acrimony, that is, through desertion, they cannot become civilians – even within another country - but remain tainted as defectors and possible political dissidents. This thesis contributes to the military desertion discourse by asserting that while deserting from the military, is associated with a precarious military identity (army deserter), the political entanglement between the President Paul Kagame-led RPF government and the RDF further spoils the precarious military identity for Rwandan army escapees who now live in exile. The army deserter identity, which is at once fixed in the purview of the state, yet publically negated by the deserters themselves, nonetheless drawn on in terms of group formation and cohesion, as well as in terms of military habitus as they are compelled to live their post military lives looking over their shoulders for fear of being discovered. This thesis has shown the ways in which the identity of 'army deserter' influences the Rwandan ex-soldiers' daily practices as they juggled between livelihood strategies and evading state surveillance in South Africa.

Secondly, focusing on 'hunted' and mobile army deserters requires a break from traditional anthropological method because the study participants do not pin their lives in a fixed locale because they are afraid of being caught by Rwandan state agents. In doing this study, I followed Nordstrom's (1994) idea of using a *theme,* in this case 'being hunted', to direct me to the places and spaces that my participants either frequented or lived in when they were on the run. This was a departure from traditional ways of doing ethnography where the researcher went and stayed in a particular locale for long periods during fieldwork. The theme therefore replaced locale, as a research site (Nordstrom 1994). The thesis demonstrated the possibility of having a 'moving ethnography'. The notion of 'moving ethnography' can also be understood in terms of the ways in which the study participants' lived experiences in exile appealed to morality and ethics. Their post military circumstances evoked the emotional aspects of doing ethnography especially after having witnessed, at close range, the violence, vulnerability and squalid conditions that the army deserters experienced as they navigated state surveillance and state sponsored terror in the host society.

Thirdly, I re-centered rumours as an important lens to understand the social and political phenomena and they helped people to make sense of troubling situations. Rumours about the

existence of state agents as well as rumours about the violence that was meted to army deserters by alleged state agents in South Africa were significant in shaping the behaviour of army deserters in an exile context (Greenhill and Oppenheim 2017). The thesis has shown the ways in which rumours contribute towards (re)constructing political subjectivities, as well as demonstrating the significance of unconfirmed narratives in strengthening resistance among the former soldiers. Lastly rumours play an important role in informing the navigation strategies that these exiled former soldiers used in South Africa. Rumours enabled the study to get an understanding of the meanings that the former soldiers attached to being hunted, being on the run as well as allowing us to understand the relationship between the army deserters and the Rwandan state, its agents and their compatriots, from the army deserters' perspective. The study did not endeavour to verify the rumours but sought to understand how rumours shaped interactions and practices among the deserters.

Fourth, evidence in the thesis suggests that the Rwandan state uses surveillance assemblages to infiltrate the Rwandan community of refugees in South Africa and beyond. Such assemblages include things (e.g. cell phones, spyware, cybertracking), institutions (the Rwandan government, the RDF) people (agents, informants), representations (e.g. deserters as dissidents) knowledge (e.g. about the movements and whereabouts of deserters), practices (surveillance, 'snitching') etcetera as part of a 'prying economy'. In relation to the latter is the commodification of real or perceived enemies of the state who include army deserters where for instance state agents or their accomplices pay informants in cash or kind. Such surveillance cannot be easily identified, is not stable, seemingly cross many boundaries, is continuously emerging and cannot be easily pinned down to a particular geography, country, government, individual or institution (Haggerty and Ericson 2000).

Furthermore, the thesis concludes that post-colonial states such as Rwanda try to *retain political power* by maiming, terrorising, injuring and killing their real or perceived 'enemies' even when the latter seek refuge beyond their home country' geographical borders. This corroborates and concretises n Mbembe's (2001) notion of 'necropolitics'. Those 'enemies' who are grievously injured but survive, spread unease, fear and even terror to those who interact with their harmed and or disfigured bodies. Such maimed bodies thus arguably became surveillance mechanisms which do an ideological work for the state.

Fifth, the thesis has demonstrated that navigating state surveillance and its associated violence in exile produced multiple post military identities in Rwanda army deserters. In addition to bearing a precarious identity (army deserter) the ex-soldiers were labelled as dissenters, political opponents and threats to the Rwandan state. As such the army deserters oscillated between their initial (and in the eyes of the state continuous and fixed) military identities, homelessness, mental illness as well as embedding themselves in Somaliness, Ethionpianess and Rasfatariness. This case of Rwandan army deserters' fluid deserter identities corroborates with contemporary identity theorizing which contends that identity binaries can no longer be relied on since there are diverse identities between the binaries.

Finally, even though Rwandan army deserters experience persecution in South Africa, they took some time to reflect on their being in exile as well as to relax and further their social cohesion. Beer drinking is an integral part of these reflection processes as it helps them to understand as well as cope with violence, console and support one another and to have fun despite their situation. Beer drinking is also regarded as an important navigation strategy which keeps army deserters away from churches which they argue have become so much infiltrated by state agents. These findings contribute to emic understandings of the importance of beer amongst army deserters who are hunted and live with the expectation of being caught and killed in exile by a seemingly deviant state.

Findings in my thesis reveal that at the point of being challenged (through army desertion) the political insecurities of authoritarian regimes (mediated by military institutions and state agents) can spill-over to other countries in an attempt to control real or perceived threats to national security. My thesis was preoccupied with male army deserters yet there could also be female deserters in the same predicament. Further studies may be necessary to answer the following questions with regards to female deserters; would the female military escapees be as 'hunted' as their male counterparts? In what ways would the study of female deserters possibly result in different conclusions? As has been demonstrated throughout the thesis, the deserters who participated in my study were living in a context which is cloaked by violent sub-cultures, South Africa. Such a context provided a camouflage for state agents or their informers to perpetrators who meted violence to army deserters. A comparative study of Rwandan state surveillance in countries which are not as violent as South Africa that would possibly transcend the confines of a dissertation.

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171

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09 July 2019

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Ethics Reference Number: HS19/5/17

Project Title: Navigating Exile: Rwandan army deserters in South Africa

Approval Period: 09 July 2019 – 09 July 2020

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

Please remember to submit a progress report in good time for annual renewal.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.

Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape

HSSREC REGISTRATION NUMBER - 130416-049

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