

## SPACES AND CHARACTER'S BEHAVIOUR IN *TREES OF PEACE* FILM: A LITERARY SPATIAL ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyse the relationship between the space and the women characters behaviour, and how the characters interpret the spaces in *Trees of Peace* film. The spatial triad by Henri Lefebvre was employed to answer the research questions while using qualitative method to analyse the data that are collected from the film's scenes and dialogues. The research found that a character's behaviour in a small space can vary, and can be very distinct from one character and another. How the characters interpret the spaces can also varies, depending on the situations and experiences that each character had gone through, even when they are spending time in the same place. The dynamic of the character also caused the difference in interpreting the space. As a result, the relationship between the characters and the space are intertwined with how they interpret the space. The better relationship a character has with the space, the more positive their interpretation of the space will be.

**Keywords:** Space; Spatial Triad; *Trees of Peace* Film; Women.

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## INTRODUCTION

Space is particularly difficult to capture in its literal sense (Ryan, 2012). Space is understood as a heterogeneous concept that is continually negotiated and redefined rather than being stable and unambiguous (Mohamed, 2022). According to Heidegger (2001) as cited in Berio (2023), the discussion on place and space is that they are not mutually exclusive concepts, meaning that 'place' refers to the physical reality where human beings interact, while 'space' refers to the atmosphere that exists within the boundaries of a particular place. He contends that place is the physical setting, while space is an abstract concept, it is created and can be taken into different forms; social, sociological, religious, moral, and economic (Berio, 2023). Space and place must have some tied relationship with humans and its capacity in order to produce and consume meaning. Furthermore, Kirby (1996) stated that the concept of an atmosphere within the limits of a physical place is a two-



way process. The subject and space define each other and at the same time the subject is the effect of space. These statements emphasize the interconnection of space, place, and human beings. Within a physical space, an atmosphere establishes that shapes its inhabitants, while the occupants also play a role in shaping that unique environment.

According to Buchholz & Jahn (2005), space in narrative is the physically existing environment in which characters live and move, usually known as settings. Space has always been applied to literary studies from a multi-perspective within ranging fields, and spatial theory started in sociology and has recently made its way into the literary world as a tool in the interpretation of fiction ((Yuncu et al., 2022; Mohamed, 2022). Novels and films often summon the feeling from the reader/audience of what it is like to be present in the space of the narrative (T. Cresswell, 2004). Space in literary texts, according to Lefebvre (1991), is everywhere and in every disguise; described, projected, dreamt of, and speculated about. Narratives define a story that takes place at a specific time and place, as well as the representation of real or fictional events in a time sequence; therefore, while time is commonly referred to as the defining component of narrative, according to literary interpretation, space incorporates an operative function (Yuncu et al., 2021).

Furthermore, space is considered as a complex construct, hence its huge appeal towards philosophers, researchers, and many more people to use it as a concept of study, one of them being the French Marxist critic, Henri Lefebvre as the one who identified space to be critical in the comprehension of the world. He claims that humans create the space in which they live, shape it according to their interests and reproduce it continuously through their intentions (Lefebvre, 1991). In *The Production of Space* by Henri Lefebvre (1991), he composed some theoretical frameworks, one of them being the spatial triad framework. The triad framework consists of *spatial practice* (perceived space); *representation of space* (conceived space); and *representational space* (lived space), and this work is Lefebvre's best known and most widely read work (Ghulyan, 2019; Fuchs, 2018; Mtolo, 2021). Moreover, space can be a narrative acting independently within the narrative itself (Yuncu et al., 2021). Space in narrative can be represented in many different ways: houses; a whole city; and in some cases, a hiding place during critical time.

While there a variety of methods to portray space in narrative, the concept of hiding space gained significant importance during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, when many people ran to avoid the atrocities. The British authorities constantly portrayed the said events in Rwanda as a brutal civil conflict brought on by long-standing animosities between Hutus and Tutsis in the region (Melvern, 2004). This conflict was one of the worst humanitarian catastrophes that resulted in the death of 800,000 people in just 100 days (Yakti, 2022; Aji, 2024) whose discussions even reached the aesthetic stage (Britt, 2025). The overall motive of the horrible slaughtering of the Tutsis was that the Hutus were determined to eliminate as many Tutsis population as it can be. Therefore, the Hutus' legacies are safe within the Hutus descendants. There was approximately 800,000 people were slaughtered in a genocide that

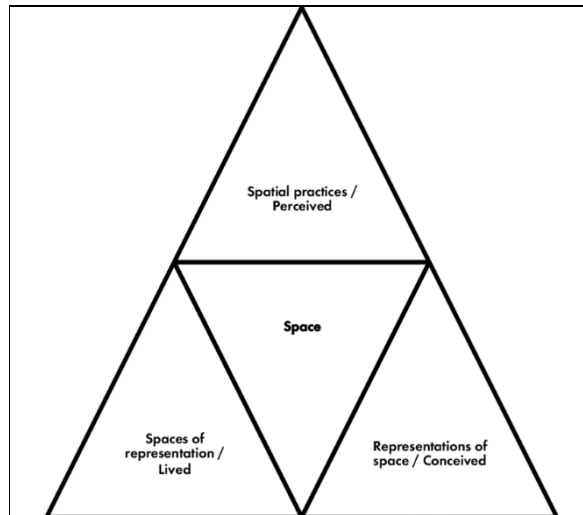
shocked the world. According to *Research Africa Bulletin* (2019), the genocidal Hutu forces, members of the old army and militia forces known as the Interahamwe, began their killing campaign on April 7th, 1994, the day after President Juvenal Habyarimana, a Hutu, was assassinated. Some were shot, but the most majority were beaten or hacked to death with machetes. (“Rwanda – Genocide Remembrance,” 2019)

*Trees of Peace* is a film inspired by the Rwandan genocide, narrating the story of four women from different backgrounds who were forced to hide in a tight storage space under the kitchen floor for eighty-one days. The four women consist of one pregnant moderate Hutu Annick, one Tutsi nun, Jeanette, one Tutsi teenager, Mutesi, and one American volunteer, Peyton. Despite their differences, they all experienced conflict and trauma, with some accepting their fate and others being rude. The events within the storage space impacted their character development, but as they opened up, they grew sympathy for each other's trauma and suffering.

However, this research aims to analyse the space in *Trees of Peace* film through the theory of Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad framework. Moreover, this research will be focusing on the interpretation of spaces in the film and depicting the tied connection between the interpretation of spaces with the character development and the interactions among character in *Trees of Peace*. By thoroughly delving up the film's narrative and cinematography in the film, this research seeks to unravel a deeper social and emotional meaning within its spatial representation. The researcher argues that space can influence the way the characters in *Trees of Peace* interact among each other. Furthermore, through analysing the film's narrative, this research intends to decipher the intricate connection between space, society, and individual experience within the narrative.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Space, according to Lefebvre, is not a neutral container, but rather it is a social construct (Leary-Owhin, 2015), and space has always been applied to literary studies from a multi-perspective within ranging fields (Yuncu et al., 2021). The diverse meanings of space are provided, and the reader/audience is given the opportunity to reflect on these spaces expressed as distinct visual impressions. Henri Lefebvre's famous spatial framework sees space as a social construct that consists of three elements; spatial practice or perceived space, representation of space or conceived space, and representational space or lived space. According to Lefebvre, space is organic, living and therefore it is shifting in its essence (Yuncu et al., 2021). Moreover, spatial is implicitly always correlating with physical, mental, and social constructs. Edward Soja (1996) claimed that Lefebvre has been more influential than any other scholar in opening up and exploring the limitless dimensions of our social spatiality (Yuncu et al., 2021). Lefebvre argues that a theory of space should be a unitary theory that recognizes a unity between the physical, mental, and social fields (Lefebvre, 1991; Fuchs, 2018).



**Picture 1.** Lefebvre's Conceptual Triad of Space

Each fragment of the triad symbolizes a distinct aspect of the social construction of space. The ties between these elements give information about the processes by which people produce space and are influenced by space in everyday life (Carp, 2008). The first element of Lefebvre's spatial triad is spatial practice, or also known as perceived space. According to Lefebvre (1991), spatial practice, which includes production and reproduction as well as particular locations and spatial sets that are unique to each social formation. Spatial practice is perceived space in the sense that it becomes visible and is created by everyday practices (Mohamed, 2022; Biagi, 2023). Carp (2008) argues that spatial practice/perceived space refers to movement sequences, habits, and patterns in and through physical spaces, and so includes both every day and special routines. This space is defined as physical form, real space that is generated and used (Elden, 2004). Therefore, Merrifield (2006), sees spatial practices as 'structure lived reality'. However, spatial practice is quite straightforward and not really difficult to conceptualize and mapped. Carp (2008) stated that the space that someone perceive is physical: it is tangible, textured, visible, audible, and olfactory. It requires us to make accommodations for its materiality (including other human bodies) by moving around, beneath, above, through, and/or within it. Generally, some certain spaces may be perceived differently by different people.

The second element is representation of space, or also known as conceived space. Representations of space, which are tied to the relations of production and to the 'order' which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to 'frontal' relations (Lefebvre, 1991). Lefebvre theorized that representation of space is the dominant space in society, built from codes, symbols, and abstract representations (Lefebvre, 1991; Yuncu et al., 2021). It is conceived by scientists, planners, and urbanists. Thus, this space is imagined; it is a mental construct linked to any dominating social order and retrieved through a 'system of verbal signs' (Mohamed, 2022; Mandal, 2026). Representations of space refer to mental activity about 'physical space' in a theoretical distinction from the physical field and from the

standpoint of human experience, conceived space refers to the activities of thinking, imagining, reflecting an idea, analyzing, planning, and etc (Carp, 2008). Moreover, conceived space is how oneself represent space through signs and codes. Furthermore, representation of space or conceived space is mental space, it is practically what is inside one's mind; thinking, reflecting, imagining, dreaming, systemizing, and etcetera (Strus et al. 2023).

The last one from the triad is representational space, or also known as lived space, and usually referred to as space of representation as well. Representational spaces that embody complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not, and are tied to the clandestine or underground side of social life (Lefebvre, 1991). Lived or representational space is the space that is directly experienced or lived through its associated images and symbols. It is the space of the everyday that the inhabitants try to follow and adapt to. Because lived space is defined by people's active participation, and it is cooperative (Yuncu et al., 2021; van Lanen, S., & Meij, E. 2026). The lived space of the everydayness of the inhabitants is a concrete space, which is also known as mental space, thus it is subjective. Lefebvre (1991) also stated that representational space has an origin, and it is childhood with all its hardships and accomplishments.

Representational space or lived space refers to the substantial experience of living in a space, it combines both physical (perceived) and mental space (lived). It evokes an unusually deep sense of meaning and the awareness of being in the moment from being alive (Carp, 2008). Representational space is lived directly through its associated symbols in a way that overlays the physical space associated with it (Lefebvre, 1991), and it is the lived space that is non-verbal, real, and experienced (Sudaryono, 2008). Furthermore, representational space or lived space is one's experience within a space; living, loving, fearing, witnessing, creating, remembering, joining in, finding, and many more.

In order to support the analysis, the characters in this film are also discussed. Character resembles people, as literature is written by, for, about people and presumably an imaginary person who inhabits a story (Bal, 2009; Kennedy & Gioia, 1995). Some characters might always have a reason behind their personality, behaviour, or actions. The reason behind it might not be seen at first, but often when the story goes by, sooner or later the reader/audience will discover it. Though some characters might not behave consistently, as the writer usually had the choice to change their behaviour and personality.

Generally, character in film are divided into two categories; static or flat and dynamic or round. A flat character only has a one-dimensional feature or a simple personality (Dhini, 2023). Furthermore, flat characters are two-dimensional, predictable personalities who lack the complexities and distinctive characteristics associated with psychological depth. Flat characters tend to be figurative characters types (Kennedy & Gioia, 1995). Although flat and round character have their differences, round character are not inherently superior to flat characters (Petrie & Boggs, 2018). It all depends on the function of each character present within a story. Meanwhile, static and dynamic or developing characters often beneficial to determine whether the

main characters in a film are static of dynamic. Developing characters are profoundly influenced by the action of the plot, whether internal, external, or both, they also experience a significant changes in personality, attitude, or outlook on life as a result of the action of the story (Petrie & Boggs, 2018; Waglawala & Singh, 2022).

## **METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive analysis technique. The qualitative method is an approach to explore the individual or group meaning about problems regarding social and humanity matters and the aims of qualitative research are tied to understanding some aspect of social life, as are the procedures, which in general is most likely to produce words as data for analysis rather than numbers (Cresswell, 2009; Patton & Cochran, 2018). The primary source is *Trees of Peace* film, which is directed by Alanna Brown, while the secondary data that came from several sources such as books, journals, and articles that are related to this research in order to gather more information regarding the issue discussed in this research.

In order to gather the data, researchers watch the film to obtain a thorough comprehension of the film's narrative. The researchers identify four dialogues and eight scenes that provide evidence that related to the issues in this research. Furthermore, the researchers analysed the data by using spatial triad as the main theory and cinematography approach in order to support the analysis. Lastly, the researcher will provide a conclusion based spatial on the analysis to answer the research questions.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

This section will elaborate the depiction of relation between spaces and characters, and how the characters interpret the spaces in *Trees of Peace*. In order to discuss the issues, this research applies Henri Lefebvre theory of space and character theory in film. Moreover, by employing the theories, this research tries to unveil the dynamics of developing character and its relation to interpret the spaces.

### **The relationship between the spaces and the characters**

As previously explained, this film depicts four women who are trapped in a narrow bunker during the civil war in Rwanda; Anick, Jeanette, Mutesi, and Peyton. The four women represent different parties, who are directly or indirectly involved in the war. Annick, Jeanette, and Mutesi are Rwandan, while Peyton is American. They are all trapped in the bunker for eighty-one days until they rescue by the army.

Annick, as the homeowner of the bunker that is used as a hiding place during a genocide in Rwanda. Her character is quite complex and portrays a variety of traits and emotions that made her have a deep characteristic. She is compassionate and empathetic by risking her life to protect the women and hide them under her roof to make sure they are safe, even though as a

moderate Hutu, she might also face the same danger. She experiences a change in perspective, and delves into the complexity of the conflict, extending beyond the initial motives behind Hutu actions. She also gradually develops strong bonds with the other women, giving each other unconditional support.

Her relationship with the hiding place is great, not only because it is located in her house and it was clearly her idea, she also thought that it is safe enough for her to stay alive and protect her baby. She feels that the hiding space is safe enough for her being and her state of mind. However, the extension of the hiding space seems to ruin her peace as she is constantly witnessing some atrocities through the ventilation hole, and overhearing an intimidation from her house. Despite being trapped in a very small space, while sharing the place with three other women, during a very critical time. However, she never once being rude towards the other women. Her experience shaped her into becoming a wise woman, who will accept anything that life is giving her. She knows well enough that life can be unpredictable.

Furthermore, Mutesi is a character that has quite the amount of depth and complexity in her character that makes her eligible to be considered as a round character. At first, she might seem as a stiff individual that is so far from being an empathetic person. She underwent a very significant shift in her character, more specifically in her behaviour. Because of those shifts, she can also be considered as a dynamic character. Those shifts are massively affecting her growth in the film.

The relationship between Mutesi and the space is shifting periodically. Caused by quite a few reasons that affects her character development as well. Mutesi is a Tutsi, meaning that she and her people are the main target of the genocide that is played by the Hutu. With Annick being a Hutu herself, and Mutesi is hiding inside a Hutu's house, she never felt safe enough to hide there. Even when she started to relax a little, and started to felt comfortable with the other women, she became terrified of the situation once again. Therefore, her relationship with the space kind of went back and forth, because she kept witnessing and overhearing traumatizing incidents. Though, after seeing how resilient the other women are during their difficult time, seeing their suffering, Mutesi finally starting to learn how to trust and became more compassionate.

Then, Peyton is also a character that is eligible enough to be considered a round character, considering the amount of depth within her character in the film. She is a foreigner among them, coming from America to Rwanda to volunteer for teaching. While the intention in coming to Rwanda seems pure, it turns out Peyton did have a very strong reason behind it, and the reason is what makes her character deep. She had done something that she fully regretted, that has been crippling her with a massive guilt and trauma. She, at first, was hesitant to tell her traumatic experience, however she finally opened up and gave the other women, as well as the audience, the clarity behind her willingness to come and volunteer in Rwanda.

Peyton undergo a growth that is quite significant for the other women and their shared experiences during the hideout. Hence why she is considered as a dynamic character. Peyton started out being the outsider among the other women because she was the only white person there. Their shared experience fosters a personal growth for her, and increases her sense of belonging as

well. He was being dragged in a long-time conflict between the Hutus and the Tutsis and is forced to hide for her safety is probably very unfortunate. Peyton relationship with the space is perhaps rather coincidentally in the right time. She needs her grounded time to have some self-realization, and having the other three women helped her so much.

Moreover, the character of Jeanette in the film has a subtle yet deep characteristic. She started out as a character that seems one-dimensional because of her firm beliefs in her faith and her rigid moral code. However, as time goes by, her character starts to show more depth and complexity that makes her also a round character just like the other women. After being in the hideout and witnessing all the atrocities and horrors challenge her prevailing perspective, it exposes her inner conflict to stay firmly in her beliefs.

Jeanette's relationship with Annick, the Hutu and the houseowner is very respectful. She respects Annick and her willingness to welcomed her along for hiding to stay alive, and is very grateful for it. Her gratitude towards Annick made her irritated by how ungrateful Mutesi is. The harmony between Jeanette and the hiding space was hindered when she intrusively suffocated Mutesi after she strangled Annick. During their hideout in the bunker, she witnessed her church member that she claims to be a good boy, slaughtering people in the street like they are wild animals. Witnessing that made her realize that there is so much more perspective from people that she never was and never will fully understand.

### **Characters and interpretation of the space**

Since all four characters were hiding in the same space for some time, the perceived space or spatial practice from the characters in the film is more or less the same. Spatial practice entails how a particular space is used and constructed during particular periods of spatial activity, and it is closely related to everyday circumstances, whether urban or routine, and includes designated areas for work, private life, and pleasure (Sarkar, 2023; Lefebvre, 1991). However, perceived space is the physical space that surrounds the characters, they can see, hear, smell, and touch the space, then, it is also the space where the characters do their routine.

Since the storage room is the main place that the characters built their routines, it is considered as the perceived space, alongside with the rest of the house and the outside field.



**Picture 2**



**Picture 3**

(Brown, 2022, 00:00:37 - 00.01.00)

**Annick** : *"We are in my home beneath the floor from my kitchen.*

*We built it ourselves, good for storing food.”*

**Annick :** *“We will be safest here, a day or so, until things get better. But we must be quiet.”*

(Brown, 2022, 00:05:43 - 00:05:49)

In the picture 2 and 3 above, Annick as the homeowner, hastily takes out all of the stuff from the storage space under the kitchen so that she can function it into a hiding place from the aggression that is starting to happen. As Annick empties out her storage, the sounds happening in the background are the sounds of gunshots, people screaming for their lives, people running around trying to not get chased and killed, chaos, and all. In cinematographic aspect, the scene from picture 2 and 3 considered as a full shot (Brown, 2016), and it is indicated by the character’s full body is shown, and the audience can see the character from head to toe.

Francois and Annick are moderate Hutu. Moderate Hutu were the people who supported power sharing with the Tutsi, and opposed the violence against the Tutsi population (Corey & Joireman, 2004). Rwandan Radio station (RTLM), disseminated the message ‘kill or be killed’, refers to the notion of self-defense against Tutsi takeover, while also operated as a threat to Hutu citizens who refused to participate in the killing (Des Forges, 1999; Kimani, 2007 as cited in Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014). Therefore, they refused to join the killing. While Annick is hiding in her house, Francois on the other hand was forced to join because he is a man. According to Britannica Encyclopedia (2024) even the Prime Minister, Agathe Uwilingiyimana, a moderate Hutu was killed the very first day of the organized killing. However, he actually was just pretending to participate in the killing while he actually was saving some people and helped them hide.

Annick’s house, excluding the basement which she cleared out for a hiding place, quickly becomes somewhat a transitional space, dividing the safe space which is the basement and the disastrous space which is the outside. Within the film, the outside seems to be the place where the intimidation and the brutality is happening. Whilst the basement is where the kindness and warm interactions can be found.



**Picture 4** (Brown, 2022, 00:25:44 - 00:25:48) **Picture 5** (Brown, 2022, 00:14:49 - 00:14:52)

Based on picture 4 and 5, the size of the storage space is approximately 1.2 x 1.2 meters. It is most certainly very small to be filled with four grown-ups. The space is most definitely far from comfortable for all of them, and there is probably not enough space for four of them to sleep freely. Hence why they

take turns in sleeping, not only for safety reasons, it also gives the one that sleeps more space to be comfortable.

Moreover, cinematographically, picture 4 and 5 is a full shot. The audience is able to see the characters' full body. It is also shown the overall of the room and how all four of the characters fit in the room. This full shot from the above angle is intended for the audience to have the visualization of how are they positioned inside the room and giving the audience a picture of how tight their hiding space is. Furthermore, as seen from picture 5, the ventilation hole provides them with a ray of sunshine, it also makes water go straight in during a rain, lucky enough for them to collect water for hydration when they ran out of water supply. Through the ventilation, all four of them are able to hear the catastrophe that is happening outside. They can also quietly see everything from the ventilation hole without being noticed by anyone from the outside. However, the ventilation also brings nightmares for them, because through it, they ended up witnessing the vile and brutality being done by the extremist Hutu towards Tutsi, including to women and children.

Whilst there is a huge contrast between the situation between the inside of the storage space and the outside world. There is the rest of Annick house which acts like some sort of mediator between those two. Throughout the film, there are a few intimidations happening but not as bad as those happening outside, and there are also warm interactions especially between Annick and Francois when he comes periodically.



**Picture 6** (Brown, 2022, 00:35:18 - 00:36:28)

- Francois** : *"Ma puce."*  
**Annick** : *"I was afraid. I was afraid you were... You were so long."*  
**Francois** : *"I am sorry, ma puce. You must know that I will never, never leave you. No, no, no. Stay... stay there. Stay hidden. How is he?"*  
**Annick** : *"He kicks hard, He is strong."*  
**Francois** : *"Like his father, eh?"*  
**Annick** : *"Mmm. What kept you?"*  
**Francois** : *"It has been a bit of chaos. But I remembered you had Peyton's food and some water already. I tried to come back to bring some more, but it has not been possible."*

(Brown, 2022, 00:35:18 - 00:36:28)

All characters perceived the space pretty much the same, they found that the bunker is a safe space that keeps them away from being killed by the extremist Hutu. Although their situations are far from ideal, they are willing to make it work by finding a way for a bathroom, sleeping alternately for safety and comfort purposes, and many other efforts to make the best out of the situation. Even when some of them kept worsened the situation. They all also consider the outside of the ventilation an unsafe space.

Much different than spatial practice or perceived space which is in a physical form and lived through by all characters, representation of space or conceived space is in a mental form. According to Carp (2008), representations of space refer to mental activity about 'physical space' in a theoretical distinction from the physical field. It means that the conceived space from each character is pretty much different. Representation of space in this film portrayed by a glimpse of a scene of a dream, a mumble, and or an action from someone during their sleep.



**Picture 7**

(Brown, 2022, 00:04:20 - 00:05:04)

**Mutesi** : *"There were hutu men, marching across our farm with machetes. They were covered in blood, and they were saying 'tall trees, cut the tall trees'."*

**Annick** : *"It's okay, a dream."*

(Brown, 2022, 00:04:20 - 00:05:04)

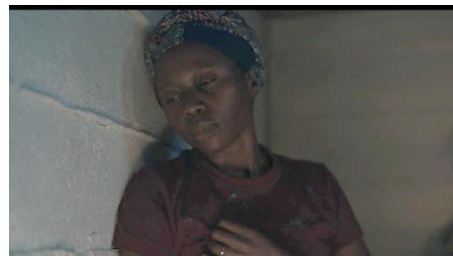
Captured in the picture 7 and dialogue above, when Mutesi was seen sleeping then her body started to tremble with fear and seem startled, presumably having a nightmare in her sleep. She then woke up screaming frantically. Mutesi was having a nightmare about how the Hutu troops invaded her property and targeted all Tutsi which they refer to as 'tall trees' that are alive. The Tutsi in this film often referred to as tall trees, but most times the Hutu referred to them as cockroaches. This scene 9 uses medium close up shot that shown her chest up to the top of Mutesi's head, and it indicates indicating that the shot is solely intended to show the terror that Mutesi experience is her dream. Showing her expression from sleeping soundly until it shifts into a full terror.

As a Tutsi, getting killed or seeing people get killed is probably Mutesi's biggest fear at the moment. It is completely understandable that it is her biggest fear, anyone would have been scared also if a massive group of people is targeting to kill them and their whole family and friends. At that point, already countless numbers of Tutsi were killed, though that seems to be not

enough for the Hutu as they kept searching for every Tutsi to ever exist for them to slaughter them until there are no more Tutsi left. As presented by McDoom (2020), an estimate of 491.000 and 522.000 Tutsi were killed in the period of April 6th to July 19th 1994 in Rwanda. She was so scared that it haunted her in her sleep. Even though she is hiding, the fear that she has must have been consuming her being.



**Picture 8**



**Picture 9**

(Brown, 2022, 00:16:55 - 00:17:10)

The scene above is showing Annick sleeping after she dreamt of her and her husband decorating the nursing room together, she seems calm, it even seems like she is subtly smirking. Her mind must have been like as long as she has her baby and the baby is safe. Annick's whole well-being is mostly about her child, her child is her happy place, it is her source of power and encouragement. Even dreaming about her life before the catastrophe kind of gave her a sense of relaxation. Being in a hideout in a catastrophic event is extremely far from being an optimal situation for her to carry a baby. However, being locked out in hiding for more than two months, turns Annick into a pessimist. Annick, who is originally a strong, courageous woman, becomes more and more vulnerable each day. Furthermore, the scene on picture 8 shown that it is a little bit blurred. In cinematography it is called soft focus, it can convey a certain subjective state (Petrie & Boggs, 2018). Subjective state can include dreams that a person has, because it is neither right or wrong. The shot is focus in the middle, and it getting more blur towards the edge of the frame. The tone is also blue, usually indicating calm and comfort.

Moreover, representational space or lived space, comes from the many events that the character had experienced in the past. Representational space originated from one's childhood with all its hardships and accomplishments and this space is used and experienced intellectually, physically, ideologically, and emotionally among others (Lefebvre, 1991; Makinde & Lanrewaju, 2024). In this film, Annick's growth from her suffering does not make her relentless, it makes her wiser and stronger instead. Unlike Mutesi who became ruthless because of her grudge towards her own experience. Mutesi kept picking them apart one by one, because she kept fuelling every minor conflict and making it bigger.

Mutesi would never listen to what Annick said, other than a massive grudge that she holds, it is also probably because of the different ethnicity background. Annick is a Hutu while Mutesi is a Tutsi, during that situation, Mutesi does not want to admit that the Hutu is better than the Tutsi by listening to what Annick had to say. During the earlier day, Mutesi also had a huge hatred towards Annick because she is a Hutu, and Mutesi still considers Annick as a

bad person because she is a Hutu, because of what her people are doing to her people. Even though Annick had explained it several times that she is a moderate Hutu, and she might face the same danger as hers.

**Jeanette** : *“We must have faith and pray.”*

**Mutesi** : *“Pray to who? Who is listening? People are being slaughtered like sows in the street and for what?”*

**Jeanette** : *“God always listens to us all, he may not always give the answer..”*

**Mutesi** : *“Like sows in the street! Your make believe is over.”*

**Jeanette** : *“People who kill will have to answer for their transgression on the day of judgment.”*

**Mutesi** : *“This is their judgment. Right now, what they did, no woman should ever have to suffer that.”*

(Brown, 2022, 00:22:55 - 00:24:22)

Mutesi’s behaviour becomes unacceptable yet it is quite understandable. She witnessed people invade her property and attacked her family. She, and the others witnessed a raping and killing of a pregnant woman with their own eyes, that significantly traumatized them. Watching that woman got raped triggered something in her. She felt enraged, angry, hurtful, but she cannot do anything, and it makes her even enraged. She stated that no woman should ever have to go through that. However, having such a traumatic experience is what makes Mutesi have such an emotional wall that surrounds her. She is having a hard time finding peace with herself because of how much of a painful event it was that she had to go through.

During Francois’s visits, he gives Annick and the rest of the women updates regarding the situations of the massacre happening, while giving them a limited amount of food and drink. Francois also informs Peyton that the UN has come to pick up white people only. Hearing that, Peyton had a small panic attack, and refused to come with Francois even though the others insisted she go and to suffer no more. Peyton ended up staying there with the other three women, while they were completely wondering why she refused to go with the UN. Within her story, it was revealed that Peyton was a hard alcoholic, and that condition made her brother died. This event haunts her so much, her body and mind are completely consumed by guilt. Therefore, she tried to give back to the children community because she was reckless enough to kill one. During their hideout in Annick’s storage, Peyton is the one that always stayed positive and never had a major conflict with anyone. She does not have any more anger left to develop a hate towards anyone because all the anger and hate she has, is already towards herself alone.

Finally, the bunker in Annick’s kitchen started out as a strangers’ chamber. When four people who could not know each other less, were forced to hide in there for an indefinite amount of time. They went through everything together as a group, sharing the same experience and suffering. Their whole journey is witnessed by the four walls that surround them, the wall of the storage room. In the beginning of the film, the wall of the storage room is clean, not a single stroke exists. At the end of the film, as all four of them finally able

to escape safely, it is shown how the wall is now full of writings and drawings. There is an implication to show how much they all bonded and developed as they spent all those time together fighting through the journey. The wall represents their bonds among each other. The wall that was originally blank represents how at first, they know nothing about each other, as if there is an imaginary wall among all of them that kept them from having empathy because they were still their own individual.

## CONCLUSIONS

*Trees of Peace* is a film that is based on real events of the history of 1994 genocide in Rwanda. This research found that the characters reacted differently when they are forced to hide in a small space. The relationship between the character and the space and the extension of the space affected by the situation and the character's experience. Moreover, the relationship between the characters and the spaces is also subtly shifting throughout the film. Using the theory of Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad, this research found that the characters perceived space is the small storage space that they are used to hide from the catastrophe.

As a result, the relationship between the characters and the space, are intertwined with how they interpret the space. The characters that do not have a good relationship with the space are most likely the one that interpret the space as a threat. How the characters interpret the space is also affected by the character's experience. Whilst the lived space within the storage is affecting the development of each character, making them the same person but with different attitude and compassion at the end of the film from they are in the beginning.

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