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What does reconciliation after genocide mean? Public transcripts and hidden transcripts in post-genocide Rwanda

EUGENIA ZORBAS

The word “reconciliation” is a key political slogan of the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) government, and is widely used by donors, media, and Rwandans themselves. Despite ubiquity, the meaning of “reconciliation” remains unclear. Drawing on fieldwork in two communities in southern Rwanda, this paper examines how respondents understand and articulate the term. For respondents, reconciliation: (i) requires punitive justice informed by a hierarchy of responsibility for crimes; (ii) does not necessarily involve forgiveness; and (iii) is repeatedly referred to as returning to “the way things were before.” The paper then contrasts these understandings and expectations with the official government discourse on reconciliation, the “RPF Healing Truth,” a narrative which, among other things, stresses that the “*hauts responsables*” (high leadership) of the previous regime is primarily responsible for the genocide even though a large segment of the population participated, and the need to “improve,” meaning chiefly educate and emancipate, Rwandans. The comparison of the “public” and “hidden” transcripts on reconciliation reveals areas of both agreement and disagreement. For example, the notion of a hierarchy of responsibility for the genocide spanning from the “*hauts responsables*” to the “*bas peuple*” (low people) is found in both discourses. Grassroots respondents, however, also attribute some responsibility for the genocide to the RPF who are themselves part of the “*hauts responsables*.” The article concludes by highlighting signs of an internal contradiction between RPF reconciliation policy and practice: as the RPF calls for Rwandan emancipation, education and critical thinking on the one hand, it attempts to “institutionalize” and control people’s behaviour on the other, as is seen in the example of “state-bestowed” forgiveness.

Introduction

Within a matter of weeks of the assassination of President Juvénal Habyarimana on April 6, 1994, Rwanda became synonymous with tribal hatreds, carnage and genocide, “the epitome of an African Holocaust.”¹ This emphasis on dark, unfathomable violence coincided with Robert Kaplan’s² influential piece on the “Coming Anarchy” and the hopelessness and barbarity of the African continent.

And yet, “contrary to the impression conveyed . . . the history of Rwanda does not begin in 1994”³ and *neither does it end there*.

As the focus of academics and the wider “International Community” slowly shifts away from the massacres of April to July 1994, more attention is beginning to be paid to the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)-dominated government’s record and more specifically, to its nebulous, though ubiquitous, “national unity and reconciliation” policy.⁴ From its first days in power, and despite initial lack of donor support,⁵ the RPF has most consistently associated this shifting policy with the prosecution of *all* people accused of genocide-related crimes. However, the RPF has also cited the imperative of reconciliation to justify a wide array of other actions: in no particular order, these have included an ongoing mass civic re-education exercise,⁶ a programme of (some have argued, forced) population resettlement into government-constructed villages,⁷ a decentralization programme, controversial legislation on land ownership, two military campaigns into neighbouring Zaïre/Democratic Republic of Congo,⁸ and the aggressive pursuit of Rwandan economic development via the promotion of higher education and Internet and Communication Technology in particular.

Despite or perhaps because of the apparent centrality of this concept, the term “reconciliation” is seldom clearly defined. Due to the RPF’s authoritarian style regarding the media,⁹ national civil society groups and international NGOs,¹⁰ coupled with now strong support from main donors, it is the official government line that tends to dominate. This official government discourse on reconciliation, what I have called the “RPF Healing Truth,” is a “public transcript,” to use James Scott’s¹¹ terminology, which is never openly questioned or assessed against social reality on the ground.

By examining what the nebulous term “reconciliation” has meant to members of two communities in southern Rwanda, I compare the overlap and divergence between the RPF public transcript and these rarely heard “hidden transcripts.” Arguing that the RPF “Healing Truth” is based on two pillars—a “backward looking” pillar, which attributes guilt for the genocide, and a “forward-looking pillar,” which seeks to prevent genocide in the future and amounts to, in theory, an extensive societal transformation project—I demonstrate that though part of both pillars finds resonance among my respondents, both pillars equally generate significant resentment and resistance.

Context and methodology

For a period of just over three months in late 2005, and as part of a larger (PhD) research project, I travelled daily to what was then known as the district of Maraba.¹² There I conducted in-depth, multiple interviews with more than 40 “ordinary” Rwandans from the sectors of Sovu and Bunzazi, meeting nearly all of them at least twice (some of them up to five times), and having social (informal) contact with them many more times. During the formal (semi-structured) interviews, we met in their homes, in secluded outdoor locations, and sometimes in nearby Butare-town for added privacy. For prisoners and soon-to-be released

prisoners in *ingando* (government-run “civic re-education camps”),¹³ our conversations took place in prison offices or a private spot in the *ingando* facility. I also met with genocide survivors (mostly, though not all, Tutsi); people whose family members were in prison on genocide-related charges or had recently been released (mostly, though not all, Hutu); and “neutral” Rwandans who had no direct family member targeted during the genocide or in prison facing genocide-related charges. I further interviewed “Old Caseload” refugees—who had fled earlier anti-Tutsi pogroms (1959 onwards) and who had returned to Rwanda after the genocide—and “New Caseload” refugees who had fled to neighbouring countries during and after the 1994 genocide. I also met with *gacaca*¹⁴ judges.

With the exception of prisoners, I was a participant observer in my respondents’ daily lives for this period and I got to know them, their family members, neighbours and their local (cell and sector-level) authorities through daily social contact. I also attended most of the same meetings they attended, including weekly *gacaca* meetings and the frequent ad hoc meetings called by district and sector-level authorities. I worked with a Rwandan translator from Kigali, who translated from Kinyarwanda into French.

Lastly, I organized two group discussions towards the end of my stay in Maraba—one in Sovu and one in Bunzazi. Ten people participated in the Sovu group discussion; six people participated in the Bunzazi group discussion. A “mix” of people (women and men, survivors and released prisoners, etc.) were sought out for each group. The discussions were structured by the following rules: each respondent chose, out of a list of ten concepts: (i) the three most important elements needed for “reconciliation” (see Table 1), and (ii) one element they considered non-essential. They were then asked to justify their choices. The discussion was facilitated by my research assistant in Kinyarwanda,

Table 1. Pre-conditions for reconciliation

Choices	Sovu n = 10	Bunzazi n = 6	Total	Cumulative percentage
1. Security: <i>consensus that this element has been attained</i>	7	5	12	25
2. Punishing the guilty, ending impunity	7	4	11	47.92
3. Being respectful to one another/ cordial relations (day-to-day)	3	3	6	60.42
4. Good governance, no corruption	3	2	5	70.83
5. Forgiveness	3	2	5	81.25
6. Truth	3	1	4	89.58
7. Economic well-being	2	0	2	93.75
8. Reparations	1	1	2	97.92
9. Sharing and mutual help	1	0	1	100
10. Time (too soon—need more)	0	0	0	100
Total	30	18	48	

Source: Results culled from group debates in Bunzazi and Sovu.

taped and then transcribed by him into French. The group discussions were animated and lasted approximately two hours.

Given the under-theorized and under-developed nature of the literature on reconciliation,¹⁵ the specificities of the Rwandan context (including a strong and authoritarian state), and the delicate nature of the topic itself, I used a strategy which deliberately privileged depth over scope in terms of number of interviewees. Other methods, such as survey-type research, would, given the context, have gleaned results superficial at best, and inaccurate at worst. Indeed, many times it was only possible to speak to respondents in private *on the second or third visit*. Making several visits and conveying a clear description of my goals enabled me to approach the subject from different angles and establish some rapport. The efficacy of this methodology is demonstrated by one member of the Bunzazi group discussion. Discussing ethnicity and things “under the surface,” my respondent recounted the following anecdote:

You go into a *cabaret* [a local bar] and you hear someone ask “do you have a piece of paper?” Asking for paper is a signal that a Tutsi has just come in and that they should change the topic of conversation. (Bunzazi, Group interview)

And yet, at our first, one-on-one interview, the same respondent had talked enthusiastically about ‘Rwandan Unity’ and that ethnicity did not exist (emulating the government’s discourse). Only through building relationships with a handful of interviewees was I able to move beyond the (government-endorsed) “official discourse” and access “hidden transcripts.”

A key element of reconciliation for respondents in the two localities—emphasized across all categories of interviews—was *punishment*. To the question “what does reconciliation mean to you?,” a genocide survivor and a prisoner responded in a similar manner:

To me, what’s important is that those that must be punished, be punished. (Sovu, survivor)

We should punish all those who are guilty. (Sovu, prisoner)

The importance attached to punishment did not stem from an abstract notion of justice being done. Rather, it was a concrete concern to dissuade future potential criminals. One participant during a group interview observed: “The genocide was only possible because before it, every time that there were massacres, like in 1959, the criminals stayed unpunished” (Sovu, Group interview). A prisoner, originally from Bunzazi, echoed these thoughts: “For me, all those who committed crimes, Hutu or Tutsi, peasants or authorities, all should be sanctioned. It’s the only way to discourage other potential criminals” (Bunzazi, prisoner). This position resonates with the government’s frequently articulated intention to “end the culture of impunity.”¹⁶ My respondents emphasized that punishment was required because of its “educational” function, as deterrence:

When a criminal is punished, this serves as a lesson to other potential criminals. (Sovu, Group interview)

For me, all those who committed crimes, Hutu or Tutsi, peasants or authorities, all should be sanctioned. It's the only way to discourage other potential criminals. (Bunzazi, prisoner)

For the murderers, we should find them a form of re-education like these TIG projects (Bunzazi, "neutral").¹⁷

For respondents, deterrence and education through punishment was seen as creating and sustaining security in their communities. In group interviews, security was the top pre-condition for reconciliation. Indeed, 70% of respondents from Sovu and 83% of respondents from Bunzazi chose security as the primary pre-condition for "reconciliation" (see Table 1). But security was also closely related to punishing the guilty (70% of respondents from Sovu and 66% of respondents from Bunzazi), and to a lesser extent, being respectful to one another (30% of respondents from Sovu, 50% of respondents from Bunzazi). Other possible components of "reconciliation" (including reparations; good governance; forgiveness; mutual help; time; truth; socio-economic wellbeing) were all in fourth and fifth positions, or lower. For respondents, "security," "punishment" and "being respectful to one another" formed the key nexus of "preconditions for reconciliation."

Ranking responsibility: the "low people" and the "high leadership"

Respondents demonstrated creativity and pragmatism in how they described what constituted sufficient or desirable punishment and *who* deserved to be punished (implying who was *truly* guilty):

I would prefer that the *hauts responsables* that brought us the calamity be punished. And also these people—my neighbours—who accepted to follow them. They [i.e. "my neighbours"] should be punished with lighter sentences like for example, six years of prison. (Sovu, family member recently released)

Sanctions are necessary but we do not want punishments that are too severe such as the ones genocide crimes would normally merit. We must lighten the punishments. (Bunzazi, Group interview)

We should use *akanyafu* [a little stick, to hit children for example without hurting them] for the *bas peuple*. (Bunzazi, "neutral")

We should punish but not too much. We shouldn't overdo it. (Bunzazi, "neutral")

Underlying this sliding scale of punishment—for the "*hauts responsables*" (high leadership) to the "*bas peuple*" (ordinary people)—was a sliding scale of responsibility and of morality. For example:

We must not punish the maximum possible amount of guilty people because, for the most part, for the *bas peuple*, these things fell on them. They had no interest in killing. Therefore, we should punish the *hauts responsables*, those that are at the origin of everything. (Sovu, prisoner)

The people from here, they did not know what was happening, where this came from. They [the authorities] know well that the people from here are not the cause of this. (Sovu, family member in prison)

It's the state. It's the state that manipulated Rwandans so that they would kill each other. Nothing else. (Sovu, survivor)

We should punish the *hauts responsables*. The others were only followers. (Bunzazi, survivor)

The population is innocent. (Bunzazi, released prisoner)

The concepts of “intelligence” and “ignorance”—in terms of a lack of formal education—were frequently used by respondents (who described themselves as “ignorant”) to determine who was, and who was not, guilty. For example:

I am as dumb as a cow, I've never been to school and I don't know how to read or write. I was pushed [into killing] because of my ignorance. (Bunzazi, released prisoner)

We are followers. We do not know or ask where things come from. When there is noise, we run [towards it]. (Bunzazi, family member recently released)

The ignorance of certain members of the population is the cause; they were manipulated by the authorities. The lack of education is definitely a factor. (Sovu, prisoner)

The same idea was expressed during a district-wide meeting for *gacaca* judges, during which a *gacaca* judge said: “the *bas peuple* should not figure in the list of promoters [i.e. Category 1 (worst) crimes]. All this came from people who are educated! We had become like their pupils, who were punished if they didn't follow.” At a meeting in Sovu (held in lieu of that week's *gacaca* session) a participant stated: “the first category should contain two names: Bagosora and Ndindiliyimana.”¹⁸ Similarly, when asked by a government representative at the same meeting “are there unforgivable acts?,” a woman responded “all acts should be forgiven. Even those that are guilty should be forgiven because they were manipulated by intelligent people whereas they are not [intelligent].” Indeed, of all the people I put the question “what do you think caused the genocide?” to, 42% responded that the main cause of the genocide was “authorities” taking advantage of the “ignorance” of the “*bas peuple*” to persuade them to participate in the killings (see Table 2). It should be noted that this differentiation of responsibility is also found at the level of law (see excerpt of “Organic Law no. 16/2004,” below).

The genocide survivors I interviewed recognized that this differentiation of degrees of guilt had evolved from an initial maximalist approach to justice immediately after the 1994 genocide:

After the war, there was a very big climate of distrust and of anger between people. Then, some survivors started saying that what happened, happened and that we have to live together with these people. And then, even the others [other survivors] realized that there was nothing else to do and that not everyone was guilty. (Sovu, survivor)

Table 2. Causes of the Rwandan genocide

Primary cause	Percentage of total responses
“The state,” “the intellectuals” who manipulated us/our ignorance	42
RPF invasion/fear of the RPF	13
I don’t know	9.5
Introduction of multiparty system	9
Conformism, obedience	9
“ <i>Le mauvais ventre</i> ” (greed)	6.5
Hatred	6
The Devil	3
Impunity (past massacres)	2
Total	100

This quote contains elements of acceptance and reflection (“they realized not everyone was guilty”) but also of resigned pragmatism (“there was nothing else to do”). Such pragmatic resignation was a constant feature of survivor responses:

What’s the point of keeping them in prison indefinitely? It’s useless. Those who are dead, are dead. We should liberate them all, right away even, and if they re-offend, then let them be punished doubly harshly. (Bunzazi, survivor)

Why should we refuse to forgive them? Anyway, our people will not be brought back to life. (Bunzazi, survivor)

The meaning of forgiveness: the case of conditional releases

A conditional release of genocide suspects, the second wave of a countrywide government programme, coincided with the start of fieldwork in Sovu and Bunzazi in 2005.¹⁹ These releases appeared to have had a deep impact on both communities and, according to testimonials gathered, the second wave proved much more disruptive than the first. In the second wave, 27 prisoners originally from Sovu and 24 originally from Bunzazi were released (according to government statistics). This, according to my respondents, had led to great unease in the community. This does not appear to have been due to relative numbers: in 2003 (during the first wave of releases), according to my respondents, eight prisoners originally from Sovu and 33 from Bunzazi had been released. Rather, it appears to have been a question of what *kinds of prisoners* were released. Whereas the 2003 wave was chiefly comprised of prisoners who were elderly, minors in 1994, and/or those who were ill, in 2005 the released prisoners were those who had confessed to genocide-related crimes, including to taking part in killings (Category 2 crimes). As a respondent observed: “The 2003 released prisoners don’t say anything in *gacaca*. They have not confessed. They were the sick ones, the old ones” (Sovu, survivor). In other words, 2005 saw the

release of confessed killers, people that, although they had not led the massacres (“planners” as Category 1 suspects are described in the genocide, and *gacaca* laws), they did have “blood on their hands.”

On the basis of my respondents’ debates about who forgives and who deserves forgiveness, three observations can be made. First, *forgiveness was not seen as integral to reconciliation*. As is shown in Table 1, it was not one of the top three preconditions for “reconciliation.” In fact, to use David Crocker’s²⁰ “thick–thin” typology of reconciliation, my respondents tended to use much “thinner” language, like “security,” “punishment,” and “being civil to one another.” Conversely, they tended to use “thick” words, like “forgiveness” and “reconciliation,” which closely echoed official slogans and my own questions (the way I described my project included the word “reconciliation”) only during initial encounters. Indeed, in time it became clear that this vocabulary was entirely shed during later meetings, once my research assistant and I had had the opportunity to establish a basic relationship with respondents and importantly, convince them that we were working alone, not with or for the government.

The second observation is that “forgiveness” was not understood as foregoing of punishment. Even though differences of opinion persisted on how forgiveness worked (how to ask for it, who to ask, etc.), there seemed to be a consensus that punishment was necessary. There was, however, no clear consensus on the required severity of punishment or sufficient remorse to enable forgiveness. Some released prisoners stated that their confessions (which, according to *gacaca* law, must include a request for forgiveness)²¹ were sufficient, that they had “paid enough given the duration and the conditions of my detention, it should be finished now” (Sovu, released prisoner). While there was agreement that “forgiveness” required “punishment,” attitudes towards the process of “forgiveness” (which had to be *earned*) were idiosyncratic.

The third observation concerns *who* should be considered as a legitimate *granter* of forgiveness? One of the reasons why the 2005 conditional releases were so controversial was that survivors interpreted it as State-imposed, or as “institutionalized forgiveness” which had a coercive, top–down quality that removed the *right* to forgive from those who had suffered. Even non-survivors recognized the imposed character of this “forgiveness”:

I am not against forgiveness, but the state should not get mixed up in this. It should give its blessing to reconciliation afterwards, but it should not give the pardon instead of the victims. (Sovu, Group interview)

There was a perception, therefore, that the state has taken upon itself a role that should only be enacted by survivors.

To live like we lived before: the “rosy past” syndrome

To return to a key question—what is “reconciliation”?—when asked what a “reconciled community” would look like, my respondents described their

community prior to 1990. In this sense, “reconciliation” was portrayed as *restoration* of a past state of affairs:

In Rwanda, before the genocide, we were like one same family. Before, we helped each other, we carried each other’s ill to the hospital, we intermarried, there were no problems. (Sovu, Group interview)

Before 1994, people lived in peace and on good terms. There were mixed marriages between Hutu and Tutsi. (Bunzazi, “neutral”)

Life was good, before. There were no problems in our community. Relations between members of our community were normal. We would pay each other visits. There were no problems before the war. (Bunzazi, prisoner)

As one survivor stated: “Reconciliation is living in peace with everyone, not to hold grudges in one’s heart, share everything, work together with everyone. *It’s to live like we lived before*” (Bunzazi, survivor, emphasis added).

The pervasive theme of *restoration* gives rise to two observations. First, and as will be discussed in greater detail below, the government’s discourse also relies on *restoration*: the restoration of a unity that existed prior to colonial rule and the racist ideology of the “Hutu Republic” (1962–1990). Here, however, my respondents celebrate the conditions *under* the “Hutu Republic.” Second, excised from their idyllic portrayal of pre-1990 Rwanda are the successive anti-Tutsi pogroms from 1959 onwards, which led to between 40% and 70% of Rwanda’s Tutsi, up to 700,000 people, fleeing to neighbouring countries.²² Respondents therefore displayed a dissonance regarding their recollections of an “idyllic past” and episodes of inter-ethnic violence. For example, a respondent who, on one occasion, commented “in 1959, those who burned Tutsi’s houses were rewarded for their work, not punished,” on another occasion, stated:

We lived well together before, we had mixed marriages, we helped carry each other’s sick, we shared beer. Whatever conflicts we had were usually little conflicts about land, or between families, or between married couples. (Sovu, family member in prison)

Despite this inconsistency, respondents gauged the state of progress of “reconciliation” according to a romantic image of the pre-1990 community. For example, one respondent, using the number of mixed marriages as a proxy for reconciliation, estimated that: “It’s not like before yet, mixed marriages are less frequent, but they are increasing, more and more” (Sovu, family member in prison). Another, using the frequency of social visits as a proxy, stated: “It’s not exactly like before 1994. But when there is beer, we invite neighbours and they too invite us” (Sovu, survivor). Commenting more generally on community life in Bunzazi, a third person stated: “It’s not like before 1994. There is a wall between people whose loved ones died during the genocide and others who have their people in jail” (Bunzazi, “neutral”). There was constant reference to “the Rwandan before the war and the Rwandan after the war” and that “most if not all [Rwandans] lost family members, others experienced exile. All this changed the hearts of people” (Bunzazi, family member in prison).

Public transcripts and hidden transcripts in post-1994 Rwanda

The “RPF Healing Truth”

I have analysed elsewhere in detail the RPF discourse on reconciliation, what I have described as the “RPF Healing Truth.”²³ This Healing Truth can be broken down into four recurring themes, although these have not necessarily remained constant since 1994.²⁴ These four basic elements can in turn be amalgamated into a “backward-looking” pillar and a “forward-looking” pillar. The “backward-looking” pillar is concerned with explaining and seeking to allocate responsibility for the 1994 genocide. There are two key components to this theme. First, the previous regime of President Juvénal Habyarimana was primarily responsible for the genocide and through its “bad governance,” “taught”²⁵ people divisionism, discrimination, hate, and ultimately—to commit genocide. Indeed, some in the RPF speak of genocide starting, in “slow-motion,” in 1959.²⁶ For example, an interview in 2000, President Paul Kagame stated that:

The genocide has a long history, if you know a bit of what happened in 1959 alone. There was a civil strife which led to many refugees moving out of the country in hundreds of thousands and tens of thousands of people being killed. More or less, genocide started around that time. There had been other genocides in 1963, 1967, 1973 and 1993... It has been taking place for quite a long period. A section of our population has always been targeted by the government and its forces. Huge sections of the population were wiped out from different parts of our country. This had been going on over thirty years.²⁷

Although the RPF sees the implementation of the genocide as being characterized by high rates of popular participation (exceeding 1 million perpetrators in 2005),²⁸ a second theme is the recognition of *degrees* of responsibility. This was established as early as 1996 in Organic Law no. 08/96 of August 30, 1996 on the Organization of Prosecutions for Offences constituting the Crime of Genocide or Crimes against Humanity committed since October 1, 1990, referred to as the 1996 genocide law.²⁹ Indeed, in Article 51 of Organic Law no. 16/2004 of June 19, 2004 Setting Up Gacaca Jurisdictions and Organizing Prosecutions For Offences Constituting the Crime of Genocide or Crimes Against Humanity Committed between October 1, 1990 and December 31, 1994, accused persons are classified in one of the following three categories (revised down from the original four categories laid out in the 1996 genocide law, as a result of the experiences gleaned from pilot *gacaca* courts):

Category 1: (a) person whose criminal acts or whose acts of criminal participation place them among the planners, organisers, instigators, supervisors and leaders of the crime of genocide or of a crime against humanity, together with his/her accomplices; (b) the person who, at that time, was acting in a position of authority at the national, prefectural, communal, sector or cell level, or in a political party, the army, gendarmerie, district or town police, religious denominations or militia, has committed these offences or encouraged others to commit them; (c) notorious murderers who by virtue of the zeal or excessive malice with which they committed atrocities, distinguished themselves in their areas of residence or

where they passed, and their accomplices; (d) persons who committed acts of torture on others even if the victims have not died from them, and their accomplices; (e) the person who committed rape or acts of torture against persons' sexual parts together with his/her accomplices; (e) the person who committed degrading acts on the dead body and his/her accomplices.

Category 2: (a) the person whose criminal acts or whose acts of criminal participation place them among authors, co-authors or accomplices of deliberate homicides or of serious attacks against persons, which caused death, and his/her accomplices; (b) the person who, with intention of giving death, has caused injuries or committed other serious violence, but from which the victims have not died; (c) the person charged with committing or assisting to commit other serious acts on people without the intention of killing, and his/her accomplices.

Category 3: The person having committed offences against assets. However, the author of the mentioned offences who on the date of this organic law enforcement, has agreed with the victim, or before the public authority or in arbitration, for an amicable settlement cannot be prosecuted for these same facts.

The 1996 genocide law and succeeding *gacaca* laws embody the RPF position that the bulk of the “normal” perpetrators (a turn of phrase used to depict those accused of Category 2 and 3 crimes, not the “big *génocidaires*” accused of Category 1 crimes) were manipulated by “bad authorities.” They therefore deserve to be “forgiven.” Indeed, in his first genocide commemoration speech in 2001, President Kagame³⁰ praised those who had sought forgiveness, further stating that “asking for forgiveness and forgiving go together, and call for courage, which may sometimes appear to be impossible.”

The “forward-looking” pillar, on the other hand, seeks to prevent another genocide and promote a prosperous, peaceful future for the country. This pillar emphasizes the need to “improve” Rwandans and “Rwandan culture” and society as a whole. One RPF representative I interviewed highlighted “Rwandan culture needs to evolve [. . .] people have suffered so much, and this is a result of Rwanda’s cultural mediocrity. We must not ask the population to keep quiet, they must express themselves, we must cultivate openness;” she also spoke of the need to teach people to express emotion, feelings, and crucially, “develop the capacity for independent critical thought” (RPF representative, Kigali 2005). Another RPF representative, speaking about economic development, spoke of the need to “transform and help Rwandans to be more ambitious” (RPF representative, Kigali 2005). This also comes up regularly in Presidential speeches and interviews. In his 2001 genocide commemoration speech for example, President Kagame said: “The tragedy of Genocide befell us because there was something wrong with us as Rwandans [. . .] Let us make it our culture to resist the circumstances that may lead to a repeat of this.” In his 2007 genocide commemoration speech, Kagame speaks both of “correcting bad [Rwandan] practices” and, in one of the angriest passages of his speech, of being “prepared to wage war” to protect this “new Rwanda.” Therefore, it is not only “bad history” and “bad authorities” that made the Rwandan genocide

possible, it is also “bad culture,” which has necessitated the development, and the defence if need be, of a new, better culture. What is being referred as bad culture is an alleged Rwandan penchant for obedience and submission, and to a lesser degree, a presumed Rwandan reluctance to express (dissenting) opinions publicly.³¹ This alleged cultural conformism is used by some to explain the high rate of participation in the genocide.³² These efforts are therefore aimed at “improving” Rwandan culture, “emphasizing individual accountability” and “helping Rwandans to make better choices” (RPF representative, Kigali 2005). Improving Rwandans is to come through promoting self-reliance and emancipation in all realms. This must include above all security (national defence) and economic development, to break “out of the cycle of begging.”³³ As a result, reconciliation is linked with economic development, but also education and “broadening” the minds of Rwandans, in order to “build a new Rwanda.”

A second key element for preventing a future genocide emphasizes (iv) the organic unity of Rwandans, that “imported” ethnic labels are “fictitious.” According to this position, before the arrival of the missionaries and the Colonialists, Rwandans lived together in harmony; no inter-ethnic conflict existed *because no ethnic groups existed*. Rwandans felt themselves to be part of one nation, and shared certain “unity characteristics” such as a common language, culture, religion, the same *mwami* (king), and living together on the same territories; there was no “region for Hutus” for example.³⁴

The RPF’s “Healing Truth” therefore consists of, as demonstrated above, a “backward-looking” and a “forward-looking” pillar. The key question is whether my respondents were convinced by these elements?

The grassroots discourses: hidden transcripts

The “backward-looking” pillar: who is responsible?

As Table 2 demonstrates, the first element of the “RPF Truth” (the responsibility of the previous regime for the genocide) finds significant support among respondents. One could argue that reflects my respondents’ desire to minimize their (in)actions during the genocide, whether as perpetrators or bystanders. And yet, genocide survivors also state that the genocide was masterminded by the previous regime. In addition, the responses demonstrate that respondents also attributed blame for the genocide to other actors and other causes, including the RPA (beginning with its invasion of Rwanda from neighbouring Uganda in October 1990),³⁵ and to the introduction of multiparty politics in 1991. For example:

The origins of the genocide lie with all those that were fighting for power, I mean the political parties and the [Tutsi] refugees that were fighting to return to the country. All these people created the chaos that led to the genocide. (Sovu, prisoner)

We were all very scared of the RPF. (Sovu, family member in prison)

Respondents also recalled alleged RPF abuses within Rwanda (before, during and after the genocide) and in neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

during the two Congo wars (1996 and 1998),³⁶ asking: “Why are the victims of the RPF not talked about? Entire families were decimated by the RPF” (Bunzazi, prisoner).³⁷ Another respondent, recounting what happened in Sovu in 1994, finished his story as follows: “then the *Inkotanyi*³⁸ came and people fled. Many, many people died in the fighting. Many Hutu died” (Sovu, prisoner). This sensitive topic was sometimes spoken of euphemistically, using coded language: “My family members are not dead from the genocide, they are dead *from the consequences of the war*” (Sovu, family member in prison, emphasis added). Indeed, many of my respondents had lost family members (children, spouses) during the violent closure of internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, as occurred at Kibeho (in the then-province of Gikongoro) in April 1995,³⁹ and the forced repatriations from refugee camps in eastern Zaïre/ DRC in 1996. Several of my respondents had suffered bullet wounds and one had lost an arm.

The second element of the “RPF Truth,” that the Hutu masses participated to an overwhelmingly large extent in the genocide, even with the mitigating clause that they were manipulated to do so, is a contested reading of events for my respondents. The idea that the killers were manipulated is accepted (cf. Table 2), but the contention that the majority of Hutu participated is not. One prisoner I interviewed, a Hutu man accused of genocide-related crimes who maintains his innocence, explained that the government’s ascription of collective guilt to all Hutu is nowhere more visible than in the *gacaca* law:

The booklets⁴⁰ containing the rules of *gacaca* do not say anything anywhere about the people who are innocent, the people who do not plead guilty and confess. In fact, people who plan to plead not guilty risk prison sentences of 30 years without any consideration of the acts they actually did or did not commit. (Bunzazi, prisoner)

Indeed, only confessed prisoners were eligible for releases, creating a perverse incentive for those prisoners who believe themselves to be innocent, to invent something to confess to. The same prisoner quoted above, who had been at the time of the interview in prison for nine years because, according to him, “I have nothing to confess to,” explained: “I’d have confidence in *gacaca* if there was nothing hidden behind this system. [...] But it is clear that the government prefers to liberate prisoners who have confessed to something, and not prisoners who are innocent. What message does that transmit to someone in my situation?”

An indirect, and subtler way to approach the issue of the perceived extent of Hutu participation in the genocide was to discuss the number of “*justes*”—people who tried to save persecuted Tutsi during the genocide.⁴¹

This has also, gradually, become part of the RPF discourse. For example, Paul Kagame in 2004:

A very special tribute to those men and women who showed enormous courage, risked their lives to rescue their neighbours and friends. You showed the greatest act of human kindness—you risked your own lives to save another. You could have chosen not to do that. But still you did so. You are our reason for hope.⁴²

Table 3. Estimates of number and motives of “*Justes*”

	Responses	Percentage of total respondents
Do you know any “ <i>justes</i> ”/can you name one or more?	No	33
	Yes	47
	Yes: I myself am one (<i>NB: Not always recognised by others</i>)	20
Total		100
How many people helped?	Some, but not many	82
	Many: most who survived were helped	18
Total		100

Source: Interviews, Bunzazi and Sovu, August to December 2005.

Understandings of what actions qualify a person as “*un juste*” (a righteous person) are varied.⁴³ For some respondents, the defining criteria was whether those who tried to assist persecuted Tutsi killed other Tutsi and, if so, was it willingly, under duress, or to keep suspicion at bay? When looking at the overall responses from my respondents, the collective perception was that some people did try to help Tutsi escape, at times at considerable risk to them, though the numbers were rather low (cf. Table 3). Moreover, well over half the respondents were able to name one or more “*justes*” (though usually no more than four)—with three explaining how they themselves had saved (or tried to save) Tutsi—up to 11 people in one case. This is at odds with the RPF government’s estimates on participation in the genocide, which at the time of fieldwork (2005) varied between 700,000 and 1 million, corresponding roughly to between 61% and 88% of all adult (14 years or older in 1994) Hutu men.⁴⁴

The “forward-looking” pillar: promoting peace and prosperity

The third element of the “RPF Truth,” the need for Rwandan emancipation and self-reliance, found some resonance and fed into a still prevalent patriotism. One respondent, a demobilized RPF soldier, compared Rwandans to Congolese:

If you take the Congo, that I know, their army is different than ours—in terms of discipline specifically. The military men from there are thieves. And in Congo, the women do all the work and the men are lazy. Here in Rwanda, we are disciplined and we work hard. (Bunzazi, “neutral”)

There was, therefore, an openness toward the government’s messages of “emancipation” and calls to hard work. One respondent explained that he was already enjoying the fruits of this labour:

Today, the country is progressing. Before, there were regular famines. Now, we are being sensitized [encouraged] to join associations. The CRS⁴⁵ has sent agronomists, and has organized study trips. I was sent to Ruhengeri and Kibuye by the CRS for a study-visit. We grow potatoes here now; we didn’t before. (Bunzazi, “neutral”)

However, the frequency and stridency with which the RPF proposed “self reliance” in the context of criticizing the United Nations; individual States (the French government in particular), and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), found no equivalent among my respondents, as is indicated in Table 4.

Although such responses were due to my respondents having little direct experience of the “International Community”⁴⁶ without the presence of the “malevolent International Community,” the theme of “self-reliance” so central to the “RPF Truth” lost meaning among my respondents. Rather, and as discussed above regarding the culpability of “*hauts responsables*,” the binary of “Rwanda versus The International Community,” was replaced with “Our Harmonious Local Community versus Centralised Power Politics.” The roots of past (and future) violence were considered to lie with distant elites in Kigali; they were the ones who had to “reconcile” with each other and stop exporting their conflicts to otherwise “harmonious” local communities.

Regarding the fourth, and final, “RPF Healing Truth,” there was resonance with the pre-colonial harmony imagery propagated by the government. For example,

[w]hat happened in 1959, the first violence, was caused by the white people. Before the white people came to colonize us there were no problems between Rwandans. There was the King and his subjects; there was neither Hutu nor Tutsi. (Bunzazi, Group interview)

And yet, for my respondents, accepting this view did not mean that ethnicity was *irrelevant* in contemporary Rwanda. My respondents spoke of their own and their neighbours’ ethnicity and continued to explain some (though not all) behaviours and attitudes with reference to ethnic identity. The RPF proscription of ethnicity was not, therefore, respected:

Even though the Hutu/Tutsi question is not relevant to daily life, historically it was the Tutsi that were in power and the Hutu that became rich were assimilated to the Tutsi. Also, Tutsi

Table 4. Attitudes towards the “International Community”

		Responses	Percentage of total respondents
Perceptions of “International Community”	Positive		52
	Negative		0
	Don’t know/mixed role		24
	No role		24
Total			100
Perceptions of the ICTR (“Arusha”)	Know it/can name at least one trial	Positive role	33
		Negative role	10
	Don’t know it	Irrelevant	19
			38
Total			100

Source: Interviews, Bunzazi and Sovu, August to December 2005.

who had modest means were closer to the Hutu, intermarried, and gave them cows—not for patronage but out of friendship. (Bunzazi, prisoner)

Before 1959, the Tutsi had all the good fields and the livestock, which provide fertilizers. (Bunzazi, “neutral”)

Despite these references to ethnicity, the consensus among my respondents was that Rwandans (mostly) lived in unity “as brothers,” but that there were differences, although these were not necessarily contradictory. Such a position is likewise, not straightforwardly contrary to the RPF’s position. For example, in an interview in 2000, Paul Kagame stated:

The issue is about being Rwandese, not being a Hutu or a Tutsi. In Rwanda there are three ethnic groups: the Batwa, the Bahutu and the Batutsi. They should all have equal rights. We don’t treat any of those as secondary citizens. [. . .] So the conclusion generally being made today is that Rwandese should have a democracy but they should associate along national, political and rational issues rather than looking at themselves as belonging to an ethnic group. I think this is taking root.⁴⁷

The RPF’s attempt at promoting a national identity was therefore acknowledged as a commendable aspiration. For example, “[I]f we started teaching the good, the true history that says that Rwandans are brothers, not enemies, that would be good” (Sovu, family member in prison). However, the government’s (evidently unsuccessful) attempt at suppressing ethnicity—including via a legal ban—was greeted with scepticism.⁴⁸ One respondent inadvertently expressed her doubt when, paraphrasing government discourse on “those people who killed” (speaking about RPF efforts to prevent a new genocide), she had to concede the following: “There is no ethnicity, we are all Rwandan. But yes, they [the government] are speaking of the Hutu” (Sovu, “neutral”).

Conclusion

This article has explored how the ubiquitous term “reconciliation” is understood by respondents in two communities in southern Rwanda. A comparison of their views with government discourse revealed areas of both overlap and divergence between the “public” and the “hidden transcripts.” For example, there was consensus on the notion of a sliding scale of responsibility for the genocide in terms of the “*bas peuple*” and “*hauts responsables*” which corresponded to the government’s recognition of differential responsibility in the 1996 genocide law and 2004 *gacaca* law. And yet, my respondents also placed the RPF among the “hauts responsables” whose political ambitions had visited destruction on their previously harmonious community. Similarly, while both my respondents and the RPF government valued “forgiveness,” my respondents resented the government usurping the right of victims to be the sole, legitimate granters of forgiveness. While aspects of the RPF discourse regarding forgiveness resonated with my respondents, they resented its institutionalization; *forgiveness by fiat*.

It is this “institutionalization” that represents a key contradiction between the RPF’s policy and practice of “reconciliation.” While on the one hand “emancipating” Rwandans and encouraging “self-reliance,” the government imposes a “reconciliatory” model. As Richard Wilson has observed in the context of the South African example, institutionalized “reconciliation” policies should be understood as nationalist tools at the service of a new elite interested in constructing a new myth for a new nation.⁴⁹ I believe there is firm evidence to conclude that the RPF government has chosen to conflate, ignore, or subjugate, individual or community reconciliation (or non-reconciliation) processes in favour of focusing on a national reconciliation strategy that tells an ambitious and in many ways progressive story about Rwanda, Rwandans and their new ruling elite.

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Notes and References

- 1 René Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnocide as Discourse and Practice* (Cambridge: Woodrow Wilson Centre Press and Cambridge University Press, 1994), p 581.
- 2 Robert D. Kaplan, “The coming anarchy: how scarcity, crime, overpopulation, tribalism, and disease are rapidly destroying the social fabric of our planet,” *The Atlantic Monthly* February, 1994, available at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/199402/anarchy>.
- 3 René Lemarchand, “Disconnecting the threads: Rwanda and the Holocaust reconsidered,” *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol 4, No 4, 2002, p 500.
- 4 Though the RPF is not a homogeneous group, my premise is that there is substantial consensus on key issues within the influential circle around President Paul Kagame. I thus use “RPF” as shorthand for this small circle of people. For a detailed description of the latter, including the kinship, marriage and other ties that bind them, see Michael Dorsey, “Violence and power-building in post-genocide Rwanda,” in: Ruddy Doom and Jan Gorus, eds., *Politics of Identity and Economics of Conflict* (Brussels: VUB University Press, 2000), pp 328–329. For a discussion of the RPF government 1994–2004, see Filip Reyntjens, “Rwanda ten years on: from genocide to dictatorship,” *African Affairs*, Vol. 103, 2004, pp 177–210.
- 5 Anton Baaré, David Shearer, et al., *The limits and scope for the use of development assistance incentives and disincentives for influencing conflict situations. Case study: Rwanda* (Paris: OECD Development Assistance Committee, 1999), p 20, para 71.
- 6 I am referring to the *ingando* civic re-education camps, run by the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, which I mention again below.
- 7 The villages are referred to as *imidugudu* (pl.; umudugu, sing.) Human Rights Watch has documented instances of forced relocation of civilians to *imidugudu*. Human Rights Watch, *Uprooting the Rural Poor in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2001).
- 8 A third military campaign began on January 20, 2009, with the entry of an estimated 4000 Rwandan Defense Forces troops into eastern DRC on the invitation of the Congolese President Joseph Kabila for the purposes of dismantling, jointly with the Congolese Army, the remnants of the Hutu armed elements considered main

- perpetrators of the 1994 genocide, a group referred to as the FDLR (Forces Democratiques pour la Liberation du Rwanda).
- 9 Frontline documents methods by which local and international journalists were routinely silenced by the RPF regime during the 2001–2004 period, leading notably to many Rwandan journalists from the country's (at the time) leading independent newspapers, *Umuseso*, resorting to self-censorship. See Frontline: The International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, *Disappearances, Arrests, Threats, Intimidation and Co-optation of Human Rights Defenders 2001–2004* (Co.Dublin, Ireland: Frontline, 2005), pp 68–82. Successive Reporters Without Borders annual reports feature very similar claims, including for the period not covered by the Frontline report. See Reporters Without Borders, *Rwanda Annual Reports* for 2005 and 2006.
 - 10 Both Human Rights Watch and the US State Department, in their respective annual reports on human rights, document the threats and intimidation local NGO staff have been subjected to by the RPF regime. This intimidation has also spread to international NGOs, as the annual reports for 2004 show most clearly; 2004 was the year in which a special Parliamentary commission report accused organizations, including leading national NGO LIPRODHOR and international NGOs CARE and Trocaire among others (along with international broadcasters BBC and VOA, and more than 300 individuals) of “divisionism” and “genocide ideology,” both ill-defined offences punishable by law. Shortly after the release of the report, which featured little supporting evidence for the claims, a dozen LIPRODHOR staff fled the country. The RPF then proposed a new law to oversee the activities of international NGOs in the country, which “was widely seen as an attack on international NGOs,” as per the US State Department report covering 2004. See US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, *Rwanda: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* (Washington DC, 2005). See also Human Rights Watch, “Rwanda” in *World Report 2004* (Human Rights Watch, January 2005).
 - 11 Scott contrasts the “public transcript” to “hidden transcripts” or the discourse that takes place “offstage.” James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p 4.
 - 12 Rwanda's four main administrative levels remain the *intara* (provinces), the *utere* (districts), the *imirenge* (sectors), and the *utugari* (cells). A January 2006 administrative reform expanded the boundaries of these units and Rwanda's twelve provinces were replaced by four larger provinces along with the municipality of Kigali City. My research sites are today located in the South Province, Huye district, sector Simbi.
 - 13 *Ingando* are “retreats” run by the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission and through which large segments of the Rwandan population transit each year. There are *ingando* camps for demobilized ex-combatants, for students about to go to university, and for released prisoners. See Chi Mgbako, “Ingando Solidarity Camps: Reconciliation and Political Indoctrination in Post-Genocide Rwanda,” *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, Vol 18, No 1, 2005, pp 201–224.
 - 14 *Gacaca* was a traditional local conflict resolution mechanism that was modernized, revamped and re-introduced in 2001 to try genocide perpetrators throughout the country. There are *gacaca* jurisdictions at cell, sector, and district levels. *Gacaca* courts have been the subject of many writings, most based on no, or very little field research. For one exception to the rule, see Penal Reform International's Gacaca Research-Action programme, available at: <http://www.penalreform.org/interim/gacaca-publications/>.
 - 15 Lederach and Minow consider the study of reconciliation in post-civil war contexts as inadequate, see Jean Paul Lederach, “Five qualities in support of reconciliation processes,” in: Raymond Helmick and Rodney L. Petersen, eds., *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy and Conflict Transformation* (Philadelphia and London: Templeton Foundation Press, 2001), p 193, and Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History After Genocide and Mass Violence* (Boston: Boston Beacon Press, 1998), p 146. Long and Brecke characterize reconciliation in post-conflict contexts as an “undertheorized” phenomenon, see William J. Long and Peter Brecke, *War and Reconciliation: Reason and Emotion in Conflict Resolution* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), p 147. In most cases the “relationships between reconciliation and the different measures employed to achieve this aim [...] ha[ve] not been convincingly demonstrated empirically” argues Gloppen in Elin Skaar, Siri Gloppen and Astri Suhrke, eds., *Roads to Reconciliation* (Lexington Books: 2005), p 45. And “this idea [of reconciliation, or coexistence] has not yet been widely theorized, commonly debated, or universally implemented,” Aneelah Afzali and Laura Colleton “Constructing coexistence,” in: Antonia Chayes and Martha Minow, eds., *Imagine Coexistence: Restoring Humanity After Violent Ethnic Conflict* (Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School and Jossey-Bass, 2003), p 4.
 - 16 See Nigel Eltringham, *Accounting for Horror: Post-Genocide Debates in Rwanda* (London: Pluto, 2004), pp 145–146.
 - 17 TIG is the acronym of “Travaux d'intérêt général” or “Works of General Interest,” also referred to as Community Service. Introduced in September 2005, this community service is one of the sentencing

- options *gacaca* courts can use for “Category 2” offenders (described below) who have confessed, in which case the *gacaca* court can decide to commute half the prison sentence to TIG. In its original incarnation, local communities would identify the work to be carried out by the “TIGistes” (perpetrators sentenced to TIG) in a kind of “neighbourhood community service” designed to help the TIGistes’ social reintegration; see Penal Reform International, *Community Service: Areas of Reflection* (Penal Reform International, March 2007), p 11. Citing logistical difficulties however, authorities in Kigali have so far had “TIGistes” sent to one or two work camps located throughout the country. By the end of 2007, close to 50,000 individuals had been sentenced to TIG, and 10,000 were carrying this sentence out; see chapter on Rwanda in Human Rights Watch, 2007 *Annual Report* (Human Rights Watch, January 2008). Penal Reform International estimates that up to 255,000 persons may be expected to have a sentence that will include TIG.
- 18 Théoneste Bagosora and Augustin Ndindiliyimana were respectively the Director of Cabinet, Ministry of Defence, and the Chief of Staff of the Gendarmerie Nationale in 1994; they both became important members of the interim government after President Habyarimana’s assassination. The first is widely considered the mastermind of the genocide, the second is a peculiar choice to single out as his influence during the genocide is speculated to have been a moderating one (the fact that he is from Butare may have played a role in singling him out). They are both detained at the ICTR. Their trials were ongoing at the time of writing.
 - 19 A January 1, 2003 Presidential decree allowed for the provisional release, pending trial, of the elderly, ill, “1994 minors” (individuals who were under 18 at the time they allegedly committed their offences) and, importantly, those prisoners who had *confessed and asked for forgiveness*, and therefore potentially qualified for reduced sentencing under guilty plea procedures built into successive laws (the 1996 genocide law and succeeding *gacaca* laws). As a result, several waves of mass provisional releases were carried out, in January 2003 (approximately 22,000 prisoners released), in August 2005 (approximately 20,330), and in February 2007 (approximately 8,000).
 - 20 Crocker distinguishes between different degrees of reconciliation along a continuum ranging from more demanding “thick” notions to minimalist or “thin” notions. See David A. Crocker, “Reckoning with past wrong: a normative framework,” *Ethics and International Affairs*, Vol. 13, No 1, 1999, pp 43–64.
 - 21 Organic Law No. 40/2000 Of 26/01/2001 Setting Up Gacaca Jurisdictions and Organizing Prosecutions for Offences Constituting the Crime of Genocide or Crimes Against Humanity Committed Between October 1, 1990 and December 31, 1994. “Article 54: Any person who has committed offences aimed at in Article one of this organic law has right to have recourse to confession procedure and guilt plea. To be received as confession in the context of this chapter, the defendant’s declarations shall contain: a) The detailed description on everything relating to the confessed offence, in particular the location where it has been committed, the date, the witnesses, the names of the victims and the damaged assets; b) The enquiries relating to co-authors and accomplices as well as any other enquiry useful to the exercise of public action; c) The apologies offered for the offences that the petitioner has committed.” <http://www.inkiko-gacaca.gov.rw/pdf/Law.pdf>.
 - 22 Catherine Watson, *Exile from Rwanda: Background to an Invasion* (Washington, DC: US Committee for Refugees, 1991), p 6.
 - 23 Eugenia Zorbas, “Reconciliation in Post-Genocide Rwanda: Discourse and Practise,” PhD thesis, Development Studies, University of London, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2008.
 - 24 Themes (ii) and (iv) have in particular seen significant evolution. See Zorbas, “Reconciliation in Post-Genocide Rwanda.”
 - 25 The *Report on the Reflection Meetings Held in the Office of the President of the Republic* is littered with references to bad authorities “teaching” Rwandans to hate and kill. For example: “[the] killings which characterised Rwanda during these past forty years, were taught to the people [...] by government which Rwanda had at that time” [sic] (p 52). See Office of the President of the Republic of Rwanda, *Report on the Reflection Meetings Held in the Office of the President of the Republic from May 1998 to March 1999* (Kigali: Republic of Rwanda, August 1999).
 - 26 See Nigel Eltringham and Saskia Van Hoyweghen, “Power and identity in post-genocide Rwanda,” in: R. Doom and J. Orus, eds., *Politics of Identity and Economics of Conflict in the Great Lakes Region* (Brussels: VUB University Press, 2000), p 225.
 - 27 Adame Gaye “Paul Kagame: My Side of the Story,” *West Africa Magazine*, 2000, available at: http://www.gov.rw/government/president/interviews/2000/interviews_my_side.html. Paul Kagame, known as the *homme fort* of the RPF, was inaugurated President of Rwanda on April 22, 2000 and was elected to the same post in 2003 with 95% of the vote in elections criticized by the EU electoral monitoring mission. See Mission d’observation électorale de l’Union Européenne (2003) *Rapport final: Élections présidentielles 25 août 2003, élections législatives, 29 et 30 septembre, 2 octobre 2003*. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/human_rights/eu_election_ass_observ/rwanda/moe_ue_final_2003.pdf

- 28 As we will see below, Rwandan government estimates of genocide perpetrators are contentious among many grassroots respondents, as they are perceived to be inflated. The estimates of c.1 million perpetrators was common in 2005; see for example Arthur Asimwe, "Rwanda estimates one million to face genocide charges," Reuters, January 14, 2005, available at: <http://www.globalpolicy.org/intljustice/tribunals/rwanda/2005/0114rwgencharges.htm>, (accessed January 2, 2006). These estimates have since been revised slightly downward, based on data coming in from *gacaca* courts. As of late 2007, the government expected that 818,000 genocide suspects would be tried by *gacaca* courts, of which c.73%, or 588,960 people, would be tried for murder or attempted murder, roughly equivalent to Categories 1 and 2 crimes as defined in the 2004 *gacaca* law. The 73% figure is derived from Service National des Juridictions *Gacaca*, *Etat d'avancement du Processus Gacaca* (Power Point presentation dated June 10, 2005), Table 2.4.1. The government's 588,960 figure is significantly higher than the estimate arrived at by Straus, who has published the only carefully and transparently reasoned out piece on the question. Straus, who defines perpetrators as people involved in murder or attempted murder, i.e. roughly equivalent to the Rwandan government's Categories 1 and 2, arrives at an estimate of 200,000 perpetrators. See Scott A. Straus "How many perpetrators were there in the Rwandan genocide? An estimate," *Journal of Genocide Research* Vol 6, No 1, 2004 pp 85–98.
- 29 Full text available at: <http://www.preventgenocide.org/law/domestic/rwanda.htm>.
- 30 P. Kagame, "Address to the Nation, Genocide Commemoration Day, Rukumberi, Kibungo Province," April 7, 2001, available at: <http://www.gov.rw/government/president/index.html>.
- 31 See for example P. K. Overdulve, "La fonction du langage et de la communication au Rwanda" (Utrecht: Editions Cook, Netherlands Missionary Council, 1998).
- 32 See Gerard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis, 1959–1994: History of a Genocide* (London: Hurst, 1995), p 245; J.-C. Willame, *Aux Sources de l'hécatombe Rwandaise* (Paris: Harmattan, 1995), p 108.
- 33 Kate Doty, "Rwanda moving forward to a unified, peaceful, just and democratic country, Kagame tells The New York Times," 2003, available at: <http://www.gov.rw/government/president/index.html>.
- 34 Office of the President of the Republic of Rwanda, "The Unity of Rwandans Before the Colonial Period," August 1999 p 8.
- 35 The Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) was the armed wing of the RPF, the force that swept through the country and stopped the genocide in July 1994. At the time, and arguably still today, the RPF was comprised mostly, though not exclusively, of Rwandan Tutsi refugees who had fled Rwanda in waves from 1959 onwards. Seeing their demands to return to Rwanda rebuffed, they opted for a military campaign for repatriation, attacking Rwanda in 1990, launching a civil war that was ongoing as the genocide began. See Dorsey, "Violence and power-building in post-genocide Rwanda."
- 36 See Eltringham, *Accounting for Horror*, pp. 118–124.
- 37 The question of this interviewee refers back to the controversy over "RPF crimes" (chiefly referring to human rights violations committed before, during and after the genocide, on Rwandan soil and in neighbouring Zaïre/Democratic Republic of Congo) which are not raised in front of *gacaca*, national courts, or at the ICTR—where only "genocide (read Hutu) crimes" are allowed to be discussed—feeding the perception that "victors' justice" is being meted out.
- 38 *Inkotanyi* is Kinyarwanda for "invincible" or "fierce warrior"—a nickname for RPA combatants.
- 39 See Paul Jordan, "Witness to genocide—a personal account of the 1995 Kibeho Massacre," 1998, available at: <http://www.anzacday.org.au/history/peacekeeping/anecdotes/kibeho.html>; Marc Brisset-Foucault, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Events at Kibeho, April 1995* (New York: United Nations, 1995).
- 40 Booklets distributed to *gacaca* judges. At the time of fieldwork, 30 years was the highest sentence a *gacaca* court could impose.
- 41 I borrow the term "justes" (*intwali mu butabazi* in Kinyarwanda) from Penal Reform International, *Les Justes: entre oubli et réconciliation? L'exemple de la Province de Kibuye* (London and Kigali: Penal Reform International, 2004).
- 42 Paul Kagame, "Speech by his Excellency Paul Kagame at the 10th Anniversary of the Genocide in Rwanda, Amahoro Stadium, Kigali," April 7, 2004, available at: <http://www.gov.rw/government/president/index.html>.
- 43 I am not aware that the government has provided a definition for "un juste," even though, as part of their pre-trial phase, *gacaca* jurisdictions were tasked with compiling lists of all the "justes" in each cell.
- 44 I calculated the percentages based on a total population figure of 8,648,248, of which 50% is male, and of those, 33% were 14 years or older at the time of the genocide. The demographic figures are from E. Muia, *Rwanda: Situation Analysis on Population, Reproductive Health and Gender* (Addis Ababa: UNFPA, December 2005).
- 45 Catholic Relief Services.

- 46 During fieldwork, the only international NGO with projects in Maraba district was the Irish NGO, Concern. Some respondents had radios with which they listened to news about how foreigners were helping Rwandans (or not) but most culled their impressions of the International Community from hearsay.
- 47 Gaye, "Paul Kagame: My Side of the Story."
- 48 On the legal banning of ethnicity, in the name of promoting reconciliation, there has been a "criminalization" of any deviation from the RPF party line via the introduction of a 2001 law banning "divisionism"—at times referred to as "genocide ideology" or "sectarianism." As the terms have never been clearly defined, in the law itself or elsewhere, this has allowed the RPF to slander, arrest, intimidate any and all sources of potential dissent. Accordingly, members of the only opposition party, the MDR (dismantled since 2003), prominent individuals and organizations (the editor of the Rwandan paper *Umuseso*, international NGOs such as Care and broadcasters such as the BBC and VOA for example) have all been accused of, and some tried on, divisionism charges.
- 49 Richard A. Wilson, *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Legitimizing the Post-Apartheid State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp 13–18.

Notes on contributor

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