

Living under “quiet insecurity”: Religion and popular culture in post-genocide Rwanda

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Abstract

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Rwanda

This thesis explores religion and popular culture in post-genocide Rwanda. In particular, I examine the rise of the new Pentecostal churches – the *abarokore* (“the saved ones”) – and the reconstruction of the “modern” music industry after the genocide. I argue that contemporary social life in Rwanda is defined by “quiet insecurity” and “temporal dissonance”. I employ these concepts to take seriously how young people in Rwanda create alternative pasts, presents, and futures for themselves within an authoritarian political context. While the government attempts to control the historical narrative and impose a particular developmentalist “vision” of the future onto its citizens, young people articulate and perform their hopes, fears, dreams, and anxieties within the realms of religion and popular culture, creating “unofficial” narratives that both converge with and contest those of the state. Against the prevailing academic consensus of Kigali as silent, I instead reposition the capital as a site of creativity wherein noisy debates take place about Rwandan identity and culture. I examine the new *abarokore* churches as important affective spaces that allow for healing and the keeping of secrets. Yet the fact that these same churches tend to be mono-ethnic suggests the limits of the born-again project. Conversely, the community

imagined within popular culture, particularly through hip hop songs, is more inclusive, with identity forged through the mutual experience of pain and suffering. I pay particular attention to gender, and consider how patriarchal tendencies in the new churches and popular culture undermine the country's "progressive" gender policies. By examining Pentecostal services, conversion testimonies, song lyrics, the Kinyarwanda-language entertainment media, and discourses of musical corruption, I explore how young people respond to a context of quiet insecurity through quiet agency – they actively seek to transform and resolve their life circumstances, however modest or temporary their transformations or resolutions prove to be.

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Table of Contents

Glossary of acronyms used in text.....	9
Introduction	
Living under “quiet insecurity”: Religion and popular culture in post-genocide Rwanda.....	10
Koudou’s song: “No matter what goes on I’ll love my land”	14
Defining quiet insecurity	18
Defining temporal dissonance	22
“Quiet agency” and the “timescapes” of youth.....	28
Surveying the field: Moving away from resistance	29
Redefining the political: Religion and popular culture.....	34
A brief demographic and historical note.....	39
Chapter outline.....	44
A polyphonic methodology	47
Under the threat of <i>gacaca</i>	49
Chapter 1	
Claiming a “subversive” history?: Catholic complicity, Protestant revival, and the new <i>abarokore</i> churches	53
The politics of history	56
Traditional Rwandan religion	59
The arrival of Christianity.....	61
The Church and the Hutu Revolution	66
The Church and genocide	70
The Protestant East African Revival and the early <i>abarokore</i>	71
The <i>abarokore</i> and power	75
The critical potential of the <i>abarokore</i>	78
Conclusion	79
Chapter 2	
Spiritual temporalities and the new <i>abarokore</i> churches: Affect, silence, and noise....	82
The post-genocide spiritual landscape	85
The arrival of the new churches.....	87
True Revival Church (TRC): A brief sketch	91

Spiritualising the past and present	94
Véronique's testimony: Transforming a "stone", emotions, and secrets.....	98
Fabrice's testimony: "The choir is like a car that takes the church"	103
Fear, noise, and silence	106
"Hidden dynamics": The ethnic make-up of the new churches.....	109
Conclusion	112
Chapter 3	
<i>Umukobwa ntagira idini (A girl does not have a religion): Gender politics in the abarokore churches</i>	114
The post-genocide rise of women in Rwandan politics	117
"Re-imagining" gender	120
Women's "precarious" gains	124
Pastor Herve's sermon	126
Christian patriarchy and the "political spiritualities" of gender	128
Young women in the church	130
Marie Claire's testimony: "Transfer without transition" and legacy.....	131
Agathe's testimony: "I was so much in theories"	136
Jeanette's testimony: The dangers of a dreaded musician	141
" <i>Umukobwa ntagira idini</i> ": A girl does not have religion.....	144
Conclusion	146
Chapter 4	
<i>Rwanda, Shima Imana!: The Politics of Thanksgiving</i>	148
The new churches and the state: Paul Kagame and Rick Warren	150
" <i>Si bo Imana</i> ": Warren and spiritual legitimacy.....	152
Rwanda Thanksgiving Day: " <i>Yesu ashimwe!</i> "	154
"Gitwaza, Mihigo Kizito disagree on God's mercy"	159
The controversy	162
Of "fruits" and too difficult breaks	165
"Genocidal discourse" and controlling spiritual meaning	167
Regulating registration: "Spreading the good gospel of the government"	171
Conclusion	173

Chapter 5

Starting from zero: The birth of the “modern” music industry	178
Traditional Rwandan music	179
Music and politics, from 1959 onwards.....	183
“Rwandan rumba”: Popular music under Habyarimana	186
Music and the RPF	192
Bikindi and “hate media”	194
Musicians killed in the genocide, and after	197
Starting music again: The role of the churches.....	199
Modern dance groups.....	201
Private stations and private studios.....	204
KGB (Kigali Boys): The “pioneers”	205
Rafiki: The king of coga	208
Mani Martin: Longing and peace.....	211
Conclusion	214

Chapter 6

Giving messages to small people: The temporalities of hip hop identity.....	218
Hip hop in Rwanda: A brief history.....	221
Rwandicising hip hop: The new school and the old school.....	227
Fandom: Speaking for “small people” and the music of sorrow	229
“Umurashi” (The shooter): The reign of the street king	234
“Bye-bye Nyakatsi”: The dangers of the “new” Kigali	240
Critical nostalgia	247
Fiston: Taking off the “blindness” of Rwandans	250
Conclusion	253

Chapter 7

“Pleasure girls”, <i>agaciro</i>, and not wasting time: Women in Popular Culture.....	255
“Wasted” girls and the politics of appropriateness	257
“Arandusebeje” (She shames us): The dangers of inappropriate behaviour.....	260
The gendered nature of celebrity	262
<i>Ruswa y’igitsina</i> (sexual corruption)	264
Fame and <i>agaciro</i>	266

Miss Jojo: The pursuit of music and being the “rightest person”	267
Leah’s “message”	272
Clarisse: Singing for Jesus and not wasting time	276
Conclusion	280
Chapter 8	
When a tree is not a tree: The politics of musical corruption	283
Introduction.....	284
“Zero” tolerance for corruption	287
More than a tree: <i>Igit</i>	290
<i>Gushishura</i> and “pirate” modernity	294
PGGSS Season 1: The dirty politics of music	298
PGGSS Season 2: Regionalism and “Me2U”	301
The fallout: Of thieves and conmen.....	304
Placing “live” versus “playback” in context: <i>Gacaca</i> , truth, and claims.....	307
Conclusion	311
Conclusion	
Kizito Mihigo and the “value of suffering” (<i>akamaro k’akababaro</i>).....	314
“ <i>Igisobanuro cy’urupfu</i> ”: A song of suffering.....	317
Works Cited	331

Glossary of acronyms used in text

ADEPR	<i>Association des Eglises de Pentecôte du Rwanda</i>
AgDF	Agaciro Development Fund
AoG	Assemblies of God
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CPR	<i>Conseil Protestant au Rwanda</i>
EDPRS	Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy
FDLR	<i>Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda</i>
FOBACOR	Forum of Born Again Churches and Christian Organizations in Rwanda
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
INRS	<i>Institut National de Recherche Scientifique</i>
KMP Foundation	Kizito Mihigo for Peace Foundation
LIRAM	Association of Rwandan Musicians
MINALOC	Ministry of Local Government
MINECOFIN	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
MINISPOC	Ministry of Sports and Culture
MRND	<i>Mouvement républicain national pour la démocratie et le développement</i>
NISR	National Institute of Statistics Rwanda
NUR	National University of Rwanda
NURC	National Unity and Reconciliation Commission
ORINFOR	Rwanda Bureau of Information and Broadcasting
PARMEHUTU	<i>Parti du Mouvement de l'Emancipation Hutu</i>
PEAR	<i>Province de l'Eglise Anglicane au Rwanda</i>
PGSS Competition	Primus Guma Guma Super Star Competition
RBO	Religious-Based Organization
RDF	Rwandan Defence Forces
RGB	Rwanda Governance Board
RNC	Rwanda National Congress
RNP	Rwanda National Police
RPA	Rwandese Patriotic Army
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
RPHC4	Rwanda Population and Housing Census 4
RTL	<i>Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines</i>
RTV	Rwanda Television
SACCOs	Saving and Credit Cooperative Societies
SBMPC	Belgian Protestant Missions Society for the Congo
SPM	Swedish Pentecostal Mission
TRC	True Revival Church
UNAMIR	United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda

Introduction

Living under “quiet insecurity”: Religion and popular culture in post-genocide

Rwanda

Just about every conversation I had in Rwanda involved some version of the following exchange:

“Andrea, don’t you love Rwanda?”

“Yes”, I would declare, nodding and smiling.

“What do you love about it?”

“Hmm...” I would say, mulling it over, unsure of how to respond. Inevitably I would mumble something about how friendly Rwandans were, or how hospitable.

“But what about the security (*umutekano*)?” my interlocutor would prod. “Rwanda has top security. It’s not like in Congo – those Congolese are crazy, so much corruption! And the climate here, don’t you love the climate? It’s not too hot like Burundi or Tanzania. And Rwanda is so beautiful – *igihugu cy’imisozi igihumbi* (the land of a thousand hills). And clean! You should see the dirty streets of Nairobi or Kampala. And, of course, you can’t forget the *abanyarwandakazi* (Rwandan women). Rwanda has the most beautiful ladies around, everyone knows it! *Ni byo?*”

Although Rwanda is known in the West almost exclusively for the 1994 genocide

during which up to one million Tutsi and moderate Hutu were killed in 100 days¹,

Rwandans have their own criteria for distinguishing their place in the world. During my 16 months of fieldwork in the country on religion and popular culture, particularly on the post-genocide rise of the *abarokore* (“the saved ones”) Pentecostal churches and the reconstruction of the “modern” music industry, I heard Rwandans boast over and over again about their very own “Big 5”: security, cleanliness, moderate climate, unforgettable topography, and beautiful women. These were the attributes Rwandans themselves chose to emphasise rather than the skulls, machetes, and mass graves that have become the country’s “standard images of horror” (Straus 2006a:15; Norridge 2009). Friends spoke of Rwanda’s

¹ In 2008, the RPF amended the constitution so that the 1994 Rwandan must be referred to as the “genocide against the Tutsis” (in Kinyarwanda, *genocide yakorewe abatutsi*).

lush rolling hills, long-horned *inyambo* cows, and intricately woven *agaseke* baskets as equally characteristic of Rwanda and *umuco nyarwanda* (Rwandan culture). They spoke of centuries of verbal art forms and dance, of a people who had long emphasised the importance of *agaciro* (self-respect or dignity) and had believed in one God and claimed Him as their own, *Imana y'u Rwanda* (the God of Rwanda), long before the Christian God had been “parachuted” in, as one friend jokingly described it.

Indeed, these disparate images and understandings of the country – of the tragic past of the genocide; of a dynamic yet reflective present; of a bright future (*ejo hazaza*) just around the corner – jostled uneasily against each other, creating a complex “representational economy” (Keane 2007:18). While bleached skulls and tattered mounds of clothing filled the country’s many genocide memorials – the Kigali Genocide Memorial in Gisozi being the most well-known and visited – local musicians and impossibly graceful traditional dancers peered down from billboards for beer, telephone networks, even banks, representing – and selling – the country to itself. “...*yacu iwacu*”, an ad for Primus, the country’s most popular beer brand and sponsor of a pioneering local music competition, proclaimed, a hand thrusting a bottle forward, an image of one of Rwanda’s green islands in the background, the “i” of “iwacu” filled in with stripes of blue, yellow, and green, the colours of the Rwandan flag. “Our home”. Upbeat and inspiring gospel songs spoke of the wonders of Pentecostal conversion. “*Amahoro, ibyishimo, munezero/bihora mu mutima wanjye*” (“Peace, happiness, [and] joy are ever in my heart”), crooned Gaby Kamanzi in the chorus of her infectious gospel hit, “Amahoro” (“Peace”). (Catholics rolled their eyes and accused *abarokore* pastors of exploiting a traumatised population for their own profit.) Enterprising music producers shot videos for the latest R&B tracks beside swimming pools

in fancy new hotels, with singers decked out in the latest “swag”, from American streetwear to thick silver and gold chains. Hip hop artists rapped their verses amidst the ruins of destroyed buildings or while roaming the streets of Nyamirambo, Kigali’s so-called “ghetto”. Paparazzi-style celebrity websites described in intricate and enthusiastic detail the everyday lives of the country’s *abahanzi* (performers), taking readers on photographic tours of their modest homes – here is his shoe collection! here is her kitchen! – and relishing in the twists and turns of their love affairs and “beefs”.

The young people I knew, in other words, refused to be defined by Rwanda’s “*amateka mabi*” (bad history) and were working hard to create new forms of identity and belonging through Pentecostal practice and participation in the country’s booming entertainment industry (*imyidagaduro*). In speaking of Rwanda’s culture and history in fond, even patriotic, terms, they were not merely parroting the official discourse of the ruling party, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which, as various critics have pointed out, rules the country with an iron fist (Reyntjens 2004; Straus and Waldorf 2011a; Thomson 2013a). Under a government of “national unity and reconciliation”, the country’s citizens are encouraged to discard the ethnic identities of Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa and consider themselves *banyarwanda* (Rwandan), ready to rebuild a peaceful and united Rwanda. Various state programmes modelled on “traditional” forms – from *gacaca* (community courts used to try cases of genocide) and *umuganda* (monthly community work) to *ingando* and *itorero* (civic education programmes) – have led scholars to claim that the RPF is leading the country down a path of “social engineering coupled with sophisticated authoritarianism” (Straus and Waldorf 2011b:13). An ambitious Vision 2020 development plan aims to transform the country into a middle-income economy by the year 2020, with

hopes of Rwanda becoming the Singapore of Africa. Every aspect of daily life is regulated, with laws banning public urination, spitting, street vendors, and “playing music outdoors in the evening” (Sommers 2012:14); others mandate seat-belt use and the wearing of shoes in public (Longman 2011:41). Fines can be doled out for offences ranging from “‘Having’ a second wife”; “Consulting traditional ‘healer’ without authorization”; or “Selling home made products like cheese, milk, etc., without authorization”, amongst many others (Ingelaere 2010:52). The ambiguously defined 2008 law on “genocide ideology” has been used to silence the regime’s critics (Begley 2013; Waldorf 2011). Although the law was revised in 2013 and now offers a “more precise definition of the offense and the requirement to demonstrate intent behind the crime”, several articles of the law still “retain language that could be used to criminalize free speech” (Human Rights Watch 2014a). Indeed, language itself has become heavily policed. A comprehensive 66-page “guideline” – with lists of words that were and were not to be used (*bavuga/ntibavuga*) – specified the “appropriate” language that journalists were allowed to employ when referring to the Genocide against the Tutsis (Uwimana, Mfurankunda, and Mbungiramihigo 2011). Civil society remains “intimidated, co-opted, and suppressed” (Longman 2011:26).² Opposition leaders and outspoken journalists have been threatened and killed.³ The law regulating the media, revised in 2013, “provides some safeguards for freedom of the press but contains too many provisions which pose a threat to journalists and the independence of the media” (Article 19 2013).

² Speaking at a panel entitled “Can it be replicated? A look at Rwanda’s development gains in context” in April 2013 at the Skoll World Forum in Oxford, Minister of Health Agnes Binagwaho called NGOs who do not support the country’s national development plan “vampires”.

³ Most recently, the coordinator of Transparency International’s Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre in Rubavu, Gustave Sharangabo Makonene, was murdered in July 2013, his body found on the shores of Lake Kivu. He had been strangled (Musoni 2013). I discuss the case in more depth in Chapter 8.

High-level party cadres who disagree with Kagame's "vision" of the country are forced into exile. The year 2014 began with news that Patrick Karegeya, the former head of Rwanda's intelligence service, had been found murdered in a Johannesburg hotel room. After falling out with Kagame, Karegeya fled the country in 2007 and had been living in South Africa under political asylum (Patrick Karegeya 2014).⁴ He and fellow exile Lieutenant General Faustin Kayumba Nyamwasa, also a former RPF loyalist who has himself survived two assassination attempts in South Africa, had formed the opposition party, the Rwanda National Congress (RNC), in 2010. When asked for an official response to Karegeya's death on Twitter, Rwandan Foreign Minister Louise Mushikiwabo responded with the following tweet: "It's not about how u start, it's how u finish. This man was a self-declared enemy of my Gov & my country. U expect pity?"⁵ She then became embroiled in a heated Twitter spat with Karegeya's son. The "reach" (Purdeková 2011a:493) of the state seems to know no borders – and, as Karegeya's son put it, "no social media etiquette" – and exiles in the UK and the US have also been warned by local authorities of plans to kill them (Patrick Karegeya 2014).

Koudou's song: "No matter what goes on I'll love my land"

Yet within the rhythms of everyday life and the textures of popular culture, the relationship that young Rwandans maintained with their country and their collective past was complex, conflicting, and highly personal. Let's consider, for a moment, the chorus of "My Land", a

⁴ Karegeya had long been a thorn in the administration's side. He and Nyamwasa had recently accused Kagame of being responsible for shooting down the plane carrying then president Juvénal Habyarimana in April 1994, the event that sparked the genocide (RFI 2013). Kagame vehemently denies all involvement.

⁵ For his part, Prime Minister Habumuremyi tweeted: "Betraying citizens and their country that made you a man shall always bear consequences to you", yet equivocated on whether or not he was referring to Karegeya's death.

thoughtful ballad written by Koudou, a one-time member of the popular boy band The Brothers but now a breakaway solo artist:

I will tell the world I love my land
I know what I cannot change with my hand
I'll use my mind
Je sais que ceux avant moi ont souffert/I know that those before me suffered
Pour me léguer ma part de terre/To bequeath to me my share of land
Reconnaissant je serai fier de mon nom, mon pays/Grateful, I will be proud of my
name, my country
De la touche couleur apportée a ma vie/Of the coloured touch given to my life
No matter what goes on I'll love my land
Unlike songs commissioned by the government to promote its various programmes

– especially genocide commemoration songs, which have become a genre in their own right

– Koudou's "My Land" was a critical reflection on what it meant to be Rwandan today, in light of the country's past and the RPF's ongoing attempts to control and "re-imagine" (Pottier 2002) the historical narrative. "No matter what goes on I'll love my land", the speaker declares, suggesting that while the country has undergone dramatic periods of violence and political upheaval, his ties to Rwanda will endure. In the first and second verse he identifies himself as "a *sope* from the roots willing to turn the dark side page of our history". Here *sope* refers to the colloquial term *abasope*, a shortened form of *abasopecyia*, the name given to Rwandans, both Hutu and Tutsi alike, who were born and raised in the country.⁶ "My Land" makes an important claim that Rwanda is more than its politics and the current RPF regime, made up predominantly, it should be noted, of Tutsi returnees from Uganda. By defining himself proudly as an *umusope*, the speaker suggests

⁶ *Abasopecyia* derives from SOPECYA (*Société Pétrolière de Cyangugu*), which was allegedly the only petrol station in the country to stay open during the genocide. Despite the government's attempts to create an inclusive Rwandan identity, I had friends who preferred to identify themselves, like Koudou, as *abasope*. The term *abasope* also must be understood in relationship to the other groups of returnees who were all given their own, mostly pejorative, names when they came back to the country after 1994: *abaGP* or *aba Garde Présidentielle* (returnees from Burundi, purportedly in reference to their greedy and materialistic nature); *abaDubai* (returnees from Congo, in reference to their love of flashing around their supposed wealth); and *abasajja* (returnees from Uganda, deriving from the Luganda word for people).

that the government's inclusive *banyarwanda* identity is inadequate; that there is a profound difference between Rwandans born in Rwanda and returnees, mostly Tutsi, who came back to the country immediately after 1994. Crucially, the difference is not ethnic but experiential and embodied. It suggests that the fact of having lived through the genocide – be it as a survivor, perpetrator, bystander, witness, or any other combination therein – engenders very particular kinds of social, moral, and political knowledge and praxis. The love of land the song articulates is subjective, historicised, and defiant; it is born of the lived – and inherited – experience of suffering and survival.

A similar sentiment can be found in the popular hip hop song “Mama Rwanda” by the rapper Fireman, featuring Afrobeat singer Kamichi.⁷ The final line – and the only one in English – declares: “We all got same colour,/We all got same mother./Even if not same struggle,/But we all got same sorrow”. While Rwandans may have experienced different forms of struggle in their past, they were united by the mutual experience of *sorrow*. In the song's imagery, Mama Rwanda carries everyone on her back. Both “My Land” and “Mama Rwanda” – along with countless other popular songs that formed the soundtrack to my fieldwork – suggest that it is this collective sorrow and suffering, differentially experienced, that bound young Rwandans together. At the same time that many young people were grateful for the opportunities available to them under the RPF – in education and business, for example, particularly for women – they were also keenly aware of the sacrifices demanded of them by the state. Rwanda's impressive reconstruction – one million people lifted out of poverty between 2006 and 2012 (Kagire and Majyambere 2012); a national

⁷ It should be noted that Kinyarwanda Afrobeat bears little resemblance to the Nigerian Afrobeat pioneered by Fela Kuti. Following informants and local industry parlance, however, I refer to it as Afrobeat. One friend who had worked as a DJ in Europe and the UK thought this music should instead be called “Afropop”, although the term never gained traction.

healthcare system that has resulted in “the most improvements of health in history” (Emery 2013); the highest percentage of women in parliament in the world (Munyaneza 2013) – came at a cost. One was always worried that the neighbours were listening in; important conversations were never held on the phone. Friends in the entertainment industry spoke of being picked up by the secret police for supposed ties to diasporic opposition groups; of being thrown in jail when their songs were seen to be too political. An outspoken *murokore* pastor turned off, then took the battery out of, his phone – “You can never be too careful” – before railing against what he perceived to be the government’s many infractions on freedom of speech and freedom of worship.

Friends who, on the surface, seemed to be the very beneficiaries of the boom in the country’s Pentecostal movement and entertainment industry often spoke of the compromises they felt forced to make, of facing intimidation and interrogation if they dared to question official doctrine. Rwanda may now represent the land of “a thousand opportunities”, with anyone able to become a star pastor or singer overnight, but it was also governed by what friends and informants called “hidden dynamics” and even “silent terror”. While the Rwandan state policed its citizens’ political behaviour, the new Pentecostal churches policed believers’ moral behaviour, ostracising anyone who did not adhere to their strict codes of comportment. “Tens of thousands of local leaders oversee their communities” (2007:345–6), Baker tells us of Rwanda’s policing system. “Criminal and socially unacceptable behaviour is noted and recorded and passed up the numerous layers of local government and security structures”. In the *abarokore* churches, unacceptable *moral* behaviour was noted by the faithful and passed up to church elders and pastors. This “mimicking” (Purdeková 2011a:480) of police structures within the

abarokore churches should come as no surprise given the intimate relationship, as Piot (2010:59) has pointed out, between charismatic Christianity and the necropolitical. “Borrowing state sovereignty’s toolkit”, he writes, “it too suspends everyday norms, creates exceptional states and carceral regimes, and wages war on those who defy its authority” (2010:59).

Yet, as we will see, although the church and the state may share a “toolkit”, young *abarokore* used Pentecostal discourse and practice to understand their past, present, and future in new ways, and to create alternative conceptions of personhood and community. Similarly, the country’s popular musicians offered alternative ways to “be” Rwandan, “veiling” (White 1993:36) critiques of the state and the country’s wider socio-political inequalities through slang, allusion, and allegory. These processes, I suggest, are intimately connected to conflicting understandings and experiences of time, which create a pervasive sense of mistrust, suspicion, and fear. I label the former temporal dissonance and the latter quiet insecurity, and argue that they characterise social life in Rwanda today. Their relationship to each other is not linear – i.e. temporal dissonance does not come before and therefore cause quiet insecurity or vice versa – but rather each feeds off of and into the other. As these concepts form the theoretical framework of this thesis, I define them in more detail below.

Defining quiet insecurity

Building upon work on uncertainty and insecurity (Archambault 2013; Ashforth 1998; Berthomé, Bonhomme, and Delaplace 2012; Cooper and Pratten 2015; Eriksen, Bal, and Salemink 2010; Haram and Yamba 2009; Pelkmans 2013a), I am interested in how the fears, concerns, hopes, aspirations, and anxieties of young Rwandans are articulated and

performed through Pentecostal practice and popular music in a context of “quiet insecurity”. I favour “insecurity” to “uncertainty” not only because, as we will see, this is the term used by one of my informants, but also because it allows me to consider how insecurity operates alongside the all-seeing security apparatus of the RPF state (Baker 2007; Begley 2013; Purdeková 2011a; Thomson 2013a:123–4). Uncertainty tends to be associated with unpredictability and risk (Haram and Yamba 2009), which is not necessarily how the young people I knew viewed their life-worlds. If anything, hardship and suffering were considered to be highly predictable and unavoidable. Whyte (2009) has articulated the difference between uncertainty and insecurity succinctly, and it is germane to my purposes here. While uncertainty is “a state of mind”, she writes, insecurity can be seen as “a social condition” and “a state of limited resources for action” (2009:214). Insecurity, she argues, prompts people to attempt to assert control using “the social and cultural resources at hand” (2009:214), yet these efforts often bring “unexpected consequences” (2009:216).

My use of the term “quiet insecurity” derives from conversations I had with one of my closest informants, JP. JP was a young Hutu musician married to a survivor. His father had been heavily involved in the genocide, which I only discovered after many months of friendship. I had been at one of JP’s concerts when a mutual friend leaned over to me and whispered, “JP’s father was a very bad man”. He intimated that he had been one of the ring leaders of the genocide and had met a particularly violent end. The fact that JP could become a musician, my friend told me, was testament to the development of the country. JP could succeed regardless of who his father had been. (JP himself, however, was less optimistic of his chances for musical success.) I never told JP what I had learned, and he

would occasionally mention his father to me in fond terms. Indeed, as Fujii has written, in post-genocide Rwanda rumours, inventions, denials, evasions, and silences – what she terms “meta-data” – are more important than “truthfulness” as they reveal what can and cannot be said to others (2010:232; see also White 2000). Although genocide testimonials have become a genre in their own right (Godfrey 2012; Peterson 2012:289–91), in everyday life the past was revealed in random snippets and snatches over time after sufficient trust had been painstakingly built up. There were, as Fujii writes, “different shades of ‘truth’ and ‘lies’” (2010:240).

JP was well connected in the local music and media scene and I would often visit him at his home to discuss the latest “news”. By “news” we did not mean what the state-controlled media was reporting – no one I knew believed that official media outlets reported the “truth” – but rather what we had been able to glean from friends or *la radio trottoir* more generally. JP was, of course, much better informed than I was and I would turn to him for “unofficial” versions of reported events. One day when I was visiting him in November 2012, we began discussing the M23 insurgency in eastern DR Congo. Despite the government’s claims that it had nothing to do with M23, a rebel group that had taken up arms against the Congolese government for marginalising Tutsis and failing to deliver on the terms set out in a 2009 peace deal, everyone I knew was convinced that Rwanda was actively supporting them. JP sighed and told me that the M23 controversy was yet another example of what he had long ago come to realise: that Rwandan social life was ruled by “quiet insecurity”. While on the surface Rwanda appeared to be a safe, stable, and economically vibrant democracy, he explained, underneath this façade people felt insecure in their lives and relationships. No one trusted anyone, and the fact that it was all but

impossible to figure out the “truth” about anything – from whether Rwanda was involved in the eastern Congo to whether one’s partner was having an affair to whether one of the country’s “stars” could actually sing – made this insecurity “quiet”, and all the more insidious. Not only did this “quiet insecurity” govern JP’s professional life – he wondered whether his music career had stalled because of who his father had been – but his married life as well. Although he loved his wife, he worried that she was unfaithful to him. When he confronted her she strongly denied it and JP had no way of proving otherwise. He could ask mutual acquaintances but there was no way of guaranteeing that they were telling the truth as they could be motivated by jealousy (*ishyari*). “I just have to let it go”, he told me. A corrosive form of “insecure sociality” (Eriksen 2010:11) governed even the most intimate of relationships.

I suggest that “quiet insecurity” is a helpful way to characterise contemporary social life in Rwanda today. Ashforth has defined “spiritual insecurity” as “the condition of danger, doubt, and fear arising from exposure to the action of unseen forces bent upon causing harm” (1998:41; see also Chitando 2009; Christiansen 2009; Salemink 2010). While this definition is helpful – indeed, as I discuss in Chapter 2, the complicity of the mainline churches in the genocide created a particular form of spiritual crisis that led many Rwandans to convert to the new *abarokore* churches – the adjective “quiet” allows me to focus not just on the spiritual aspect of insecurity but also on its political and temporal dimensions. Although human security has been theorised in economic and political terms since the mid-1990s – “freedom from want” and “freedom from fear” – more recent attempts have called attention to “existential security”, emphasising the “cultural, cognitive, emotional, religious and symbolic dimensions” of security (Salemink 2010:265). My use of

“quiet insecurity” is in line with this analytical trajectory. Insecurity, it should be pointed out, is not necessarily negative, and can offer opportunities to certain well-positioned entrepreneurs (Eriksen 2010:12–3). Indeed, as we saw above, popular musicians and rappers derive their success from their ability to articulate the hardships and difficulties of living under quiet insecurity in creative and humorous ways. Crucially, insecurity is differentially experienced and dependent upon one’s position vis-à-vis the state (Evers 2010): publicly supporting its discourses, practices, and policies can lead to a greater sense of security, but this can dissipate if one aligns oneself with the wrong parties (see Kizito Mihigo case in the Conclusion).

“Quiet”, furthermore, draws attention not to the visible but rather to the aural/oral, highlighting the importance of orality within the Rwandan cultural universe. We can think here not of the politics of invisibility (Weiss 2009:108; Perry 2004:123) but rather of inaudibility, of who is included within the listening public. For “quiet” can imply, as we will see, coded, cryptic, indirect, even allegorical; meaning that requires work to decipher. Rather than focusing on “silence”, which has become a recurring trope in Rwanda studies (Goodfellow 2013; Thomson 2013a; Burnet 2012), I focus instead on what is said, performed, sung, shouted, rapped, or prayed for by young people, often in very public ways. What are the “messages” (*abatumwa*) contained in these performances? Who speaks them and who hears them? What kinds of affective communities do they create? In this way I hope to push Rwandan scholarship in new directions.

Defining temporal dissonance

Instead of merely labelling the contemporary Rwandan socio-political world as one of quiet insecurity, however, I want to go a step further to consider how and why this has become

the case. Drawing on how temporality and the future have recently been theorised within anthropology (Appadurai 2013; Dalsgaard and Frederiksen 2013; Nielsen 2011; Cole 2010; Crapanzano 2007; 2004; 2003; Guyer 2007; Miyazaki 2006; 2004), I suggest that “quiet insecurity” in Rwanda is created in part by conflicting understandings and experiences of time. Here I find Koselleck’s (2004) work on historical time particularly helpful. To Koselleck experience and expectation constitute history. Experience, he tells us, “is present past, whose events have been incorporated and can be remembered” (2004:259). Expectation, on the other hand, “is the future made present; it directs itself to the not-yet, to the nonexperienced, to that which is to be revealed. Hope and fear, wishes and desires, cares and rational analysis, receptive display and curiosity; all enter into expectation and constitute it” (2004:259). Yet under modernity, particularly through the notion of progress, the difference between the two has “increasingly expanded” (2004:263) until experience and expectation have diverged completely from each other. The “temporal structure of the modern” is ultimately one wherein “the lesser the experience, the greater the expectation” (2004:274).

Applying these observations to Rwanda, I call this tension between experience and expectation temporal dissonance and relate it to the politicisation of time more generally in the country. The RPF state attempts to exert interpretative control over the country’s past; enforces and polices unity and reconciliation in the present; and forcibly propels its citizens into its own narrowly defined concept of the future (Waldorf 2009:104). “True to its Vision [2020], Rwanda is steaming ahead at breakneck speed (much faster than its peers) and, willing or reluctant, the population is being pulled along” (2012:5), Campioni and Noack observe. In addition to working towards the long-term target of the year 2020, the

government has also developed “medium-term” strategies – in the form of the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) – to ensure that Rwanda’s future is mapped out to the smallest detail.⁸ The country is currently focused on EDPRS 2 because the government was so successful in achieving its goals that it had to revise its original poverty reduction targets (Kagire and Majyambere 2012). Contrary to stereotypical representations of an Africa stuck in the past with a political imagination dismissed as “incomprehensible, pathological, and abnormal” (Mbembe 2001:8), Rwanda can be defined by its speed and a political imagination that strives towards transparency, accountability, and “rationality”.

If conversations with JP helped me to understand contemporary Rwanda through the framework of quiet insecurity, then my understanding of temporal dissonance became clear through conversations with Christine, an actor and cultural activist. Christine and I were once chatting about the importance of culture and the arts in Rwanda’s development – and their politicisation by the state – and she surprised me by emphasising the centrality of time to this process. As she remarked:

The one thing that we *think* we don’t have in Rwanda is time. We think that we are late, we are behind, and with the genocide we are just running to get where the other people are – And then we do everything quickly...

This is the most challenging thing. That’s why, you know, you take all the essence, all the flesh of the concept out and then you just give people fast food without all the proteins, all the vitamins, all the things that are in the concept of *agaciro* [self-respect or dignity]– This is what I think we are doing. We think we are late and we are behind people. And it’s not bad to be behind people. Because you learn from others. You don’t make the mistakes they made... We should take our time and do things properly. Because otherwise we will come back to the same thing. We will realise that we didn’t do anything.

⁸ EDPRS 2 aims to accelerate growth and reduce poverty through economic transformation, rural development, productivity, youth employment, and accountable governance between 2013 and 2018. The concrete goals of the strategy are to increase GDP per capital to \$1,000; reduce the poverty rate to below 30%; and reduce the extreme poverty rate to below 9%.

Christine's comments suggest that in its haste to create a "new" Rwanda the government has disherited a rich and diversified cultural history, instrumentalising it into "fast food" for its own political gains. Although the most well-documented examples of this reinvention of tradition are, as mentioned earlier, *gacaca*, *umuganda*, *ingando*, and *itorero*, during my fieldwork, as Christine pointed out, the buzzword was *agaciro*. A key cultural concept, *agaciro* means self-respect or dignity, and it is tied to local understandings not only of patriotism and love of country that existed long before the RPF took power, but also to proper bodily and emotional comportment. *Agaciro* implied giving value to the culture, tradition, and history of Rwanda *and* giving value to oneself. We can see Koudou's "My Land" as expressing a certain kind of *agaciro*. Yet through the government's creation of the Agaciro Development Fund (AgDF), the concept had become synonymous with the financial support of the state, yet another *umusanzu* (contribution) that Rwandans were all but forced to make (Purdeková 2011a:482). The Fund asks Rwandans to donate money to unspecified "key national projects and initiatives"⁹, and in practice this meant that every working person in Rwanda "voluntarily" handed over the equivalent of a month's salary. Although the Fund had been established in August 2012, it was widely seen by Rwandans as a way for the government to make up for foreign aid cuts. When a U.N.-commissioned report by the Group of Experts accused Rwanda of supporting M23 in November 2012, various Western governments suspended their aid, withdrawing a total of US\$245 million. For a country that depends upon foreign aid for around 40% of its budget, this was a considerable blow.¹⁰ After these aid cuts, the AgDF drive kicked into high gear. Private

⁹ <https://www.agaciro.org>.

¹⁰ "It was the first time Kagame had ever lost a major public-relations battle", Gettleman (2013) noted of the withdrawal of foreign aid. Yet powerful friends of Rwanda stepped in to plead her case. Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and American business tycoon Howard G. Buffett (2013) urged Western donors to "stand

companies, government ministries, and diaspora communities competed with each other to see who could make the biggest contribution.¹¹ By the end of October 2014, the Fund had raised 23.712 billion Rwf, more than US\$34 million, but significantly less than the withdrawn US\$245 million.

The country's rapid development, then, came at a price for its citizens. "Clinging to the past, being stuck in memories, working slowly on the transforming of feelings and relations do not fit within the predominant government conception of development as fast-paced, forward-bound transformation" (2012:192), Purdeková writes. Indeed, Kagame himself has characterised the immediate past in highly negative terms. "[M]uch of the past five decades [in Africa] up to the mid-1990s were characterized by instability, conflict, weak institutions, and dismal economic performance", he declared during a speech to the diaspora in Cambridge, going on to call these years the "lost decades" (Turner 2013:272–3). These "lost decades" – which coincide, we should note, with the governments of former Rwandan presidents Grégoire Kayibanda and Juvénal Habyarimana – are juxtaposed against the good governance and "purposeful" vision offered by the RPF. "There is a view that development is a marathon, not a sprint", Kagame (2013) wrote in an op-ed for *The Wall Street Journal*. "We do not agree. Development is a marathon that must be run at a sprint". The Minister of Health, Agnes Binagwaho, has voiced her dislike of piloting healthcare projects before rolling them out nationwide, asking: "If something is good, I don't know why we should pilot it in a portion, why those people in this district have the

with Rwanda", arguing that cutting aid would not solve the underlying conflict and would only harm the Rwandan people. It would also "ris[k] undoing one of Africa's great success stories", the pair claimed.

¹¹ Local musicians also got into the game. During my fieldwork I attended various concerts with the proceeds of ticket sales going towards the Agaciro Development Fund.

special [treatment] and not the rest of the country”. “Why should I lose my time for that?”¹² In this way, Rwandans were exhorted to *kwihutisha amajyambere*, to “hurry up progress” (Purdeková 2012:203). Elsewhere, Ingelaere (2010) has contrasted the country’s “aesthetics of progress” with its “ethics of dissimulation”.

Despite her impressive contributions to Rwanda’s cultural scene, Christine told me she was often criticised for focusing on the genocide. As she said:

People say, “Why are you talking every time about the genocide?” How can I talk about [anything else]?... Because this is the context. This is our actual context. Maybe in the future, not even in the near future, maybe later, far, far in the future, there will be another context.... [Because] the specificity of the genocide of Rwanda happened in the family – father killed the son or a husband killed the wife. I like to say that we killed ourselves. We never killed the others, we killed ourselves. Then, yes, this is how the society is composed and every one of us has been touched by the genocide in a very deep [way] and sometimes we are not even aware of the dramatic consequences of this.

Christine suggests that coming to terms with the past requires a more intimate type of healing, one that was not politically expedient but time-consuming. It implied that getting to the “far, far” future was a long-term, possibly never-ending and impossible process whose progress could not be measured through *imihigo*, the pervasive state-imposed performance contracts (Purdeková 2011a:484–6). Other forms of healing, through spirituality and art, were urgently required to perform this “labour of memory” (Ricœur 2004; Lemarchand 2009). Christine’s comments reveal that young people were not “stuck” (Sommers 2012) in the present or merely focused on the “here and now” (Honwana 2012:30), but involved in complex temporal processes that often imagined the future by way of the past, particularly through the concept of legacy (see Chapter 3) and critical nostalgia (Chapter 6).

¹² Comments made at the “Can it be replicated?” panel at the 2013 Skoll World Forum, see Note 2.

“Quiet agency” and the “timescapes” of youth

If social life in contemporary Rwanda is defined by quiet insecurity and temporal dissonance, I argue that young Rwandans do not passively accept this condition but actively attempt to navigate its complex contours to create meaning and a sense of belonging and identity in their everyday lives. Through religion and popular culture they challenge and repurpose the state’s “vision” for the country on their own terms. In this way they enact a “quiet agency”. Bayat has employed the model of “quiet encroachment” to conceptualise agency among urban subalterns in the global South. He defines it as “non-collective but prolonged direct action by individuals and families to acquire the basic necessities of their lives...in a quiet and unassuming illegal fashion” (2000:536). Bayat’s approach is helpful because it moves us beyond the resistance paradigm, allowing us to focus on activities that are not necessarily directly “political” yet still strive for “the redistribution of social goods” and cultural and political “autonomy” (Bayat 2000:548). Acts of quiet encroachment – illegally tapping utilities, for example, or squatting on state/public lands – are ultimately driven by “the necessity to survive and improve a dignified life” (2000:547). Bayat is most concerned with illegal activities, however, and with space, whereas my concern is with activities that take place within – and attempt to expand – the bounds of the legal, and with time.

In a recent paper examining young people’s lives and livelihoods in Rwanda, Pells, Pontalti, and Williams (2014:301) suggest that although young people were “enthusiastic” about the country’s post-genocide development and felt capable of contributing to it, there was often “a gap between the policy rhetoric and their own lived realities”. They suggest that the RPF’s developmentalist vision for the future can be understood as a “contradictory

resource”, “conferring the promises of development, social mobility, and dignity on some, while foreclosing these same opportunities for others” (2014:304). The linear time of the RPF state (Dalsgaard 2013), in other words, was not necessarily how Rwandans themselves experienced and understood time in their everyday lives. Yet they stop short of examining how young people themselves are creating alternative “visions” of their past, present, and future.

I argue that young peoples’ quiet agency is asserted through their attempts to create alternative “timescapes” (Otto 2013) through religion and popular culture. Otto defines “timescape” as “the details of the temporal orientation of a specific group of actors – their use of means of time reckoning, their temporal valuations and anticipations” (2013:72). “Timescapes”, he writes, “involve notions about changeability and causality, and it is through their connection to agency that timescapes become a factor of social action in the present” (2013:76). I find this a productive concept as it suggests not only time but space, and does not create an unhelpful binary between the two. It also allows us to consider how young peoples’ timescapes offer possibilities of agency outside of “resistance” (Palmer 2014; Breed 2013; Thomson 2013a) in ways that have so far remained unexplored in Rwandan scholarship. If doubt produces action in contexts of uncertainty (Pelkmans 2013b), then quiet insecurity produces quiet agency – in the form of creating and imagining “unofficial” pasts, presents, and futures – in post-genocide Rwanda.

Surveying the field: Moving away from resistance

Although there is an ever-growing body of literature on Rwanda, it tends to concentrate on very specific themes. After 1994, it focused, quite understandably, on the dynamics of the genocide itself (Dallaire 2003; Des Forges 1999; Gourevitch 1998; Hatzfeld 2008; 2009;

Keane 1995; Mamdani 2001; Melvern 2004; Prunier 1998; Straus 2006b; Taylor 1999; Wallis 2006). This gave way to a focus on the *gacaca* courts and the increasingly authoritarian nature of the RPF state (Begley 2013; Clark 2011; Ingelaere 2009; Lemarchand 2009; Pottier 2002; Purdeková 2011a; Reyntjens 2004; Straus and Waldorf 2011a; Thomson 2013a). Despite the breadth and depth of this research, however, very little work has been conducted on religion and popular culture. The work that does exist on Christianity in the country tends to be historical in nature (Carney 2012a; 2012b; Godfrey 2012; Longman 2010; Mbanda 1997; Van Hoyweghen 1996; Rittner, Roth, and Whitworth 2004) or focus on Christian testimonies of the genocide (Bilindabagabo 2001; Ilibagiza 2006; Rutayisire 1995). Recently, research has examined the post-genocide politics of the Anglican church (Cantrell 2007; 2009; 2014) and a few scholars have taken an interest in the new Pentecostal churches (Kubai 2005; 2007a; van't Spijker 2011), although this research has not been in-depth or long-term. When it comes to popular culture, some work exists on theatre (Breed 2006; 2008; 2013), film (Cieplak 2011; Dauge-Roth 2010), art photography and interviews (Norridge 2009), women's autobiographical writing (Norridge 2012), and traditional dance. Popular music, however, has attracted very little attention. Two exceptions are an article by Barz (2012) on how traditional music, particularly *inanga* (trough-zither) performance, contributes to unity and reconciliation; and a short radio piece on love in contemporary popular music (Two Decades Out of Ghastly Violence 2013).

This lack of interest in religion and popular culture is surprising given that recent scholarship has convincingly argued, as we have seen, that the political space in the country is severely curtailed. Scholars have pointed out that Rwanda's public space is defined by "the complete absence of oppositional viewpoints" (Begley 2011:12); that it is "taboo"

(Thomson 2013b:140) to discuss politics in a critical way. This has resulted in a tendency to see contemporary social life in the country as relentlessly repressive, devoid of all creativity and humour. It is above all seen as “silent” (Burnet 2012; Goodfellow 2013; Goodfellow and Smith 2013). Sommers argues that Rwandan youth, unlike their counterparts in Burundi, are “stuck”. They expect little from life and adopt “risk averse strategies” (2012:200) to cope with an increasingly hopeless future. The only form of agency available to them, he claims, is “tactical and strategic”, expressed through avoidance, stealth, and “hushed counteraction” (2012:201–2). He concludes that he unearthed “no evidence in the research data of young Rwandans creating alternative paths to adulthood by challenging traditional and government-led definitions” (2012:202), though he concedes that these paths may have been possible for “elite youth”.

Given this tight control of the public space, many authors have relied on Scott’s work (1990; 1985) on “everyday resistance” and “hidden transcripts” to theorise agency and resistance in contemporary Rwanda (Ansoms 2013; Bouka 2013; Zorbas 2009). Thomson, for example, claims that Rwandan peasants “whisper truth to power” through various forms of everyday resistance, which she defines as “any subtle, indirect, and nonconfrontational act that makes daily life more sustainable in light of the strong and centralized power of the policy of national unity and reconciliation” (2013a:132). Thomson concentrates in particular on three forms of everyday resistance: “staying on the sidelines”, “irreverent compliance”, and “withdrawn muteness”. Peasants avoid participating in government programmes such as *ingando* and *gacaca*, for example, by getting up early and going to their fields; they laugh loudly or glare at officials during government ceremonies to articulate their contempt; and they remain silent when the state demands their

performance. Yet, as Palmer (2014) has pointed out, Thomson's approach is too wide-ranging. By applying the concept of resistance too broadly, she writes, "there is a danger of failing to unpack and explain the normative or pragmatic basis for these individual choices" (2014:12).

More in line with the approach I'm advocating here, Breed (2013) has examined the relationship between resistance and performance in post-genocide Rwanda relying on Scott's notion of "faltered speech". Scott suggests that although the subordinate rely on "hidden transcripts" to articulate their critique of the powerful behind their backs, they occasionally make interventions on the public transcript in "muted or veiled form" (1990:138). Faltered speech is thus when "one person has a severe speech impediment induced by power relations" (1990:138), and traces of this remain on the public transcript. Breed suggests that social performances in Rwanda – from *gacaca* confessions, theatre productions, and unperformed theatre scripts – articulate resistance to government policies, particular the RPF's attempts to create a pan-ethnic Rwandan identity or Rwandicity. Using the artistic productions of the Ishyo Arts Centre in Kigali as examples, she concludes that "theatrical frames have provided an alternative route for hidden transcripts to emerge, developing a space and platform for the reconstruction of post-genocide Rwanda" (2013:18).

While the work discussed above provides a helpful background to how agency and resistance have been conceptualised in post-genocide Rwanda, its scope has been too narrow in three key ways. Firstly, it assumes resistance and alternative viewpoints only emanate from rural areas and are directed towards specific RPF programmes or policies, such as that of national unity and reconciliation, *gacaca*, or Rwandicity. This only serves to

constrain the field of political action as praxis is defined solely in terms of resistance to the state. Cooper has long warned of the dangers of such analysis, writing: “The binaries of colonizer/colonized, Western/non-Western, and domination/resistance begin as useful devices for opening up questions of power but end up constraining the search for precise ways in which power is deployed and the ways in which power is engaged, contested, deflected, and appropriated” (1994:1517). Secondly, there is an overwhelming tendency in the literature to dismiss Kigali as the playground of the RPF.¹³ Turner pushes this line of thinking the furthest, declaring that Kigali “appears like a façade – a stage – put up in honour of donors and wealthy members of the diaspora” (2013:267). Instead of assuming that the “meaning of life” can only be found in the countryside (Ingelaere 2010:54), Kigali must be repositioned as an African city (De Boeck 2004; Förster 2014; Nuttall and Mbembe 2008; Simone 2004), its creative practices taken seriously. An entire generation of young, urban Rwandans live in and make Kigali their own, predominantly in the city’s so-called “ghettoes”, and their life-worlds are defined by poverty and hardship rather than wealth and privilege. Thirdly, research into the arts has tended to focus on “elite” forms that are not known or accessible to the vast majority of Rwandans. More often than not, it considers texts and performances in English and French rather than in Kinyarwanda, the language most widely spoken in the country. For all the important work that Ishyo Arts Centre has done, for example, its productions do not have the same reach as popular Kinyarwanda songs played on the radio, which remains Rwanda’s dominant form of media.

¹³ Straus and Waldorf claim Kigali is “where the RPF elite viewpoint prevails” (2011a:7). Bouka states that its “comfort” and “outward show of peace and calm” fool scholars into assuming that these dynamics prevail “in the periphery” (2013:109). Ingelaere (2010:42) asserts that Kigali “functions as an outpost of progress where Rwanda is presented and experienced as the beacon of hope, development, and change on the African continent”.

Redefining the political: Religion and popular culture

I examine religion and popular culture together in this thesis as I consider them the two most important social forces shaping young peoples' everyday lives in contemporary Rwanda. Both the new Pentecostal churches and the modern music industry were created after 1994 almost "from zero", as one informant put it (see Chapter 5), and their practices and imaginaries should be understood as intimately intertwined. Both offer important sites of quiet insecurity and temporal dissonance, as we will see, and provide young people alternative ways of understanding the country's past, present, and future, and their own place within this "timescape". The vast majority of the country's young musical stars, it must be noted, started out singing in the churches, as they provided perhaps the only opportunity for musical training in the country. Although many of these singers went on to sing in the "secular" music industry, they always acknowledged their "spiritual" musical roots in conversations and interviews with me.

Theoretically, by examining religion and popular culture in Rwanda, we can also begin to ask a new set of questions that move us away from unhelpful analytical binaries such as domination/resistance, public/private, and structure/agency. This approach allows me to consider the imaginary and everyday practice, and how they engage with the political. Scholars have, after all, long been interested in the ways that religion and popular culture provide alternative ways to understand the past, present, and future, and produce new forms of identity and community. Comaroff (1985) and Fields (1985) have shown how religion can provide spaces and sites of contestation and resistance to hegemonic power (see also Eriksen 2009).

Yet I am careful here not to reduce the meaning of religion to its “resistant” possibilities. Indeed, Abu-Lughod (1990) has famously warned of the dangers of “romanticising” resistance, with Ortner (1995) later pointing out that studies of resistance tend to be ethnographically “thin”. As Englund (2011a) has argued, claiming that religious or occult practices are acts of political resistance privileges interpretation as the mode of analysis. In addition to constructing the analyst as the definitive interpreter or reader of these texts, this approach ultimately “diminishes” religion’s “practical import” and “imaginative resources” (2011a:8). Instead of understanding religion through the concept of belief – which, as Ruel (1997) and Asad (1993) have pointed out, is a particular historical construction – Englund suggests that it is more productive to consider it through practice, which allows us to examine “the multiple ways in which Christians live their faith practically, how their convictions resonate or conflict with other viewpoints available to them, and how...they situate themselves in public life” (2011a:9; see also Englund 2007).

Marshall (2009) makes a similar point in her work on born-again Christianity in Nigeria. Born-again ideology, she argues, cannot be reduced to politics, yet at the same time it contributes “to the historical conditions in which the complex field of political practice and representation is produced” (2009:2). Instead of taking for granted that Jesus – and Pentecostalism more generally – has become the “solution” to the social, political, and moral crisis of postcolonial Nigeria, she emphasises that “the questions to which Jesus is an answer are multiple, contradictory, and above all, produced through the complex interpenetration of multiple struggles and relations” (2009:34). Born-Again Christianity, she argues, is “a specific regime of practice, in and through which particular moral and political subjects are produced” (2009:34). Hirschkind has shown how listening to cassette-

recorded sermons helps to create an Islamic counter-public, and draws on Arendt's notion of the political to define it as "the activities of ordinary citizens who, through the exercise of their agency in contexts of public interaction, shape the conditions of their collective existence" (2006:8). Marshall and Hirschkind do not take for granted what makes up the "religious" or the "political" but rather examine how they have been constituted at specific historical moments.

In a similar way, I do not assume that there is a causal relationship between the genocide and the rise of born-again Christianity and the boom in the country's entertainment industry. To do so would suggest that the genocide was a singularly *political* event, divorced from the country's wider socio-cultural and spiritual life. Yet, as we will see, to many of my informants, the genocide was a spiritual and cultural event that engendered a spiritual and cultural crisis. Thus it is these very grounds that require reclaiming and reconstituting in the post-genocide period. By redefining what it means to pray, testify, compose songs, and perform, they are actively creating new ways to "be" Rwandan, drawing on the past to form relationships in the present and envision futures for themselves and their country. Rather than focus on the "ruptures" (Meyer 1998; Robbins 2007) of Pentecostal practice and contemporary social life, we can instead consider the particular ways young Rwandans attempt to "inhabit the processes of their own displacement, to live through rupture, not simply react to it" (Weiss 2009:94).

Although Englund encourages scholars to frame their work in terms of "public culture" as it "prompts questions about how certain events, ideas, and practices assume public significance and thereby cross over the boundaries of their own domains" (2011a:3), I focus instead on popular culture and how its forms shape public culture more generally.

Popular culture, furthermore, allows me to explore young peoples' creative practices and build upon what is already a substantial body of work. As we saw, Rwanda's youth form an important and potentially powerful constituency. In this way I contribute here to the recent focus on youth in anthropology (Archambault 2013; Cole 2010; De Boeck and Honwana 2005; Durham 2000; Mains 2012; Utas 2005; Vigh 2006; Weiss 2009), taking youth as a socially "shifting" category, and paying particular attention to how they imagine and navigate complex socio-political worlds.

As numerous scholars have pointed out, popular culture offers a site of alternative discourses and imaginings. The "popular" aspect of popular culture, then, is of vital importance. If we take "popular" to refer neither to romanticised rural "folk" nor urban industrial workers but rather to a radically diverse group of people "excluded from the privileges of the political, business and military elites" (Barber 1997a:4), then popular arts offer a way into "unofficial" narratives. Since the vast majority of Rwandans do not have access to institutional forms of power or political expression – "the universities, the pulpit, the press, the theatre, the political pronouncement" – the realm of "the informal, the festive, the apparently escapist" becomes "evidence of real experience and real response" (Ranger 1975:3). Yet we should not see popular arts as unmediated reflections of social reality. Rather they are "works" created by specific social actors at specific historical moments that can be consumed in "more than one way" (Bryce 1997:119). Their gaps, silences, and fissures "reveal to the critical reader the limits – the edge, as it were – of a particular ideological position, throwing up its outline to view" (Barber 1997b:92). This imaginative aspect of popular culture is important as it allows us to sidestep problematic questions of "the truth" and "the real" and instead focus on how multiple, conflicting perspectives are

created, circulated, and contested within its realm. Importantly, popular arts are firmly rooted in the present – “they are the deeds, the ways, not of Africans in the past but of Africans now” (Falola and Agwuele 2009:6) – even if, as Waterman (1997; see also Rea 2014) has shown, they work to actively reshape history. In this way, they can be seen as “the episteme of the everyday” (Newell and Okome 2014).

The particular forms of Rwandan popular culture can help us to see how young people in the country actively create spaces for expression and manoeuvre. Popular culture is all the more important in repressive political contexts where traditional “political” channels are closed, particularly to young people. Nyamnjoh, for example, has pointed out that in authoritarian contexts, popular media “can often step into the breach to provide a platform for democratic debate and channels for competing discourses of development may emerge” (2011:28). Indeed, as Fabian writes, popular culture has the potential to “create collective freedom precisely in situations where individual freedom is denied or limited” (1998:18), even if this freedom only comes in “moments”. It is precisely within the realm of popular culture and art, furthermore, that important spaces of healing and alternative forms of truth-telling open up. Art in Africa, Bisschoff and van de Peer point out, offers possibilities to “regenerate resilience, hope and reconciliation in the aftermath of atrocities” (2013:6).

Building on the insights of these scholars, this thesis explores the creative, heterogeneous, and unexpected ways young Rwandans live under and cope with quiet insecurity and temporal dissonance, particularly through their engagement in Pentecostal practice and popular music. I see their projects and practices within these fields as assertions of quiet agency. Although I am interested in the political implications of

Pentecostal practice and popular music, I do not take the political for granted or define it solely in terms of resistance to the state. Instead I ask: what kind of “claims” (Englund 2011b; Ferguson 2013; Haynes 2013) do Pentecostalism and popular music make possible? What kind of affects, feelings, and “truths” do they create, and how are they implicitly gendered and/or ethnicised? How do prayers, songs, and fandom allow young people to create a sense of security and alternative “timescapes” in their everyday lives and relationships? How are they defining and redefining the country’s past, present, and future, and understandings of Rwandan culture (*umuco nyarwanda*) more generally? More fundamentally, what does it mean to be a “good” person and to lead a “good” life in Rwanda now?

A brief demographic and historical note

Although I provide a more thorough discussion of Rwandan history in Chapter 1, it is important to lay out here some basic demographic and historical information to orient the reader. Before the genocide, Hutu comprised roughly 85% of the population, Tutsi 14%, and Twa 1%. In the pre-colonial period, Rwanda was ruled by a Tutsi-dominated monarchy, which, especially under the Nyiginya dynasty, established complex ritual and artistic codes to maintain its privilege (Vansina 2004). When the country was colonized – first by Germany (1894-1918) and then by Belgium (1918-1961) – the official colonial policy was to support this “natural” hierarchy. Especially under Belgian rule, this policy helped to cement the somewhat flexible socio-economic categories of Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa into rigid “ethnic” identities. When the country gained independence in 1961, the ethnic hierarchy was more or less inverted: Hutu began to dominate the country’s political and social life. From 1959 onwards, ethnic violence led to the migration of thousands of Tutsi

to neighbouring countries. Decades later, the children of these Tutsi exiles in Uganda formed the RPF and united similarly disaffected Tutsi in the region to invade Rwanda and return “home”.

It is important to point out, however, that regional identities have often superseded ethnic ones. Grégoire Kayibanda, the first president of Rwanda (1962-1973), was a Hutu from the south who was seen to privilege Hutu from his region. Riled by this southern bias, Juvénal Habyarimana, a Hutu from the north, ousted Kayibanda in a military coup in 1973. He then went on to privilege northern Hutu, particularly those from the lineage of his wife, Agathe Habyarimana. Similarly, despite the current government’s ban on publicly discussing ethnic identities, it is composed predominantly of returnee Tutsis from Uganda. Although ethnicity was never a focus of my research, I discovered that rifts continue to exist not so much along ethnic lines as along experiential ones: returnee Tutsis were said to be very different from the so-called *abasope*, Rwandans, both Hutu and Tutsi alike, who were born and raised in the country.

During the genocide, it has been estimated that roughly 70% of the country’s Tutsi population was killed. Yet the genocide, which took place for 100 days beginning on April 6th, 1994 with the shooting down of Habyarimana’s plane, should not be seen as the beginning or end of violence in the country. The genocide was preceded by a civil war – what the RPF has termed the “Liberation War” (*Urugamba rwo Kwibohora*) – that began when the RPF invaded the country from its base in Uganda on October 1, 1990. The conflict exacerbated ethnic tensions in Rwanda and eventually led to a power-sharing agreement with the Habyarimana government, the so-called Arusha Accords, in August 1993. The cease-fire ultimately failed, however, in part due to regional conflict. The

assassination of Burundi's Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye, in October 1993 by the country's Tutsi-dominated army, ignited a civil war in Burundi that spilled over into Rwanda. The situation in Rwanda worsened to such an extent that the United Nations sent a peacekeeping force, United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), led by Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire, to help stabilize the country. Yet, as Dallaire himself documents in his memoir (Dallaire 2003), UNAMIR was ultimately incapable of fulfilling its mission and mostly stood by – along with the rest of the international community (Barnett 2002; Melvern 2004) – and watched helplessly as Tutsi were massacred.

The genocide led to a massive migration of Rwandans. On the one hand, almost two million Hutu fled the RPF advance into neighbouring countries, and established refugee camps, most notably in eastern Zaire. In the years immediately following the genocide, the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA), the military wing of the RPF, massacred unknown numbers of Hutu and Tutsi civilians (Burnet 2009:82; Des Forges 1999:705–714). In 1996-7, it forcibly repatriated almost a million refugees from eastern Zaire by attacking refugee camps and “organized the massacres of hundreds of thousands more under the guise of a ‘Banyamulenge rebellion’” (Burnet 2009:82). The years 1997-2000 saw an insurgency in Rwanda's northwest, which pitted the RPA against Hutu militias and members of the former Rwandan military. Although the militias were eventually pushed back into what had then become DR Congo, both sides were said to have engaged in “killings, rapes, and torture” (Burnet 2009:82). Persecuting these genocidal Hutu militias is the reason why the RPF government has justified – and continues to justify – its involvement in the eastern DR Congo and the region's geopolitics more generally, most notably in the “Great African

War” (Reyntjens 2009). The extent of Rwanda’s involvement in DR Congo was raised again during my fieldwork, as I discussed above, with the M23 insurgency.

On the other hand, immediately following the end of the genocide, hundreds of thousands of Tutsi began returning to the country from exile in the neighbouring countries of Uganda, Tanzania, DR Congo, Kenya, and Burundi. Many of these returnees had been born in exile and were in some cases more familiar with the languages and cultures of their birth countries rather than with Rwandan culture (*umuco nyarwanda*) and Kinyarwanda. (I was often told by friends that Kagame himself had not spoken Kinyarwanda well when he first returned to Rwanda.) This created a linguistic rift between the Tutsi returnees and the *abasope*. Further linguistic shifts occurred when the country abruptly switched its education system from French to English in 2008. The following year, Rwanda joined the Commonwealth. Although ostensibly the switch to English was an attempt to bring Rwanda closer to its English-speaking partners in the East African Community, it has also been interpreted as an attempt to distance the country from France. Not only was France cozy with the former Hutu regime, its controversial intervention in the genocide, Operation Turquoise, has been criticized for providing protection not to Tutsi but to Hutu perpetrators (Wallis 2006).

Given the scale, speed, and intimate nature of the genocide, establishing “unity and reconciliation” has been a particularly difficult task for the Rwandan government. In 2001, it began a massive experiment in transitional justice by implementing *gacaca*, a “traditional” form of community courts, to try cases of genocide. Yet the legacy of these courts, which came to a close in 2012, has been mixed, with scholars arguing that they served as a political tool for the RPF and amounted to “victor’s justice” as crimes

perpetrated by the RPA were not acknowledged. I take up *gacaca*'s influence on the public sphere more generally in Chapter 8. In addition to *gacaca*, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), based in Arusha, Tanzania, has been prosecuting higher order genocide cases since 1995. To date, it has indicted 93 individuals, with 61 sentenced.¹⁴ *Gacaca*, on the other hand, tried almost two million people and found approximately 65% guilty (BBC 2012).

The socio-cultural landscape of post-genocide Rwanda, in other words, has dramatically altered. These transformations are particularly visible when it comes to religion, gender, and generation. Before the genocide, 62.6% of the population considered itself Catholic, 18.8% Protestant, 8.4% Seventh Day Adventist, and 1.2% Muslim. The fourth Rwanda Population and Housing Census (RPHC4), undertaken in 2012 during my fieldwork, found that Catholics in the country had dropped to 44%, and Protestants had risen to 38% (NISR and MINECOFIN 2014). Similarly, women and youth have taken on newfound social and political significance. After the genocide, the gender balance in the country altered. In 1995, it is estimated that 60-70% of the population was female (Herndon and Randell 2010:4). Faced with this real-world absence of men, the RPF began promoting women and encouraging them to participate in public life. It also must be noted that Rwanda's population is dominated by youth. In the 2012 national census, young people between the ages of 14 and 35 made up 40% of the total population (NISR and MINECOFIN 2014b). In Kigali City, they accounted for 53% (NISR and MINECOFIN 2014b).

¹⁴ <http://www.unictr.org/en/tribunal>

It is for these very reasons that this thesis takes a particular interest in the reconfiguration of the country's religious landscape, gender politics, and youth as a socially constructed category.

Chapter outline

I divide my thesis into two parts, although they are joined by overlapping themes and questions. The first half focuses on the rise of the new *abarokore* churches and the second examines the reconstruction of the modern music industry. Chapter 1 is historical in nature and explores the relationship between religion and power, tracing it from the dynastic monarchies of the pre-colonial period to the close relationship between the Catholic Church and political authority in the colonial period and after independence. I consider as well the “subversive” (Peterson 2012) history of the *abarokore* through a discussion of the East African Revival. How, I ask, do the new *abarokore* churches both draw upon and distance themselves from this heritage? Chapter 2 considers the genocide as a spiritual crisis and examines how Pentecostalism arrived into this complex spiritual landscape to offer new hope to traumatised converts. I argue that the *abarokore* churches became important affective spaces, able to retool the emotional capacities of traumatised Rwandans. While the affective communities they created were inclusive, particularly as one was encouraged not to divulge one's “secrets”, the fact that the new churches were often mono-ethnic in nature, composed of specific groups of returnee Tutsis, undermined their claims to heal the nation.

Chapter 3 explores the common Kinyarwanda phrase “*umukobwa ntagira idini*” (“a girl does not have a religion”) to examine the gender politics of the churches and how they structure the lives of young women in both empowering and constricting ways. I frame the

debate through a discussion of how church pastors reacted to the September 2013 parliamentary elections in which women once again won the majority of seats. I explore here the concept of legacy, and how young women orient their everyday actions with an eye to leaving a legacy for imagined heirs in the future. Chapter 4 provides the link between Parts 1 and 2. It examines in detail a Christian crusade, Rwanda, *Shima Imana!* (Rwanda Thanksgiving Day), and argues that the government's presence at the event was an attempt by the RPF to spiritually legitimise its regime. Yet I stress that this is only the surface reading. The event stirred controversy within popular culture as one well-known Pentecostal pastor publicly corrected the Biblical interpretation of a well-known Catholic singer, Kizito Mihigo. The conflict, I suggest, was ultimately about power – who has the right, ability, and authority to interpret the Bible and, by extension, Rwanda's history and collective memory.

Part 2 examines the reconstruction of the music industry in the country after the genocide. Like Chapter 1, Chapter 5 is historical in nature, examining the history of music and power over the *longue durée* of Rwandan history. I consider music as a way to produce and contest power. These two uses have existed in tension with each other from the Nyiginya kingdom up to the present. In the post-genocide period young artists struggle to find their voice amidst such a contentious legacy, and work to both “rupture” with it and repurpose it in creative and unexpected ways. Chapter 6 examines the musical genre that has come to dominate the country's musical landscape during my fieldwork: Kinyarwanda rap and hip hop. I argue that its rise in popularity can be attributed to the fact that it purports to speak the “truth” of young peoples' everyday struggles. I develop the concept of

critical nostalgia to explore how young people engaged with a past they were not supposed to want to remember.

Chapter 7 analyses gender in popular culture, focusing on the difficulties encountered by female singers as performing in public was considered taboo for “proper” Rwandan girls. I discuss the wide-spread occurrence of *ruswa y’igitsina* (sexual corruption) and how female singers attempted to navigate the music industry’s gendered terrain, often by evoking the cultural concept of *agaciro*. Chapter 8 examines musical corruption, centring on the Primus Guma Super Star (PGSS) competition. The contest sparked intense debates about the moral economy of music, and revealed ongoing socio-economic inequalities. I consider the debate between “playback” versus “live” music and suggest that it must be considered against the backdrop of the *gacaca* courts, which have helped to shape Rwanda’s public culture into a space of contested truth telling. I argue that by demanding transparency and “truth” from the music industry, young people were making important “claims” on those in authority.

I conclude by considering the recent arrest of Catholic singer and unity and reconciliation activist Kizito Mihigo. In mid-April 2014 Mihigo was arrested on charges of suspected offences against state security, including planning “terrorist” attacks. Mihigo’s arrest, however, was widely understood as a reaction to the release of a commemoration song that suggested that the 20th anniversary of the genocide should also involve remembering Hutu who had been killed. I consider the dynamics of his arrest and the implications this has on the music industry in the future.

A polyphonic methodology

I conducted a total of 16 months of fieldwork in Rwanda. My main period of fieldwork occurred between late August 2011 and mid-December 2012, and I returned the following year for the month of September. Although I was based in Kigali, I travelled extensively throughout the country, conducting various research trips either with informants or alone and attending countless concerts and cultural events. I made it a point to live in different neighbourhoods of Kigali, which allowed me to experience starkly different socio-economic landscapes: the “silent”, elite neighbourhood of Kagugu; the slightly livelier middle-class areas of Kicukiro, Gikondo, and Kacyiru; and the bustling, so-called “ghetto” of Nyamirambo. I lived with a Rwandan family, with mixed Rwandan-Western families, with an unmarried female Rwandan friend, and with an unmarried female East African friend. All of these experiences allowed me to live the city through very different eyes and ears.

My methodology was primarily participant observation, complemented by more than 200 structured and semi-structured interviews in English, French, and, occasionally, in my passable Kinyarwanda. I took Kinyarwanda lessons before and during my fieldwork, which proved immensely helpful in following local media both during my fieldwork and after I had left. On the religious side, I focused on one main *murokore* church, which I have called True Revival Church. I attended its weekly services, special events, and conferences, and interviewed its leaders and members. I also attended a number of other *abarokore* churches in the city and in other parts of the country, and conducted interviews with their pastors and members. To get a better sense of the country’s changing religious landscape, I interviewed religious leaders in the Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Catholic

churches, as well as a Muslim leader. In terms of popular culture, I attended music concerts, rehearsals, traditional Kinyarwanda dance rehearsals, and any other vaguely “creative” activity to which I happened to be invited. I interviewed musicians of all stripes, from traditional to hip hop, along with producers, entertainment journalists, painters, cultural activists, and radio personalities. I have used pseudonyms whenever possible, although not when discussing interviews and conversations with key public figures. If certain of these individuals expressed what I considered to be politically sensitive viewpoints, I anonymised that part of the interview.

In practice my “polyphonic” methodology meant that I was involved in a wide range of seemingly unrelated activities, which attests to the dynamic nature of cultural production on the ground. I helped to organise the country’s first Big and Beautiful fashion show for plus-sized models, a pet project of a well-known church member; I had a small role in a Pentecostal film; I volunteered as “artist liaison” for the KigaliUp international music festival for two years; I followed the Primus Guma Guma Super Star Season 2 (PGGSS 2) competition; I appeared in a friend’s music video; I modelled clothing for two local fashion designers; I helped to organise a number of conferences and concerts; I worked on-and-off as an entertainment journalist and photographer for the state-controlled English-language newspaper, *The New Times*; with a Rwandan scholar, I regularly visited a group of women outside of Kigali who had all been raped and impregnated during the genocide and decided to keep their children. Although space prevents me from considering their stories in any depth here, I draw on their experiences in Chapter 4.

Yet my most successful fieldwork was spent hanging out with friends in their homes and with their families. Tagging along with them as they went about their everyday

lives in the city – and occasionally outside of Kigali’s boundaries – generated invaluable research data. I soon realised that interviewing anyone – however “informal” I thought I was being – was only marginally helpful. This point was brought home to me by JP, who taught me that inquiring about something directly was the least effective method of acquiring knowledge. Although I began my fieldwork conducting formal, recorded interviews, after JP’s instruction I turned off my tape recorder for a number of months. It was only in my last month and a half of fieldwork that I started “formally” interviewing anyone again, after having spent quite a lot of time with them in informal settings. Ethnography, as Shaw has pointed out, often challenges us “to unlearn as much as we learn” (2007a:188). In this way, JP taught me how to talk.

Under the threat of *gacaca*

My polyphonic methodology, however, was not without its challenges. To the church, I was living a “double” life – half in the church, half in the “world” – and they ultimately interpreted my very public participation in popular culture as proof that I was more worldly than Christian. Although I had tried to make it clear that I was interested in both religion and popular culture from the outset, by the end of my fieldwork my relationship with the church had become somewhat strained. I hadn’t realised the extent of this until I had a little “talk” with one of the church’s senior pastors, Pastor Anselme (see Chapter 2). I had come to see him because I needed a letter from the church to extend my research visa, which I had accidentally let expire. Pastor Anselme listened carefully as I explained my predicament. When I finished speaking, he began to shake his head. “But Andrea”, he said, “I don’t know if I can do this for you. You’re never in the church! We don’t know you anymore! People come to me and they say you’re always in the nightclubs! That you have a

different boyfriend every week! No one knows what you're doing anymore! We don't know you!"

In the end, Pastor Anselme did write me a recommendation letter, but not before telling me that we needed to have a "*gacaca*" on my behaviour. Although his accusations were exaggerated, I left his office upset, feeling as though I had disappointed the entire church community, not just the church leaders but the many church members who had welcomed me into their homes and shared their stories and lives with me. Yet when I told a trusted friend, who was a *murokore* but not from the same church, about the "talk" with the bishop, he was not the least bit surprised. "Oh Andrea", he laughed, "they probably had a spy following you around from the beginning!"

Although the threatened *gacaca* never took place, the episode was something of a turning point in how I was beginning to understand the *abarokore*. For one, it stimulated my interest in the gender politics of the new churches. Additionally, as I told friends about my "talk", many of them told me that they too had experienced similar exchanges with officials in their churches and that these intrusions into their private lives had ultimately caused them to leave the church. Indeed, when I returned to Rwanda in September 2013, I discovered that a number of my fellow church members had left or been kicked out. A choir leader had been forced to leave for his repeated lying and conning of church members; a pastor had broken his vow to the church and gotten divorced; a close friend was stripped of his church duties over allegations – which he claimed were baseless – he had had girls in his room. To this friend, his departure from the church was both revealing ("I saw that they were not real Christians") and deeply wounding. Many of his closest friends still prayed at the church and, while he hadn't been banned outright, he felt uncomfortable

attending services. My friend emphasised that the whole episode had been a blessing in disguise. He had found a new church, a new job, and even a new living arrangement with distant family members. He was, he told me, happier than ever, excited about his new idea to start a Christian-focused TV talk show.

PART 1: Quiet Insecurity and Religion

Chapter 1

Claiming a “subversive” history?: Catholic complicity, Protestant revival, and the new *abarokore* churches

The question remains “Is the Rwandan Culture Dead?” Assuming it’s in coma, when do you think it was born? The few links I clicked on said it all started around the 16th century. I wasn’t there, so I can’t tell. You? If you work in the education sector, and my son asks you this same question 20 years later, I’ll make sure I’m fit enough to kick you in the nuts. Where are facts? Where are History books, basi? I swear the lack of knowledge about our history (except that of the genocide) makes me really feel like a retarded. And, I should, right? I mean, what do I really know? I try to google sometimes but I remain a bit sceptical about data. Wikipedia still classify Rwandans in ethnic groups. Why is the transmission of the Rwandan history so subjective[?] In my opinion, our history has been t[a]mpered with so much that it’s hard, almost impossible, to know the truth. You have to believe it. Hallelujah!

“Is Umuco Dead?”, eric1key, Rwandan blogger, September 7, 2012¹⁵

In his typically insightful and humorous style, Rwandan blogger and spoken word artist eric1key articulates the difficulties of writing authoritatively or objectively about Rwanda’s past. In a country that has undergone an intense “re-imagining” (Pottier 2002) and “remaking” (Straus and Waldorf 2011) cultural and historical transmission has become deeply problematic, engendering a sense of loss and even embarrassment among young Rwandans that they cannot teach their own children about their country’s past outside of the genocide. Rwandan history has been “tampered” with to such an extent that it is now a matter not of “facts”, “books”, or “data”, but of belief. In these murky historical waters, only God (*Imana*) can be called upon for any sense of truth or clarity. “You have to believe it”, eric1key writes. “Hallelujah!”

I suggest that we keep eric1key’s remarks in mind when we consider the history of religion in Rwanda. Any examination of the country’s past will involve the politics of the

¹⁵ *Umuco* is the Kinyarwanda word for culture.

present, and this is no less true when it comes to religion. Although the new Pentecostal churches, whose members are known as the *abarokore* (“the saved ones”), arrived in the country after the genocide, their intervention on Rwanda’s spiritual field must be placed in historical perspective. Of particular significance is the involvement of the mainline Christian churches, especially the Catholic Church, in secular politics, and the various ways missionaries – along with colonial administrators – contributed to the construction of ethnic identity. This history is important to lay out here as it provides the background for my claim that the contemporary post-genocide period is marked by quiet insecurity and temporal dissonance. Here we can trace these concepts historically, and consider the type of encounter created by the arrival of the first Catholic missionaries. The Catholic Church, as we will see, has long been a dominant player on the country’s religious and political field. Before the genocide, nearly 90% of the population considered itself Christian, with 62.6% Catholic, 18.8% Protestant, 8.4% Seventh Day Adventist, and 1.2% Muslim. Although considered sites of safe haven during periods of ethnic violence from 1959 onwards, in 1994 church buildings became “Rwanda’s primary killing fields” (Longman 2010:4) as clergy, catechists, and other officials willingly participated in the violence. Since 1994, the country’s spiritual landscape has undergone a dramatic transformation. The 2012 census, undertaken during my fieldwork, reported that 44% of Rwandans were Roman Catholic, 38% Protestant, 12% Adventist, and 2% Muslim (NISR and MINECOFIN 2014). These are significant changes and, as we will see in this chapter and the next, can be attributed in part to the complicity of the Catholic Church during the genocide and the post-genocide arrival of the new *abarokore* churches.

Yet the complicity of the mainline churches in the genocide is not the only history to consider here. Members of the new Pentecostal churches in the post-genocide period refer to themselves as the *abarokore*, and thus they position themselves as heirs to the Protestant East African Revival of the 1930s whose adherents were known as the original *abarokore*. While the complicity of the mainline churches in Rwanda's past has received some attention from scholars (Longman 2010; Rittner, Roth, and Whitworth 2004; Van Hoyweghen 1996), less has been said about the alternative spiritual history of the *abarokore*, many of whom resisted becoming embroiled in "worldly politics" and, according to Peterson (2012), actively "subverted" all systems of authority. Here we see that the possibility of dissent existed in Rwanda's spiritual past, and a new set of questions presents itself for the following chapters: how do the new *abarokore* churches live up to this "subversive" legacy? In what ways do their understandings of temporality reflect particular social, historical, and political realities? How have these changed in the post-genocide period? Can Peterson's concept of subversion be applied more generally to "resistant" discourses and actions within popular culture?

I begin this chapter by considering the politicised nature of Rwanda's past in general, and then move on to examine the history of mainline Christianity and the East African Revival, respectively. By bringing these histories into dialogue with each other I suggest that we can better understand the rapid growth of the new *abarokore* churches in the post-genocide era. We can also trace insecurity over the long *durée* of Rwandan history, and demonstrate that revival has played an important role, offering alternative spiritual modes and identities in periods of social, political, and moral uncertainty (Marshall 2009).

The politics of history

As Eric Key's remarks above make clear, Rwandan history has become increasingly politicised in the post-genocide era. The RPF maintains a tight grip on the country's historical narrative and disseminates its own "official" version of the country's past through the media, genocide memorials, *gacaca*, and civic education programmes such as *ingando* and *itorero* (Ingelaere 2009; Pottier 2002; Purdeková 2011b; Straus and Waldorf 2011a; Thomson 2013a). Central to this is the assertion that ethnic harmony reigned in pre-colonial Rwanda and that Europeans, whether colonial administrators or Catholic missionaries, "created" ethnicity. In this narrative, when European colonisers – first German (1897-1916) and then Belgian (1916-1962) – arrived in Rwanda to discover a centralised, hierarchically arranged kingdom ruled by a Tutsi minority, they interpreted it through a racialized lens. They imposed the "ethnic" identities of Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa onto what had been flexible socio-economic categories – Tutsi were pastoralists, Hutu agriculturalists, and Twa hunters and potters – and assigned certain privileges based on this categorisation. Tutsi received top places in schools and government, which led to ethnic resentment and the divisive politics of the Hutu regimes of Grégoire Kayibanda (1962-1973) and Juvénal Habyarimana (1973-1994), ultimately culminating in the 1994 genocide. After single-handedly stopping the genocide and taking power, the RPF outlawed ethnicity and promoted an inclusive *banyarwanda* identity that is, in many ways, an attempt to re-establish the "symbiotic harmony"¹⁶ that allegedly characterised the pre-colonial social order.

Critics, however, refute this "official" history. A closer look into Rwanda's historical record suggests that social antagonisms between groups who self-consciously

¹⁶ <http://www.gov.rw/History?lang=en>; accessed 23 October 2013.

identified themselves as “Hutu” and “Tutsi” did exist prior to colonisation (Vansina 2004; Newbury 1988).¹⁷ Under the Nyiginya kingdom (1650–1897), not only did Rwanda expand through military conquest and develop new institutional and administrative structures, a wide variety of complex oral art forms were developed to create a “royal ideology” (Vansina 2004:4) that legitimised the authority of the *mwami* and the Tutsi elite (see chapter 5).¹⁸ Iliffe, in fact, terms dynastic poetry cultivated under the Nyiginya kingdom “propaganda” (2005:162). The image of Rwanda’s pre-colonial past as one of order, control, and social cohesion belies what was a violent and insecure political reality.¹⁹ Competing lineages fought for power, and regions in the kingdom’s periphery, particularly the southeast, north, and southwest, resisted the imposition of central court rule (David Newbury 2011a). Under King Kigeri IV Rwabugiri (1853-1895), these formerly autonomous Hutu regions were incorporated into the “modern” Rwandan state through systems of clientship, particularly *ubuhake* (cattle clientship) and *ubutaka* (land clientship), in an effort to consolidate and centralise his power (Longman 2010:34–5). When the first German representatives arrived in Rwanda in 1897, they did so only four months after a

¹⁷ Vansina shows that an insurrection in 1897 in the northwest was motivated by anti-Tutsi sentiment, proving “without any ambiguity not only that the population at this time was conscious of a great divide between Tutsi and Hutu, but also that the antagonism between these two social categories had already broken into the open” (2004:138). He also stresses the dynamic nature of the terms. “Hutu”, for example, did not always signify agriculturalist and was once used as a marker of “rural boorishness”; later, it was used to designate any foreigner and, later still, a non-combatant (2004:138).

¹⁸ *Abatekereza*, the historians, recounted official genealogies that had been passed on from their ancestors, parents, or neighbours; *abacurabwenge*, the genealogists, preserved the lineages and bibliographies of monarchs and queens; *abasizi* were dynastic poets; and *abiru*, the “constitutional experts”, were seen as the “most important ritual councillors of the court” (Gatwa 2005:20–1).

¹⁹ The origin myth propagated by the royal court, for example, claimed that Kigwa, the first-born son of the king Nkuba, descended from heaven and had three sons, Gatwa, Gahutu, and Gatutsi. He gave each son a calabash of milk for safekeeping for one night. The next morning he found that Gatwa had drunk the milk, Gahutu had spilt it, and Gatutsi had kept it safe (Linden 1977:17; Thomson 2013a:55). The myth provides divine sanction for a hierarchical political structure in which the minority Tutsi are the rightful leaders over the Hutu and Twa.

bloody coup d'état had upset proper succession norms and installed the adolescent Musinga as king, nearly destroying the Nyiginya dynasty in the process (Des Forges 2011).

Numerous critics have argued that the RPF's selective reconstruction of Rwandan history serves to legitimise its oppressive rule, particularly its programme of national unity and reconciliation (Purdeková 2011b; Reyntjens 2004; Straus and Waldorf 2011a; Thomson 2013a). This control of the historical record shapes the more recent past as crimes committed by the RPF before, during, and after the genocide cannot be publicly discussed, let alone tried in court, and commemoration has created a "polarizing ethnicized discourse" (Burnet 2009:95) that constructs Tutsi as survivors and Hutu as perpetrators. Hutu killed during the genocide and those killed, both Hutu and Tutsi alike, by violence perpetrated by the RPF are erased from the national imagination (Burnet 2009:95). This strict control of the historical record has led to frustrations among young people, as we saw above, about where to access the real "truth" of Rwanda's history. Until 1999, there was a moratorium on teaching history in schools, and it was only in 2005 that the subject started being taught, albeit in a limited fashion (Duruz 2012). Although a curriculum has been set for primary and secondary schools, many history teachers reportedly still feel uncomfortable teaching the more politically sensitive periods of Rwanda's past and "jump over" subjects such as the origins of ethnicity, the power relations of the pre-colonial state, the 1959 revolution in which Hutu came to power, and the causes of the genocide (Duruz 2012:90; see also Buckley-Zistel 2009; Freedman et al. 2008; King 2014; McLean Hilker 2011).

History, in other words, has become politically fraught in the post-genocide era. We must keep this active manipulation of the country's past in mind in the following discussion of the history of religion in the country. Where, we might ask, can we locate sources of

“unofficial” histories? How are religion and popular culture alternative sites of history-making?

Traditional Rwandan religion

Before moving on to consider the history of Christianity in the country, I want to first make a few remarks about “traditional” Rwandan religion. I suggest that authority in Rwanda, as elsewhere in Africa (Ellis and ter Haar 1998), has a long history of being spiritually constituted. We can observe an underlying logic wherein the spiritual and the physical are not “sharply dichotomize[d]” but rather developments in the former are understood to manifest themselves in the latter (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005:96). This point is important to emphasise if we want to understand the nature of power in the pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial, and post-genocide periods. Yet by remarking upon this relationship, I take Englund’s (2011a) critique of the facile conflation of religion and politics in Africa to heart. As he points out, “Religious thought, particularly as it evokes and wrestles with the occult, would seem to define African experiences in a way that it does not Euro-American experiences” (2011a:3). We cannot assume, as adherents of the secularization thesis have done, that religion and politics form two separate, static, spheres. “Ideas expressed in, and actions taken within, apparently different domains and institutions feed into each other”, he writes, “and what belongs to the public sphere or the private sphere is to be investigated and not assumed” (Englund 2011a:2). Instead, I am interested in the ways in which the religious and the political have been constituted at various historical moments, and the implications this has had on the life-worlds of Rwandans themselves.

The cosmology of pre-colonial Rwanda involved both a concept of an omnipotent God (*Imana*) and various classes of ancestral and possession cult spirits. *Imana* was

considered invisible but ever-present, a “creative force” (Des Forges 2011, 14) who possessed human qualities such as “intelligence, power, a will and emotion”, his name forming part of the “day-to-day vocabulary” of Rwandans (Mbanda 1997:11). *Imana* was considered the source of all life and as such was not worshipped (Longman 2010:36). Under the Nyiginya kingdom, the Tutsi king (*mwami*) was considered the representative of *Imana* on earth. Designated court ritualists, the *abiru*, developed and performed elaborate ceremonies that provided spiritual legitimacy to the *mwami*’s rule. In the early 19th century, these rituals became codified into the *ubwiru*, the official “ritual code” of the royal court (David Newbury 2011b:7). This ritual knowledge was contained in certain poetic texts that only the *abiru* could memorise. The *mwami* controlled the transmission of these poems and would organise recitation sessions wherein “a specialist who made a mistake was condemned to death by drowning unless he could produce another member of his lineage who was word-perfect” (Barber 2007:60). The secrecy of these texts was not created linguistically – they were, in fact, straightforward directives for ritual action phrased in “very plain language” – but rather through controlled access to them, with only a select few given this honour (Barber 2007:60).

Traditional Rwandan beliefs also involved the *abazimu* (sing., *umuzimu*), ancestral spirits that were considered “malevolent everyday influences” (Mbanda 1997:11). When the correct offerings were made, the *abazimu* could provide families with spiritual protection; if the *abazimu* were “slighted”, they could cause illness or misfortune (Longman 2010:36). Above the *abazimu* were the *imandwa*, spirits of powerful heroic figures such as Nyabingi and Ryangombe. Membership to these possession cults involved undergoing initiation, *kubandwa*. Unlike *Imana*, who, although benevolent, was passive,

the *imandwa* were believed to “provide more immediate help in the trials of life” (Des Forges 2011:14). Throughout the 19th and early 20th century, in fact, the *imandwa* provided opposition to both central court rule *and* colonial rule at particularly tenuous historical moments (Des Forges 2011; Berger 1981). The prophetic nature of the cult of Nyabingi, in fact, finds resonances in the new post-genocide *abarokore* churches’ insistence on prophecy, signs, and miracles, although the *abarokore* themselves would be quick to deny any continuity (see Chapter 2). Indeed, when the East African Revival began in Gahini in the 1930s, as I discuss below, it was interpreted by some as “a revival of the Nyabingi cult” (Ward 2012a:7). Nevertheless, it is these “traditional” practices that Christian missionaries dismissed as witchcraft and sought to eradicate when they arrived in Rwanda.

The arrival of Christianity

Despite the RPF’s “re-imagining” of Rwandan history, the role of the colonial administration and Christian churches in shaping Rwanda’s political field cannot be ignored. In particular, they contributed to the reifying of socio-economic difference into rigid “ethnic” identities. When the Society of Missionaries of Africa, better known as the White Fathers, first arrived in what is now Rwanda in 1900, they had a very specific evangelising strategy. Based on the ideas of their founder Cardinal Charles Lavigerie, they sought to first convert the local political elite in the hopes that the masses would follow suit. To this end, they actively courted the Tutsi ruling class, although they were initially viewed with suspicion not only by King Musinga and the Tutsi court but also by communities surrounding the first mission stations.²⁰ Poor Hutu, however, were eventually

²⁰ Rumours circulated that the White Fathers were cannibals who drank the blood of children at night, and the fact that the missionaries lived in tents, freely distributed salt and cigarettes, and appeared to have no discernible motive were further causes for alarm (Vidal 1974:68–9). Those who did convert were ostracised.

won over, attracted by the material support and healing services the White Fathers provided, and by the possibility of gaining powerful new patrons (Des Forges 2011:213–4).²¹ Furthermore, we should not assume that all missionaries unquestionably accepted this top-down evangelisation. Missionaries in the field often sympathised with local populations as they witnessed first-hand their mistreatment by local chiefs. They were instructed by their superiors, however, to “Render unto Caesar and Musinga all that can be returned to Caesar and Musinga” (Longman 2010:38). By granting the missionaries land in regions that had only recently come under his control, Musinga was able to consolidate and centralise his rule through the help of the missionaries and the colonial administration.

In addition to following Lavigerie’s missionizing strategy, the White Fathers – and colonial officials – interpreted Rwanda’s socio-economic structure through a particular ideological lens: that of the Hamitic hypothesis. Propagated by early colonial explorers to East Africa such as John Hanning Speke and Henry Morton Stanley, this pseudo-scientific “theory” claimed that the Tutsi were a Hamitic race who had come from either Egypt or Ethiopia with a superior culture to dispossess the region’s indigenous inhabitants, the Negroid Hutu and Pygmoid Twa. With their lighter skin, tall statures, and ‘elegant’ mannerisms, the Tutsi were considered “born rulers”, endowed with “a right to a history and future almost as noble as their European ‘cousins’” (Linden 1977:22). All Tutsi were seen as chiefs and all Hutu their subjects; the existence of Hutu kingdoms and Hutu chiefs,

People refused to eat and drink with them and labelled them *ibisome*, “those who have drank the poison of the whites”, or *ingome*, “rebels” (Vidal 1974:72). Since many new converts lived on the mission stations, they were seen more generally as “non-human” (Mbanda 1997:16), detached from kinship, clan, and lineage structures.

²¹ Although many authors have claimed that the first Catholic converts in Rwanda were predominantly Hutu peasants, Gatwa (2005) argues that poor Tutsi were also attracted by the missionaries’ message. It is difficult to determine the exact ethnic make-up of these converts as early missionary reports and publications tended to identify all peasants as Hutu (Gatwa 2005:61).

along with poor or “petit” Tutsi, was ignored. Colonial officials and missionaries alike took this fabricated social theory as “unquestioned ‘scientific canon’” (Prunier 1998:9), resulting in the real-world privileging of Tutsi in all areas of public and institutional life.²² Places in Catholic seminaries and government schools were taken up by the children of Tutsi chiefs, and in the 1920s administrative reforms reserved chieftaincies for Tutsi (Longman 2010:64). What had been somewhat flexible social categories based on occupation and status became distinct racial groups. The Belgians introduced ethnic identity cards in the 1930s, which classified every Rwandan as Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa according to how many cattle they owned, church records, and physical measurements. During the genocide, these cards allowed Hutu extremists to identify Tutsi, thus marking them for death.

Under Belgian rule, the Catholic Church flourished. In 1917 the Belgians forced Musinga to sign a decree on religious freedom, which amounted to the desacralisation of the kingship (Longman 2010: 49). That same year, the first Tutsi chef was baptised. In 1931, the influence of the Catholic Church led to the deposing of Musinga, who had remained resistant to Christianity and had never converted. Léon Classe, the Vicar Apostolic of Rwanda from 1922 until 1945, and Belgian Vice-Governor Charles Voisin declared the new king, Rudahigwa, upsetting traditional processes by which the *abiru* ritualists controlled the ordination. This ordination of Rudahigwa, a Catholic catechumen, signalled a definitive shift in power away from the *mwami* and the court to the Catholic Church and the Belgian administration. Three decades after the White Fathers’ arrival,

²² While the Hamitic hypothesis provided the ideological justification for Tutsi privilege under colonial rule, it was inverted during the Hutu Revolution. Tutsi were deemed the “foreign invaders” who had cruelly oppressed the majority Hutu and had to be pushed from power. During the genocide, Hutu extremists again emphasised the foreign origins of Tutsi and urged Hutu to purify, for once and for all, the nation (Mamdani 2001). In an infamous speech in 1992, Dr Léon Mugesera, then vice-president of the MRND, called for Tutsis to be sent back to Ethiopia via the Nyabarongo River. During the genocide, the bodies of Tutsi were indeed thrown into this very river.

Rudahigwa's enthroning finally led to the mass conversion of the Tutsi elite, known collectively as the Tornado.²³ Although in 1929-30 there had been 4,937 baptisms, by 1931-2 there were 16,527 (Longman 2010:55). Baptism became a requirement to become a chief, making conversion "both a duty and a question of political survival" (Gatwa 2005:90).²⁴

In 1946, Rudahigwa consecrated Rwanda to Christ the King and the Virgin Mary, effectively announcing Catholicism as the state religion. By 1950, Rwanda was considered "one of the most Catholic countries in Africa" (Carney 2012a:181), with almost 600,000 baptized Catholics and catechumens. The Catholic Church "had become the central agent of intellectual and political formation in colonial Rwanda" (Carney 2012a:181).

For their part the Protestant churches followed the lead of the Catholic Church and also attempted to align themselves with the ruling Tutsi elite. Their later arrival in Rwanda – Protestants began their missionary work from 1907 onwards – put them at a distinct disadvantage.²⁵ Like the Catholic Church, the mainline Protestant churches also bought into the "false anthropology" of the Hamitic hypothesis and saw Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa as distinct racial groups (Bowen 2004:39). Instead of positioning Protestant churches as

²³ This appellation was given to the phenomenon, considered "the greatest Catholic missionary achievement on the continent" (Gatwa 2005:90), after an article appeared in *Revue des Grands Lacs* in 1936.

²⁴ Indeed, between 1933 and 1939, 90% of the 1,250 chiefs and sub-chiefs had become Catholic (Gatwa 2005:92).

²⁵ The first Protestant missionaries – the Lutheran Bethel Mission, led by Dr Ernest Johanssen – arrived in 1907, setting up stations in Zinga and Kirinda. Over the next few years they too expanded, constructing posts in Rubengera in 1909, Kiteme in 1910 (now in DR Congo), and in Remera-Rukoma in 1912. Although the German defeat in the First World War led to the withdrawal of the Bethel Mission in 1916, Protestant orders returned to the country in 1921 through the Belgian Protestant Missions Society for the Congo (SBMPC) and, in 1925, the Ruanda Mission of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) was established. In addition, from their base in Burundi, Danish Baptist missionaries began evangelising in southern Rwanda in 1936, establishing a station at Nyantanga, near Kigeme (Longman 2010: 81). The Union of Baptist Churches maintained a presence in southern Rwanda, and the American-based Free Methodist Church founded a station at Kibogoro on Lake Kivu in 1942 (Longman 2010: 81). The Pentecostal Church was also a latecomer, arriving in Rwanda in 1940 via Swedish missionaries stationed in the Congo.

refuges for the “poor and voiceless” and offering an alternative spiritual vision, the Protestant missionaries “envied the Catholic relationship with both the colonial regime and the indigenous state and sought to emulate it” (Longman 2010:77). Additionally, the Ruanda Mission of the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS), which arrived in the country in 1925, was the product of divisions within the Church of England at the time, principally the split between evangelical “conservatives” and “liberals” over scriptural authority. This led Anglican missionaries in Rwanda to focus more on evangelism than critiquing the local socio-political context (Bowen 2004:38; Cantrell 2014).

Yet we should also be wary of exaggerating the role of the churches in “creating” ethnicity. Carney (2012a; 2012b) has recently argued that the Hutu-Tutsi question was not the dominant paradigm for Catholic discourse during the early colonial period.²⁶ Although Catholic leaders were influenced by “flawed missionary anthropology” such as the Hamitic hypothesis, they were not “brainwashed” by it (2012a:193). Classe, for example, is a telling example. The cleric actively promoted privileging Tutsi within the colonial administration and schools. In the 1920s, he introduced a two-tiered educational system that saw Tutsi students receive “more rigorous” training than their Hutu peers, even though Hutu and Tutsi had been educated together before 1920 (2012a:179; Carney 2012b:84). He also wrote a controversial essay in 1930 that advocated removing Musinga from power and installing Tutsi as the ruling class, which, as we saw above, he helped to accomplish. Yet Carney suggests that Classe was not a racist ideologue but rather “a consummate ecclesial

²⁶ Indeed, Ward (2012b) makes a similar argument about the early Anglican Mission in Rwanda. “By and large Tutsi and Hutu identity was not really an issue for the first 30 years of Anglican work in Rwanda”, he writes, “at least in the self-understanding of the Ruanda Mission” (2012b). Yet school enrolment and church employment told a different story, revealing “a strong bias towards Tutsi, a bias which was no less powerful because it was unstated” (2012b).

politician looking to position the Catholic Church for future growth” (2012a:174). He was not against Hutu advancement per se, and under his watch a number of Hutu were appointed to positions of authority in the church (2012a:179). The Catholic endorsement of the Hamitic hypothesis was not born of deep-seated racist ideologies, Carney suggests, but rather a conscious political strategy for ensuring the church’s continued influence in the country. This emphasis on the political motivations of the Catholic Church also helps to explain its turn to supporting the Hutu cause mid-century, as I discuss below. Just as many Rwandans at the time converted in a context of socio-political insecurity, so too did Catholic leaders attempt to mitigate institutional insecurity and support “democratic” influences to retain their spiritual authority.

The Church and the Hutu Revolution

Beginning in the 1940s the Catholic Church slowly began to question its whole-hearted backing of the Tutsi minority. Within the walls of the seminaries, a Hutu “counter-elite” (Lemarchand 1970) began to consolidate, inspired by social Catholicism – influenced by Vatican II²⁷ – and the need to redress social injustice (Van Hoyweghen 1996:381). Younger missionaries from working class backgrounds arrived in Rwanda with new post-war ideas about race, colonialism, and human rights, and identified with the majority Hutu, whom they saw as an “exploited class” (Longman 2010:67). The ensuing Hutu Revolution (1959-1962) saw the dissolution of the monarchy and the overturning of Tutsi privilege in institutional life. In 1961, Grégoire Kayibanda, a Hutu from the south who had been educated in Catholic seminaries, was elected president, and the following year Rwanda

²⁷ The Second Vatican Council – Vatican II – was held between 1962-1965 and the policies that resulted from it “sought to modernize the church by making it more responsive to the local contexts within which it operated, symbolized by the change of mass to vernacular languages” (Longman 2010:98).

gained independence from Belgium. The Hutu Revolution, however, was not so much a “social revolution” as “an ethnic transfer of power” (Prunier 1998:50). Democracy came to be equated with Hutu majority rule, expressed by the Kinyarwanda phrase, *rubanda nyamwinshi* (“the Hutu majority”) (Ndahiro 2004). During this period, hundreds of Tutsi were killed and thousands more fled into exile. If the Catholic Church since its arrival in the country had assumed the role of “kingmaker” (Longman 2010:75), in the post-independence period it became the “mute Church” (Van Hoyweghen 1996:381). Instead of speaking out against the increasingly violent marginalisation of Tutsi, it remained silent and refused to “question the political structures in which it comfortably operated” (Van Hoyweghen 1996:381).

This complicity continued with the 1973 coup d’état in which Juvénal Habyarimana, a Hutu from the north, took power.²⁸ Once again, hundreds of Tutsi were killed in ethnic pogroms or fled into exile. Habyarimana banned political activity for two years, installed an ethnic quota system in education and employment, and, in 1975, founded the political party *Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement* (MRND). Not only was party membership mandatory, citizens were forced to participate in national programmes such as *animation*, “ritualized expressions of support and loyalty to the regime”, and *umuganda*, community work (Longman 2010:88). Significantly, at the beginning of 1974, Rwanda’s first indigenous Catholic bishop, the moderate Aloys Bigirumwami, who was of mixed ethnic origin, was replaced by Hutu nationalist Vincent

²⁸ In a way that foreshadowed the killing in churches during the genocide, in 1973 the violence began in Catholic secondary schools in Byimana, Save, and Nyamasheke with the forced removal of Tutsi students (Carney 2012b: 95-6). This removal spread to the National University of Rwanda (NUR) in Butare and to Catholic schools and seminaries in the north-west; eventually it moved to banks, businesses, and civil institutions. Several hundred Tutsis died and many more were forced into exile. To Carney, 1973 was “a turning point in Catholic leadership” in the country (2012b: 96).

Nsengiyumva as Bishop of Nyundo. From this point on, Hutu nationalists “dominated” Catholic leadership until the genocide (Carney 2012b:96). Nsengiyumva, later promoted to archbishop of Kigali, was an active committee member of the MRND and the “personal confessor” of Habyarimana’s wife, Agathe Kazinga. Also a Hutu from the north, he reportedly wore a pin emblazoned with Habyarimana’s portrait on his cassock while giving mass. A Catholic priest, Father Michael, told me that when he began preaching in the early 1990s, Catholicism was “a kind of state religion”. Although the constitution guaranteed religious freedom, in practice the government actively attempted to “quash” the establishment of new religious groups (Longman 2010:91). According to Pastor Odile, a pastor with the Pentecostal church Assemblies of God (AoG), the government claimed at the time that it would be “chaotic” to have too many denominations operating in such a small country. “But it was the scheme of the enemy to put people under the bondage of religion”, she told me. Here too the government relied on a narrative of insecurity to quash dissent, political or religious.

Although the Catholic leadership became heavily involved in ethnic politics, this did not mean that all priests whole-heartedly supported this entanglement. In the 1980s, influenced by a liberation theology that championed greater political engagement, the Catholic Church began introducing structural reforms that increased lay participation and focused on sustainable development programmes. The 1980s and 1990s saw the emergence of a number of lay organisations, such as women’s groups and development cooperatives, that fostered solidarity among church members and created awareness about their rights and abilities (Longman 2010:96–116). By the end of the 1980s, economic decline, social inequality, and rampant government corruption – to say nothing of a growing HIV/AIDS

pandemic, overpopulation, and a 1988-9 famine – sparked a frustrated public into forming a nascent democracy movement (Longman 2010:103). Habyarimana’s control of the press lessened somewhat, and voices criticising government corruption began to be heard, both in new independent newspapers and also in the well-established Catholic newspaper, *Kinyamateka*. In July 1990, prompted by student protests and international pressure, Habyarimana announced a series of political reforms.

On October 1, 1990, however, the RPF invaded northern Rwanda from its base in Uganda, setting off a civil war. Habyarimana responded with a political crack-down, and thousands of RPF “accomplices” inside the country were arrested, some of them tortured and killed. Included in the round-up were popular musicians, as I discuss in Chapter 5. To shore up his eroding power, Habyarimana announced a number of new reforms and, in 1991, a law legalising the formation of political parties was adopted. A number of new parties were created at this time, but they tended to coalesce along regional and ethnic lines. Violent anti-Tutsi propaganda began to be disseminated through radio and print, creating a notorious “hate media”.²⁹ Certain new religious groups, however, were allowed to register. In 1993, Assemblies of God, for example, legally registered with the government. The mainline churches’ reaction to the democracy movement was ambivalent. On the one hand voices of critical of the regime appeared in the pages of Catholic publications, and many lay Catholics were involved in human rights and other civil society organisations. On the other, the Catholic leadership remained loyal to the Habyarimana regime and rarely voiced public criticism of it, remaining silent when Tutsi were massacred in several ethnic

²⁹ I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 5.

pogroms in the early 1990s (Longman 2010:150–2).³⁰ After attending a conference in Tanzania on the stalled political process in Rwanda and Burundi, Habyarimana flew back to Rwanda. His plane was shot down in Kigali on April 6, 1994, which sparked the genocide.³¹

The Church and genocide

Within hours of Habyarimana's death, killing squads went to work. The genocide was planned and orchestrated by a small extremist clique around Habyarimana and his wife, the so-called *akazu* ("little house"), who sought to eliminate their political rivals. Based on previously compiled lists, the Presidential Guard and other elite troops killed leading opposition figures, human right activists, and any known opponent of the Habyarimana regime. The killings soon spread from Kigali to all areas of the country as civilian militias and ordinary citizens began hunting down Tutsi (Des Forges 1999). Churches became massacre sites, with some clergy actively participating in the killings. While some priests lured Tutsi to their churches and then handed them over to the militias to be killed, others demanded sexual favours from Tutsi women.³² Some, however, sheltered Tutsi. National church leaders did not speak out to condemn the violence, thereby leaving "the way clear for officials, politicians, and propagandists to assert that the slaughter actually met with God's favour" (Des Forges 1999:246).

³⁰ In 1991, for example, Thadée Nsengiyumwa, the president of the Catholic conference of bishops, published an open letter that spoke out against human rights abuses being committed in the country and chastised the churches for failing to lead the way (Longman 2010:8).

³¹ The Burundian president Cyprien Ntaryimana was also on board and was killed as well.

³² Father Wenceslas Munyeshyaka, for example, the curé of Sainte Famille parish in Kigali, allegedly turned over Tutsi who had gathered at his church to the militias to be killed. He is also accused of having demanded sex from girls and women in exchange for protection. Those who refused were handed over to the death squads (Longman 2010:6). In 2006, a military court in Rwanda sentenced Munyeshyaka in absentia to life in prison. Despite various legal interventions, since 2001 Munyeshyaka has worked as a priest at a church in the small French town of Gisors (McGreal 2014). Survivors see this as further evidence of the Catholic Church's failure to bring to justice Rwandan priests and clerics implicated in the genocide.

Even after the genocide churches shirked “institutional responsibility” and the official position of the Catholic Church has been to blame individual Christians instead of admitting a wider culpability (Longman 2010:7).³³ This official line was repeated to me by Father Michael. “The Catholic Church did not commit genocide”, he insisted, “the Rwandese themselves committed genocide. Blood was thicker than the waters of baptism”. In this way, some scholars have concluded that while the Catholic Church as an institution did not possess a “genocidal mentality”, it was “instrumental in the creation of important preconditions” for such a mentality to develop (Bjørnlund et al. 2004). Longman argues that the complicity of the churches can be traced back to the nature of the Christian message taught and received in Rwanda: it was not one of “love and fellowship”, but rather “one of obedience, division, and power” (Longman 2010:10).

The Protestant East African Revival and the early *abarokore*

The history of the Catholic and mainline churches, however, is not the only history relevant to our purposes here. While the complicity of the churches in the genocide has undoubtedly shaped the contemporary religious and political landscape in the country, there is another important historical trajectory that we must consider: that of the Protestant East African Revival of the 1930s. It is from this movement, after all, that the post-genocide *abarokore* derive their name. Surprisingly, this “subversive” (Peterson 2012) spiritual history is often ignored by scholars of Rwanda working on more secular topics. This has led them to overlook moments of spiritual “resistance” in the country’s recent past (Breed 2013; Palmer

³³ The official Vatican line, delivered by Pope John Paul in May 1996, has been: “the church...cannot be held responsible for the guilt of its members that have acted against the evangelic law; they will be called to render account of their own actions...” (Kubai 2007b:230).

2014; Thomson 2013a), with the result that their studies are ethnographically “thin” (Ortner 1995) in their approach to Rwandan history.

When the new churches arrived in Rwanda after 1994, they condemned the mainline churches for their complicity in the genocide in part because these accusations were well-founded, as we saw, but also because it was a useful strategy to attract new members. The new churches used a “very sharp sword of words” against the Catholic Church, as Father Michael called it. One Pentecostal pastor who returned from Burundi with his church in 1995 recounted how he had vigorously preached against the “old” religions, condemning them for their tradition and ritual and claiming that they had nothing to offer a traumatised Rwandan population. “We invented ourselves like that”, he told me – with a chuckle and a knowing smile – and admitted that he had exaggerated the mainline churches’ involvement in the genocide deliberately to carve out a new space for his church in what was becoming a crowded spiritual marketplace.

In many ways, these new churches were heirs to the Revival. Although Cantrell (2014) has described how returnee Tutsi Anglicans consider themselves as legitimate heirs to the Revival, I found that the post-genocide *abarokore* equally made these claims. Not only do they derive their name, the *abarokore*, from Revival history, the churches often defined themselves as “revival-driven”. Indeed, during my fieldwork I often had animated conversations with *abarokore* pastors and believers about the extent to which the post-genocide period could be considered one of revival, with opinion divided on whether or not this was the case. During the very first service I attended at True Revival Church (TRC), my main fieldwork church, the pastor spoke about revival. While the number and quality of born-again Christians in the country was increasing, he told us, we had to take care to

encourage the revival spirit to grow. “Revival can only begin in the spirit of unity”, he warned. It involved one faith, one thought, and one direction. Yet a few weeks later, it should be noted, the same pastor claimed that we were living in the end times and that the present moment was caught up in the pain of “birthing this new world order”.

Although the Revival has its historical roots in the Anglican Church, its influence has been far-reaching. It began in 1936 at the Anglican mission in Gahini, eastern Rwanda, and spread to the rest of the country, then to eastern and southern Africa, Europe, and other parts of the world.³⁴ Characterised by “many emotional and spiritual outbursts” (Osborn 1991:18), the Revival was sparked by a disturbance at a girls’ boarding school. It involved intense embodied experiences – “[s]inging, laughter, hysterical weeping, dreams, glossolalia, trembling of the body” (Church 1981:131) – that resulted in impassioned public repentance and a desire to “witness boldly” through evangelism (Osborn 1991:18). Revivalists, known as the *abarokore* in Rwanda and the *balokole* in Uganda (Christiansen 2009; Gusman 2013), stressed the importance of one’s personal relationship with Christ and a withdrawal from worldly matters. Alcohol and tobacco consumption were banned, and revivalists believed in the Second Coming of Christ. During my fieldwork, Jean-Baptiste, an Anglican priest, told me that the legacy of the Revival in Rwanda was its insistence on personal conversion, confession of sin, repentance, and “walking in the light”. It is also important to note that although the Revival started in the Anglican Church, the *abarokore* included members of other mainline Christian denominations. With few exceptions, it is only in the post-genocide period that the *abarokore* have formed their own

³⁴ Cantrell (2014, 432) stresses that although the East African Revival is normally understood as having its origins in Rwanda, it was “heavily influenced” by the history and development of the Anglican Church in Buganda.

independent churches. Although the Revival was influenced by the Keswick holiness movement and American evangelical revivalism, it “addressed an African sensibility, radical and critical in its message, but one rising from the very particular concerns of African Christians in late colonial society” (Ward 2012c:189). Although the Revival contributed to creating a “modern missionary movement”, revivalists themselves were not “uncritical proponents of modernity” but rather sought to integrate traditional and modern values to form a wider Christian fellowship (Ward 2012c:187–8).

In an influential reading of the Revival, Peterson (2012) has suggested that it provides a helpful lens through which we can consider dissent and nonconformism in eastern Africa. Revivalists, Peterson argues, “constructed dramatically different accounts of history and positioned themselves differently in the social world” (2012:4). Since they rejected the dictates of tradition and culture and refused to be confined to any ethnic homeland, he labels them “subversives”. Unlike “ethnic patriots” of the time, revivalists saw themselves as multilingual cosmopolitans and relied on the latest modern technologies – the post, newspapers, bicycles, and road infrastructure – to participate in a wider revivalist community. They also had a distinct understanding of time. Unlike ethnic patriots who considered the past as a reservoir of positive values, revivalists considered it a “burden” (2012:4) to be discarded and looked forward to the imminent return of Christ.

Yet this subversion did not take place on the grand stage of post-war history. Rather, revivalists were “dissenters on the field of etiquette, manners, and social convention – a field that patriotic organizers sought by all means to regiment” (Peterson 2012:4). By speaking loudly and publicly about sexual misconduct and bringing taboo subjects out into the open, for example, they challenged the civil order and disciplinary authority. In

Rwanda, as elsewhere in East Africa, privacy and concealment were highly valued. Tutsi aristocrats erected thick hedges around their homesteads to create a strict demarcation between public and private life (Peterson 2012:17). When a Tutsi woman wanted to leave her home, for example, the courtyard was cleared, a mat was placed in front of the gateway, and another mat was held around her to shield her from “the outer gaze”, as one missionary described it (Peterson 2012:17). Men were taught to suppress and disguise their emotions, a cultural ideal expressed in the common Kinyarwanda saying “*Amarira y’umugabo atemba ajya mu nda*” (the tears of a man fall inside). Yet Rwandan revivalists flouted these customs and publicly pronounced their sins, often in lurid detail (Peterson 2012:19–20). Debates and controversies about the Revival, Peterson argues, were equally about “the definition of eastern Africa’s public sphere” (2012:4).

In this way, although critics such as Mbembe (2001) have decried the politics of the belly and the lack of a critical post-colonial African public, Peterson suggests that an alternative understanding of dissent can be gleaned from the Revival. Instead of seeing it as “an austere intellectual position”, we must see dissent as “a cultural practice, a bodily movement that leads toward another future” (2012:4).

The *abarokore* and power

I find Peterson’s framework a helpful way to consider the *abarokore* in Rwanda, both in the past and the present, and to theorise their often antagonistic relationship with power. Thus although the *abarokore* have always maintained a marginal presence on Rwanda’s religious landscape, their repudiation of worldly corruption allowed them to maintain a certain distance from secular politics during periods of political insecurity from the 1950s onwards. Ward (2010; 2012b) has argued that during the Hutu Revolution, the *abarokore* spirit

allowed the Anglican Church to rise above party politics, albeit in a limited fashion. From 1959 until 1964 – a particularly tumultuous period of Rwandan history, as we saw – the Anglican Church helped some Rwandans, including the Queen Mother, flee ethnic violence, and arranged for children to find places in Ugandan schools (2010:111). Many *abarokore* refused to join PARMEHUTU, Kayibanda’s political party, and many *abarokore* Hutu did not participate in the looting of Tutsi property and cattle, unlike many of their peers at the time (Ward 2010:111). The prevailing political climate, in fact, caused both Hutu and Tutsi *abarokore* to flee into exile, particularly to Uganda. As a result, Ward argues, the Revival movement “lost its most courageous members to death or exile” (2010:112), and the church was forced to compromise with the state. From 1965 until 1990, the Anglican church “built itself up as a predominantly Hutu church” (Ward 2010:112).

Another revival occurred in various Protestant churches in the 1980s. Drawing inspiration from North American charismatic and fundamentalist churches, the movement once again emphasised a personal relationship with Christ and a strict code of moral conduct (Longman 2010:114). Members would meet informally after Sunday services and, guided by lay leaders, sing hymns, share personal testimonies, and speak in tongues (Longman 2010:114). During this time, the *abarokore* often came into direct confrontation with the Habyarimana regime. As we saw above, Habyarimana, himself a devout Catholic, maintained tight control of the country’s religious landscape. In 1986 the government charged 300 members of various unregistered Christian “sects”, including some *abarokore*, with inciting rebellion amongst the population and disrespecting official state symbols (Longman 2010:93).³⁵ The *abarokore* and others had refused to join MRND,

³⁵ Also brought to trial were members of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the *Abatempera* (a break-away Adventist group), and the *Abantu b’Imana bihana* (the Repentant People of God) (Longman 2010:93).

Habyarimana's political party, and had boycotted participation in state programmes such as *animation* and *umuganda* because they considered them "idolatrous" (Longman 2010:93). Two of the Christians charged recanted, but the remaining were found guilty and faced prison sentences of five to 15 years (Longman 2010:93).

In the 1990s the "saved" also held inter-ethnic meetings that involved group prayer, fasting, confessions, Bible studies, and singing (Mbanda 1997:77). These meetings, which eventually turned into large public gatherings, created a platform for addressing political issues and condemning the church authorities for their corruption and close alignment to the state (Mbanda 1997:77). Additionally, some *abarokore* tried to push for reform within the Protestant churches. *Abarokore* within the Presbyterian Church, for example, lobbied to introduce baptism by immersion rather than aspersion, but church leaders refused their request (Longman 2010:160). Although Mbanda reports that some *abarokore* who participated in the inter-ethnic meetings later became members of the *Interahamwe* (Mbanda 1997:77), Longman contends that a "disproportionate" number of *abarokore* and Pentecostals from ADEPR (*Association des Eglises de Pentecôte du Rwanda*), the first Pentecostal church in the country, resisted (Longman 2010:196).³⁶ He attributes this to the fact that the *abarokore* were never closely aligned to the country's structures of power and that their theology, as we saw, forbade them from engaging in politics (Longman 2010:196). Yet it must be noted that some Pentecostal pastors were implicated in the genocide. Pentecostal pastor Jean-Bosco Uwinkindi, for example, has been accused of participating in the slaughter of Tutsi who had sought shelter at his Kayenzi Pentecostal Church in Kanzenze commune, now Bugesera District (Musoni 2014a). After two years of

³⁶ I will have more to say about ADEPR in the next chapter.

delay, his trial began in May 2014. He pleaded not guilty to charges of genocide and mass murder as crimes against humanity (Musoni 2014a). He is accused of helping the Interahamwe to hunt down and kill those who survived the church massacre and were “hiding in the buses” outside (Musoni 2014a).³⁷

The critical potential of the *abarokore*

Due to this conflicting history, commentators have been divided on the critical potential of the Revival. Linden argues that the *abarokore* renounced the evils of “traditional” religion and rebelled against the moral failings of the mainline missionaries and the Catholic Tutsi chiefs (1977:204–5; Longman 2010:81). Others have argued that since an emphasis was placed on repentance and finding a new identity “in Christ”, ethnic difference was undermined as Hutu and Tutsi fellowshipped together (Bowen 2004:38–9). Ward, however, is much more ambivalent, pointing out that on occasion the Revivalist spirit inspired some Hutu to save Tutsi, but that it is difficult to pin down whether this was the Revivalist spirit itself or a more general sense of “human compassion” and “Christian integrity” (2010:114).

Others argue that the Revival did little to challenge the hegemony of the Catholic Church in Rwanda. Its “heavenly-minded” focus did not help to create structural changes within the hierarchy of Protestant churches nor did it challenge social injustice, allowing one commentator to declare that the revival resulted in a “naive faith” (Rutayisire 1995:115). The *abarokore* focus on maintaining “uncompromising” standards of moral conduct, furthermore, often caused resentment among nominal Christians as they felt they were the implied “targets” of *abarokore* critique (Cantrell 2014:433). We can also see how

³⁷ Uwinkindi was the first suspect to be transferred to Rwanda by the UN’s International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) to stand trial in the country.

concentrating on “private morality” such as drinking, lying, stealing, and adultery, does not necessarily allow for a wider, more institutional understanding of sin and immorality (Bowen 2004:43). Similarly, since the Revival focused on evangelism rather than on discipleship, it did not provide Christians with practical tools to navigate their everyday lives (Bowen 2004:43). Indeed, as one Anglican pastor told me, the problem with Christianity in Rwanda has always hinged on a lack of discipleship. “So discipleship, I think even today, if it’s not properly done then Rwandese may not get involved into genocide”, he said, “but they will make other mistakes”.

These criticisms, we will see, were remarkably similar to those levelled against the new *abarokore* churches in the post-genocide era. Added to this arsenal was the accusation that the post-genocide churches were nothing more than businesses shelling an exploitative prosperity gospel (Gifford 1990; Coleman 2000; Haynes 2013).

Conclusion

I started this chapter with a quote from Eric1key to underscore the politicised nature of history in Rwanda. Amidst the RPF’s “re-imagining” and “re-making” of Rwandan history, young people struggled to determine the “truth” about their past, and ultimately threw their hands up in the air in frustration. I considered the two strands of Christian history in the country. First, I focused on the complicity of the mainline churches, particularly the Catholic Church, in exacerbating ethnic divisions from the colonial period up to the genocide. Second, I examined the Protestant East African revival of the 1930s and traced how *abarokore* in the country had spoken out against government corruption and attempted to resist participating in government programmes, albeit with limited success. Placing the new churches in historical perspective allows us to ask if the new *abarokore* churches

continue the “subversive” interventions of earlier periods or if the authoritarian context of the post-genocide period prevents them from doing so. In this way, we can situate insecurity within a longer historical trajectory.

We can see as well that although the Catholic Church has been the dominant player on the country’s religious landscape since the beginning of the 20th century, this did not mean that other spiritualities were absent. While I focused here on the *abarokore* and their emergence after the East African Revival in the 1930s, other forms of spiritual revival have played an important role in Rwanda’s past. I briefly mentioned the Nyabingi possession cult, but we can also consider the Marian apparitions of Kibeho in the 1980s in this light (Ilibagiza 2010; Ruzindaza 2013). Revival movements, furthermore, were not limited to Christian denominations. Vidal (1974) reports that during her fieldwork in the early 1970s, traditional religion experienced something of a comeback. Peasants practiced *kubandwa*, secret rituals, and divination ceremonies. In her reading, with the failure of modern institutions, the increasingly pronounced hypocrisy of the Catholic Church, despair at economic recession, and a rising population, peasants returned to the only world that had not participated in this crisis: the imaginary (1974:88). While they may not have been able to openly rebel against the state, traditional religion provided marginalised peasants access to the protective and reassuring spiritual universe of their ancestors (1974:88).

I argue in the next chapter that seeing the new *abarokore* as subversives is productive. With their loud expressive worship styles, the *abarokore* were often considered an affront to Rwandan cultural sensibilities. Yet, as we will see, their “subversion” followed pre-existing cultural logics and was shaped by the fraught post-genocide political context. We must also be wary of drawing a direct line between the early *abarokore* and

their post-genocide counterparts. There has long been an “uneasy” relationship between the Revival and Pentecostalism (Ward 2012c:197). In Uganda, for example, although Pentecostalism and the *Balokole* movement are considered by the public to be “virtually indistinguishable”, the *Balokole* themselves are suspicious of the “undisciplined” and “ostentatious” nature of Pentecostals (Ward 2012c:197). Similar cleavages exist between the “old” Pentecostal church in Rwanda, ADEPR (Association des Eglises de Pentecôte du Rwanda), and the new Pentecostal churches. Furthermore, as I discuss in Chapter 4, the new *abarokore* churches provide spiritual legitimacy to the RPF.

In the next chapter I turn to the post-genocide spiritual landscape and testimonies from young *abarokore* themselves. I pay particular attention to the affects of conversion and *abarokore* practice.

Chapter 2

Spiritual temporalities and the new *abarokore* churches: Affect, silence, and noise

In the last chapter I explored Rwanda's spiritual history and suggested that the new *abarokore* churches can be seen as heirs to multiple Christian trajectories. On the one hand, they inherited the complicity of the mainline churches in the genocide; on the other, they can equally lay claim to the "subversive" (Peterson 2012) social and political orientation of the early *abarokore*. Building on the last chapter, I suggest that the new *abarokore* churches were so appealing because they provided an alternative understanding of Rwanda's past, present, and future.³⁸ To the *abarokore*, the genocide was the result of demonic possession rather than decades of ethnic politics, poverty, or international inaction, and the country's future was understood through the framework of prophecy and revival rather than that of the RPF's Vision 2020 development programme. The new churches emphasised that Rwanda's physical development must be accompanied by spiritual development if the country wanted to achieve God's promises. These spiritual temporalities provided young Rwandans with hope for the future and the ability to see their present life circumstances as the result of divine intervention rather than a socio-political climate of quiet insecurity. It also allowed them to contribute to the country's reconstruction on their own terms through prayer, praise and worship, and intercession. These techniques of the self were radically opposed to the secular state processes of *ingando*, *umuganda*, and *itorero*.

³⁸ Following Kubai, I employ "new" here to refer to churches that "were not present in Rwanda prior to the genocide, even if they belong to the already established Pentecostal, or charismatic churches in other parts of the world" (2007a:199). For his part, van't Spijker calls them "New Christian communities" (2010:5).

Theoretically this chapter and the ones that follow contribute to the ongoing “rupture” debate within the anthropology of Christianity. While seeing Pentecostal conversion as a complete break with the past and a discourse on modernity has been productive in recent scholarship (Meyer 1999, 1998; Robbins 2007, 2010; van Dijk 1998, 2001), it is less helpful in the Rwandan context. If anything, the genocide is considered the “extraordinary rupture” (Buckley-Zistel 2006:137), a “demarcation line” through which Rwandan youth distinguish between a “good” pre-1994 past and everything since as “bad” (Pells 2009:340). Genocide itself has been theorised as the “dark side of modernity” (Hinton 2002) as both are inextricably tied to notions of progress, capitalism, the emergence of the nation-state, violent technological innovations, and “crises of identity” (Hinton 2005:5). A focus on rupture occludes the complex ways young Rwandans remember and commemorate lost loved ones and repurpose their pasts to create new futures. Performing a “complete break”, furthermore, suggests a certain violence (van De Kamp 2011). It is not difficult to see how this sense of rupture was disquieting – even potentially retraumatising – for those who had experienced violence first-hand in their own lives and families, with some still bearing scars on their bodies and/or “wounds” in their hearts.

Indeed, what often gets lost in the rupture debate is affect. In this chapter and the ones that follow I ask: what are the affects created by conversion? How is rupture an affective experience that is both productive and destructive of selves and social relations? Drawing on the concept of the “sociality of emotions” (Ahmed 2004), I suggest that born-again conversion was a way to reanimate the bodies and emotions of individuals who had been traumatised by the genocide, migration, or the quiet insecurity of the post-genocide

period more generally. Pentecostal conversion allowed them to transform from “stones”, as one informant put it, into human beings once again. In this way the *abarokore* churches can be considered sites of “social repair” (Shaw 2007b; Das et al. 2001). Music was an important part of this spiritual transformation and young people became active agents in this process by participating in choirs and acting as worship leaders. Here we see that the *abarokore* churches provided young people with new roles and responsibilities that allowed them to contribute directly to the country’s spiritual growth. Through their emphasis on keeping secrets safe in the heart, the new *abarokore* churches created an inclusive affective community where multiple kinds of pain and emotions could be expressed, shared, and thus validated.

Yet while the new *abarokore* churches created an inclusive affective community an unsettling aspect of the new churches was the fact that they tended to be mono-ethnic in nature. While *abarokore* pastors claimed that the love of Jesus surpassed ethnic difference, specific *abarokore* churches were said to attract specific groups of Tutsi returnees. The church I consider here, True Revival Church (TRC), for example, was known to be the church of returnee Tutsis from DR Congo. This “hidden” ethnic composition undermined its claims to minister to *all* Rwandans, and repeated comparisons of Rwandans to the Israelites implicitly excluded Rwandans who had been born and raised in the country from its Christian community. In this way, we can question the kind of affect the new churches created. While their loud expressive worship styles and belief in miracles offered hope to converts, to others it was mere “noise” that distracted from a deeper connection with God. Here the soundscape of Christian practice took on newfound moral significance (Hirschkind 2006).

I structure this chapter in the following way. I first sketch the post-genocide spiritual landscape and how the *abarokore* churches offered something “new” to a traumatised Rwandan population. I provide a brief sketch of True Revival Church (TRC), the *abarokore* church that was the main site of my fieldwork. I then turn to the personal testimonies of *abarokore* themselves to gain insight into the affective possibilities of born-again conversion. I end by considering the “hidden dynamics” of the new churches.

The post-genocide spiritual landscape

As we saw in the last chapter, the churches in Rwanda, especially the Catholic Church, had been complicit not only in the genocide but also in divisive “ethnic” politics since their arrival in Rwanda at the turn of the 20th century. When the RPF stopped the genocide in July 1994, the mainline churches had been decimated. In 1995, out of 400 Catholic priests, 200 remained in Rwanda, with 60 in the refugee camps in Goma who blamed the RPF for the genocide (Van Hoyweghen 1996:395). The Catholic Church, in fact, lost roughly a third of its clergy. Since 1994 a number of priests, nuns, and religious leaders have been convicted of genocide, both by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and national courts.³⁹ Many churches across the country have since been transformed into memorial sites (Smith and Rittner 2004). I visited the former Catholic Church of Nyamata, which acts as a memorial site for 20,000 people killed in and around the church, with the young artists from the Primus Guma Super Star Season 2 (PGGSS 2) competition. While the performers and competition organisers remained collected and composed, some of the entertainment journalists broke down in tears and were comforted by their peers.

³⁹ To name but one example, Father Athanase Seromba, the first Catholic priest to be tried at the ICTR, was sentenced to 15 years in prison in 2006. He ordered the bulldozing of his Nyange parish, resulting in the deaths of more than 2,000 Tutsis who had sought refuge at the church.

The complicity of the churches in the genocide engendered a profound crisis of faith, particularly for the *abasope*, Rwandans, both Hutu and Tutsi alike, who had been born and raised in the country.⁴⁰ Before 1994, as we saw in the last chapter, the country had been overwhelmingly Catholic. Jean-Baptiste, the Anglican priest and a survivor whom we encountered last chapter, told me that the genocide “shook the complacency of the churches; people started questioning the kind of church we’ve had”.

Not only did the complicity of the mainline churches cause profound spiritual trauma, it also had lasting political effects. In the years immediately following the genocide, the RPF was suspicious of the mainline churches and even intervened in their “internal disputes” (van’t Spijker 2011:11). It was particularly hostile towards the Catholic Church, which it accused of complicity with the Hutu state.⁴¹ Indeed, in June 1994, RPF soldiers killed three Catholic bishops they were charged with protecting: Mgr. Vincent Nsengiyumva, the archbishop of Kigali mentioned in the last chapter; Mgr. Thaddée Nsengiyumva, Bishop of Kabgaye; and Mgr. Ruzindana, the Bishop of Byumba. The RPF claimed that the killings were the act of four rogue soldiers and executed one of them. The arrest in April 1999 of Augustin Misago, the former bishop of Gikongoro, was widely interpreted as the RPF’s attempt to hold the Catholic Church accountable for its involvement in the genocide. Misago allegedly refused to shelter Tutsis during the genocide because of “lack of space” in his bishop’s residence (Ndahiro 2004:239). Throughout the

⁴⁰ This complicity was not only performed by the Catholic Church. The Seventh Day Adventist Church, the second most popular Christian denomination before the genocide, was also involved. At Mugonero Church, for example, the president of the church, Pastor Elizaphan Ntakirutimana, lured 8,000 refugees to the site and, on the 16th of April, the Adventist Sabbath, led a motorcade of soldiers and militia into the complex – the killing lasted for 11 hours (Kubai 2005: 10). Ntakirutimana was sentenced to 10 years in prison for his role in the massacre and the church has since become a memorial site.

⁴¹ It should be noted that this hostility had historical roots. Many Tutsi who fled the country from 1959 onwards felt that the Catholic Church was “anti-Tutsi”, and had converted to the Anglican Church, Pentecostalism, and Islam while in exile (Longman 2010:74).

ordeal Misago was backed by the Pope and top Vatican officials who claimed that the trial was a campaign against the Catholic Church (BBC News 2000).⁴² Misago always maintained his innocence. Even respected Rwanda scholar Alison Des Forges weighed in on the trial, commenting: “There is a difference between ‘historical justice and legal justice’” (Santoro 1999). Misago was acquitted in June 2000 and resumed his church activities until he died in March 2012 (Bucyensenge 2012).

This hostile stance towards the mainline churches “created a favourable climate for the founding of independent churches”, van’t Spijker suggests (2011:11). There was also a sense that a new political order required a new source of spiritual legitimation. As one Anglican official told me: “There was a political change, obviously there should be a spiritual change”.⁴³ Frank, a *murokore* and representative of the PEACE Plan, a Christian NGO I discuss in more detail in Chapter 4, told me that after a calamity like genocide, peoples’ “spirituality” was very high. “The questions in their minds, they need ministry”, he told me. “It’s a time when people need relief. People think it’s only physical relief like food and shelter, but it’s emotional relief. And a good church should be able to handle that”. The country’s spiritual field was “green”, as Frank put it, ready to be planted with new churches offering new possibilities for Christian personhood and community.

The arrival of the new churches

Immediately following the RPF’s victory, hundreds of thousands of exiled Tutsi began returning to the country from Uganda, Burundi, DR Congo, Kenya, and Tanzania. Amidst

⁴² The Catholic Church has assisted several Catholic priests to flee the country after the genocide, including Father Wenceslas Munyeshyaka and Monsignor Simon Habyarimana (Ndahiro 2004:243–4).

⁴³ Similarly, when the National Resistance Movement (NRM) took power in Uganda in 1986 there was an “influx” of charismatic churches and revival movements within the mainline churches, which challenged the historical dominance of the Catholic and Anglican Churches (Christiansen 2009:53).

this flood of Tutsi returnees were young *abarokore* pastors who began founding churches and ministries (Corten 2003:36). The arrival of the new churches in Rwanda has been described as an “explosion” (Van Hoyweghen 1996:379) and an “onslaught” (Hatzfeld 2009:184), attesting to the speed of their growth and their tendency to hold loud, often all-night, prayer vigils. With their emphasis on the “brokenness” of conversion (Ward 2012a:4), sin, repentance, and personal confession, the post-genocide *abarokore* churches are similar to the earlier *abarokore* movement discussed in the last chapter. Yet with their focus on signs and wonders, spiritual gifts, deliverance, healing, and the centrality of the Holy Spirit, they also form part of a world-wide Pentecostal movement that has swept the globe since the 1980s (Meyer 1999; Corten and Marshall 2001; Martin 2002; Gifford 2004; Marshall 2009).⁴⁴ In interviews with these new *abarokore* pastors, many of them told me that they had had visions or dreams of starting their own churches while still in exile, in many cases even before the genocide. The events of 1994, however, created the possibility for them to return and begin “healing the nation”. Under Habyarimana, as we saw, the religious space in the country had been tightly controlled. The genocide opened it up, especially as the RPF started distancing itself from the Catholic Church.

By 1996 there were at least 45 new denominations in Kigali, with many others outside the capital (van’t Spijker 1997:252). In 2005 Kubai wrote that there were more than 100 (2005:26). During my fieldwork, religious leaders claimed there were over 300. This number, however, was somehow inflated. Between 2011 and 2013, 405 religious institutions attempted to register to legally operate in Rwanda with the Rwandan

⁴⁴ Van’t Spijker divides these “New Christian communities” into three categories: those that were established after 1994; those from denominations established elsewhere that were then brought to Rwanda after the genocide; and Christian communities that had already existed in Rwanda but gained new followers after 1994 (2010: 5-6).

Governance Board (RGB), yet only 221 were granted permission (Umurerwa 2013; Dusabemungu and Emma Marie 2013). I was often told by pastors that although the *abarokore* churches in the country more or less shared the same spiritual doctrine – i.e. one of personal salvation – they differed in terms of their “visions” and “objectives”.

This turn away from the Catholic Church and embrace of Protestantism in all its forms was reflected in the most recent national census. Before the genocide, as we have seen, 62.6% of the population considered itself Catholic, 18.8% Protestant, 8.4% Seventh Day Adventist, and 1.2% Muslim. The fourth Rwanda Population and Housing Census (RPHC4), undertaken in 2012 during my fieldwork, found that out of a population of 10.5 million 44% were Roman Catholic, 38% Protestant, 12% Adventist, 2% Muslim, and 1% Jehovah’s Witnesses (NISR and MINECOFIN 2014). Those with no religious affiliation accounted for 2.5% of the population, and all other groups, including traditionalist/animists, represented less than 1% (NISR and MINECOFIN 2014). Compared to the 2002 Census, in 2012 Catholics in the country had dropped by 18%, down from 62%, while Protestants increased by 11%, up from 27% (NISR and MINECOFIN 2014). Within the span of one decade, these were sizeable gains and losses. Although the RPHC4 did not separate Pentecostalism from Protestantism, it is safe to assume that the rise in Protestant affiliation has been dramatically impacted by the arrival of the new *abarokore* churches.

The new Pentecostal churches also influenced religious practice in the mainline churches. It was, as one Presbyterian leader told me, “like a big bang”. Although mainline churches had been “dormant”, the new churches roused them from their liturgical lethargy and many of them introduced singing, dancing, and clapping into their services. There was, in other words, a “Pentecostalising” of mainline Christianity, as has been reported for other

parts of the continent (Deacon and Lynch 2013:115). The Catholic Church even began using musical instruments and conducting services in English and French. Although in the past the mainline churches had relied on an “attractional mode”, as Jean-Baptiste told me, expecting believers to come to them, they started saying, “let’s go to them where they are”. Not only did their worship styles become more “charismatic”, mainline churches were also influenced by Pentecostal doctrine and began placing more of an emphasis on the Holy Spirit and the importance of deliverance.

Despite the *abarokore* churches’ claims to newness, it is important to point out that they were not the first to bring Pentecostalism to the country. The Pentecostal Church, known as ADEPR (Association des Eglises de Pentecôte du Rwanda), first arrived in Rwanda in 1940 via Swedish missionaries stationed in the eastern part of what is now DR Congo.⁴⁵ Its influence on the country’s spiritual landscape, however, was marginal as it was overshadowed by the Catholic Church and the more established Protestant denominations.⁴⁶ Given that the church has historically had a much greater presence in rural areas, its adherents and leaders were largely Hutu (Sundqvist 2011). Although ADEPR might have been seen as a natural ally to the new Pentecostal pastors arriving in the country after the genocide, returnee Tutsi pastors came into conflict with the Hutu-dominated leadership of ADEPR, which saw these new pastors as a “threat” (Sundqvist 2011:177). For their part, the Tutsi pastors were suspicious of Hutu leaders and assumed they had participated in the genocide if they had survived.

⁴⁵ ADEPR has been operating independently from the Swedish Pentecostal Mission (SPM), which first established the church in Rwanda, since 1962 (Sundqvist 2011).

⁴⁶ Early ADEPR converts were usually from among the disenfranchised, first poor Hutu and then, after the Hutu revolution, impoverished Tutsi. Unlike the Catholic Church, ADEPR eschewed the “corrupting” nature of politics and encouraged its members to focus on salvation and evangelism (Longman 2010:81).

Although ADEPR and the new *abarokore* churches espouse similar theologies, they differ quite markedly in terms of practice. *Abarokore* routinely criticise ADEPR for being too “legalistic” and old-fashioned. Not only are their services much more sombre affairs with less exuberant singing and dancing, women in ADEPR must cover their hair, wear skirts that extend below the knee, and cannot wear makeup, nail polish, or jewellery. In many ways, we can see the difference between ADEPR and the *abarokore* churches as similar to that between the “holiness” and “Pentecostal” churches in Nigeria (Marshall 1991).

In addition to ADEPR, a few *abarokore* churches had existed in the country prior to the genocide. These included Inkuru Nziza and Assemblies of God (AoG). Right after the genocide, Inkuru Nziza ran an important daily lunchtime fellowship in the heart of Kigali. Many *abarokore* I spoke to told me that these fellowship meetings had been vital to their growing faith.

Before analysing the testimonies of *abarokore* themselves, I offer a brief sketch of one particular *murokore* church, which was my main fieldwork site. It can be seen as representative of the many other *abarokore* churches I visited. I pay particular attention here to the spiritual temporalities it offered – i.e. how it taught converts to position themselves vis-à-vis their past, present, and future, and how this helped converts to cope with the quiet insecurity in their everyday lives.

True Revival Church (TRC): A brief sketch

True Revival Church (TRC) began in Kigali in 1996. In addition to its mother church, it had dozens of parishes around the country. I visited TRC branches in Kanombe, Kayonza, Musanze, and Butare. In line with many other *abarokore* churches, TRC’s mission was

four-fold: to speak the true word of God; to empower believers spiritually and socially; to correct “errors” that have been made in the past; and to preach the message of the kingdom. In the tradition of Pentecostal and charismatic churches around the globe, TRC believed in one eternal God; the absolute authority of the Bible; salvation and sanctification through Jesus Christ; baptism by immersion; spiritual gifts and the power of prayer; deliverance; and the imminent return of Jesus Christ.

TRC was led by a young, charismatic Tutsi pastor who had returned to Rwanda after the genocide. In this case, Pastor Herve had grown up in DR Congo and came back to Rwanda in 1996 – when he was in his mid-20s – with a “vision” of spreading a message of peace and reconciliation and healing Rwandans from the genocide and decades of ethnic politics. TRC was known for its excellent choir, which had produced a number of break-away gospel singers. Indeed, I discuss the testimony of TRC’s praise and worship leader below. Its membership was predominantly made up of young people, representing an overall trend in the *abarokore* churches. The pastors of TRC were all married and their wives were known within the church as well. They would often preach at special women’s meetings and conferences. I leave a discussion of the gender politics of the *abarokore* churches to the next chapter.

The church was divided into a number of ministries that targeted specific groups: men, women, the youth, people living with HIV/AIDS, widows, orphans, and survivors. Church members could also participate in a wide variety of different clubs, from the protocol team to a theatre club and a traditional dance group. Outreach activities were also popular, especially during April, genocide commemoration month. During this period I

went with other church members to visit the Kayonza church and a nearby orphanage.⁴⁷

TRC also ran an elementary school and a health centre, and was planning on opening a bank.

TRC services followed a format that I observed in many other *abarokore* churches. The services, referred to as *cultes* or *amateraniro*, began with enthusiastic praise and worship (*guhimbaza Imana*) led by a choir and live band that usually lasted for more than an hour. This was followed by announcements (*itangazo*), which included formally welcoming first-time visitors (*kwakira amashyitsi*) and inviting recently engaged couples to the stage to be presented in front of the church. Offerings (*amaturu*) came next, and then the main sermon (*ijambo ry’Imana*). Closing prayers (*amasengesho*) rounded out the services. Unlike the services I attended in the mainline churches and ADEPR, TRC *cultes* tended to be loud, boisterous affairs with singing, dancing, yelling, clapping, and weeping. Pastors gesticulated wildly, yelled, sang, and encouraged church members to be led by the spirit.

Miracles and miraculous healing were recurrent themes. During one notable evening service – which took place during a special week of prayers – Pastor Herve proclaimed, “I see the hand of God!” This evening, he told us, the strength of God was present (*uyu mugoroba hari ukuboko kw’Imana*). A hush fell over the congregation. Pastor Herve turned his attention to the right-hand section of the church. “Who has diabetes in this section?” he asked. When a woman stood up, he told her to come to the stage and proclaimed emphatically that she had been healed of diabetes. Pastor Herve wiped oil on

⁴⁷ TRC was not unique in this regard and other *abarokore* churches also engaged in similar activities. For example, also during commemoration month, I accompanied a group of women from Assemblies of God in Kigali to visit women in its branch in Nyamata.

her head and hands to “anoint” her. He gave her the microphone he was holding and told her to command diabetes to leave her body. The woman took the microphone and yelled, “In the name of God, I command diabetes to go! From the church, from Rwanda, from the world!” The church erupted in loud praying, exclaiming, and clapping. When the uproar subsided, Pastor Herve told us not to be jealous that this woman was healed, but rather that we should thank God. God does things so others have faith, he reminded us. He does miracles so we feel that God can do the same for us. “Even you”, he said, “God has touched you”.

Pastor Herve then went on to perform miraculous healing for church members who “had the problem of wearing shoes”. “God even cares about your toes”, he exclaimed. This particular healing, however, did not go completely according to plan. The first person to respond to the shoe call was a young man. When Pastor Herve asked him to explain his problem, he responded, “I only have one pair of shoes”. Pastor Herve threw him off the stage and told the church to “Be serious”. He then turned his miraculous attention to heal more worthy candidates.

Spiritualising the past and present

An important claim of the *abarokore* churches was that they brought something “new” to the country’s religious landscape. Before considering the testimonies of *abarokore* themselves, I want to consider how TRC leaders understood these claims and the church’s role in Rwandan society more generally.

Pastor Anselme, one of TRC’s leaders, told me that before the genocide the mainline Christian churches preached about going to heaven as if this was the ultimate goal. They taught acceptance of suffering instead of the possibility of earthly prosperity.

Against this, TRC taught Rwandans that before going to heaven they had to live as children of God on earth first. They had to “work hard, start having knowledge, technology, understanding, searching for opportunities, having a vision, being focused, time management”, Pastor Anselme told me, listing off important *abarokore* values. It was because of this teaching that many people who had started out “hopeless” in the TRC ministry in 1996 were now prospering. Many of them owned companies and Kigali’s tallest buildings. Their success, Pastor Anselme told me, was proof that TRC’s spiritual programme was working; it was bearing spiritual “fruits” (see also Christiansen 2009:59). This claim was inspired by the Biblical passage “A Tree and its Fruit” (Matthew 7: 15-20), which was one of the most cited passages I encountered amongst *abarokore*. “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves”, it reads. “You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit” (Matthew 7: 15-18). The passage warned against being deceived by “fake” Christians, and taught true converts to evaluate others based on their “fruits”. I will have more to say about spiritual “fruits” in Chapter 4.

When I asked Pastor Anselme to sum up TRC’s doctrine, he responded in this way:

[TRC’s] teaching is mainly to help everyone to know and understand who you are and what you have been called to do... Why are you surviving? Why weren’t you killed in 1994? There’s a purpose for you... So unlock that idea. And then you know I was called to be a singer, I was called to be a businessman, I was called to be a pastor, I was called to be a politician... So everyone has to know first who is Jesus Christ and how I feel Him inside of me. I’ve been saved, I’m forgiven, yes, but this is just the beginning... Writing to the Romans, Paul said “being renewed in new wisdom”.⁴⁸ Having a new understanding, new life perspective. New vision. New focus. Then you step in your destiny.

⁴⁸ Romans 12:2.

Robbins (2007:11) has taken Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus and rejection of Jewish law as the archetypal model of Pentecostal conversion, arguing that conversion "is always an event, a rupture in the time line of a person's life". It is this very temporal rupture, in fact, that "allows people to make claims for the absolute newness of the lives they lead after conversion and of the ones they hope they will lead in the millennial future" (2007:11). Yet Pastor Anselme's reference to Paul suggests a different interpretation. The past is not something to be ruptured with but rather a source of strength and spiritual growth. It was through learning from the past that one's "purpose" (Deacon 2012) for the future could be "unlocked".

We could see, in fact, how Pentecostal conversion allowed the past to be repurposed. TRC's approach was not one of "rupture" but rather spiritual reinterpretation. I suggest that this was related to Rwanda's particular political history and current discourse of "Never Again", in which the country's genocidal past cannot be forgotten. TRC's understanding of history offered an alternative version to the country's "official" version, which Thomson sums up in this way: "the combination of a docile and obedient population, a legacy of authoritarian government, and colonial policies of ethnic divisionism caused the 1994 genocide" (2013a:110). Rather than repeat this narrative, Pastor Anselme stressed the "spiritual influence" of the genocide. The genocide had not been the result of economic decline or even Habyarimana's death, but demonic influence. "There were demons controlling the lives of people", Pastor Anselme insisted. This interpretation, it should be noted, was not limited to the *abarokore* churches. Jean-Baptiste also emphasised the demonic nature of the violence. "I don't think a man-made tragedy of the magnitude of the genocide can be simply human without any demonic intervention", he told me. Killers

grilled victims' hearts on sticks like *brochettes* and ate them; they drank victims' blood. In a country that had never known cannibalism, how could you make sense of these actions without relying on the demonic? "Unless you believe in demon possession, then you have to negate their humanity", Jean-Baptiste said simply. By displacing the violence of the genocide onto the spiritual realm, the humanity of perpetrators could be restored. More importantly, the new *abarokore* churches offered specific practices to combat these demonic forces, from prayer and fasting to deliverance and spiritual warfare. Churches like TRC claimed that they had brought these spiritual tools to the country for the very first time.

Shaw (2007b) has observed a similar process at work amongst young Pentecostals in Sierra Leone. Within a context of civil war and violence, Pentecostal practice – in particular, a "retooled deliverance ministry" that frames spiritual warfare in local and culturally specific terms – allows Sierra Leonean youth to "forget" their past experiences of violence and "participate imaginatively" in the battle between good and evil (2007b:277). By relocating the war to an Underworld "that can be fought through prayer and exorcism", these youth attempt to "displace their war memories by the Holy Spirit" and transform "demonic memory into Pentecostal memory" (2007b:277). A similar dynamic was at work in the new *abarokore* churches, although converts were not encouraged to forget the past but rather spiritually repurpose it to find divine meaning in their lives.

Reframing the genocide as a spiritual event also allowed the new *abarokore* churches to imbue conversion with a sense of urgency. "Unless we are united and we pray together and we apply [godly] principles and cry for mercy and grace upon His people", Pastor Anselme told me, "you still have the same mentality... What happened, happened,

but I know that out of it God brought something new into Rwanda”. By focusing on the spiritual blessings and “fruits” that had been made possible after the genocide, the new *abarokore* churches allowed Rwandans to see God’s hand even in absolute destruction. It also meant that reconciliation required not just participation in various secular state programmes – such as *ingando* and *itorero* – but a “holistic” spiritual transformation that involved the mind, heart, and spirit. As Pastor Anselme explained:

You cannot transform a heart of someone, the spirit of someone, if it’s not Jesus Christ Himself inside of you. That’s why we believe that we have to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is a gospel of reconciliation. Once you are reconciled with God, automatically, God will always tell you to reconcile with your brother and your sister.

While the current RPF government may mandate reconciliation, there was no guarantee that it would not be overthrown or replaced by another government with a different understanding of reconciliation. God, on the other hand, was omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. He alone could reconcile Rwandans with each other. During services, TRC pastors often spoke about the need for both vertical and horizontal reconciliation. Looking up to God and reconciling with Him was vertical reconciliation; looking to our sides to those around us was horizontal reconciliation. Christians needed to perform both types of reconciliation in order to be truly healed from the past. In this way, the new *abarokore* churches offered an alternative model of divine reconciliation that surpassed the secular model imposed by the state.

Now that I have provided a brief sketch of TRC doctrine, I turn now to consider testimonies of church members.

Véronique’s testimony: Transforming a “stone”, emotions, and secrets

Véronique was one of the first Christians I met at TRC. She was in her late 20s, unmarried, and a genocide survivor. Véronique’s childhood and adolescence had been defined by loss.

Her father had died when she was three; her father-in-law had died when she was six; and then her entire family, including her mother and sisters, had been killed in the genocide. “All those things I’ve been through...” Véronique told me. “I never cried. I was like a stone”. Although she had been raised Catholic and had gone to mass every Sunday, from the genocide up until 2008, she had not been anything. “I saw what Catholics did, what the Catholic Church did”, she told me, her voice trailing off. She tried a number of different churches – Anglican, Pentecostal, even returning to the Catholic Church – but nothing moved her. She went away for her university studies and when she returned to Rwanda in 2008, she went to TRC. For Véronique, conversion had been an important affective experience. When she received Jesus into her heart for the first time, she cried on the floor. Finally, she told me, she was able to feel things and have emotions; she was no longer a stone. She could now dream of getting married and having children. “Now it’s fine”, she told me. “I know Jesus loves me so much and he’s going to do good things for me”.

I suggest that it is helpful to understand Véronique’s *abarokore* faith in terms of what Ahmed (2004) has called the “sociality of emotions”. Ahmed suggests that instead of seeing emotions through an “inside out” model – i.e. the individual has emotions that then move out towards objects and others – she argues for an “outside in” approach. As she elaborates: “Rather than emotions being understood as coming from within and moving outwards, emotions are assumed to *come from without and move inward*” (2004:9). Emotions, she argues, “create the very effect of the surfaces and boundaries that allow us to distinguish an inside and outside in the first place” (2004:10). In this way, “the ‘I’ and the ‘we’ are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others” (2004:10).

Although Ahmed does not frame her argument in terms of born-again faith, her “outside in” model of emotions can help us to understand why the expressive worship, prayer, and preaching style of the new *abarokore* churches was so appealing, particularly to traumatised survivors such as Véronique. Although Véronique’s conversion and new life in Jesus was indeed an inner transformation, it also depended upon her affective environment. The Catholic Church and the mainline churches were defined by affective restraint: there was no dancing, little singing, and prayer involved quietly bowing one’s head or repeating after the priest. The new *abarokore* churches, on the other hand, involved lengthy praise and worship sessions wherein members sang loudly, called out the name of Jesus, blew horns, clapped, jumped, cried, threw their arms in the air, and danced through the church aisles. During one particularly rowdy praise and worship session at TRC’s annual conference, for example, church members, led in the spirit by a talented visiting worship group, lifted their plastic seats in the air and danced around with them held high above their heads. Against the prevailing academic consensus of Kigali as silent, the new churches were above all else *noisy*. Although Véronique may have entered the church as a stone, over time the emotions created by this ecstatic worship environment moved from the outside in, reanimating her emotional capacity.

It is important to see this affect in terms of longer trajectories of cultural expression. In the Rwandan cultural universe, restraint and self-mastery were and are praised. This can be traced back to the pre-colonial period where, as Iliffe has suggested, Rwanda was an “honour culture”, with Tutsi youth learning “the importance of appearances, the need to conceal feelings behind the stylised inscrutability essential to survival at a dangerous court”

(2005:163).⁴⁹ This is perhaps best expressed through the cultural concept of *ubwenge*, which can be understood as “intelligence resulting in self-controlled public acts” (Ingelaere 2009:519–20). Additionally, *agaciro*, self-respect and dignity, also involves mastering one’s body and emotions. The heart (*umutima*) is of particular importance as it is “the force unifying the human being” (Ingelaere 2009:514). If the genocide was said to have changed Rwandans’ hearts, then the *abarokore* churches, with their “holistic” ministries, attempted to heal them by orienting them towards God.

Yet while the ecstatic spirituality of the new *abarokore* churches appear to “subvert” (Peterson 2012) these cultural values as they demanded the surrender of the body to God, I argue instead that a certain continuity can be discerned. Here we have to distinguish between affects and secrets. While pastors encouraged members to shout and dance for Jesus, they also routinely told church members *not* to publicly confess their secrets. During the special prayer week I mentioned above, TRC members were instructed to write down their prayer requests on pieces of paper that were to be burned at the end of the week. Pastor Herve repeatedly emphasised that if we had secrets, we should *not* write them down. “Keep those secret requests in your heart”, he instructed, “and the Holy Spirit will see them. When it comes time for God to consider the request, the Holy Spirit will remember what was not written”. People, he told us, gossip. God alone was the only one we could trust with our innermost secrets.

Although secrets could not be made public, emotions could. Since one did not have to explain why one was crying, jumping, or lamenting – Jesus was explanation enough – the new *abarokore* churches became important sites of unregulated or unpoliced affect.

⁴⁹ Iliffe draws here on Codere’s work (1973:21–3, 53–6, 75).

Given the highly regulated nature of the country's public culture, I suggest that this in itself was significant. Indeed, this becomes especially so once we compare the affective spaces of the *abarokore* churches with what has become the country's preeminent affective moment: that of genocide commemoration. Unlike during commemoration, which focuses on the suffering of Tutsi – those who lost Hutu loved ones find “no official outlet for their grief” (Thomson 2013a:117) – the affective community created by the *abarokore* churches was inclusive. Given that TRC adherents were not required to speak about the specific pain that resided in their hearts, they could express grief, sadness, and despair – even when it had been caused by the specific policies and actions of the current political regime.

Meyer (2011) has argued that the underlying logic of Pentecostalism in Ghana is one of “making public”. Pentecostal pastors seek to expose or “unmask” the hidden “powers of darkness” that are said to characterise traditional religion (2011:154). Within Pentecostal practice, she writes, “personal, intimate, or secret matters move center stage, becoming prime matters to be made public” (2011:158). Yet we see an altogether different logic at work in Rwandan Pentecostal churches such as TRC. Not only does Rwandan culture value discretion and concealment, but the quiet insecurity of the post-genocide period made the possibility of exposing secrets in public extremely dangerous. Pastors seemed all too aware of this and instead encouraged the faithful to keep their secrets safe in their hearts, where they could be remembered before God by the Holy Spirit. Here we see that the new churches reworked older cultural understandings in novel ways to address the contemporary life-worlds of their members.

Fabrice's testimony: "The choir is like a car that takes the church"

Not only did the new *abarokore* churches allow believers to heal their hearts and begin to feel again, it also allowed young people to be actively involved in this process. Praise and worship was a key aspect of the affective experience, and many young people either sang in church choirs or acted as worship leaders. Indeed, as I discuss in Chapter 5, many of the country's most popular secular singers had started out in the church. Here I consider the testimony of Fabrice, who was the worship leader at TRC.

Fabrice was born in 1990 in Burundi and returned to Rwanda in 2000 to join his mother and siblings. His father had died of illness in 1995. On January 31, 2004, he had been on his way home from the market in Kigali when he ran into a friend. The friend was on his way to church to celebrate the New Year in prayer, as was often the case in *abarokore* churches. Although Fabrice was Catholic, he decided to join his friend at the church. He had always loved singing and was particularly struck by the church's music. "In the time of praise and worship", he told me, "I felt something... I felt someone in my heart, and I felt that I had to repent my sins". Fabrice, however, was too scared to respond to the pastor's altar call, but when he went home after the service he repeated the pastor's words on his own.

To Fabrice music was an integral part of his spiritual experience. The song that had "touched" him in particular was one by the Burundian gospel artist Apollinaire. In a dulcet voice, Fabrice sang part of the song for me:

*Ibyo kora byose ni bwiza
kuku bikora n'urukundo
Ibyo vuga byose n'ukuri
gukubivuga n'urukundo*

Everything you do is good
Because you do it in love
Everything you say is true
What you say is love

“And the next chorus says, ‘*nisanze muru*’ – I find myself in your love”, he told me. “I find myself in your arms. And it touched me so much. I felt like now I’ve become *murokore*”.

For Fabrice, it was only through music that he felt as though he had truly converted.

After changing schools and moving house, Fabrice ended up at TRC. He joined the TRC choir and credited it for helping him to “grow in salvation” and for keeping him on the right Christian path. “When you work for God, it motivates you to stay in God’s things”, he told me. “Because at my age, it’s hard to be a Christian. I have many friends in the choir but they go to nightclubs, they drink, many left”. Fabrice, however, was committed as his involvement had already led to “miracles” in his life. One day, a church member gave him US\$200 because he was so moved by Fabrice’s singing. Another day, someone else offered to pay Fabrice’s school fees for the same reason. Being a highly visible member of the church could lead to very tangible rewards. “So I can’t leave the choir”, Fabrice told me. “God told me that this is your place, I will bless you here. Because when God wants to give you blessings, He can’t give you like this, in disorder. He gives you at the right time, at the right moment”.

Fabrice had started leading praise and worship in TRC in 2009. To be a good worship leader required prayer and fasting, he told me. One had to be close to God. “Because I have many people who I have to lead”, he explained, “if I’m not with God, where can I bring these people? Praise and worship is like a journey. It’s like a journey from here to God, from yourself to God. The choir is like a car that takes the church”. The worship leader in this analogy was the “taxi driver” who drove others to God through a highly structured musical journey. A good worship leader paid careful attention to church members to gauge their spiritual energy. Fabrice explained to me that songs had to be sung

in a particular order if this journey was to be successful. Although the ambiguity of popular gospel songs has been remarked upon elsewhere (Lamont 2010; Nyairo 2008), to Fabrice praise and worship songs had very specific purposes and singing the wrong song at the wrong moment could be spiritually disastrous.

Fabrice was confident as well that his singing and worship talents would take him around the world. Not only had God told Fabrice this directly, a visiting American pastor had prophesied this global tour for Fabrice, thus confirming its accuracy. Yet Fabrice was still concerned about his family. His mother, father-in-law, and siblings were “pagans” and he prayed and fasted for them to find salvation. His faith had led to familial tensions in the past. When he would come home late from choir practice, his family would lock him out of the house. They couldn’t understand why he was spending every day at church. They had slowly started to accept his involvement, however, especially when they saw how it had materially “blessed” him. For his part, Fabrice continued to pray for them.

In the rupture debate, breaking with the past is often framed in term of “renouncing one’s ancestral spirits, one’s extended family, and even, in some cases, one’s closest kin” (Engelke 2010a:177). Shaw has pointed out, however, that in post-conflict contexts, pastors rarely encouraged believers to cut kin ties as the ones that remain were considered “precious” (2007b:277). Rather than breaking with non-Born Again kin, Pentecostals are encouraged to “redeem” them and bring them into the Pentecostal fold (2007b:277). This is equally the case in Rwanda, where pastors did not stress renouncing family members, and *abarokore* such as Fabrice instead sought to convert them.

The emotionality of the new churches created new roles and opportunities for young people to be active in church life. Despite their youth, they could assert their agency and

assume roles of responsibility and authority despite a wider context of quiet insecurity wherein young peoples' livelihoods were precarious indeed (Pells 2009; Pells, Pontalti, and Williams 2014; Sommers 2012). Leading the church in praise and worship was an incredibly important task: it could either encourage people to find salvation and a closer relationship with Jesus, transforming them from stones into committed Christians, or it could send them on a dangerous detour towards the Satanic (Pype 2006). Fabrice's story suggests as well the importance of music in young peoples' lives. I focus on various forms of secular music in the second half of my thesis.

Fear, noise, and silence

Up to this point, I've focused on the possibilities of emotional retooling that the new *abarokore* churches provided. But Pentecostal conversion could also be motivated by a different kind of affect: that of fear and desperation. Furthermore, to non-*abarokore* Rwandans, the expressive worship style of the new churches was "noise" that prevented the *abarokore* from truly contemplating their relationship with the divine and each other.

Let's consider for example the story of Félicien. Félicien was a young Hutu man in his mid-20s who was born in a village north of Kigali. He was raised Catholic but converted to ADEPR in 1997, later joining AoG in 2006. His sister converted first, he told me, and then began preaching to him. In particular, she read him the passage of Job 37, which speaks of God's majesty and power. As Félicien remembered: "We were living through a very difficult situation, in our family. My sister showed me this word and I was convinced". Another passage, 1 Peter 4 and 5, also encouraged him to convert. This word, Félicien explained, spoke of suffering and how Jesus cared about someone in spite of the difficulties he or she experienced in the world. "Really, I felt that I had to convert", he told

me. “I had to change the path I was on and change myself. I wasn’t really a sinner because I was still young, but I felt that I had to become *murokore*, at least a little *murokore*, to be recognised by God”.

The difficult situation that Félicien alluded to was his father’s imprisonment. He had been a member of the military under Habyarimana and after the genocide was accused of participating in the killings. His imprisonment was hard on the family as he had been its “pillar”. Félicien still found it difficult to speak of this time. As he told me, “It was something else. You can’t even talk about it. You can’t talk about it to anyone. It was horrible... There were even people that I met who were very, very mean at that time... But it’s finished”. After nine months, his father was released though Félicien’s family continued to struggle.

Félicien related his *abarokore* conversion not only to his particular family circumstances but to the wider political climate of the late 1990s. As he told me:

From 1997 until 2000, there was a massive flood of people who left the Catholic Church to become *abarokore*. The reason was this one: at the time, there was war in Rwanda and so many people feared death. When you fear death, you fear God as well. You wanted to die as a believer. That was the reason. We were scared of death. And when you are scared of death, you are also scared of hell. You see? Because in 1994, there was the genocide. Many people were believing in God. After the genocide there was the war of the *abacengezi*, the infiltrators. You understand? There were many rumours. They were saying that they would attack Rwanda. So people were saying, you have to convert.... But now, do you see many people converting? No... Because we are at peace. Because we are safe and there are no more rumours of war.

Félicien’s testimony highlights the importance of political context to spiritual conversion. It was the real-world experience of war and insecurity that had pushed him and many others to become born-again. Within a new post-genocide political context, the spiritual possibilities of the Catholic Church suddenly seemed outdated and inadequate. A new political threat – the *abacengezi* – required a new spiritual response (Marshall 2009).

Following from this, despite the emotional possibilities that the new churches opened up, we might also consider both the spiritual and political implications of the affect they created. To mainline Protestants and Catholics, the *abarokore* churches emphasised “noisy” worship forms such as singing, dancing, and clapping, at the expense of silent contemplation and meditation (see also Hirschkind 2006:125–6). This was not a trivial difference. To one Catholic bishop I spoke to, Bishop Guy, noise prevented a deeper kind of spiritual healing that was only possible by “entering in one’s self, reflecting, contemplating, praying”. In fact, Bishop Guy told me that the inability to contemplate God in silence was a sign of trauma. Singing and dancing allowed people to forget, but their problems would come back once the “noise” had subsided. “Those people go and beat drums, they dance, they clap, they sweat, they go back tired and sleep”, he said. “But tomorrow, the same problems are there and they have not confronted them”.

Against the “instant” healing (van Dijk 1998) of the Pentecostal churches, the Catholic Church offered silence and divine contemplation. Bishop Guy explained this using 1 Kings 19: 10-13. He glossed the passage for me in this way:

When the prophet Elijah was on the mountain waiting for God, there came lightning, thunder, fire, an earthquake – all those phenomena that show the power of God, just as it happened on Mount Sinai. Terrifying things. When the fire could come, Elijah could say, “Ah, here God is coming”. But God was not there. Thundering, terrifying thundering. He said, “Ah, I think God finally has arrived”. But it could pass. God has not come. Earthquake. Lightning. And then in the end God came as a small, little wind, was smooth breathing, a soft wind. That’s when he heard the voice of God. So the Catholic tradition is meeting God in silence. Bishop Guy’s comments reveal a fundamental difference in how Pentecostals and Catholics understood healing and their relationship with God. While Pentecostals approached God through “noisy” praise and worship, Catholics approached Him in silence. “We believe God, the voice of God, comes deep in the heart”, Bishop Guy told me. “And to meet Him,

to listen to Him, to talk to Him, requires that moment of entering oneself, of prayer and silence. This does not mean that one cannot also thank God, sing for God, praise God, dance and clap, but it has to be balanced”. In this way there was a different tempo or rhythm to each faith. While the *abarokore* jumped and danced until they became “kind of drunk with the word of God”, to Catholics the “climax” was the Eucharist, which manifested the “real presence of Christ”. Bishop Guy worried that the new churches were not addressing the root causes of Rwandans’ suffering, and that the “wounds” they had in their hearts were starting to fester.

Here we see the profound differences between the Catholic and Pentecostal modes of spiritual understanding and practice. While the nature of these differences was not new, what troubled Catholics in the post-genocide era was that the new Pentecostal churches attempted to dominate the country’s public arena. They noisily declared themselves the sole authorities of biblical truth, which created new social, spiritual, and political divisions. Most worryingly, many believed they included only a specific group of people within their community of the saved. I turn to these “hidden dynamics” below.

“Hidden dynamics”: The ethnic make-up of the new churches

As Bishop Guy’s comments made clear, not everyone was happy with the “onslaught” of the new Pentecostal churches in the country. One of the most common criticisms levelled against them was that they were merely businesses, exploiting a poor and vulnerable Rwandan population. It was a running joke among friends that the best way to make money in the post-genocide era was to start either an NGO or a church. One popular story circulated that a woman at a well-known *abarokore* church was so moved by the spirit that she donated her car to the church. When her husband, who was a soldier, found out about it,

he stormed over to the church and demanded his car back. “Do you think God is going to drive that car?” one Catholic friend said to me, rolling her eyes. An Adventist friend said she thought that the fate of the *abarokore* churches was “*entre parenthèses*” (in brackets). “We don’t know”, she told me. “You hear someone saying, ‘I gave my car to the church’. You what? Is that demanded? There is a kind of poverty. Maybe he beats his wife and goes to church and gives his car. Is that what it means to be Christian? That isn’t being Christian from the bottom of the heart”. Indeed, Catholic leaders told me that many newly converted *abarokore* were returning to the Catholic Church. There was even a Kinyarwanda term for them: *abagarukira Imana* (those who return to God). Rumours abounded as well about the sexual misconduct of pastors. The *abarokore* practice of all-night prayers (*gusenga mu ibyumba*) was seen by some as a way for ill-intentioned pastors to take advantage of young women (see also Chitando 2009:39). Indeed, *abarokore* pastors reportedly relied on a passage in 2 Kings to claim that deliverance had to be conducted mouth-on-mouth and nose-on-nose.

Yet perhaps the most worrying aspect of the new Pentecostal churches was that they tended to be mono-ethnic. Certain churches were known to be frequented by Tutsis who had returned from Burundi; others by returnees from DR Congo; yet others by those who had come back from Uganda. In this way, Kigali had attained a certain ethnicised spiritual topography. While Pastor Anselme insisted that “there is no Hutu and Tutsi and we don’t care about being Tutsi and Hutu”, the TRC was known to be dominated by Congolese Tutsis. Furthermore, in TRC doctrine, Rwanda was said to have been given a calling similar to that of Israel. Although Rwandans, like the Jews, had suffered in exile, they had returned to their homeland by God’s grace. This was the source of their blessing. Such

claims, however, implicitly suggested that the country's "true" Christians were Tutsis who had been exiled from 1959 onwards (for a similar critique of the Anglican Church, see Cantrell 2014). Non-Congolese Tutsi pastors, in fact, told me that they often felt excluded from decision-making processes. One told me that although he had ideas about reforming church bureaucracy, his ideas were ignored. TRC, he said, was "probably a tree of not more than 10 or 15 major families". Since he was not a member of one of these families, he held no authority. The new churches, van't Spijker had warned in a 1997 article, threatened to introduce a new division into an already deeply divided Rwandan society: "the organization of churches along ethnic lines" (1997:253). Although in the past "no church ever counted uniquely Hutu or Tutsi to its membership" (van't Spijker 1997:253), by the time of my fieldwork, the mono-ethnic nature of the new churches seemed to be a "hidden dynamic", as Jean-Baptiste put it.

Given the mono-ethnic nature of the new churches, it was difficult to see how they could contribute to reconciliation. Indeed, the fact that the new *abarokore* pastors had not experienced the genocide first-hand let them have a somewhat simplistic understanding of Rwanda's history. (I take this up again in Chapter 4 through conflicting ideas about God's mercy.) As Jean-Baptiste, who was himself a survivor of the genocide, explained:

Most of the Pentecostal churches that started, don't understand at all the dynamics of this country. Because most of the Rwandese who came from outside, don't even know the history of this country... Very often you find [during] the mourning week, that's the time when I get tired more than any other time because I'm giving talks here and there. I say, why don't you call other pastors? They say they don't master the topic. Why? Because they are too young to understand the dynamics of what happened. They don't have any clue of what has happened here... I can tell you the people who have contributed a lot in the process of reconciliation are not part of the Pentecostal churches.

While young Pentecostal pastors could appeal to Rwandan youth, it also meant that they lacked the embodied experience of the genocide and the burden – “I get tired”, as Jean-Baptiste said – that accompanied this knowledge.

Pentecostal churches in other parts of Africa can “incite imaginations of community that surpass the space of the ethnic group or the nation, in that they are delocalized and represent believers as ‘brothers and sisters in Christ’” (Larkin and Meyer 2006:298; see also Meyer 2004:461). Yet their ability to do so is heavily dependent on the particular social, political, and historical context in which they are operating. In Rwanda it seemed there were implicit or “quiet” limits to this imagining.

Conclusion

Amongst the wave of Tutsi returnees who came back to Rwanda after 1994, there was a sizeable number of *abarokore* pastors who planted churches in the country’s devastated spiritual landscape. Since this post-genocide influx, the spiritual landscape of Rwanda has changed dramatically. I have argued that one of the main reasons that the new *abarokore* churches achieved such rapid success was because they offered Rwandans a new way to conceive of their past, present, and future. These spiritual temporalities diverged from those offered by the secular state, which suggests that the new *abarokore* churches were in some ways heirs to the “subversive” nature of the early Revivalists. For many *abarokore* conversion was not a rupture but rather an important affective experience that allowed them to heal their hearts and reanimate their emotional capacities. Since one did not need to speak the “secret” source of one’s pain – and, indeed, pastors actively advised against this – the affective community imagined and created by the *abarokore* churches was inclusive. This was in sharp contrast to the highly politicised affective terrain of genocide

commemoration, where Tutsi suffering was privileged. Music was an important part of this process, and young Rwandans could actively participate in it by joining choirs or becoming worship leaders.

Not all *abarokore*, however, converted for the same reasons. Some converted due to fear and desperation, and some Rwandans, as we will see, did not convert at all. To mainline Christians the affect that the *abarokore* churches created was noise that prevented a more thoughtful and contemplative relationship with God. For all the “new” spiritual doctrines and practices that the *abarokore* churches offered, the fact that their congregations tended to be mono-ethnic was troubling. It suggested that the churches were once again caught up in ethnic politics, despite claims to offer something “new” to Rwandans. Given that the *abarokore* pastors were young returnees, they did not have the embodied experience of having survived the genocide and were criticised for not truly understanding the dynamics of Rwanda’s complex past. This suggested cleavages in the country’s spiritual landscape, though not necessarily along ethnic lines. Those who had been born and raised in the country, the so-called *abasope*, both Hutu and Tutsi alike, had very different understandings of God’s place in the world than the mostly Tutsi returnees. Although the new churches offered spiritual security to some converts, the ethnic make-up of their congregations implicitly or “quietly” suggested that it was only available to certain groups of Rwandans. In this way, despite promises to “heal the nation” the *abarokore* churches contributed overall to a sense of quiet insecurity. Ironically, one way they contributed to this was through noise.

Chapter 3

Umukobwa ntagira idini (A girl does not have a religion): Gender politics in the abarokore churches

We're living in a terrible time. There is a pressure from the Western world that the woman should rise in this country. For example you will see this in parliament, women in Rwanda, they are 64.7 % and men 20 point something percent. I've not said you didn't vote in the right way, but I'm looking at the red signs of danger because there are no men. Think about it. Just think about it. Think about it! And please, dear ladies, do not be offended, I'm trying to communicate a truth here. Think about a society led by women. The snake knew that he couldn't touch Adam so he chose to go for Eve. So men rise! It's the *urgence de moment* (emergency of the moment)!

Pastor Herve, True Revival Church (TRC), September 22, 2013

The above comments are taken from the TRC service I attended in Kigali the Sunday after the country's 2013 parliamentary elections, which saw women win an unprecedented 64% of seats. To no one's surprise, the ruling RPF party took 76% of the vote in a "landslide" victory ("Rwanda Election" 2013). Not only were women elected to the 24 seats reserved for them in Rwanda's constitution, they also won 26 of the 53 openly competed for seats.⁵⁰ The elections saw Rwanda retain its position as the country with the highest number of female parliamentarians in the world, a feat it first accomplished in 2008. Although the state-controlled media and a number of foreign media outlets praised the government's active promotion of women (Gogineni 2013), the response from Rwandans themselves, especially Rwandan men, was much more ambivalent. Even in the normally restrained comments section of *The New Times* website, doubts were raised about the motivation behind the RPF's particular brand of gender politics. "I would like to know if we are promoting a female dominated parliament because of its rationality or just for the

⁵⁰ The constitution mandates that out of Rwanda's 80-seat parliament 24 seats should go to women, two to candidates representing the youth, and one to a candidate representing disabled people.

sake of being in Guinness record book [sic]”, one Rwema from the UK wrote (Munyaneza 2013). The flipside of Rwanda’s strong female representation, he continued, was that “Rwanda remains the only country in the world male underrepresented parliament [sic]”.

Within the *abarokore* churches, a similar note of warning was issued by pastors such as Herve. Although the new churches claimed to support women’s participation in the church – there were usually departments or ministries dedicated to girls (*abakobwa*), mothers (*abagore*), and widows (*abapfakazi*) within the city’s largest churches, and pastors’ wives were visible members of church hierarchy – there was a sense among some male pastors that Rwandan society was spinning dangerously out of control. Women’s rise to political prominence within the country was “terrible”, an emergency that required direct spiritual intervention. While the patriarchal nature of Pentecostal teachings has been analysed succinctly elsewhere (Gill 1990; Mate 2002), Pastor Herve’s comments are significant within the Rwandan context for their political nature. Given the often intimate relationship between the *abarokore* churches and the state – as I argue in the next chapter, they provide spiritual legitimacy to the RPF at the same time as the RPF acknowledges them as powerful new players on the country’s religious landscape – Herve’s critique of the RPF’s gender politics suggests an uneasy relationship between the government’s forward-looking and avowedly secular “vision” of the future and the churches’ own Biblical understanding of time and gender relationships. By suggesting that Rwandans voted in the wrong way, Herve challenged the RPF’s promotion of women as a key tenet of its political agenda. Profoundly different understandings of Rwandan culture and tradition, I argue, were at stake. While the RPF claims that its promotion of women has its roots in strong

female leadership in Rwanda's pre-colonial past, the churches viewed it as an imposition from the West that was unbiblical and unnatural.

Moving from doctrine to practice, we can ask: how did young *abarokore* women understand the church's gender politics in their everyday lives and relationships? While some young women felt that the church gave them new confidence and stability, others found the church's insistence that women should submit unquestioningly to male authority highly problematic. To these women, the church's often black-and-white approach to morality and female sexuality did not adequately account for the social, moral, and political complexity of the present, which, as I argue, has become increasingly defined by quiet insecurity. Building on and contributing to work that has examined the role of women in Pentecostal churches (Soothill 2007; Cole 2010; Pype 2012), I suggest a new way to frame and gender the "rupture" debate: what happens when the church decides to "break" with young women? How do women cope with the emotional and psychological effects/affects of this rupture?

In this chapter I explore how the church's teaching on women shape the ways that young women were able – or unable – to imagine their futures. In contrast to recent conceptualisations of the future as "open-ended" (Dalsgaard and Frederiksen 2013), the young women I knew conceived of the future with reference to the past. They spoke of the importance of the future as a space wherein they could create and leave a "legacy" through their faith and good deeds both in the present and the near future (Guyer 2007). Here we can conceive of the future as an attempt to create a past, one that would be left behind for friends and family members who had not yet been born. Although Koselleck (2004) sees

the present as composed of past futures, young *abarokore* women saw the future as composed of future pasts.

The chapter is structured as follows. I begin by considering how the RPF has “re-imagined” (Pottier 2002) women’s agency through a selective reading of Rwandan culture and tradition. After a discussion of Herve’s sermon, I then move on to explore young women’s experiences in the *abarokore* churches. While this chapter is concerned with women in the church, Chapter 7 examines gender within popular culture.

The post-genocide rise of women in Rwandan politics

Since the 1994 genocide women have become important and highly visible players on Rwanda’s political stage. During the post-genocide transitional government that ruled from 1994 to 2003, women were appointed to 25.7% of seats in parliament. When the new constitution was being drafted in 2000, not only were three members of the 12-member commission women, the local women’s movement lobbied to have equality included as a key precept (Powley 2005:155). These efforts resulted in the enshrinement of gender equality in the constitution, which was formally adopted in May 2003, along with a gender quota system that mandated that women occupy 30% of positions “in all decision-making organs” (Powley 2005:155), including the parliament and the senate. In the parliamentary elections in September 2008, women won 56% of seats, followed, as we saw, by 64% in September 2013. Women activists have been “instrumental” in pushing forward gender sensitive policies, including laws against gender-based violence and, significantly, the Inheritance and Marital Property Law in 1999, which allowed women to inherit land for the first time in the country’s history (Herndon and Randell 2010:9). A national system of

women's councils was also established after the genocide to run "parallel" to the general local councils and give women a voice at each administrative level (Powley 2005:156–7).⁵¹

This direct promotion of women is all the more striking given the minimal participation of women in politics before the genocide. Although women had won the right to vote and stand for election in 1961, it took four years before the first female parliamentarian began serving (Powley 2005:154), and it was only in 1990 that a woman became a government minister. Prior to 1994 there had been no female mayors or prefects, with women representing a mere 3.2% of sub-prefects (Sharlach 1999:391). At their highest rate of participation, women occupied 18% of seats in parliament (Powley 2005:154). During the genocide, furthermore, women both participated in and were victims of violence. On the one hand, prominent women such as Agathe Habyarimana, the wife of then president Juvénal Habyarimana, and the Minister of the Family and Promotion of Women were members of the so-called *akazu* (little house), the political elite surrounding the presidency that was allegedly responsible for planning the genocide (Sharlach 1999). One of the leading *animateurs* on notorious hate radio station RTLM (Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines) was Valerie Bemeriki, a female journalist who was later convicted of planning genocide by a Rwandan court and sentenced to life in prison (BBC 2009). Women participated in the violence in an "ad hoc" manner (Spens-Black 2013:14), often exerting pressure on sons and husbands to kill.

On the other hand, Tutsi women were victims of extreme forms of sexual violence. Approximately 200,000 to 350,000 women were subjected to rape, gang rape, sexual torture, sexual slavery, and forced "marriage" (Zraly and Nyirazinyoye 2010:1657). It is

⁵¹ Yet Powley points out that since positions on the local women's councils are voluntary and unpaid, they are not "consistently active" and suffer from lack of resources (2005).

estimated that around 50,000 of these girls and women survived, and around 5,000 children were born from genocide-rape (Zrally, Ruban, and Mukamana 2013:411, 413). Prior to the genocide, extremist Hutu propaganda – broadcast on RTLM and distributed through magazines such as *Kangura* (“Wake it Up”) – demonised and sexualised Tutsi women, creating a “climate in which the mass rape of Tutsi women appeared to be an appropriate form of retribution for their purported arrogance, immorality, hyper-sexuality, and espionage” (Sharlach 1999: 394).⁵² It is also worth noting that one of the first victims of the genocide was Agathe Uwilingiyimana, the country’s first female prime minister. Some analysts have argued that Hutu extremists were not the only ones guilty of sexual violence. During the RPF invasion in June it has been reported that some RPF soldiers perpetrated “retaliatory rapes” against Hutu women and sexually exploited and even “captured” Tutsi women (Sharlach 1999:395; see also Twagiramariya and Turshen 1998:103–4).⁵³

Why, then, did the RPF go out of its way to include women in the post-genocide reconstruction and reconciliation processes? One of the reasons for the increase in women’s political participation was the real-world absence of men: in 1995, it is estimated that 60-70% of the population was female (Herndon and Randell 2010:4). Men who had not been killed in the genocide were often in prison for genocide crimes or had fled into exile in neighbouring countries. In such circumstances, many women took on roles traditionally

⁵² Drawing on local concepts of healing in traditional Rwandan medicine, Taylor (1999) has argued that Tutsi women were targeted because they obstructed the formation of a “pure” Hutu state. At the same time that they were considered “liminoid beings” (1999:156), capable of polluting the Hutu bloodline, they were also objects of desire. The gendered legacy of the Hamitic hypothesis constructed Tutsi women as more beautiful and sexually alluring than Hutu women. Since Hutu extremists “harboured enormous psychological ambivalence toward Tutsi women” (1999:177), Taylor suggests, they subjected them to extreme forms of sexualised violence.

⁵³ Twagiramariya and Turshen’s accusations of rape perpetrated by the RPF were later called into question by African Rights (Sharlach 1999). The organisation later discredited Twagiramariya’s work, declaring it, in Sharlach’s words, as “either misinformed or propaganda intended to depict her own ethnic group, the Hutus, in a favorable light” (Sharlach 1999:395).

reserved for men, becoming heads of households, community leaders, and breadwinners. To some analysts the RPF's "policy of inclusion" can be attributed in part to the fact that its leaders had grown up in Uganda, where they had been exposed to "gender equality issues" (Powley 2005:159), such as the gender quota law reserving 20% of seats in Uganda's parliament for women. Mirroring the important contribution of women in liberation struggles elsewhere on the continent – in Mozambique, for example, women were crucial in the struggle for independence from Portugal (Arnfred 2011) – Rwandan women played a key role in the exiled RPF movement (Spens-Black 2013; Powley 2005:159). Some claim that women accounted for 37.5% of the RPF leadership (Herndon and Randell 2010:7). In the aftermath of the destruction and horrific violence of the genocide, there was also a sense that a new approach was needed. "Men managed badly", Jean de Dieu Mucyo, the current minister of the National Commission for the Fight against Genocide, has stated. "We are trying to see if women succeed where men failed" (Herndon and Randell 2010:7).

"Re-imagining" gender

Much as the RPF has taken inspiration from Rwandan "traditions" for a number of its political programmes such as *gacaca* and *ingando*, so too has it looked to the past to legitimise its promotion of women. In particular, it has "framed" its policies in terms of "pre-colonial practices of gender equality" (Uwineza and Pearson 2009:6), regardless of whether the historical record completely supports these claims. Let's consider for a moment the words of Aloisea Inyumba, an important RPF cadre and a fierce advocate for women's participation in the political process. Responsible for fundraising while the RPF was in exile, Inyumba held a number of prominent posts in the post-genocide government, becoming the country's first Minister for Gender and Social Affairs from 1994 to 1999; the

executive secretary of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) from 1999 to 2001; and, from 2004, a senator (Nsanzimana 2012). She had been serving as the Minister for Gender and Family Promotion when she died of cancer in December 2012.

During a lecture at the Interdisciplinary Genocide Studies Centre in Kigali in July 2009, Inyumba had stressed the active role of women in Rwanda's past:

Rwandan history and tradition provide pre-colonial examples of women's power. We had traditional family structures long before we came under colonial leadership. Men could not make major decisions in the home; for example a man would not give away land or cows without consulting his wife. The family tradition is on the basis of dialogue with women. (Herndon and Randell 2010:6)

Similarly, when I asked another prominent female politician, Minister of Health Agnes Binagwaho, about the importance of Rwandan culture in shaping post-genocide policy, she told me: "In our tradition, women have always got position. If you see, the king's mother, she was fully, fully, fully leading the country, except she didn't have the right to go to war" (Binagwaho et al. 2013). The queen mother (*umugabekazi*) was a formidable figure at the royal court, often making or breaking kings. The most well-documented example of an *umugabekazi* was Kanjogera or Nyirayuhi, the mother of King Musinga, who ruled Rwanda from 1896 to 1931 during an incredibly tumultuous period of its history (Des Forges 2011). Women, furthermore, were important spiritual leaders and prophets. They often led possession cults that advocated rising up against courtly and then colonial power (Des Forges 2011). As Iliffe points out, even under the "masculine dynastic order" of the Nyiginya kingdom, Rwandan women, particularly non-aristocratic women, could find "outlets in religious activities": "for female mediums communicated with the gods of the heroic pantheon, the widespread cult of the hero Ryangombe concerned especially female fertility, and the dissident Nyabingi cult on Rwanda's borders spoke of a women's world of

equality and local autonomy” (2005:166). Young women were also important visionaries during the Kibeho apparitions of the 1980s (Ruzindaza 2013; Saur 2004).

In this way, emphasising women’s important role in the past as “behind-the-scenes advisors” (Herndon and Randell 2010:1) lent cultural legitimacy to female political participation. A sponsor of the bill on gender-based violence in 2006, for example, argued successfully that gender discrimination had its roots in colonialism and male-only education, while others claimed valuing women was a key part of Rwandan tradition (Uwineza and Pearson 2009:6). By declaring patriarchy a colonial import, proponents of gender equality appealed to indigenous cultural practices to gain support for legislation that safeguarded women’s rights.

Yet this selective reading of Rwanda’s gendered past glosses over “oppressive and patriarchal” (Uwineza and Pearson 2009:6) aspects that were equally present within Rwandan culture and tradition. While in general Rwandan gender relations have been conceived in terms of “complementarity” with men and women fulfilling different roles and responsibilities both within and outside of the household, the rightful place of women was considered to be in the home as daughters, wives, and mothers to men. Marriage and childbearing marked the transition of girls (*abakobwa*) into women (*abagore*), which was accompanied by new restrictions on socially acceptable activities. Women, for example, were no longer able to milk cows or climb trees. Although a married woman who bore children garnered respect for extending her husband’s lineage, a woman who became pregnant outside of wedlock was exiled or even killed, practices that continued until the 1920s (Zrally, Ruban, and Mukamana 2013:412). Women were not allowed to speak in

public if their husbands were present, and Rwandan culture placed a high value on female virginity.

As we saw above, before 1999 women were unable to own land. When a patriarch died, his property was inherited by male heirs or his brothers. If he had been married with children, his wife was expected to marry one of his brothers to maintain their status in the lineage (Uwineza and Pearson 2009:9) Women may have been respected for their ability to run a household and were consulted when it came to making everyday decisions relating to land and property, as Inyumba suggested, but men remained “the ultimate arbiters” (Uwineza and Pearson 2009:8). A wife’s “subordinate status” was reflected in the fact that she was not permitted to speak aloud the names of her husband’s family members, or even words that sounded similar (Uwineza and Pearson 2009:10). A woman was also encouraged to engage in sexual relations with her brothers-in-law – refusal could mean rejection by her husband’s family – and polygamy was acceptable among wealthy men, especially in the northern region (Uwineza and Pearson 2009:10).

Furthermore, although the queen mother was a powerful member of the royal court, she did not necessarily have a designated role. She lived at the capital with her own court, cattle, and clients, but her position depended on that of her son (Maquet 1954:148). It is equally important to note how Kanjogera was popularly perceived. Under the first and second republics from 1962 to 1994, for example, she was demonised as a cruel and ruthless leader who victimised Hutu servants and killed babies to “feed” her sword (Uwineza and Pearson 2009:12). This negative interpretation of female leadership can be discerned in popular Kinyarwanda sayings such as “*uruvuze umugore ruvuga umuhoro*” (“a

home with a vocal or assertive woman results in nothing but bloodshed”) (Uwineza and Pearson 2009:12). Significantly, Agathe Habyarimana was referred to as Kanjogera.

Women’s “precarious” gains

While women played important roles in the RPF, they often struggled to adjust to post-genocide life as civilians. As Spens-Black has observed, although the experience of war had “fundamentally changed” the women, they returned to a society that viewed them as “liminal beings” (2013:57). Similarly, women who survived rape and sexual assault were marginalised and seen as “tainted”. Many coped with their difficult emotional, psychological, and material conditions with various forms of “resilience” (Zrally and Nyirazinyoye 2010). In their work with genocide-rape survivors in Southern Rwanda, Zrally and Nyirazinyoye identified three local concepts of resilience: *kwihangana* (to withstand); *kwongera kubaho* (to live again); and *gukomeza ubuzima* (to continue life/health). By employing these concepts the women were able to imbue everyday life “with an emotional ethos of refusing to linger in pain, standing firm in the face of problems, and struggling for survival and health” (Zrally and Nyirazinyoye 2010:1662). Various forms of “mothering” (Zrally, Ruban, and Mukamana 2013) have also allowed genocide-rape survivors to cope with the suffering and social stigmatization they have encountered in their post-genocide lives. By becoming mothers on their own terms rather than on culturally accepted ones – i.e. only wives should become mothers – they have “carved out new social pathways to motherhood” (Zrally, Ruban, and Mukamana 2013:430). After the genocide, women broke “cultural taboos” regarding the “proper” place of women in society, not due to a grand emancipatory agenda, but rather because “they had no other choice” (Burnet 2012:6).

Just as the RPF has “re-imagined” (Pottier 2002) Rwandan history as a model of ethnic harmony, so too has it re-imagined Rwanda’s past as one of gender equality. Yet this re-imagining is not without its hazards. Given that the promotion of women in the country has become so intimately tied to the RPF, women’s ability to critique the party has been undermined. Rwandan women and the women’s movement more generally thus occupy a “precarious position”: “they owe their ability to participate in democratic institutions to a political party that is less than fully democratic, and cannot be truly independent of the state” (Powley 2005:160). In this way, the RPF’s gender politics “defuse opposition” (Uwineza and Pearson 2009:6–7). I would also argue that they shape how *men* articulate their opposition to the state. Since the promotion of women has become synonymous with the RPF, critiquing women’s newfound pride and power has become a way to indirectly critique the country’s authoritarian political system. This conflation of gender equality and the RPF has unsettling implications. If a critique of the state can be couched indirectly through misogyny, how secure are the gains that women in the country have achieved? In such contexts, gender-based violence becomes a political act, with women’s lives and bodies suffering the consequences. If this is the case in Rwanda, then women occupy a “precarious” position indeed, particularly within the (male) cultural imagination. As we will see, a sort of patriarchal politics is created and expressed through popular (male) hip hop songs.

While powerful female politicians such as Louise Mushikiwabo, Aloisea Inyumba, and Agnes Binagwaho provide important aspirational figures, the lives of ordinary women in the country continue to be shaped by poverty and sexual exploitation. Recent reports have revealed that female students are outperformed by male students (Mwai 2014), and

that unwanted teenage pregnancy in schools poses a serious problem (Kanyesigye 2013). Gender-based violence persists, with women “expected to suffer in silence” (Herndon and Randell 2010:13). Women, furthermore, especially uneducated poor rural women, are often unaware of their rights, particularly in regards to inheritance, property, and gender-based violence (Herndon and Randell 2010:14).

Pastor Herve’s sermon

It is into this complex field of gender relations that Pastor Herve’s sermon makes its intervention. Before moving on to the testimonies of four *abarokore* women, it is worthwhile considering the sermon I quoted at the beginning of the chapter in some detail.

Pastor Herve entered the church during the offerings, flanked by two attendants – often rumoured to be former soldiers and his bodyguards – and another high-ranking pastor. After the introductory prayers (*amasengesho*), Herve invited around two dozen men to the stage. These men, he told us, had recently completed training to become leaders in both the church and their families. They were “*abagabo exemplaire*” (exceptional men) who had the “*esprit révolutionnaire*” (revolutionary spirit) to “*guhindura ibintu*” (change things). The church, Herve announced, would now have a men’s committee that would be in charge of developing a “*plan stratégique*” (strategic plan) for men in the church. Inviting the men to share the stage with him made them publicly accountable: they were “outed” as exemplary men and would be monitored to ensure they lived up to their new titles. It is at this juncture – after stressing the importance of male leadership within and outside of the church – that Herve launched into his warning about the perils of female leadership. It is worth quoting him here at some length:

I’m telling you a word which will take you by surprise, but it’s the truth... For so long in the Bible, every time a man rose, something happened with his rising. And

every time a woman rose, it will be evident that there was lack of men... Deborah said that every time there were no men to rise in Israel, I, Deborah, rose...⁵⁴ Abigail rose because her husband had chosen to be foolish...⁵⁵ When we talk about Jezebel it is because Ahab was not being a responsible leader.⁵⁶ Eve was misguided because Adam was nowhere to be found. So every time you see women rise in this season in this time, you need to understand that there is a lack of men somewhere. That's the reality...

When you look at Western nations, you find that they have laws...because they are led by the queen, for example Australia, Canada, and England... The laws state the most important person is the child. The second is the woman. The third is the domestic pet. The fourth is the man. That's how it is in Canada, that is how it is in the U.K. Those are the laws they abide by. So in those countries it is the man who will separate from the woman and leave her in the home. She will wake up in the morning and tell the husband, "Get out of my house!" That's the truth. The society has shifted and in so doing lost its balance because the man who should be on the top is on the fourth position. That's why men have chosen to say that they are women, or they say, "I feel like I'm a woman". Those are the true roots of homosexuality: lack of identity.

Herve then went on to decry the "pressure" that had been exerted by the Western world on Rwanda to empower women, even suggesting, as we saw above, that Rwandans had voted in the "wrong" way in the parliamentary elections. Drawing on the example of Nehemiah, who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, Herve argued that society was "burying" men even though they were the true "foundations" of society. He called on men to take decisive action:

So men, rise up! This is the emergency need... Go back to your responsibilities in the home, be men, because if you are doing well at home, people will see it outside. No woman can rise if she doesn't have a man. It's impossible. Truthfully, it's impossible... God created the woman to always feel secure under the man. And God has given the longings to the woman to always be completed by the husband. So when a woman doesn't have a husband, she feels uncovered... Because if you don't have a man, everyone feels that they can do whatever they want with you. But if they know you are married, they will be cautious with how they address you.

So may the Lord help us, because the world is heading to a turning point. I praise the Lord the solution is in the church.

⁵⁴ Judges 4 and 5.

⁵⁵ 1 Samuel 25.

⁵⁶ Book of 1 Kings, Book of 2 Kings.

Drawing on a number of Biblical verses⁵⁷, Herve proceeded to preach about the necessity of active church membership, challenging the congregation to reaffirm its commitment to and “zeal” for the work of God. The service ended with church members reciting a prayer line-by-line after Herve: “Return to me the love for your house. Return to me the zeal for your work. That I may love the church because that’s where I find my blessing”.

Christian patriarchy and the “political spiritualities” of gender

There were a number of remarkable assertions in Herve’s sermon, and I want to consider a few of them here. For one, we can see his claim that women only rise in the absence of men as an attempt to biblically sanction male authority. While some scholars have argued that Pentecostal teaching can “modify aspects of male behaviour that are harmful to women” (Gill 1990:709) by encouraging men to give up alcohol and redirect their attention and financial resources towards the family, in Herve’s comments a different gender logic is at work. Gender is conceived as a zero-sum game: women rise not only in the absence of men, but at their expense. By legitimating his claim through a number of examples from the Bible – the stories of Deborah, Abigail, Jezebel, and Eve – Herve argues that the rise of women to authority creates societal imbalance and, more importantly, it is against God’s will. God created man to govern at the “top”, and His order has been overturned. Due to the seriousness of these implications – the world is nearing a precipitous “turning point” – Herve felt compelled to challenge Rwandans’ voting practices and, concomitantly, a political system that not only encourages but mandates female leadership. Importantly,

⁵⁷ These were, in order: Psalm 27:4-6; Psalm 92: 12-15; Psalm 84; Psalm 116: 17-19; Psalm 118: 26; Psalm 122: 7-9; Psalm 134; Psalm 135: 1-2.

unlike Christian conceptions elsewhere of men as the “head” of the wife that usually confines male authority to the domestic sphere rather than that of the church (Robbins 2012:119; Mate 2002:556), Herve declares women’s emerging *political* authority as unbiblical.

Furthermore, unlike the RPF, which, as we saw, emphasises female agency in Rwanda’s pre-colonial past to legitimise its promotion of women in the present, Herve argues that the recent empowerment of women in Rwanda has been imposed by the West. This in itself is a significant departure from official ideology. Kagame has repeatedly emphasised the need for Rwandans to look inward for solutions to their problems and has explicitly rejected the West’s attempts to meddle in Rwanda’s domestic affairs. To Herve, however, gender equality is a concept that has its roots in a particular form of political organisation: that of the Commonwealth, which Rwanda joined in 2009. Since Commonwealth countries are headed by a woman they subvert and contradict true Christian gender relations. Herve makes a direct link between female leadership and a corrupted or unnatural social system. In these female-headed countries, he asserts, children and even pets are placed before men. Even worse, female leadership has led to homosexuality, here constructed as the ultimate sign of social and moral degradation. In a highly dramatic fashion punctuated by dramatic arm gestures and shrill exclamations, Herve identified the political and social empowerment of women as the source of earthly sin.

In her work on women in Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe, Mate has argued that Pentecostal discourse “romanticises female subordination to men”, equating submitting to one’s husband with “submitting to God’s will” (2002:557). The “modernity” that born-again ideology envisions, she concludes, is one “where women are subordinate to men”

(2002:566). Pushing this line of analysis further, we can see in Herve's remarks a particular conceptualisation of female subjectivity: women are insecure, incomplete, and uncovered when they are not in relationships with men. Without a husband, in fact, a woman's social standing is uncertain. She can be treated any which way because no man is present to protect her. Unmarried women are thus understood as inherently dangerous and threatening to the social order (Hodgson and McCurdy 2001a). This logic is in sharp contrast to state attempts to construct women as powerful agents whose participation is required to rebuild the country. "The leadership of Rwanda has always been aware of the importance of identifying women as true actors in the transformation of our country Rwanda", Inyumba declared in the same speech I quoted above. "Therein women's roles as key advisors in decision-making inform their ascension into current government posts" (Herndon and Randell 2010:6). To Herve and other male Pentecostal leaders, although they support the RPF-led transformation of Rwanda into a safe, politically stable, and prosperous country, their particular construction of Christian gender relations prevents them from supporting the RPF's calculated promotion of women to political power.

Young women in the church

Given the conflicting conceptions of gender that young women in Rwanda received from secular society and the church, how do they account for this "contradiction" (Gill 1990:709) in their everyday lives? Do they see it as a "contradiction" at all? Indeed, although Pastor Herve relied on biblical examples to claim that women's leadership always occurred in the absence of men, elsewhere Pentecostal women used the Bible to legitimise their authority. In Kenya, for example, Parsitau tells us that Bishop Margaret Wanjiru, a Pentecostal leader who ran in the 2007 parliamentary elections, "justified her entry into politics by likening

herself to Esther...who rescued her people from destruction” (2011:135). Female-led churches claim biblical women such as Hagar, Ruth, Mary, Elizabeth, Magdalene, and even Deborah as “models to be followed” (2011:140). Given the ambiguous nature of biblical interpretation, the Bible could be used both to support patriarchy and undermine it.

To examine how young Pentecostal women understood their spiritual selves and lives, I consider the testimonies of four *abarokore* women, two of whom were members of Pastor Herve’s church. These women, as we will see, had very different understandings of female agency. Instead of understanding female subjectivity as in need of always being completed by men, these women “shaped” their selves through a variety of spiritual practices that ultimately developed their capacity to love not only God, but themselves, others, and their country. Furthermore, some young women saw their faith as endowing them the ability to leave behind a proper “legacy” for imagined loved ones in the future. Yet others were forced out of the church when they refused to accept (male) authority.

Marie Claire’s testimony: “Transfer without transition” and legacy

Marie-Claire was a young woman in her early 20s who had recently completed her university studies. She was the only member of her immediate family who was saved. Like many of TRC’s members, she was a Tutsi returnee from Congo. She had converted to Pentecostalism from the Anglican Church during a difficult period in her life. In 2006, after finishing secondary school and completing a month of *ingando*, Marie-Claire won a place to study at a private university in Kigali that had recently started a programme to promote women in the sciences. The programme, however, was severely mismanaged. In the end Marie-Claire and more than three quarters of the other girls in the programme failed a qualifying examination and were forced to leave the university.

Always a strong student, Marie-Claire was distraught. “I was so desperate, so lost, so confused – I could not see any future, I could not see any breakthrough”, she told me. At the time, there happened to be two Pentecostal conferences taking place in Kigali. Marie-Claire went to the first one and found a francophone pastor speaking about Nick Vujicic, a Christian man who was born with no limbs but still had a strong faith in God.⁵⁸ Although she was “touched” by the preaching, she felt that the message was somehow limited. “I said, ‘God, if someone without limbs can live a normal life, maybe you can do something for me?’”, she told me. “But I didn’t think that God would give me to study university. I just thought that God will make me anew, will give me a new life”. Feeling spiritually unsatisfied, Marie-Claire decided to attend the conference at TRC. Upon entering the church, she was immediately impressed by the energy and joy of the congregation members – everyone around her was dancing, jumping, and making noise. When she heard Pastor Herve preach, she connected immediately with his words. More than seven years later, Marie-Claire recounted the sermon to me in vivid detail:

He preached about a message saying “transfer without transition”. He spoke about David, how David came from being a shepherd and he found himself being the king of Israel for 40 years. But he did not have to go through royal formation, political science, business trainings – no. He just had to go in the palace, play on the guitar for King Sol, and he had just to face some battles, and God shaped him like that. And he gave another illustration of Joshua. Joshua spent sufficient time with Moses for him to become the one to make the children of Israel cross the Jordan. So he said that this is David. He was transferred, but he had no transition. But this is Joshua. He was transferred but had transition. And he said, “God is going to transfer you without transition”. And the moment he said that, it hit my mind and I said, “Really? I am going to have my studies! I will not pass through this transition!”

A few weeks later, Marie-Claire’s father unexpectedly offered to pay her tuition fees and she was able to enrol in another university.

⁵⁸ <http://www.lifewithoutlimbs.org/about-nick/bio/>

If we orient Marie-Claire's testimony within the prevailing literature on Pentecostal conversion, one of the most striking aspects is the fact that she did not find the message of "rupture" (Meyer 1998; Meyer 1999; Robbins 2007) particularly appealing. While she found comfort in the notion that she could be "made anew" and given a "new life", it was not enough. She wanted a message that would address her specific life circumstances and the idea of being born anew was too general and vague to be of much help. Pastor Herve presented two biblical models of change – transfer with transition and transfer without transition – and promised the latter to church members. Given the challenges she had recently faced with her studies, this message "hit" Marie-Claire with force and allowed her to reframe her life circumstances according to this biblical narrative. Although in the past she had suffered through transition like Joshua, Pastor Herve taught her that an alternative perspective was possible. From now on, like David, she would forgo transition and move straight to transfer, gaining access to new opportunities in the process.

To Marie-Claire conversion also engendered personal transformation. She learned to be still, patient, and more "decisive". She had been "shapeless" before, she told me, but becoming born-again had taught her to "shape" herself, a process intimately connected to acting in the world. Marie-Claire summarised her understanding of TRC doctrine in this way: "It was telling you, you're here, yes, but you're going to leave this world. You're not a mountain, you're not those trees. But if you leave, what shall the world remember about you?" This understanding of the future as a space to create one's past was also present in Marie-Claire's words when I asked her why she thought the TRC had gained so many followers:

True Revival Church is the kind of church that gives you the word of God as it is. TRC, they can preach about miracles, of course they can. They can give

prophecies, yes. They can preach about blessings and tremendous things God is about to do. But on the other side, they always show you that it is up to you... God has put before you two ways: the way of death, the way of life. God will never come and push you to decide, you have the freedom of choice. So if you choose right, good. But if you choose wrong, it's up to you... When people come to TRC and they say, "Wow, I'm not supposed to wait on the blessing but I can go for the blessing! I am here in the church, I'm not passive, I can be active!" It shows people that actually there is a potential in you that you need to unlock... You're someone...and people find that kind of confidence. Because when TRC came in Rwanda, there was a group of people that felt they are not yet human beings, because of those histories. And they said, "I'm someone. I'm a human being. I can leave a legacy in this world. There are some people who can count on me even when I'm gone. There are some people who can say, 'We depended on them'". In Marie-Claire's understanding of Pentecostal doctrine, one had the choice to

become saved or not, to stay passive or become active; power was in the hand of the individual to choose God's path or that of the Devil. Conversion was not only an actualisation of the self – an "unlocking" of potential, a becoming of "someone", and a gaining of confidence – it was also a process of re-humanization. TRC, we will remember, arrived in the country after the genocide and ministered to Rwandans who were, in Marie-Claire's terms, "not yet human beings". We can recall here Pastor Anselme and Pastor Jean-Baptiste's comments in the last chapter about the genocide being a sort of demonic possession. Crucially, Marie-Claire's description of social life after 1994 was not dependent on ethnicity. She does not identify this "group" of not-yet-humans as composed solely of survivors or perpetrators. Rather she implies that the genocide de-humanised everyone who experienced it. For these people, she tells us, becoming born again was a way to work through the trauma of the genocide to regain one's humanity.

An important aspect of the re-humanising or healing process of Pentecostal conversion was the realisation that one had a particular "legacy" to bequeath to the world. Here Marie-Claire articulated a very particular understanding of memory and the future. Rather than realising one's own personal fate or destiny, the future was envisioned as a

place to leave something behind for others. Since so many lives had been lost in Rwanda's collective past, this concept of legacy, of making one's mark on the world, was extremely important. Dalsgaard and Frederiksen have recently emphasised the importance of acknowledging the "potential openness of every life", arguing that it involves a particular understanding of hope, which they define as "a method of radical temporal reorientation of knowledge, a process of looking forward instead of backward" (2013:56). I argue that we can discern in Marie-Claire's testimony a much more complex understanding of the past, present, and future. Her "temporal reorientation" involves both a looking forward *and* a looking backward, hinging on the distinction between history and legacy. While history is confined to the deeds of the past – "those histories" that dehumanized a certain group of people – legacy is understood as one's future past, a space wherein future loved ones look back on one's deeds and remember one's contribution to their lives ("We depended on them"). What I'm describing here resonates, I believe, with Appadurai's (2013) understanding of the future as a "cultural fact". In Marie-Claire's words we can discern a specifically Rwandan way – in the sense that is shaped by the particular social, political, historical, and spiritual context of Rwanda – of imagining the future. Although Koselleck (2004) has argued that the temporality of modernity involves the separation of experience (the past) from the horizon of expectation (the future), we can see here that legacy attempts to bridge this divide and heal the rupture of modernity and the genocide. Or, indeed, the rupture of modernity as genocide (Hinton 2002).

Finally, although Pastor Herve suggested that God created women to be "completed" and "covered" by their husbands, this was not how Marie-Claire spoke about her future. While she hoped to find a husband one day, she was more focused on her own

personal, professional, and spiritual development. She had recently accepted a position in a new evangelical ministry and dreamed of opening her own publishing house. Even though a young man had recently fallen in love with her and had even approached one of the church's pastors for his blessing to ask for her hand in marriage, Marie-Claire was hesitant to accept. She had never met the young man before, she told me, and he had only seen her at church. "If he's the one God intended for me, I'll know", she said. Despite her reservations, Marie-Claire also realised that marrying the young man could prove advantageous for her. He lived in Europe, which would allow Marie-Claire to pursue further studies in publishing and make important transnational connections. "Marrying him could be about love, but it could also be about business!" she joked with me. Thus even though Marie-Claire wanted to get married, she understood marriage not in terms of finally being "completed" or "covered" by a man but rather as an opportunity to pursue her own goals for the future. To her, love and "business", as she put it, were not mutually exclusive.

While Pastor Herve's teachings may have become increasingly patriarchal, for Marie-Claire women had always played important roles in the church. Although men dominated the "visible scene" of the church, women worked "in secret". They were the ones in charge of organising conferences, fellowships, and meetings, even if others were not always aware of their contributions. "So I think maybe women are not very seen, but they work a lot", she observed. It was this behind-the-scenes organizing, in fact, that allowed for the smooth operating of the church and the "rise" of successful male pastors.

Agathe's testimony: "I was so much in theories"

I move on now to Agathe, another young woman in the church. Agathe was in her early 20s and was a survivor who had lost her parents in the genocide. Although her aunt had

introduced her to TRC as a child, she became truly “committed” a few years later. She was reading *The Purpose-Driven Life* by Rick Warren (see Chapter 4) and the book “touched” her heart.⁵⁹ She embarked on 40 days of prayer and fasting and studied one chapter each day. After reading the book, her life completely changed. Echoing Marie-Claire’s emphasis on the importance of choice in faith, Agathe declared: “I realised that my choice was to follow God, to be committed to God”.

Salvation, however, did not mean that Agathe was immediately cured from all her worries and troubles. In fact, due to her position as a survivor – in Marie-Claire’s words, someone who was “not yet human” – Agathe struggled with her own healing. Although she had thought that she had been delivered from her sadness and anger when she first became born-again, Agathe soon realised that she was still “wounded”. When someone asked her about her father, for example, she would burst into tears. Agathe described her state of mind at the time in this way:

Sometimes I would think, “Yeah, it was God’s plan [that she became an orphan during the genocide]”. I was so much in theories. I would say, “Yeah, I lost my parents but I can still believe in the future, my future is bright”. But it was like I was hiding the wound that was in me. And to get the wound healed, you must not hide it. You must expose it, you must face it... You must accept it. I would prefer not to think about it and I would think that I’m getting peace by that, but that’s not true. The way you get peace is when you really accept what is done. You accept the past and you try to learn from it.

Agathe here articulates both the epistemological and ontological “insecurity”

(Ashforth 1998) underlying Pentecostal conversion. How did one know if one was truly healed? One could be “in theories”, as she says, convincingly repeating a pastor’s message about love and reconciliation, but the wounds inflicted by the genocide could be so deep

⁵⁹ Aside from members of the PEACE Plan, Rick Warren’s Christian NGO based in Rwanda, Agathe was the only person I knew who had read Warren’s book. I will have more to say about Warren’s involvement in Rwanda in Chapter 4.

that one was not even aware of their presence. While Agathe admitted that her deliverance was not “100%”, she was now able to imagine a time when it would be. Importantly, as I discuss below, the church gave her practices to employ in the present to work towards this future.

Like Marie-Claire, Agathe was concerned with shaping the future not only for herself but also for others. “I must live a legacy”, she told me. Living a legacy meant living a good Christian life in the present with an eye to the near future, which was not “evacuated” (Guyer 2007) but rather populated by future loved ones and thus an important focal point of her practices of healing and self-fashioning in the present. Like many young women I knew, Agathe was an active church member and was heavily involved in intercession, forceful prayer sessions to “intercede” in the spiritual lives of others. For Agathe, intercession was tied not only to the love of others, but also to the love of country. As she explained:

Intercession is very important because it really means praying for others. So when you pray for others, it shows love... I think the thing that will show that I really love Rwanda, it's when I have the burden for Rwandese people. So when you have the burden, the first thing that you can do is to pray. So when you are interceding, it develops that love. You feel like you need the best for others. You're not careless if you're an intercessor. You can see the problems around you, you can see that people are suffering cause you cannot solve all the problems. But you can pray for everyone you see.

This love of Rwanda that Agathe describes is not the secular patriotism encouraged by the state but rather something much more personal and spiritual. Klaitz (2010) has recently argued that creating, maintaining, and renewing relations of love were at the heart of the Baitshapi Apostolic Church in Botswana during the height of the AIDS pandemic. In a similar way, interceding for Agathe meant asserting her agency through love and not being “careless” with others. To Agathe, love and responsibility – what she describes as her

“burden” – were intimately linked, suggesting that this love was neither idealistic nor naïve: it was born of a certain pragmatic relationship with the surrounding world. O’Neill (2010), as I discuss in the next chapter, has also written of the Pentecostal concept of “burden”, which he sees as distracting from Pentecostals’ ability to identify structural causes of inequality. Agathe’s understanding of burden, however, seems to me somehow different. Expressing love through intercession meant acknowledging the limits of her ability to affect change in a complex secular realm where the Devil may have the upper hand. While praying did not always ease the suffering of others or solve their problems, demonstrating her love for them was crucial to becoming the kind of Christian she hoped to be and to create the kind of community, even nation, she hoped to inhabit. Through intercession, Agathe enacted a certain kind of utopian vision for the future and Rwandicity that was defined not by achieving prescribed 2020 development goals but rather by loving others, regardless of whether or not they loved her back.

Despite the capacity for love that Agathe developed through intercession, she admitted that being a young woman in the church was not always easy. It was difficult, in fact, to learn whom she could trust, particularly when it came to marriage. Young saved women were considered highly desirable by men, saved and unsaved alike. Since there were so few girls who were truly saved and “behaving well”, as Agathe put it, they became objects of intense attraction:

So when guys see that “Oh, this girl is serious, she prays”, all those boys come to you. And it doesn’t mean that they are saved! So you have to know how to deal with them. Cause you understand that it’s a challenge to the girl. When a girl is being pursued by many guys, it may disturb her. Not because she’s not serious, but she’s a human being, she’s in flesh. So this requires a lot of discipline. If you have a disciplined prayer life, you are not conducted by the emotions. You can know how to rule over your feelings. But you cannot do that by yourself. That’s the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can only strengthen you and give you that power.

Agathe herself had been pursued by a number of young men in the church, but she relied on God to guide her path. “You have to get wisdom from God and to have boldness to be able to say, ‘I think this is not God’s will. I feel it in my spirit. I believe I’m not marrying you, cause I didn’t hear anything from God’”, she told me. “If you are not bold, you may accept and your whole life will be ruined”. Although conversion allowed for the inward movement of emotions, as we saw in the last chapter, there was always the danger that it could also stimulate the “wrong” ones.

For young women, then, there was a certain dangerous paradox involved in conversion: by becoming born again and pledging a vow of chastity, they became more desirable to young men. At the same time, conversion brought with it a certain “discipline” or “boldness” that allowed born-again women to refuse men’s advances. Similarly, Marshall (1991:30) reports that young female Pentecostals in Nigeria rely on the “power of Jesus” to refuse unwanted sexual advances, particularly from school lecturers. The churches provided spaces of “relative freedom and dignity”, and allowed young women to “gain a measure of control over their sexual and family lives” (1991:32). Since Pentecostalism emphasises the personal relationship between God and the individual, in some cases a young woman was able to use this to push back against pressure from family members or even pastors to marry a particular suitor, as we saw with Marie-Claire. In this way we can see Pentecostal practice as developing a certain kind of affective economy amongst young women. While practices such as prayer and intercession developed love, reliance on the Holy Spirit prevented them from feeling the wrong kind of “emotions” and “feelings”, here associated with sexual desire.

Yet although the Holy Spirit gave women the “discipline” and “boldness” to handle relationships in their everyday lives, particularly with men, not being bold enough – i.e. accepting a man’s advances – or being *too* bold – i.e. questioning patriarchal church doctrine and finding a husband outside of the church – could dramatically alter a young woman’s sense of self and her future. It is to these stories that I now turn.

Jeanette’s testimony: The dangers of a dreaded musician

Building on the previous two testimonies, we might ask: what happened when a young woman transgressed church doctrine? What were the consequences for her *icyaha* (sin)?

I consider here the story of Jeanette, who was the wife of a friend. He was the one, in fact, who had encouraged me to speak to Jeanette about her experiences with the *abarokore* church, insisting that she had an important story to tell. Although I had known Jeanette for quite some time, it was only near the end of my fieldwork that I asked her directly about her experiences in Miracle Working Church, another *murokore* church that was considered to be TRC’s main rival. Jeanette told me that her reason for converting to Pentecostalism was very specific. She had grown up Catholic but when she came back to Rwanda from Burundi as a teenager, her older sister was pregnant – and unmarried. “It was a big shame for our family”, she told me. “In Rwandan culture, to have a baby and not be married, it’s a very bad thing”. To Jeanette, this sense of shame fell squarely on her shoulders, especially after her second sister became pregnant, also out of wedlock. “Everyone, my aunts, my uncles, my cousins, said to me, ‘You’re next!’” Jeanette was terrified and vowed that the same fate would not befall her. She decided to join Miracle Working Church and became a dedicated member, even becoming part of its protocol department.

Yet much to her surprise, Jeanette ended up meeting and falling in love with a man outside of the church. To the horror of her pastors and fellow church members, this man was a musician with dreadlocks who was highly sceptical not only of the new churches but also of organised religion more generally. As one of Jeanette's friends told me, "They [church pastors] thought that he was doing drugs and he was a bad person just because he had dreads". The church's pastor tried to persuade Jeanette to break it off with her fiancé and told her she could not have her wedding in the church. ("I had a fight with the pastor", her husband told me. "She wasn't supposed to marry this infidel".) In the end, Jeanette ignored the pastor's advice and left the church, choosing to get married in the Catholic Church instead.

Jeanette's testimony forces us to approach "rupture" from another angle. What happens when the church decides to "make a complete break" (Meyer 1998) with a believer? What are the stakes involved, especially for women? Many scholars have written of the important social networks that Pentecostalism creates for marginalised believers (Frahm-Arp 2010). Gill, for example, observes that the poor, mostly single women in her study in La Paz turn to Pentecostalism "for comfort and the assistance of a new network of believers who could lend a sense of coherence to their experiences and revalidate their personhood" (1990:711). Cole writes that Malagasy women are attracted to Pentecostalism because it gives them "a new way to interpret the suffering associated with being poor" (2010:154). The Pentecostal church provides "both an alternative model and an alternative set of ways to build a positive sense of self" (2010:176), disembedding women from the competitive and money-driven economy of Tamatavian daily life. Robbins suggests that charismatic Christianity can "open up systems of gender relations to creative change"

(2012:130) allowing women to assert agency in new ways. Yet when women stray from church doctrine, they face criticism and expulsion, restricting their opportunities for the future. Not only could breaking with the church damage their reputations, making them all but unmarriageable, it also cut them off from important social and economic networks, inducing a new kind of suffering. Although Pye, for example, stresses the processual and idiosyncratic nature of Pentecostalism in Kinshasa, arguing that it is a religion constantly “in the making” (2012:12–3), what we see in Jeanette’s case – and in the words of Pastor Herve’s sermon – are repeated attempts by male pastors to control the terms of this making, particularly when it comes to female spiritual subjectivities.

We can imagine, then, the emotional, psychological, and spiritual pain that an enforced “rupture” with the church might cause a young woman. Jeanette, however, was fortunate to have a group of female friends to support her before, during, and after her departure from the church. This close circle was comprised of seven women in their late 20s and early 30s who had first met in high school. Although they came from a range of backgrounds and faiths – all were Christian but some were Catholic and others *abarokore* from different churches – they relied on each other for prayer, support, and resources. One of the women, Chantal, was an orphan, but she referred to the parents of the other women as her parents. Two of the original group members were living abroad, but the five remaining ones continued to meet regularly to discuss their lives and “*s’eclater*” (burst into laughter), as Chantal told me. Instead of viewing Jeanette’s fiancé through the eyes of the church and judging him based on his rough exterior, her friends took the time to get to know him. In the end, he won them over and they approved of Jeanette’s choice. The

unmarried members of the group even joked that they were looking for their own version of Jeanette's husband to marry themselves.

In this way, we can see that alternative forms of "spiritual kinship" (Englund 2007) formed outside of the church were equally important in the life-worlds of some *abarokore* women. If the church decided to "rupture" with them, they were able to alleviate this "spiritual insecurity" (Ashforth 1998) – here forcibly imposed onto them by male pastors – through female friendship.

"Umukobwa ntagira idini": A girl does not have religion

Before concluding, I want to consider the testimony of one of Jeanette's friends, Chantal. As we saw above, Chantal was an orphan and although she had been raised Catholic, like Jeanette she too had converted to Pentecostalism. She had joined a small Pentecostal church – a bit player on Kigali's spiritual stage – and became a member of its protocol department. Chantal had converted because she had been looking for a personal relationship with God. Besides, she told me, "I like to create things". Being part of the church had allowed her to assert her creative agency. Along with other church members, Chantal had helped to buy the plot of land on which the church's new building was constructed. In this way she felt she had personally contributed to building the country's bright future (*kubaka ejo hazaza h'igihugu*).

Yet even though Chantal was a devoted *murokore* at the moment, this did not mean that she thought she would always remain one. Since she was a little girl, she told me, she had always dreamt of getting married in the Catholic Church. She had imagined the priest in his long robes, the grandeur of the Catholic cathedral, and the pomp and ritualistic ceremony of the service. These attributes were sadly lacking in the new Pentecostal

churches, whose buildings often resembled airport hangars or warehouses. Her dream of a Catholic wedding was not entirely implausible as she was currently engaged to a Catholic man. “As we say here, ‘*umukobwa ntagira idini*’”, Chantal joked. The expression, which can be translated as “a girl does not have a religion”, was often employed when a couple of two different faiths was about to get married. It was culturally expected that the woman would convert, and this was especially true in the new *abarokore* churches. If a couple wanted to get married in the church, both members of the couple had to be *abarokore*, as we saw with Jeanette’s testimony.

To some women the adage revealed the unequal gender dynamics of religion. Assuming that the woman would convert after marriage suggested it was the man who determined the couple’s spiritual future. The phrase could also be used in a highly pejorative way. To say “*uyu mukobwa nta dini agira*” (“this girl does not have a religion”), referring to a particular girl, often meant that the girl in question was untrustworthy, unstable, and bad mannered. Indeed, when I asked another friend, who was a young male Pentecostal pastor, what the phrase meant to him, he told me – in his characteristically humorous way – “it means, ‘girl, never joke’”. A girl without a religion was someone of questionable moral character.

Chantal, however, used the phrase to her advantage. Although she loved her *murokore* church and the sense of creative agency it allowed her to exert, by converting to Catholicism for her marriage she could fulfil her childhood dream of having a Catholic ceremony. More importantly, her close group of female friends would provide her with spiritual kinship throughout any new transformation. While her *murokore* faith suited her for the time being, Chantal imagined a future for herself that did not close off the

possibility of other spiritual conversions. For Chantal contingency was an intimate part of her spiritual life (Bledsoe 2002).

Conclusion

Despite a “gender sensitive” constitution and the highest percentage of female parliamentarians in the world, the gender politics of the *abarokore* churches in Rwanda often conflicted with the forward-looking policies and practices of the RPF. While the state claimed that women had played an important role in the country’s past to justify women’s political empowerment in the present and future, the new churches dismissed this gendered historical reconstruction as an imposition from the West. Drawing on biblical models of female subjectivity and leadership, they came to different conclusions on the “proper” place of women in society. Pentecostal pastors considered Rwandan women’s rise as a “red sign of danger” that side-lined men, with gender conceived of as a zero-sum game. Two approaches to gender were at work, one secular, one Christian, and they ultimately created dissonances and anxieties in the lives of young *abarokore* women.

Despite the churches’ patriarchal ideology, however, many young women took advantage of opportunities within the church to fashion their own understandings of personhood and community. To Marie-Claire Pentecostal conversion had given her the ability to create a legacy to leave behind for others; to Agathe intercession allowed her to generate and express a love of God and country. Yet when women dared to stray from accepted *abarokore* doctrine, they were punished and even ostracised. While Jeanette was able to draw on the “spiritual kinship” of a close group of female friends after her “rupture” with the church, not all women were as fortunate. At the same time, Chantal turned a patriarchal precept about women’s supposed spiritual subservience on its head and instead

used it to imagine a spiritually fulfilling future. As Parsitau has argued, “women’s engagement with religious patriarchy is a complex issue whose particular dynamics and effects must be understood within specific sociohistorical contexts” (2011:132). The gender dynamics of the new *abarokore* churches in Rwanda were ultimately ambiguous, allowing some young women to assert “quiet” spiritual agency yet foreclosing this possibility for others. Theoretically, we can see how the “rupture” debate within the anthropology of Christianity must be approached through the framework of gender as men and women experience the “break” in dramatically different ways.

While I have argued that TRC’s stance towards gender conflicted with the gender politics of the RPF state, in the next chapter I examine how the new *abarokore* churches provide it with spiritual legitimacy.

Chapter 4

Rwanda, *Shima Imana!*: The Politics of Thanksgiving

“Don’t blame Kizito Mihigo”, Apostle Paul Gitwaza, the leader and founder of one of Rwanda’s most powerful new Pentecostal churches, declared in front of 23,000 Rwandans at Amahoro Stadium, the national stadium in Kigali. Kizito Mihigo, a Catholic singer, genocide survivor, and unity and reconciliation activist had just finished performing one of his songs, “Arc-en-ciel” (Rainbow) for the very first Rwanda, *Shima Imana!* or Rwanda Thanksgiving Day in August 2012. Before singing, Mihigo had explained the song’s meaning, which articulated a certain understanding of God’s mercy. Gitwaza had not agreed with him. “He didn’t study theology like we did”, Gitwaza continued, addressing his fellow Protestant leaders sitting in the VIP section of the stadium. “He’s not a pastor, he’s not even a priest, the child is only a Christian singer”. The event, a crusade (*igiterane*) that purported to bring together the country’s Christians in a day of thanksgiving, was attended not only by prominent Protestant leaders but also by politicians including the guest of honour, the Prime Minister of Rwanda. Noticeably absent were high-ranking representatives of the Catholic Church and the country’s Muslim community. Rwanda Thanksgiving Day was organised by Rwanda Purpose Driven Ministries/PEACE Plan, a Christian organisation established in the country by the well-known American evangelist Rick Warren. In 2005, Warren and President Kagame had christened Rwanda the world’s first “purpose driven” nation.

Although later dismissed by one of the event’s organisers as a “small incident that the media blew beyond proportion”, this exchange – and Mihigo’s response to Gitwaza’s comments – became one of the most discussed “beefs” in the local Kinyarwanda-language

media, sparking heated discussion on websites, radio shows, and in everyday conversation. While the *abarokore* churches skilfully employ new media technologies for evangelising purposes (Meyer and Moors 2006; Morgan 2008; Vries 2008; Engelke 2010b), these very technologies allowed Rwandans to articulate their concerns with *abarokore* attempts to dominate the country's religious landscape and control spiritual meaning.

Yet Rwanda, *Shima Imana!* must also be considered a political event. Building on the historical groundwork I laid in Chapter 1, I argue that although the RPF claims to have ruptured with the “bad” governance and corruption of the former Hutu regimes, continuities persist, especially when it comes to the relationship between religion and power. I suggest that the RPF relies on the new *abarokore* churches – and the mainline Protestant churches more broadly – to spiritually legitimise its regime, much in the same way as the *abiru*, the royal ritualists, did for the Royal Court and the Catholic Church did for the presidencies of Kayibanda and Habyarimana. Power in Rwanda, in other words, has a long history of being spiritually constituted. Theoretically, this chapter contributes to research exploring the relationship between Pentecostalism and power (Ashforth 1998; Ellis and ter Haar 1998; Phiri 2003; Asamoah-Gyadu 2005; Marshall 2009; Deacon and Lynch 2013).

I structure the chapter as follows. I first consider the relationship between Warren and Kagame and then provide an anatomy of the Mihigo-Gitwaza debate, arguing that it was ultimately a conflict about power – who has the right, ability, and authority to interpret the Bible and, by extension, Rwanda's history and collective memory. Since the event played out so publicly in the media, I will consider media reports, song lyrics, personal interviews with a variety of religious figures, and my own attendance at the event. Thus this

chapter serves as a bridge to the second half of my thesis, which focuses more exclusively on popular culture.

To give a “bottom-up” perspective of the event, I also draw on the spiritual testimonies of a group of women survivors, whom I visited regularly in their village outside Kigali as part of a collaborative project with a Rwandan researcher. All of the women had been raped during the genocide, impregnated by their rapists, and had decided to keep the children. Given their personal experiences of violence both during and after the genocide – they were seen as “tainted” women and, without exception, all were raped again by family member or neighbours after 1994 – their testimonies about God’s mercy are particularly powerful and can help us to see more clearly the generational dynamics at stake within the country’s reconfigured spiritual landscape.

The new churches and the state: Paul Kagame and Rick Warren

Before considering Rwanda Thanksgiving Day, I want to first consider how Rick Warren, best-selling author of *The Purpose Driven Life* and founder of one of America’s largest churches, Saddleback Church in California, became such a visible player in Rwanda’s evangelical Christian movement. Kagame was reportedly given an autographed copy of *The Purpose-Driven Life* by one of Warren’s staff members in 2004 (Morgan 2005; PEACE Plan 2013).⁶⁰ After reading it, the president wrote a letter to Warren declaring, “I am a purpose-driven man”, and invited his team to Kigali where they “jointly” decided to make Rwanda the world’s first purpose-driven nation in July 2005 (Morgan 2005). According to Frank, a PEACE plan representative I interviewed, Warren and Kagame shared similar

⁶⁰ Van’t Spijker (2011:11) claims that Kagame came across *The Purpose Driven Life* in his hotel room in the United States.

ideas about leadership. “Our president, whatever he does, he has a purpose”, Frank told me. “He knows what he wants, he knows where he’s taking the people... There is a vision, there is a goal, and he aligns people towards that purpose. That’s great leadership”.

The PEACE Plan is a global initiative launched by Warren to combat what he has labelled the five global giants: spiritual emptiness; self-centred leadership; extreme poverty; pandemic diseases; and illiteracy. The way to combat these giants is set out in the PEACE acronym itself. Promote reconciliation, Equip servant leaders, Assist the poor, Care for the sick, and Educate the next generation. Following these guidelines, Frank explained, leads to a purpose-driven life, a purpose-driven church, and a purpose-driven nation. Soon after the PEACE Plan’s public launch, trainers from Warren’s church arrived to mentor an interdenominational group of Rwandan pastors and church leaders in all things PEACE related, from leadership and management to purpose driven strategy and preaching (PEACE Plan 2013). A total of 51 Rwandans completed a three-year training course, with eight becoming “Master Trainers” who went on to train more than 3,000 pastors and church leaders. Hundreds of pastors have since been trained in areas such as healthcare and HIV prevention, hygiene and sanitation, and even land security (PEACE Plan 2013). The reach of the organisation has been impressive. In 2013 it claimed that 29,239 Rwandan families had benefited from monthly in-home care by trained PEACE volunteers and that 146,195 Rwandans had received primary and preventative healthcare for HIV/AIDS, malaria, and nutrition. While Saddleback continues to assist with “generous” funding, Frank insisted that the “ownership” of the organisation was now “100% Rwandan”. The funding for Rwanda Thanksgiving Day, for example – which had a budget of more than \$80,000 US, an astronomical sum in Rwanda – had come from local sources.

The mantra of PEACE Plan, Frank told me, was “ordinary people empowered by the spirit to do extraordinary things”. Another was “hand up, not hand out”. PEACE Plan was concerned with transforming peoples’ “minds” so that their potential could be unlocked. “We teach people to look within themselves, the church to look within itself, there are potentials there... They need just to have their mind right, their mindset right”, Frank explained. This “right mindset” would ensure that Christians would never again allow genocide to happen in the country again. To this end, Frank told me that the most important contribution that the PEACE Plan has made in Rwanda was uniting church leadership. Instead of working on their own projects in “isolation”, the country’s Protestant churches were now able to operate together under the interdenominational PEACE Plan umbrella and consider Rwanda as “one parish”. This umbrella, however, excluded the Catholic Church as its “structures” made working with them too difficult. In 2013 it was announced that the PEACE Plan would be implemented in Burundi, DR Congo, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, South Sudan, and Nigeria-Niger Delta. Rwanda would also be the model for a PEACE Plan programme to build churches in 12 “Gateway cities”: Accra, Amman, Bangalore, Berlin, Buenos Aires, Hong Kong, Johannesburg, London, Manila, Mexico City, Moscow, and Tokyo.

“*Si bo Imana*”: Warren and spiritual legitimacy

Yet, we could ask ourselves, what kind of “right mindset” is the PEACE Plan attempting to cultivate in Rwandans? What should we make of the close partnership between Warren and Kagame? To get a sense of this, I want to consider the prayer offered by Warren at Kagame’s second presidential inauguration in September 2010, also at Amahoro Stadium.

Warren was one of three religious leaders to offer special prayers for Kagame.⁶¹ He was the only Protestant and the only foreigner. When it came his turn to speak, Warren greeted the 60,000-strong crowd in Kinyarwanda and, holding up his Rwandan passport, declared, “*ndi mu rugo*” (I’m at home). He then invited the audience to stand, stretch their arms out towards Kagame, and join him in praying for their leader. Part of Warren’s prayer went as follows:

You have said in your word, “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord”.⁶² And help all Rwandans to remember that only God is God. And when critics seek to discourage, *si bo Imana* [they are not God]. And when other nations pressure Rwanda to give up its values, *si bo Imana* [they are not God]. And when outsiders assume that they know what Rwandans should do, *si bo Imana* [they are not God]. Only you are God. These people know where they came from, they know what they want, and they know you are God...

Warren’s prayer is remarkable in the way that it echoes Kagame’s own stance towards his critics. Banking on a certain “genocide credit” (Reyntjens 2004), Kagame frequently claims that no one has the “moral right” to criticise Rwanda and his vision for the country (Birrell 2011).⁶³ Alongside former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz, Warren has become one of Kagame’s most vocal Western supporters (Wallis 2011). While critics decry Kagame’s human rights abuses, a clique of powerful friends help to position the president as “the global elite’s favorite strongman” (Gettleman 2013), claiming that he has brought peace and stability to a troubled region.

⁶¹ The other two were the then mufti of Rwanda, Swaleh Habimana, and the Catholic leader, Bishop Smaragde Mboniyenge.

⁶² Psalm 33: 12. Warren’s words are similar here to those uttered by then president Frederick J.T. Chiluba when he declared Zambia a Christian nation in 1991 (Hinfelaar 2011; Phiri 2003).

⁶³ One of the most well-documented cases of this was Kagame’s “tweeterspat” with British journalist Ian Birrell in May 2011 (Birrell 2011). Referring to an interview with Kagame in the *Financial Times* that had been published that morning (Wallis 2011), Birrell tweeted, “No-one in media, UN or human rights groups has the moral right to criticise me, says despotic & deluded [Kagame]”. Much to Birrell’s surprise, Kagame responded to him directly in two consecutive tweets: “Not you either...no moral right! You give yourself the right to abuse pple and judge them like you r the one to decide...and determine universally what s right or wrong and what shd be believed or not!!! Wrong u r...u have no such right..” The pair went back-and-forth and Louise Mushikiwabo, Rwanda’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, even joined the fray, offering her support for the president.

Warren lends spiritual legitimacy to this claim. Relying on Biblical authority, he declares that only God can judge Rwanda, not “critics”, not other nations, not “outsiders”. Kagame’s rule is “blessed” and therefore above all secular authority. Those who question the president’s authoritarian hand can be dismissed as unbelievers. Indeed, Wallis (2011) argues that Kagame has “skilfully courted” the American evangelical community, which reportedly helped him to win over an initially sceptical Bush administration.

Kagame is not unique in this regard. Former Kenyan president Daniel arap Moi aligned himself with German evangelist Reinhard Bonnke who “provided a theological justification for a strong state due to the need for people to be saved from themselves” (Deacon and Lynch 2013:114; Gifford 1992). Deacon and Lynch argue that Moi used religion more generally as a way to “legitimate his underresourced rule”, but by doing so he also opened himself up to accusations that his power derived not from God but from Satan (Deacon and Lynch 2013:117–8). In this way, attempts to spiritually legitimise political authority are always “unsteady” (Deacon and Lynch 2013:117–8). This “unsteadiness” revealed itself at Rwanda, *Shima Imana!*. Although the event aimed to demonstrate the unity of the country’s Christian churches, it ultimately revealed deep divisions between denominations, particularly between the new Pentecostal churches and the Catholic Church.

Rwanda Thanksgiving Day: “*Yesu ashimwe!*”

The intended purpose of Rwanda Thanksgiving Day was to bring the country’s Christian communities together to thank God for all He has done in and for Rwanda.⁶⁴ It was not an

⁶⁴ The event involved the participation of a number of the country’s umbrella Protestant organisations: the Protestant Council in Rwanda (CPR), the Evangelical Alliance of Rwanda, the Province of the Anglican Church of Rwanda (PEAR), and the Forum of Born Again Churches and Christian Organizations in Rwanda (FOBACOR).

attempt to “heal” or “deliver” the nation from unseen evils, as has been examined elsewhere (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005), but rather focused on thanksgiving, taking its inspiration from Proverbs 126:3: “The Lord has done great things for us; and we are glad” (*Uwiteka yadukoreye ibikomeye, natwe turishimye*).⁶⁵ As Frank explained to me, Rwanda Thanksgiving Day aimed to instil the “culture of thanking God” in Rwandans and to tell them, “Be positive, don’t focus on what doesn’t work, on the weaknesses within the country, focus on what God is doing and thank Him for that – and then pray for the rest”. It was designed to allow Christians to feel a “unity of purpose”, to come together and offer a unified prayer for the nation. Another PEACE Plan representative explained to me that the event had been inspired both by scripture and traditional Rwandan culture. Not only did the Bible describe the Pentecost as a day of harvest (Exodus 23:16), in the past Rwandans had celebrated a day of harvest (*umunsi w’umuganura*) in August. “We’re trying to help people now to look at themselves as a nation”, he told me. “Try to go beyond your individual or your extended family or your region”. Warren, he explained, often emphasized that a nation requires three legs: the government, the private sector, and the church. Rwanda Thanksgiving Day was an attempt to mobilise all three.

Although the day-long crusade involved performances by a number of choirs, including the well-respected Seventh Day Adventist choir, Ambassadors of Christ, and the Rwanda Defence Force Army Jazz Band, to mention but a few, the culmination of the day’s activities was a number of official speeches, first by Anglican Church leaders and then by politicians. The master of ceremonies was Apostle Paul Gitwaza, head of one of the

⁶⁵ Indeed, in a Kinyarwanda song released to coincide with the event – “Rwanda Shima Imana” by All Rwandan Gospel Super Stars – this phrase is incorporated into the lyrics.

country's most prominent new Pentecostal churches, Zion Temple Celebration Centre.⁶⁶

The religious leaders who spoke – Emmanuel Kolini, the former archbishop of the Anglican Church and the PEACE Plan Chairman; Onesphore Rwaje, the current archbishop of the Anglican Church; and Geoffrey Rwubusisi, the former Anglican bishop of Cyangugu – all urged Rwandans to thank God for the country's development and good governance.⁶⁷

It was God's grace, they emphasised, that had allowed the country to rebuild after the genocide. They thanked God for giving Rwanda various government programs, including the Agaciro Development Fund, which encourages Rwandans to "voluntarily" donate money to the government for unspecified national programmes; health insurance (*mutuelle de santé*); *girinka*, the one cow per family programme; *ubudehe*, a programme of community works; *gacaca*, the community courts established to try cases of genocide; and the *umurenge* SACCOs programme, which introduced SACCOs (Saving and Credit Cooperative Societies) at the level of each administrative sector (*umurenge*).

In a similar spirit, James Musoni, the Minister of Local Government, thanked God for the country's development. "When you look at what the country went through and where it is today, there's a lot for Rwanda to be thankful to God to", he declared. "God has been so kind to this nation and helped rebuilt it" (Kaitezi 2012).

⁶⁶ Gitwaza was born and raised in the Eastern DR Congo and returned to Rwanda after the genocide to minister to traumatised and wounded Rwandans. In 1999, he started a church in Kigali and, 13 years later, it boasted more than 20,000 members, with branches all over the country. The Zion Temple has since planted churches internationally, including in Europe, North America, Asia, and in other parts of Africa. Gitwaza regularly travels the globe to speak at conferences and is reported to be the spiritual adviser to a number of high-ranking politicians, both in Rwanda and in the region. Zion Temple is a "mega church", and is known as the "church for the rich" (van't Spijker 2011:9), as evidenced by the fact that a number of prominent businessmen, politicians, and entertainers are very visible members.

⁶⁷ It should be noted that in April 2013, Apostle Gitwaza, head of the Zion Temple, replaced the retiring Kolini as the new head of the PEACE Plan (Turikumwe 2013).

The guest of honour was Dr Pierre Damien Habumuremyi, the Prime Minister of Rwanda. Frank told me that Kagame himself had been invited but pulled out at the last minute. “*Yesu ashimwe!*” (Praise Jesus!), Habumuremyi declared, using the standard Pentecostal greeting when he took his place behind the podium, much to the crowd’s delight.⁶⁸ Habumuremyi delivered a message from Kagame. The president, he said, “will use all the power God gave him to continue bringing together all Rwandans” (*azakoresha imbaraga zose Imana yamuhaye akomeza guhuza Abanyarwanda*).⁶⁹ Habumuremyi had his own message for the crowd. “Rwandans have now woken up and are indeed committed to building their nation,” he asserted. “We have a reason to thank God, He no longer only spends daytime and sleeps in Rwanda like they used to say, God is always in Rwanda day and night” (Kaitezi 2012). Rwandans, he said, have many reasons to thank God, especially because of *agaciro*, referring both to the Rwandan cultural concept of *agaciro* – dignity or self-respect – and the government programme of the Agaciro Development Fund.

By aligning the country’s development and reconstruction with the will of God, the religious leaders and politicians who spoke at Rwanda Thanksgiving Day implicitly offered spiritual legitimacy to Kagame’s regime. In this respect, they echoed Warren’s prayer discussed above. It was under the guidance of Kagame and the RPF, after all, that Rwanda’s “miraculous” recovery became possible. By connecting God with the RPF state, power became divinely inflected, recalling the pre-colonial dynastic kingdoms wherein the *mwami* (king) was understood as “the source and symbol of all authority” (Dorsey 1994:7)

⁶⁸ The correct response to this is, “*Ahimbazwe*” (He answers).

⁶⁹ This phrase was live tweeted via the official Rwanda Thanksgiving Day Twitter account, Rwanda Thanksgiving @RwandaShima.

and “the eye through which God look[ed] upon Ruanda” (Webster 1966:1).⁷⁰ Indeed, not only did the pre-colonial Nyiginya kingdoms have their own ritual specialists, the *abiru*, as we saw in Chapter 1, they at times incorporated potentially threatening spiritual elements into their fold. In the mid-18th century under the reign of Cyilima Rujugira, for example, when the possession cult of Ryangombe gained in popularity, the court appointed its own “official celebrant” of the cult, thus neutralising what could have become a “focus for alternative loyalties to the state” (David Newbury 2011c). If the state was concerned with the growing popularity of the *abarokore* churches and their mainline Protestant allies, then publicly embracing them was a shrewd political move to appropriate their power. It was also a way to create a sharp moral dichotomy: Kagame’s rule stood for “all the things that are good” and any opposition to it therefore emanated from the devil (Phiri 2003).

We can see here clear resonances between the Protestant-RPF axis and that formed between the Catholic Church and the Kayibanda and Habyarimana regimes (Van Hoyweghen 1996; Taylor 2004). Under Habyarimana, the mainline churches, particularly the Catholic Church, “openly supported state goals and praised state achievements”, while the regime itself looked to the churches for “legitimacy” and popular support (Longman 2010:91). In this way, the mainline churches “helped to maintain order, integrating the population into the social system and teaching obedience to authority” (Longman 2010:91). We can identify a very similar dynamic with the RPF state and the Protestant churches, despite the fact that the RPF has staked its own political legitimacy upon its supposed “break” with the former regimes.

⁷⁰ Kagame, of course, would bristle at the suggestion. When journalist William Wallis suggested that Rwanda’s leadership could be compared to that of Bahrain, where a Sunni minority rules over a majority Shia population, Kagame pointed out that he was not a monarch but an elected official and declared, “Somebody who makes that comparison, I will just say is ignorant” (Wallis 2011).

Despite this disquieting historical continuity, PEACE Plan officials proclaimed the inaugural Rwanda Thanksgiving Day an overwhelming success. A 2013 country report on Rwanda made the following pronouncement:

The relationship between the government and the church that has been established and reinforced by The PEACE Plan will continue to be an important element that weaves the country of Rwanda together. As Shima Imana continues to be celebrated for decades to come, Rwandans will participate in this newfound tradition of national unity and gratitude for the country's destiny of restoration, greatness, and purpose. (PEACE Plan 2013)

Yet, as I discuss below, the Rwandan public took an altogether different message away from the event. A heated dispute between Pentecostal leader Apostle Paul Gitwaza and Catholic singer Kizito Mihigo revealed the fractious nature of the country's religious landscape, despite outward claims of unity.

“Gitwaza, Mihigo Kizito disagree on God’s mercy”⁷¹

As I outlined briefly in the opening paragraph, the spat between Gitwaza and Mihigo centred on the interpretation of one of Mihigo's songs. Mihigo, we will remember, was the only Catholic involved in the proceedings. When he arrived on stage to perform the song “Arc-en- ciel” (Rainbow), he first made a few comments about the song's meaning. Since the song was composed mainly in French, Mihigo told me after the event that he had wanted to make sure that everyone in the audience understood it in the “right” way. He was worried, in fact, that some listeners would assume that the rainbow he referred to was Kagame, and that he had written the song to praise the president. This interpretation would not have been surprising given the close relationship Mihigo had at the time with Kagame and the RPF. Not only was Mihigo sent to study music in Europe through the personal

⁷¹ This is the title of the article about the dispute from the English version of the popular website, Igihe.com (IGIHE Reporter 2012). In my discussion of the event I cross-checked Kinyarwanda quotes from Mihigo and Gitwaza via a Kinyarwanda article on the Kinyarwanda version of IGIHE.com (IGIHE 2012).

intervention of Kagame, his very public promotion of unity and reconciliation – particularly through the non-profit organisation he founded in 2010, Kizito Mihigo for Peace (KMP) Foundation, which holds concerts and artistic events in secondary schools and prisons around the country – has often led to criticisms that some of his songs are RPF propaganda. Indeed, although Mihigo started out as a Catholic liturgical singer and composer, more recently he has composed and performed songs that have supported particular government programmes and policies.⁷² Yet, as I discuss in the Conclusion, this close relationship broke down when Mihigo released a controversial song for the 20th anniversary of the genocide and was imprisoned, much to the shock of the Rwandan public.

In order to prevent any confusion about the song’s meaning and intention, Mihigo explained that “Arc-en-ciel” was about God’s mercy. “In the Old Testament, before Jesus, the Bible clearly shows that sometimes God can be extremely angry such that he kills his people”, Mihigo told the audience. He then gave a number of Biblical examples to support his claim. In Genesis 6, God sent a flood that killed everyone except Noah and his family; in Exodus 11, God decreed that every firstborn in Egypt should be killed because the Egyptians had refused to let the Israelites go; and, in Exodus 14, God parted the Red Sea for the Israelites but then drowned the Egyptian soldiers who had pursued them.

Yet after such destruction, Mihigo continued, God showed His mercy. After the flood, God sent a rainbow to Noah. In Mihigo’s interpretation, the rainbow had been “a sign that He [God] was going to be more forgiving of people” (*ikimenyetso cy’uko igiye kuzajya ibabarira abantu*) and illustrated God’s desire “to be a merciful God rather than an

⁷² “Agaciro k’Abanyarwanda” (“The dignity of Rwandans”), for example, encourages Rwandans to donate to the Agaciro Development Fund; “Turi abana b’u Rwanda” (“We are children of Rwanda”), is dedicated to the Rwandan diaspora and invites them to return home; and “Intare Yampaye Agaciro” (“The lion gave dignity”) was composed for the 25th anniversary of the RPF in December 2012.

angry God” (*Imana Nyirimbabazi mbere yo kuba Imana Nyiruburakari*) (IGIHE 2012).

This mercy was manifested most clearly in Jesus, who had suffered on the cross but was then resurrected for the salvation of all mankind. “In this way”, Mihigo told the crowd at Amahoro Stadium, “Jesus is the extraordinary rainbow, He is the one I’m going to sing about so that He visits Rwanda and gives us forgiveness and peace”. He then performed the song, which was mostly composed in French, with verses three and five in Kinyarwanda.

For brevity’s sake, I reproduce only the chorus and verses three and five:

Chorus

*Rainbow, sign of hope
Rainbow, a call to unity
Rainbow, come visit Rwanda
Bring us forgiveness and peace
Rainbow, come visit Rwanda
Bring us love and unity*

Verse 3

*Come, Lord Jesus teach us to love you
So that we could also love each other as brothers
Teach us to forgive
You will be the pillar of our life
Teach us to forgive
You will be the pillar of our life*

Verse 5

*Our reason to love Rwanda
is that our country has a testimony
A testimony that tells all of humanity
that love does not die
A testimony that tells the whole world
that unity is possible*

After Mihigo’s performance, Gitwaza, the master of ceremonies, took a moment to comment on Mihigo’s explanation of the song. “I would like to first correct Kizito Mihigo regarding what he said about God having killed people”, Gitwaza began. “God never kills His people, in fact, it’s Satan who kills them. When killing occurs, Satan is the one who

kills, not God”. Gitwaza then went on, as we saw above, to instruct the audience not to “blame” Mihigo for his comments as he was neither a pastor nor a priest.

When Mihigo returned to the stage later in the afternoon to perform another song, he responded to Gitwaza’s remarks. “Brother Gitwaza”, he said, “it seems that you did not understand what I said. I did not say that God is mean, on the contrary, I said that the side of him that is of peace and love became much more evident when Jesus arrived”. He continued, “At an event like this that brings together people from different beliefs, there ought not to be a person coming across as a teacher correcting everyone, because it would be like trying to bring us into his church”. “Me, I’m an artist from the Catholic Church, but I joined with you because I like the values of unity”, he concluded.

The controversy

In the days following Rwanda Thanksgiving Day, the event received an enormous amount of attention in the Kinyarwanda-language media. An article about the Mihigo-Gitwaza spat was reportedly the most viewed article in the past three years on the website Igihe.com, the country’s most read website (IGIHE 2012). More than 700 readers left comments. Public reaction was divided. On the one hand, some Rwandans thought that Gitwaza had crossed the line by correcting Mihigo in such a public manner. Why, they asked, did Gitwaza, a self-proclaimed “apostle”, think he was the sole authority on the Bible? “You told him for me” (*yaramumbwiriye*), some encouraged Mihigo. Supporters of Gitwaza countered that Mihigo should not have contradicted him. As his spiritual elder, Gitwaza had only been trying to help Mihigo (*yamufashije*) and, in his own way, to make sure the audience did not leave with the “wrong” interpretation.

The incident revealed the contested nature of the spiritual landscape in Rwanda, despite the PEACE Plan's attempts to erect a united front. To non-Pentecostal believers in the audience, the fact that Habumuremyi had greeted the crowd as a Pentecostal suggested an uncomfortable alliance between the state and the new Pentecostal churches. Catholics greeted each other with “*Yezu akuzwe*” (Jesus is forever) – to which the proper response is “*Iteka*” (Forever) – and by adopting the new Pentecostal salutation, many felt that Habumuremyi, in his role as the representative of Rwanda's highest office, was implicitly excluding non-Pentecostals from the community he was addressing. In addition to introducing new salutations, the Pentecostal churches have also created new terms and phrases to define the boundaries of their faith. Anyone who is not Pentecostal is referred to as “*ntwabwo arakizwa*”, meaning he or she is not saved. In this terminology, only Pentecostals – *abarokore*, after all, means the saved ones – are saved, and anyone else, from Catholics, mainline Protestants, to Muslims, are pagans (*abapagani*). Indeed, the new *abarokore* churches have been accused of “killing” (*kwica*) Kinyarwanda via a “slow painful death” (*urubozo*) as the new churches have introduced grammatically incorrect terms and phrases and “Kinyarwandicised” foreign words (Shaba 2014). Perhaps the most trivial – yet most revealing – difference is the fact that *abarokore* refer to Jesus as “*Yesu*”, while Catholics refer to Him as “*Yezu*”. To many non-*abarokore* Rwandans, these introductions were pointless and ridiculous, only further demonstrating the arrogance and foreignness of the *abarokore*.

Mihigo's comments suggested a more nuanced understanding of good and evil, one that did not set up a strict dichotomy – Satan kills, God does not – but rather introduced a way of looking at the world that saw good and evil as intimately connected, no matter how

absolute the evil. This understanding, I suggest, reflects Mihigo's own experience of the genocide and his long journey towards peace and forgiveness, a testimony he often shared through his KMP Foundation. Mihigo's father was killed during the genocide by the father of his best friend. After many years of reflection, Mihigo eventually decided to forgive his childhood friend, tracking her down and sharing a meal with her. This process taught Mihigo that Rwandans had been given a particularly powerful testimony of peace and reconciliation; because they had suffered through and survived the genocide, they knew first-hand what it was like to live without mercy and forgiveness. On a spiritual level, this embodied knowledge helped them to better comprehend the mission of Christ. As he told me, "the person who has suffered the most, who has endured hate much more than others, it's he who can testify about love the most". This suffering created not only a greater love of God, but also of country. As the lyrics in verse five of "Arc-en-ciel" declare, "Our reason to love Rwanda is that our country has a testimony".

To Mihigo, Rwandans who had grown up outside of the country – like Gitwaza, who had grown up in the eastern Congo – could never fully comprehend the cataclysm and complete destruction of the genocide.⁷³ While the genocide may have been an absolute evil, it also, paradoxically, allowed for the possibility of new "fruits", as Mihigo called them, to be born. This is what Mihigo had been getting at with his explanation of "Arc-en-ciel". After the flood, there had been a rainbow. Only those who had directly witnessed and lived through the destruction caused by the flood could understand and testify to both the nature

⁷³ Elsewhere, Zoë Norridge (2009) has written how Yolande Mukagasana's own status as survivor allowed her to identify with the survivors she interviewed for her collaborative photography and testimony project, *Les Blessures du silence*. Mukagasana, Norridge tells us, "identifies with others who suffer by drawing on her own tormented past, beginning her exploration of the world through her personal knowledge of pain" (2009:142). This suffering in turn "gives her the authority to draw others out and comment on their actions" (2009:142).

of destruction *and* rebirth, evil *and* peace. The two went hand in hand. To frame it in Christian terms, Mihigo considered the genocide “the cross of Rwanda” that, although a symbol of unimaginable suffering, was also, paradoxically, that which allows for resurrection and, in some cases, new hope and possibility. Here we can see Mihigo’s interpretation as a creative spiritual act, one that helps, as Nordstrom has said of the importance of imagination and creativity in post-conflict contexts, to “make the present liveable” (Nordstrom 1995:147) again. In a similar way, McNeill, writing on the AIDS pandemic in South Africa and a more general post-apartheid context of emergency, argues that crisis “can also appear in the guise of – and be converted into – opportunity, through engagement in a series of material and symbolic entrepreneurial activities” (2011:233).

Of “fruits” and too difficult breaks

Mihigo was not the only one who found comfort in focusing on the “fruits” made possible by the genocide. To make clear what was at stake in this battle over spiritual meaning, I consider here two testimonies from women who were genocide-rape survivors and who did not convert to the new *abarokore* churches.

Bernadette had been subjected to extreme forms of sexual violence during the genocide. In one of our conversations she told me that before the genocide her husband had often warned her that he was going to die, correctly – and tragically – reading the tense political climate at the time. Bernadette’s biggest fear was to be widowed. She had vowed to herself that if her husband died, she would hang herself. When the genocide occurred, her husband and many of her family members were killed. She was repeatedly gang raped and eventually gave birth to a child born of rape. Although her fear was realised and she became a widow, there was a crucial difference: the genocide had made many women

around her widows as well. In this way, she explained to me that the genocide was “kind of positive” for her. Paradoxically, death – in particular, the systematic killing of men as husbands and fathers – had given her life and a new community founded on the mutual experience of loss. “If it [becoming a widow] had happened to me alone”, she told me, “I would have hung myself”.

This was an incredibly complex, poignant, and paradoxical understanding of the genocide and God’s mercy. Bernadette, who was born Catholic but converted to ADEPR, the “old” Pentecostal church in the country, after the genocide, found solace in the fact that God had at once taken away everything, but remained with her. She had lost her husband and her family, but she was not alone in her suffering; she had left the Catholic faith, but other ADEPR members became new family members. As we saw in Chapter 2, the fact that the vast majority of the new Pentecostal churches were founded by returnees severely limited their ability not only to minister to Rwandans who had been born and raised in the country, Hutu and Tutsi alike, but also to help rebuild the country and contribute to reconciliation. While young Pentecostal pastors could appeal to Rwandan youth, it also meant that they lacked the embodied experience of the genocide and the burden that accompanied this knowledge. Instead, they had to rely on promising their followers miracles and earthly rewards, either in the form of material wealth – “everything is double-double”, as the popular Pentecostal song went – or in the form of finding a husband or wife.

Similarly, Angelique, another genocide-rape survivor who had kept her child born of rape, also had not converted. Angelique, who was also HIV positive, had been raised Catholic and remained so, even though she had sought refuge in a Catholic church during the genocide and it had become a massacre site; everyone around her had been killed.

Despite this, Angelique told me that she remained Catholic and could never convert to one of the new denominations. The main reason for this was because of Mary, the woman who had given birth to Jesus. Although Protestants, particularly Pentecostals, tried to claim that Mary was just an ordinary woman, Angelique rejected their interpretation; to her Mary was a “special” and “extraordinary” woman and, as such, an extremely important source of comfort and hope. Even though Angelique had lost faith in the Catholic Church as an institution and no longer attended mass, her relationship with Mary – and the possibility of *female* mediation she offered – was central to her ability to cope with the losses of the past and the insecurities of her present and future. Angelique had survived unimaginable sexual violence both during the genocide and its aftermath. Mary’s very femininity – although she was “special”, she had lived on this earth as a woman – was integral to the intimacy of the relationship Angelique was able to feel and maintain towards her. While she could no longer trust Catholic priests or bishops, she could trust Mary. This relationship of proximity, understanding, and love – one that Pentecostal conversion would have required her to sever – was not something she was willing to give up.

For many Rwandans, in other words, the “rupture” that Pentecostal conversion demanded in one’s spiritual world was ultimately too great.

“Genocidal discourse” and controlling spiritual meaning

If the new Pentecostal churches tried to draw interpretative boundaries around the spiritual meaning of the genocide, so too did the Rwandan state. The view espoused by Mihigo – and then “corrected” by Gitwaza – that God’s mercy and, by extension, the country’s past, was more grey than black-and-white, and that, paradoxically, “fruits” could be born from absolute evil, was highly controversial. Not only did it spark heated debate after Rwanda

Thanksgiving Day, as we saw, it was also targeted as a type of reasoning associated with “genocidal discourse” in a 2011 report issued by the Media High Council, the government body that controls and regulates Rwanda’s media. The document, entitled “Appropriate journalistic language in relation to Genocide against Tutsis in Rwanda: Key Guidelines” (Uwimana, Mfurankunda, and Mbungiramihigo 2011), was an attempt to control the language journalists are allowed to use when speaking about the genocide and Rwanda’s past more broadly. One of the examples that the report highlighted was an interview given by a pastor on a radio programme broadcast on Voice of Hope for the commemoration period of April 2010. Articulating views very similar to Mihigo’s, the pastor spoke about burying loved ones who had died during the genocide. He told listeners that when burying their loved ones, they should remember that “there is a specific kind of blessing after the genocide” (Uwimana, Mfurankunda, and Mbungiramihigo 2011:28). The pastor went on to explain that God did not take one’s loved ones as bones but rather gave them new bodies that will never perish (Uwimana, Mfurankunda, and Mbungiramihigo 2011:28).

The report’s writers, however, did not agree with the pastor’s interpretation. “This might be part of encouraging and soothing discourse for believers”, they wrote, “but for non believers this might sound a form of disrespect for one’s relatives that were murdered during the Genocide” (Uwimana, Mfurankunda, and Mbungiramihigo 2011:28). Indeed, the report tells us that when speaking of remembering lost loved ones the phrase *kuzura akaboze* (“to resurrect those who have perished”) is not to be used. *Kuzura*, with its religious associations – one would use the word to describe how Jesus resurrected Lazarus (*Yezu yazuye Lazaro*), for example – goes against the state’s attempts to construct the genocide as a secular political event (see Chapter 2). Instead, one is instructed to say, “to

commemorate our loved ones lost in the genocide against the Tutsis” (*kwibuka abacu bazize Jenoside yakorewe Abatutsi*). One is not to refer to the remains of the dead as “bones” (*amagufa*) but rather “the bodies of those who died in the genocide against the Tutsi” (*imbiri y’abazize jenoside yakorewe abatutsi*). One buries these lost loved ones not in a “cemetery” (*amarimbi*) but in a “genocide memorial” (*inzibutso za Jenoside*). In this way, even the bodies of the dead become politicised; they gain meaning through their relationship to official state doctrine and spaces.

Although the report was ostensibly an effort to control language use and prevent genocide negationism, here we see that it was also indirectly an attempt by the state to control spiritual interpretation. A similar logic was at work, I suggest, with Gitwaza’s comments and his “correction” of Mihigo. Why, we might ask, is it dangerous for survivors to claim that “fruits” can come after the genocide, for pastors to argue that it also allowed for “a specific kind of blessing”? I suggest that both the new Pentecostal churches and the state attempt to control how the genocide is understood and interpreted not to create unity and reconciliation but rather to legitimise and shore up their own claims to power. If genocidal discourse was not a constant threat, then the state would have no reason to police freedom of speech or severely limit political opposition; if the Catholic Church and the mainline churches were not universally responsible for the genocide, then Pentecostal churches would have no moral high ground and their claims to offer believers something “new” would be less convincing.

To new Pentecostals, however, the fact that Rwanda’s religious field was more open, that more spiritual options were available to believers, was a positive development. As Frank, the PEACE Plan representative told me:

In Rwanda, we haven't reached a saturation of churches, so we need as many churches as we can to evangelise the whole Rwanda and to reach out to every Rwandan. It takes all sorts of churches to reach out to all sorts of people... But at the end of the day what matters most is are they going to church? Number two, are they getting the right message? Number three, are they transformed? Is any transformation happening in their lives? If those are not happening, then there's a problem.

Yet the proliferation of new churches also implied the proliferation of new assertions of moral authority and claims that one's church was the sole purveyor of the "right" message. As a Muslim leader confided in me, "I can anticipate having a problem of religions in this country... Because everybody claims to be the right one, and everybody is just campaigning to get followers from the same 10 million [Rwanda's population]". Indeed, a 2010 study by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life found that 58% of Rwandans thought that religious conflict was a "very big problem" in the country.⁷⁴ How, in the end, could one measure "transformation", often referred to with the Kinyarwanda verb *guhindura*, to change? If the intended goal of the PEACE Plan and Rwanda Thanksgiving Day was to change the "mindset" of Rwandans, as Frank had told me earlier, how was it possible to know if this transformation had succeeded? This, I suggest, was perhaps the most pressing question faced by all religious institutions in the country. How could they be absolutely certain that their message was the "right" one and, more worrying still, that it was being interpreted as they intended it to be?

This fear of ambiguity was present both in Mihigo's attempt to explain his song "Arc-en-ciel" to the audience at Rwanda Thanksgiving Day and in Gitwaza's attempt to correct him. Rather than clarifying their respective messages, however, their interventions introduced new ambiguities that incited new debates about the meaning of God's mercy and the role of both the new churches and the Catholic Church in the future.

⁷⁴ <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2010/04/sub-saharan-africa-full-report.pdf>

Regulating registration: “Spreading the good gospel of the government”

Rwanda Thanksgiving Day revealed the close relationship between the new *abarokore* churches and the RPF. While the new churches required the RPF’s blessing to operate in the country, the RPF required spiritual legitimacy from the new churches as it could no longer rely on the Catholic Church for this function. Yet although the RPF had allowed for the “mushrooming” of the new Pentecostal churches after the genocide as a way to counter the hegemony of the Catholic Church, by 2012 it sought to establish tighter control. In February 2012 a new law was passed (N°06/2012) requiring all “religious-based organisation” (RBO) to legally register with the government. In order to do so, each RBO now had to have its own “statutes” that included its name; mission, activities, and beneficiaries; organisation structure and duties of each unit; criteria for leadership and loss of it; administration and financial audit organs; organ and mechanisms for conflict resolution; and property disposal mechanism.⁷⁵ The Rwanda section of the 2012 Report on International Religious Freedom by the U.S. State Department claimed that the new law “imposes, and government policy exacerbates, burdensome registration requirements, as well as time-consuming requirements for annual financial and activity reports and action plans”.⁷⁶ The report concludes it ultimately diminishes the separation between church and state, and that government practices “discourag[e] religious groups from dissenting from national policies and programs”.⁷⁷

When I talked to an official from RGB, he claimed that the new law had been formulated to protect religious freedom. “If I look at the law, it is the only law which can

⁷⁵ http://www.rgb.rw/spip.php?page=rubrique&id_rubrique=18

⁷⁶ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2012/af/208184.htm>

⁷⁷ Ibid.

support the churches to grow”, he told me. “But at the same time, to minimise the conflicts within the church”. Indeed, a leadership dispute within ADEPR in September 2012 – mere weeks after Rwanda, *Shima Imana!* – had caused the RGB to dismiss the church’s executive committee and order all ADEPR pastors to attend a “government-sponsored, organization-specific civic education retreat that included national history lessons, reconciliation sessions, and other topics” (United States Department of State 2013). Although the RGB official claimed that the new law helped guarantee the separation between church and state, his comments to me suggested a much more intimate relationship. “Nobody can say no to the fact that within the church or within the mosque is the right place to spread a good gospel of the government”, he said. “On Friday without any invitation, all mosques in the country are full. On Saturday, all churches of Seventh-Day Adventists, they are full. On Sunday, Catholics and Protestants, they are full. But now call them as a president or as a minister – they’ll never come... So now in Africa, you can’t say no to a limited type of working together with the government. It has to be there”.

It is also worth noting that Rwanda Thanksgiving Day was not the only event demonstrating the close link between the Protestant churches and the state. Since 1995, Protestant and Pentecostal pastors have held a Prayer Breakfast for prominent politicians. The initiative was inspired by a meeting between church leaders and Desmond Tutu at the Hôtel des Mille Collines in Kigali in July 1995. Afterwards a handful of participants – including Antoine Rutayisire, a well-respected Anglican pastor, Charles Muriganda, the adviser to the Office of the President, and Gideon Rudahunga, the chief of protocol in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – decided to continue holding the event. A pastor who was involved in organising the Prayer Breakfasts explained their genesis to me in this way:

We said, why don't we just keep on organising something like this on a regular basis so...we get an opportunity, number one, to pray for the country, number two, to gather with the leadership and talk about leadership from a biblical perspective, then, number three, see how we can spread the Christian values in leadership positions?

While national Prayer Breakfasts are held once a year in countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States, in Rwanda they take place every second Sunday of the month, and usually attract anywhere from 100 to 300 people. Top officials in the government, from permanent secretaries to ministers to members of parliament and the senate, are invited, as well as leaders in the army, police, and Christian organisations. Just as the government relies on the churches to disseminate its vision, so too do the churches attempt to influence the country's leadership to see the world through a Biblical perspective. Significantly, the Catholic Church does not participate. As one Catholic bishop told me: "Prayer Breakfast is something new that has not entered into our structures. On Sunday, according to us, you go to church to pray. Now on Sunday to go to a hotel or restaurant, it's more of a meeting. It can be some good form of meeting people perhaps who would not go to church".

Conclusion

Drawing on fieldwork in Soweto, Ashforth has defined "spiritual insecurity" as "the condition of danger, doubt, and fear arising from exposure to the action of unseen forces bent upon causing harm" (1998:41). While various kinds of "interpretative authorities" claim to possess the truth about these invisible forces, none can ultimately "impose a generalized hegemony of interpretation" (1998:41). We can read Gitwaza's correction of Mihigo and the RPF's regulation of new religious groups as anxious attempts to position the *abarokore* and the state as the ultimate "interpretative authorities" within contemporary Rwanda today.

Similarly, Marshall has argued that the “political effects” of born-again spirituality are ultimately ambivalent (2009:3). Although the born-again ethic, in Marshall’s eyes, is ultimately a matter of Foucauldian subjectivation, or the “forms of relationship that the self elaborates with the self”, its concern with revelation and the miraculous suggest “a fundamental instability in the effectiveness of techniques of the self, and underlines the inherent difficulty in creating orthodoxy, institutionalized authority, and, indeed, any form of political community” (2009:13). In fact, Marshall suggests that the “radical uncertainty” of postcolonial Nigeria is not alleviated by Pentecostal practice but rather “appears increasingly exacerbated by it” (2009:13). While in theory Pentecostalism celebrates “democratic access to personal spiritual power”— anyone, after all, can declare herself pastor if sufficiently moved by the Holy Spirit – Marshall argues that “[t]he bid to stabilize pastoral authority and the perpetual engagement with the figure of the demonic shows the antidemocratic side of the Pentecostal political engagement” (2009:14). “Underlying the bid to convert the other”, she writes, “is the need to *convict* and *overcome* him, to identify within him the demonic that needs to be destroyed for salvation and redemption to occur” (2009:14).

This “antidemocratic” side of Pentecostalism was revealed at Rwanda Thanksgiving Day. While transnational evangelical networks are highly visible on the country’s charismatic Christian scene, these engagements are played out on the RPF’s terms, and spiritual leaders, both local and foreign, offer spiritual legitimacy to Kagame’s regime. Ironically, at an event that was supposed to demonstrate the unity of the churches, a disagreement about God’s mercy revealed the fractious nature of Rwanda’s religious landscape. The controversy over the Gitwaza-Mihigo spat suggested that many Rwandans

who had been born and raised in the country, the so-called *abasope*, were uneasy about the new Pentecostal churches' claims of spiritual authority and, by extension, the spiritually legitimised authority of the RPF. We can see, in fact, how the black-and-white approach to morality espoused by the new churches – Satan kills, God saves – mimicked the political ideology of the RPF: it alone had brought “good” governance to a country once ruled by corruption and ethnic politics. Just as the RPF constructs itself as the sole purveyor of historical truth (see Chapter 1), so too do the *abarokore* pastors equally position themselves as the true mediators of biblical truth.

To conclude I suggest that although recent scholarship has emphasised the creativity and potentiality of healing in Pentecostal practice – Shaw, as we saw, has written eloquently about how Pentecostal practice allows displaced Sierra Leonean youth to transform “demonic memory into Pentecostal memory” (2007b:89) – we must also be attendant to the boundaries and limits imposed upon the “saved”. While the recent boom of Pentecostalism in Africa can be attributed in part to its less formal, more “live and direct” (Engelke 2007) worship style, one of the ways it creates community is through negation and exclusion – it is equally about what one is not supposed to believe, what one is not supposed to say, and how one is not supposed to act. As much as Pentecostal practice provides a “relinguaging” or a “renarration”, allowing believers to reshape their past to create a “meaningful present” (Shaw 2007b:68), these new languages and narrative techniques are neither neutral nor all-inclusive; they offer very particular vocabularies that exclude others and divergent interpretations. Especially in post-conflict contexts, we must pay particular attention to the *negative* aspects of Pentecostal practice, about who it excludes and why, and how these exclusions are performed. Equally important, however, is

to examine how other Christians work to overcome these divisions, and create new communities often based, paradoxically, on the *generative* experience of loss.

PART 2: Quiet Insecurity and Popular Culture

Chapter 5

Starting from zero: The birth of the “modern” music industry

In the previous chapters I explored how the *abarokore* churches offered young Rwandans new ways of understanding their past, present, and future within a context of quiet insecurity. For some, conversion reanimated their affective selves and provided them with powerful new roles as intercessors or church worship leaders. For others, conversion demanded a violent “rupture” with spiritual mediators that they were ultimately unprepared to make. While some young *abarokore* women became “bold” through Pentecostal practice, others were ostracized when they did not follow pastoral advice. More worryingly, despite their claims to minister to all Rwandans, many *abarokore* churches quietly introduced new ethnic dimensions to religious practice. Their mono-ethnic congregations implicitly suggested that salvation was only available to certain groups, and the very public attempts by *abarokore* pastors to dominate the country’s public culture alienated so-called “pagans” who did not share their views on God’s mercy. The country’s religious field, in other words, was deeply divided, belying a supposedly harmonious façade. While many Rwandans did want to thank God (*gushima Imana*), this did not mean they wanted to thank Him in the same manner or, indeed, for the same reasons.

The *abarokore* churches, however, were not the only space in which young Rwandans made and remade their life-worlds under quiet insecurity. The burgeoning music industry, which had started to take off in the mid-2000s, was also an important way for them to navigate the complexities of post-genocide life. It offered alternative forms of “being” Rwandan than those imposed by the state. The second half of my thesis thus focuses on popular culture. I ask: what can popular culture tell us about young peoples’

everyday lives under quiet insecurity? How does it stray into the “unofficial”? At what moments and in which ways does it converge with and diverge from the religious and the political? What are the moral economies and “timescapes” (Otto 2013) involved? What new forms of femininity and masculinity are at stake? These are the questions that I take up in the second half of my thesis.

Before I can explore how the music industry was reconstructed after the genocide, however, I must first provide a brief historical sketch of Rwanda’s musical past. In this chapter I examine “traditional” and popular forms over the *longue durée* of Rwandan history, paying particular attention to the various ways that music has been inextricably linked to politics and power. In Rwanda’s past music has helped to produce and shore up power, yet it has also served to undermine and challenge it. In the post-genocide period young people attempt to both “rupture” with and repurpose this inherited musical past in order to address the struggles they face in their everyday lives. In the first half of the chapter I consider music and art forms from old Rwanda up to the genocide. In the second half I consider how young people started music again after 1994.

Traditional Rwandan music

Although the government claims that Rwanda has always had “one culture”, this unified cultural past begins to break down when we consider music and dance. Under the Nyiginya dynasty, highly refined oral art forms were cultivated amongst the Tutsi elite. In Chapter 1 I made reference to the secretive *abiru* poems. To this we can add the genres of *ibisigo* (dynastic poetry), *amahamba* (pastoral songs in the style of warrior poems), and *ibihozo* (lullabies). The ability to express oneself with ease and mastery was considered the defining characteristic of the elite, and this appreciation for “le beau mot” applied equally

to *ibihozo* and the historical narratives performed with *inanga* (Gansemans 1988:26). As Newbury has pointed out, “The exquisite subtlety of Kinyarwanda and the cultural value placed on its manipulation, from poetry to politics, lent themselves to the same end: at the court, the artistry of words was part of the craft of power” (2011a:xxxvi). The Court was the heart of musical and artistic life. Eminent musicians were invited to stay for temporary residencies, and the Court maintained its own group of drummers and *intore* dancers (Gansemans 1988:27).

The existence of these various genres was not “natural” but rather the product of a hierarchical social structure. Barber argues that these texts were the “bearers of social relations”, forming “a significant and central mechanism by which those relations were established and maintained” (2007:65). It was through Hutu labour, after all, that aristocratic Tutsi could develop these art forms, many of which required specialised knowledge to decipher. *Ibisigo*, dynastic poetry, is a case in point. The texts reportedly had their origins in the 16th century or earlier, and were composed by “hereditary bards” tasked with no other courtly duty but to memorise, perform, and transmit them (Barber 2007:61). Although these texts could be taught to anyone who wanted to learn, in practice this was no easy feat as they were deliberately composed to “veil” the meaning until it all but disappeared. If “dangerous” (Barber 2007:62) messages were to be conveyed, the referents were not mentioned directly but rather camouflaged by complex linguistic acrobatics that took the form of puns, allusions, and “lateral associations” (Barber 2007:62). When young Tutsi boys attended *itorero*, military and cultural training camps, they learned various forms of speech styles, dances, and poetic genres. The aim behind this artistic instruction was to make them “inaccessible to the vulgar majority” (Barber 2007:59). The verbal art

forms cultivated by the elite ultimately worked to “consolidate the Mwami’s power and to elaborate the aristocracy’s privileged aura, both amongst themselves and in their dealings with Hutu clients” (Barber 2007:59).

Circulating alongside these courtly genres, however, were more popular forms associated with Hutu. Popular music, Gansemans tells us, was defined by its narrative and entertaining character (1988:27). It was performed by small groups during evening gatherings such as *inkera* and *ibitaramo*, in addition to during marriage parties. (In the post-genocide period concerts of all stripes – from R&B to hip hop – are referred to as *ibitaramo*.) Songs were accompanied by musical instruments such as the *ikembe* (lamellaphone), *umuduri* (musical bow), *iningidi* (fiddle), and *inanga*, and described everyday life in tones that ranged from the satirical and humorous to the melancholic (Gansemans 1988:27). Songs were accompanied by dances such as the *imbyino*, *ikinyemera*, and the *imparamba* (Gansemans 1988:15).

While the Court formed the “ideational centre” (Barber 2007:64) of the kingdom and its mark could be discerned even in stories circulating in peripheral areas, its cultural productions did not exist in a vacuum. Although *ibitekerezo* (historical narratives), for example, were “edited, polished and transmitted by official royal historians”, they were often picked up and performed by non-elite serving at the royal court (Barber 2007:65). *Imigani* (proverbs), were another important popular genre and were “freely improvised by everyone” regardless of ethnicity, gender, or age (Barber 2007:64). Barber describes a two-way process wherein the artistic forms of the elite influenced yet were also influenced by popular forms. In this way, although traditional forms were “bearers of social relations”, as we saw, this did not mean that these relations were “water-tight” (Barber 2007:65).

Despite the government's attempts to create a unified *banyarwanda* identity, many Rwandans I spoke to during my fieldwork emphasized that distinct forms of music and dance were associated with different regions and, implicitly, with different ethnic groups. While slower, more melodic music and dance was associated with the south and therefore with Tutsi pastoralists, faster, more vigorous rhythms were associated with the north and Hutu agriculturalists. Twa, hunters and potters, were considered to be gifted singers and dancers and were renowned for their polyphonic melodies, despite their marginalized social status (Lewis and Knight 1995; Lewis 2000). Cécile Kayirebwa, considered the undisputed “queen” of traditional Rwandan music (*umwamikazi wa muzika nyarwanda*), offered this description:

Rwandan culture is one... All the same, according to the regions, there are specificities. Buganza [in the east] has songs having to do with cows, what we call *ibintu z'inka*, and pastoral poetry... And in the south as well, in Nyaruguru, where cows are [also] of principal importance in the region. They don't sing like in the north where their work is principally by the hoe. There, the songs are about harvest – it goes with the life of the people... And even the dance of the north is energetic, it's jumping, it's stamping the ground. But you will see in the songs of the cows, it's the arms, it's the body, it's the head, all of that, and very little with the feet. It's really the body that moves... You will hear a lot of flute because shepherds at night played flutes and responded [to each other] from hill to hill.

Mighty Popo, a traditional Rwandan musician in his early 40s who had grown up in the diaspora but returned to Rwanda to study music with the Twa, echoed these sentiments.

As he told me:

There are three traditions: pastoral, cultivators, and hunter-gatherers. History, blah, blah, blah [chuckles]. But that's so true. You had the music – everything goes with the land and what the activities were. The pastoral melodies were sung by the Tutsis and [were about] their cows. That's pretty much what Tutsi music was: about cows. And the [Tutsi] dance, when you see all that stuff – it's cows and long horns. If you travel the regions you'll see [the musical differences]. When you border the Congo, most of the rhythms are Congolese, it's like 4/4. When you get to the Batwa, now you get into the polyphony, the 5/4s. Most of the Tutsi [music], it's long melodies, mostly in 3/4s.

Popo's own music attempted to "tap into" and modernise these varied musical traditions.

"Sometimes I'll mix them", he told me.

I'll take a typical, what I can consider to be truly borderline music between Rwanda and Congo, very Hutuland, and try to Tutsisize it a little bit. And it works. And vice versa. I take the *inanga* [trough-zither] that was sang during the Royal Court – Royal Court music was mostly associated with the Tutsis but sang by the Batwa and the Hutu, everyone – you just kinda soften it up a little bit and you turn it into [something new]. But it all makes one thing, it all makes one Rwanda. To both Kayirebwa and Popo, Rwanda's various musical strands came together to form a complex and interwoven whole, like an *agaseke* mat. Yet, as Popo intimated, this had not always been the case, and in Rwanda's past genre has been aligned with creating and sustaining power.

Music and politics, from 1959 onwards

Given that elite forms helped to consolidate Tutsi privilege, when the "ethnic" politics of the country shifted dramatically during the Hutu Revolution "Tutsi" art forms were more or less banned. Certain musical genres that were associated with the Royal Court completely vanished (Gansemans 1988:27). As Popo told me, "There was an effort made to make anything that was from the past disappear. It's like kill anything that has any word T-U-T-S-I, as if it wasn't Rwandan". On the one hand, the Hutu population wanted to forget their past "submission" to the Tutsi elite; on the other, former Court musicians feared performing Royal genres as doing so risked punishment from local authorities (Gansemans 1988:27). By the time Gansemans began conducting his research in the 1970s, not only had a significant portion of Tutsi musical culture disappeared, what endured was heavily modified (1988: 28). Instead of songs in praise of the king and great warriors, for example, they praised national or local authorities and expressed the political ideologies of particular parties: PARMEHUTU under Kayibanda then the MRND under Habyarimana (1988:28).

Indeed, older friends who had grown up under Habyarimana still recalled lyrics to certain MRND songs.

Traditional “Tutsi” music, however, was not lost entirely but rather survived in the diaspora. Bujumbura and Brussels in particular became cultural hubs as Tutsi artists resumed their musical activities in exile. One of the most important figures in the diaspora was Kayirebwa, whom we encountered above. Born in Kigali in 1946, she fled the country in 1973 and settled in Brussels with her young family. She began releasing music in 1981. In 1983 she spent three months at the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren studying Rwandan musical archives that had been collected by anthropologists and ethnomusicologists from the colonial period onwards. Her music quickly became the rallying cry for the exiled Tutsi diaspora, articulating nostalgia for a lost homeland and the desire to return. It created a “common narrative”, as her son explained to me. Kayirebwa’s music was soon used by the RPF to encourage soldiers on the battlefield and to mobilise diasporic funds for its military activities. During the Liberation War, in fact, one of Kayirebwa’s songs opened and closed the RPF’s radio broadcasts on Radio Muhabura. Her songs “Instinzi” (Victory) and “Inkindi” (A Strong and Proud Fighter), which celebrate the “sacrifices and successes” of the RPF, were later used in the film about the genocide, *100 Days* (Dauge-Roth 2010:208).

Unsurprisingly, Kayirebwa’s music was banned in Rwanda. Kayirebwa herself did not consider the content of her music political, but the Habyarimana regime certainly did. As she told me, “There was no politics in my songs... Even my way of singing disturbed them. The dance, the costumes”. It was all, in other words, far too “Tutsi”. Although her

cassettes circulated far and wide amongst the Rwandan diaspora, possessing one of them inside the country could lead to trouble. As her son explained:

In Rwanda, they didn't really like [her music]. It was a bit controversial. It was like, "These guys, we kicked them out of the country and now they're just getting strong because they've got that [music]!" And it really peaked at a certain point where it was dangerous. People were persecuted to listen to those songs. People were hiding the tapes in the garden... Sometimes it created divisions within the same household. Because if the dad says we don't want to be caught, but the wife or the daughter is listening to the songs in secret... People came to visit you at your house and said that you were part of the spies because you'd been listening to those song. You could be in trouble; you could be interrogated.

A close friend who grew up in Rwanda told me her mother had possessed cassettes of banned "Tutsi" music. In order to avoid detection from the local authorities, she buried them in the garden. Unexpectedly, my friend and her family were forced to flee their home, leaving the buried cassettes behind. Although my friend was later able to leave the country, her parents remained and were killed in the genocide. She still had recurring dreams about returning to the house and digging up the buried cassettes.

A similar attempt at cultural preservation was undertaken in Bujumbura under the direction of Athanase Sentore, a musician who had fled Rwanda in 1959. Considered an *inanga* master, Sentore had been raised at the court of King Rudahigwa, where he had undergone a comprehensive musical and artistic training, taught in part by Twa musicians.⁷⁸ In 1958, Sentore was the captain of a dance team that travelled with Rudahigwa to Belgium to compete in the World Exhibition. Out of 150 countries, Rwanda won the top prize.

Exiled in Bujumbura, Sentore realised that Rwandan culture was beginning to disappear. He and his colleagues created Collège de Saint-Albert and began giving courses

⁷⁸ According to his son Masamba Intore, one day the king was visiting Nyaruguru and saw a group dancing. He was so impressed by the ability of Sentore, who was a young boy at the time, that he asked Sentore's father, the chief of Nyaruguru, if he could take him back to the royal palace at Nyanza.

in Rwandan culture to Bujumbura's exiled Rwandan community. In the process they introduced a new generation to traditional music and dance. Sentore's son, Masamba Intore, went on to become a "freedom fighter", as I discuss below, and champion of *gakondo*, traditional music. Sentore's grandson, Jules Sentore, has also followed in his family's footsteps and is now a well-respected singer. He participated, in fact, in Season 4 of the Primus Guma Super Star competition in 2014.

"Rwandan rumba": Popular music under Habyarimana

While traditional "Tutsi" music was banned inside the country, other forms of music were in circulation. In addition to the traditional music styles of the north, Habyarimana's natal area, there was also a vibrant "modern" music scene. This music, referred to as *igisope* after the genocide, was influenced by Congolese rumba, rock n' roll, and funk.⁷⁹ It was called *igisope* because it was considered the music of the *abasope*, Rwandans, both Hutu and Tutsi alike, who had been born and raised in Rwanda. Unlike "modern" music that was produced by young people after the genocide, *igisope* was performed by live bands, often called *orchestres*. This is how Abdoul Makanyaga, a popular musician of that period, described it to me:

You could hear all the instruments and you just played the instruments, no improving with the computer. It was just live, playing instruments. It's sort of like rumba from the Congo, but Rwandese rumba. There's a part where we sing and a second part where we dance.

The music was performed at a number of bars throughout the city and was also played on Radio Rwanda, the state broadcaster. Radio Rwanda, in fact, possessed the only recording studio in the country. If musicians wanted to record their songs, they had to record them

⁷⁹ In the post-genocide period *igisope* was also called *izohambere* (from before), *karahanyuze* (that which passed here before), or *umuzika w'inyana za kera* (music in an old style).

there. Because studio time was expensive, groups often had only one take for each song, which occasionally resulted in recordings where listeners could pick out the artists' mistakes. To some *igiso*pe fans these "mistakes" enhanced their attachment to the music as it suggested an immediacy and intimacy. One friend played a track by Impala, a popular band that was sponsored by the ruling political party, the MRND, over and over again for me so I could hear the exact moment when the singer missed a refrain of the chorus. Similarly, the instruments that the musicians used were not always of the best quality. Makanyaga recalled that he and his band mates had to rent equipment from the Ministry of Sports and Culture in order to perform.

Igisope was defined against traditional music played on the *inanga* and was aligned, unsurprisingly, with the younger generation. Despite the tense political context, popular music was a space where Hutu and Tutsi musicians performed together. Even though Impala was more or less sponsored by the state, it was fronted by a Tutsi singer, André Sebanani, who was also a well-known actor with the group *Indamutsa* and a journalist on Radio Rwanda. Listeners were more concerned with a performer's musical prowess than with his or her ethnicity. As Jean-Paul Samputu, an important musician of this period who would later "convert" to traditional music and gospel, recalled:

Even if you were a Tutsi [and] you sang well, Hutu would dance to your music. That wasn't a problem, just that the music was good. You could hear a guy who was *Interahamwe* [member of the extremist Hutu militia], but when he sang well, you danced to his tune!... And after you said, "Oh, he's *Interahamwe* – but the music was so good!"

Indeed, it seemed as though if musicians steered clear of politics they were more or less left alone. As Makanyaga recalled:

We never had any problems because, first of all, some people when they sang they were looking to get some favours. And for us, we were not in the band that was getting favours from the old regime. No. If there was a band that was getting

favours, it was Impala. We would be seeing each other, seeing them around, but they would sing their songs and we would sing our songs. So we didn't get those favours and we just sang.

Yet as the political climate worsened, the music scene became more and more politicised. Makanyaga, for example, started his musical career with a group called *Les Copains*, which had been founded by a Swiss Catholic priest based at the Ecole Ste-Andre in Nyamirambo, an area of Kigali. When the priest left Rwanda, the band was looking for new recruits and Makanyaga signed on. He didn't, however, last long. The group became increasingly politicised and when it was hired to perform for the military in Camp Kigali, Makanyaga quit (Kagire 2013). He went on to start *Orchestre Abamararungu* in 1977 with a few of his colleagues from *Les Copains*. Although their music was "modern", they also had girls performing traditional Rwandan dance. Once again, when band members started becoming involved in "bad politics", Makanyaga left *Orchestre Abamararungu* and started another band called *Inkumburwa*. Sadly, this new group did not survive the genocide (Kagire 2013).

Unlike Kayirebwa's songs of longing and nostalgia for a lost homeland, recurrent themes in *igisope* were love, relationships, and everyday life. Makanyaga's inspiration for his songs, he told me, was always love and nature. I once remarked to a friend that many *igisope* songs seemed to be about women, with women's names serving as song titles. He responded by saying that *igisope* singers really knew about romantic love, unlike the young post-genocide R&B singers. Take for example one of Sebanani's most well-known songs, "Mama Munyana" (The mother of Munyana). "Mama Munyana" tells the story of a man who pleads with Mama Munyana to "open" for him as she is "opening" for everyone else he knows. He greets her but she refuses to let him into her house, pretending that she is perfect, but he knows the truth. As the chorus goes:

*Erega shenge ndi kimwe na
Yohani
Lawuriyani cyangwa se Felesiyani
Najye ndi umugenzi nkuko ngo
nabo
Bari baje bigendera*

You know I'm no different from
John
Laurent or Félicien
I'm a traveller too

The same way they come and go!

My friend JP helped me to translate the song and explained that it was said to be a true story. Sebanani, who was married, was lusting after a woman who refused him but was sleeping with his colleagues. The names used in the song, JP told me, referred to real people. After the song was released, Sebanani reportedly confessed everything to his wife. As a way of atoning, he recorded another song just for her – “Urubaruta” (“You are above them”). During my fieldwork, Afrobeat group Urban Boys released a cover of the song. Sebanani’s family was upset at this as they had not been asked permission. JP told me it was also because they were embarrassed by the “true” origin of the song.

This is not to suggest, however, that *igisope* artists did not write about the socio-political context that surrounded them. One song in this vein was “Agaca” (The Falcon) by Cyprien Rugamba.⁸⁰ Rugamba was known, as one journalist described it, for his “songs teaching society to live together peacefully, and [songs about] God” (*ndirimbo zigisha sosiyete kubana neza, iz’Imana*). Rugamba’s music was heavily influenced by the Catholic Church and his songs were often sung by choirs in a style described as “Gregorian”.

“Agaca” was recorded in this vein, but its subject matter was decidedly secular. It describes five characters: a falcon, a chick, a hen, a cock, and a man. The chorus goes:

Here comes the so famous falcon
Controlling everything in the sky
Its dance shows how the falcon is happy
Watching all the chickens
It can’t grab the cock or the hen

⁸⁰ In fact, Rugamba helped Gansemans in his research. In his Preface, Gansemans thanks the musician, who was at the time the director of the Institut National de Recherche Scientifique (INRS) in Butare, for his help (1988: 8).

No, because they are not small anymore!
In the first verse the speaker tells the cock to gather all the chickens to protect them from a falcon hovering in the sky. The cock should shout and rouse the man who will come and chase the falcon away. The falcon, however, overhears the plan and flies away. The man does not see the falcon and goes back inside to drink his wine. In the second verse, the chickens come out of hiding to look for food. The falcon swoops down and grabs a chick, decreasing their number from 9 to 8. The man realises a chick is missing and gets his bow and waits for the falcon to return. When he does, he shoots the falcon with a bow and arrow. The final verse declares:

You too keep hiding
Saying you're more clever than others
You keep killing innocent people
The day you don't expect you'll be caught
And when you try to escape, it won't work
Stay away from others' property
Keep the law as your weapon

The chick didn't have a clue about nowadays tricks
The hen lost her baby because of lack of wisdom
The falcon was killed by its big stomach
The short plan of the cock cost the chick life
The man lost his animal, busy with his wine

The song was widely interpreted as an indirect critique of Habyarimana's increasingly violent and corrupt regime. What is interesting about the song is how blame is equally distributed: the chick, hen, falcon, cock, and man are all seen as partially at fault for the violence. Rugamba's critique was never stated outright but rather told through allegory. We can see here how its "veiled" character recalled the *ibisigo* poems discussed above. Indeed, as I discuss in Chapter 6, one outspoken contemporary rapper told me that he was inspired

by Rugamba and attempted to “hide” his own criticisms of the RPF regime through slang and allusion.⁸¹

After the RPF invaded in 1990, Tutsis in all areas of life were persecuted, and Tutsi musicians were no exception. As Makanyaga recalled:

It was different during that time [the early 1990s]. It was all tense and you could tell that people were worried about something. There was an atmosphere where people were afraid, and maybe they had to leave [performances] early...fearing that something might happen... As a result, it was not as free and popular as it was before.

During the 1990s, Hutu extremists attempted to “methodically delineate ‘Hutu culture’ from ‘Tutsi culture’” (Taylor 1999:152). Taylor notes that Radio Rwanda “ceased airing traditional folk songs in honour of cattle, deeming these to be reminiscent of the time when Rwanda was ruled by pastoralist ‘feudal monarchists’ – as Tutsi came to be labelled by Hutu extremists” (1999:152) .

Tutsi musicians were harassed by the police and even imprisoned. Samputu met such a fate. He had started his music career in 1982 with a group called Nyampinga, “a beautiful and well-educated girl”, then went on to start another band called Ingeri, “the most beautiful of all cows”, two years later. Ingeri was sponsored by a wealthy Tutsi businessman from Gisenyi. As Samputu remembered, “He supported us but the war started and we suffered because of that. We were in prison six months because we were Tutsi”. After his imprisonment, Samputu fled to Burundi and then Uganda, where he joined the RPF and the liberation struggle. Samputu wasn’t the only Tutsi artist who was imprisoned.

⁸¹ Using animal allegory to critique a repressive political system is not limited to Rwanda. Shipley (2013:4) reports that the hit 1967 highlife song by Nana Ampadu, “Ebi Te Yie”, was based on a Akan folktale involving an antelope who tries to speak but is interrupted by a lion. The song, which was released after the military overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah, was interpreted as “a critique of the purported silencing of public discourse by the coup-makers” and was subsequently banned by the government, which only increased its popularity (2013:4).

Sebanani, whom we encountered above, was imprisoned in 1990 and accused of being an *ibytso by'inkotanyi* (an accomplice of the RPF) (Muhirwa 2013). He was later freed by the head of ORINFOR (The Rwanda Bureau of Information and Broadcasting) who vouched for his character (Muhirwa 2013).

In the post-genocide period young musicians considered *igisope* a modern Rwandan form that retained a distinctly Rwandan identity. As DJ Adams, who became a crusader against the corruption of the modern music industry (Chapter 8), told me: “It still has got some kind of originality... Something fused up with a little rumba, but they’ve got so much Rwandan in it... It’s not like these ones [modern artists], they jumped from here and straight away they became Chris Brown”. Ironically, unlike popular modern musicians who were later derided for “lying” to the audience, *igisope* artists were praised for their Rwandanness, despite the fact that when *igisope* was popular it was considered “foreign”, defined against traditional music such as songs played on the *inanga*. During my fieldwork, *igisope* nights were held at various bars around Kigali and *igisope* artists who were still alive performed regularly at weddings. For the *abasope*, this music recalled happier times before the genocide. While Kayirebwa evoked nostalgia in returnees, *igisope* was the preeminent nostalgic form for Rwandans who had been born and raised in the country. Once again we see the variegated nature of the country’s “soundscape” (Hirschkind 2006).

Music and the RPF

After Samputu’s imprisonment, as we saw, he fled into exile to join the RPF’s struggle to liberate the country. His contribution was not of a military nature, but rather musical. From 1990 until 1994 he toured in Uganda, Burundi, and then Zaire. In 1991 he recorded an album for the RPF in Burundi called *RPF Ganza* (RPF Conquer), and in 1993 he recorded a

second RPF album in Brussels entitled, *Twararutashye* (“We have returned”). The title song was composed in 1992 when Samputu went to visit the RPF rebels in the bush. As he remembered, “They were taking a portion of Rwanda. And I said, ‘Ok, we are in Rwanda. We have returned to our home’. Then I composed that song”.

Another well-known song from this period was “Bahizi beza”. Samputu summarised the song’s meaning for me in this way:

Bahizi beza is a brave warrior. [It was about] the Inkotanyi military, to help them. “You are fighting for your country, you are so good, go on. We follow you, we help you... You have taken the decision to go to fight for Rwandans to return to their country, you are amazing. May God bless you”. Those are the words. I was also saying, “You protect us, you are our heroes. You will bring us to our country. God bless you”.

Masamba Intore, whose father Sentore we encountered above, was another artist involved in the liberation struggle. At the age of 21, he stopped his studies at the University of Bujumbura and went to join the RPF. Although Masamba completed military training, the RPF found other uses for him. He was tasked with recruitment and consciousness raising (*sensibilisation*), eventually becoming the head of fundraising. It was at this juncture that he met Samputu. He travelled, as he put it, “almost the whole world”, performing concerts to raise money and international awareness about the RPF cause, in addition to encouraging young people to join the struggle. “People were calling me Che Guevera”, he told me, chuckling.

While these songs helped to unite exiled Rwandans, some musicians I spoke to considered them mere RPF propaganda. One friend dismissed them as “army stuff” that should not be considered part of the country’s musical history. “It was in the bush, they had to pump themselves up”, he told me.

Bikindi and “hate media”

Perhaps the most glaring example of the politicisation of music in the country is the case of folk singer Simon Bikindi and the notorious radio station Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM). RTLM, a Hutu Power station that broadcast between July 1993 and October 1994 and was the country’s first privately owned station, played a lethal role in fomenting genocidal violence. Although funded by private investors, it had “strong links” to the government’s “inner circles” and “effectively operated as a mouthpiece of the Hutu power ideology” (Craig and Mkhize 2006:40). Not only did RTLM’s vitriolic anti-Tutsi – and anti-moderate Hutu – propaganda exacerbate ethnic tensions prior to April 1994, it actively encouraged citizens to participate in the killings, often identifying specific individuals to be slaughtered and later congratulating the killers on air (Des Forges 2007:49). Indeed, Ferdinand Nahimana, director of RTLM during the genocide and a professor of history at the National University of Rwanda, was tried at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and found guilty in 2003 of “conspiracy to commit genocide; genocide; direct and public incitement to commit genocide; crimes against humanity (persecution); and crimes against humanity (extermination)” (Buckley-Zistel 2009:39). As the presiding judge declared during Nahimana’s sentencing: “Without a firearm, machete or any physical weapon, you caused the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians” (Buckley-Zistel 2009:39).

To some commentators RTLM played a “quotidian role” (Li 2007:101), allowing the violence to be normalised, with killers planning their activities around and according to RTLM broadcasts. As Li argues, “through the daily diet of informational updates, operational details (not to leave bodies on the road in view of Western journalists, for

example) and encouraging monologues, [RTLM] contributed to the framing of schedules and the routinization of [killing as] ‘work’” (Li 2007:101).

Seen from a certain angle, the station’s rise and eventual dominance of the airwaves can be attributed to its skilful manipulation of popular culture. It initially gained a loyal listenership, especially among young people, because of its “extensive collection” of the latest Congolese and Caribbean music (Vokes 2007:817). Contrary to the “ponderous tones” of Radio Rwanda, RTLM was “informal and lively” (Des Forges 2007:44), with a number of “charismatic presenters” (Vokes 2007:817) hosting popular talk shows. Not only were listeners able to call in and gossip with the announcers, these same announcers often took to the streets to canvas “the people” for their opinions on the particular topic of the day (Des Forges 2007:44). During the genocide RTLM continued this “interactive broadcasting” – journalists interviewed ordinary citizens stationed at the barriers in Kigali, a practice that ultimately served to legitimate the violence to listeners (Des Forges 2007:50). RTLM’s message was so powerful, according to Vokes, because it constructed “a cosmopolitan ‘other’ against a domestic ‘self’” (2007:820). In this extremist form of populism, the “foreigner” Tutsi had to be exterminated because they threatened the rightful majority rule of the “native” Hutu (Mamdani 2001). It was autochthonous ideology at its bloodiest.

Bikindi’s anti-Tutsi music was played frequently on RTLM. Some of his most popular songs included “Naga abahutu” (I hate these Hutu), “Twasezereye” (We said goodbye to the feudal regime), and “Bene Sebahinzi” (Sons of the cultivators). A native of Gisenyi, Bikindi was arrested in The Netherlands in July 2001 and was transferred to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in Arusha in March 2002. In 2008 he

was convicted of “direct and public incitement to commit genocide” and sentenced to 15 years in prison.⁸² Importantly, he was not convicted because of his music but rather because of “pro-genocide statements” he was said to have made near Gisenyi (Mccoy 2013:11). Many of his songs had been composed and released prior to the genocide, making Bikindi’s musical intention hard to determine. “Twasezereye”, for example, was released in 1987, but began recirculating in 1992-1993 as “an anthem for Hutus dissatisfied with the strictures of the Arusha Accords” (Craig and Mkhize 2006:42). Mccoy has argued that Bikindi’s songs contain multiple, conflicting meanings, and that while they “played a significant role in inciting genocide”, they ultimately “never explicitly called for violence against Tutsi nor denigrated them in any obvious way” (2013:9). For his part, Bikindi, whom Mccoy interviewed, claims that he composed his songs as both “a call for self-defense against the RPF onslaught” and as “a call for peace, selflessness, reconciliation, transparency in government, fair and free elections, power-sharing, ethnic equality, national unity, and patriotism” (2013:9). At Bikindi’s trial, however, the judges justified their conviction by claiming that the artist’s celebrity status meant that “he wielded enough influence to incite genocide through means of speech” (Mccoy 2013:11).

Samputu had known Bikindi personally and had considered him a “friend”. When I asked him what Bikindi had been like, he responded:

He showed his extremism when the war started. Before, he was extremist but because of being satisfied with the government. Sometimes, you cannot see that. You see that when a real problem happens. But these people were having everything with the government. Sometimes they said, “Aw, he’s a Tutsi, it’s ok, you can eat. Because I’m not hungry, then you can eat”. When you are done with the food, you give it to dogs. It’s like, “Ok, this Tutsi can eat now because I’m okay now. You can eat”. Even a dog, you give to them. I was like a dog.

⁸² Bikindi was acquitted of five other counts: conspiracy to commit genocide, genocide, complicity in genocide, murder, and persecution as crimes against humanity.

Indeed, to friends I knew, Bikindi's legacy was ultimately ambiguous. Much to my surprise, even Tutsi informants often expressed sympathy for Bikindi who was, after all, an excellent musician. While they disapproved of the messages contained in his music, they also felt that he had naively gotten caught up in "bad" politics. Ironically, these same friends considered Kizito Mihigo, whom we encountered in the last chapter and whom I discuss in the Conclusion, a modern-day Bikindi. He too was intimately aligned with power and they worried, presciently, that this would lead to his downfall.

Musicians killed in the genocide, and after

It is difficult to determine the exact number of musicians killed in the genocide. The Association of Rwandan Musicians (LIRAM⁸³) released a list of 14 artists who were killed but they included only well-known artists and not those who were "underground" (Kagire 2013). Prominent musicians killed included Sebanani and Rugamba, whom we encountered above. Other artists killed include Sadi Gatete, a member of *Orchestre Abamararungu*; Lotti Bizimana of *Orchestre Ikibatsi*; Eugène Rugerinyange of *Orchestre Ingeli*; Emmanuel Seikmonyo, known as Manu Tabaro; Mimir Murebwayire, a member of *Orchestre Les Citadins* who was "one of the few female musicians at the time"; Saulve Iyamuremye, a member of *Indahemuka choir*; Berchmas Rwakabayiza and Jean de Dieu Kayigamba from *Chorale de Kigali*; Bernard Kalisa of *Chorale Ijuru*; in addition to Rodrigue Karemera and the musical couple Agnes Uwimbabazi and Dieudonné Bizimungu (Kagire 2013). As Makanyaga remembered in an interview during the 19th commemoration period, "Most of my band mates including those we were with in Le[s] Copains were killed during Genocide against the Tutsi. I still have photos of people like Gideon Tshondo. In my own band, Jean

⁸³ In Kinyarwanda, Ihuriro Nyarwanda ry'Abahanzi ba Muzika.

Nepomuscene Rutagambwa and many others were killed” (Kagire 2013). He had played as well with Sebanani and said of him, “He was a great composer of love songs. He loved people and wanted people to love each other” (Kagire 2013).

Even Hutu musicians who played with Tutsi musicians were targeted during the genocide. As one musician from that period told me, “one of my guitarists, he’s in one of those documentaries where you see people begging to be taken by the Belgians. He was one of those guys begging. He’s Hutu. And he was jailed with the Tutsis because he was hanging out with them and they thought he was an enemy”.

After the genocide, Rwanda’s musical landscape had changed dramatically. When exiled Tutsi musicians returned from exile, they did not recognise the country. They had been promised a land of milk and honey but instead encountered devastation. As Masamba remembered:

We found a Rwanda where the culture had been *génocidé*, 100%. Rwanda was divided. The people from the north didn’t accept the dance and the music from the south; the people from the south didn’t accept anything from the north. All these changes were due to the previous regime. They had said everything that was Tutsi had to be killed. Yet the unity of Rwanda, what had joined people together outside of their ethnicity before, was culture... When he came back, my father had to reteach and reform a cultural troupe, *Indashyikirwa*, the elites. Sentore, Masamba’s father, had trained the group in Bujumbura and revived it when he returned to Rwanda in an attempt to spark a post-genocide cultural renaissance. Sentore also searched for musicians he had played with in the past and their descendants. He eventually located Daniel Ngarukiye, the son of a celebrated dancer who had accompanied Sentore on the above-mentioned trip to Belgium. He took Ngarukiye, who was a young boy at the time, under his wing and began teaching him how to sing, dance, and play *inanga*. Ngarukiye, now one of the country’s rising *inanga* stars, is said to sing with Sentore’s accent. Sentore also became the head coach of the famed National Ballet of Rwanda,

Urukerereza, which, although founded in 1973, had lost the majority of its members during the genocide. Under his leadership, the group went on to win a number of prizes in dance and cultural festivals around the world, including in Israel, Canada, and Belgium. When Sentore died in March 2012, he was still the head coach.

Yet, as we will see, these attempts to reanimate traditional music after the genocide did not necessarily appeal to young people. They were interested instead in the global genres of hip hop, R&B, and Afrobeat. I turn now to how young people founded the “modern” music industry.

Starting music again: The role of the churches

How, then, did music begin again after 1994? Immediately following the destruction of the genocide, music and “entertainment” more generally were often far from the traumatised population’s mind. The government was busy reconstructing the country and had little time to consider the plight of the music industry. As Rafiki, a pioneering “modern” musician, told me:

There were so many different people, so many problems. I don’t think the government had time to entertain people. They had to say, “You, you, were involved in genocide, you have to go to jail”. “You, you have to go to the hospital”... There were so many orphans, so many people without legs... But I think in 1996, 1997, we started to have some happiness.

For Rafiki the first sign of “happiness” returning to the country via entertainment

(*imyidagaduro*) was when Rwanda won the Council of East and Central Africa Football

Associations (CECAFA) Cup in 1999.⁸⁴ It was only later, in the mid-2000s, that the

category of entertainment was expanded to include modern Kinyarwanda-language music.

⁸⁴ For an examination of football in Rwanda during the first half of the 20th century, see (Riot 2010).

Within this devastated context, the church played a significant role not only in providing emotional and spiritual support, as we saw in previous chapters, but also in terms of access to music. Many of the country's most well-known modern artists started out singing in choirs in the Adventist, Catholic, Pentecostal (ADEPR), Anglican, and *abarokore* churches. Given that there were no music schools in the country, the church provided young Rwandans with important, if limited, musical training. Félicien, the young *murokore* man we encountered in Chapter 2, learned how to play guitar, bass guitar, and piano in ADEPR after he had converted from the Catholic Church in 1997. He later became a gospel journalist. Churches, he claimed, played a seminal role in creating the modern music industry, both gospel and secular:

From 1994 until 2000, music was calm. There wasn't any, really. Because there were many people who came from outside; there were many dead. You see? There was disorder. Not only in music, but also in all other domains... But in 2000, that's when the music started to develop through the choirs.

Music was also an important pull factor for the *abarokore* churches. Lively – and lengthy – praise and worship sessions drew many people into the new churches, as we saw, and influenced the mainline churches to adopt more expressive musical styles.

The predominance of gospel was also reflected in the programming of Radio Rwanda. Until 2004, it was the only radio station in the country. “Radio Rwanda was only playing gospel music and foreign music”, Félicien remembered. “Ugandan, Tanzanian, Kenyan. But apart from that, it was gospel”. In particular, Félicien recalled the songs “Akamanyu k’umutsima” (Pieces of bread) and “Urwambariro rw’abera” (The purification of saints), sung by ADEPR choirs, as being particularly popular. These songs emphasised the ephemeral nature of the world and encouraged listeners to devote their lives to Christ. Although older artists such as Kayirebwa and Masamba were still played, new music was

produced almost exclusively by church choirs. Mani Martin, who started out singing in ADEPR and whose career I take up again below, related the prominence of gospel to the country's fragile emotional and psychological state at the time:

The new music after the genocide, much of it was [produced by] the choirs. Because it was after the dangerous time so people wanted to listen to the gospel stuff. People were feeling like praying, like praising the lord. And some of the people were traumatised.

According to Félicien, gospel music had its peak from 2000 to 2005, just before the modern secular music industry really took off. This is not to suggest, however, that gospel did not continue to remain an important genre in its own right. During my fieldwork there was a number of popular gospel artists including Gaby Kamanzi, Aline Gahongayire, Dominic Nic Ashimwe, Tonzi, Aime Uwimana, Patient Bizimana, the gospel rapper Bright, and the Christian rock band Beauty for Ashes. I consider the testimony of one female gospel singer in Chapter 7.

Modern dance groups

At the same time that church choirs dominated the “new” music scene, secular dance groups began to form. These groups, composed of young men and women, started performing choreographed dance routines to foreign pop songs. Adolphe Bagabo (aka Kamichi), a popular Afrobeat singer at the time of my fieldwork, had been a member of a dance group called Hot Side. Kamichi's interest in music began in the Adventist church, but he soon tired of the choir's demanding rehearsal and performance schedule. In 2002, he became a dancer. As he told me:

I went to [join] a dancing club cause singing died with the genocide. We didn't have new artists since 1994. No studios, all the artists died. AIDS first killed many artists before the genocide... So everybody was a dancer. I used to go to the TV, watch 'N Sync, then copy their choreography and take it to my friends. Then I was Justin Timberlake! We would dance, and people would enter for 100 or 200 francs.

Other members of Hot Side, which started in a small hall of a Catholic Church in Kicukiro, included Rafiki, Jean Claude Mugambira (Clovis, aka Coga Flewa), and a number of other young people who would go on to become well-known solo singers. Kim Kizito, an entertainment journalist and singer who had been a member of the dancing group Just Family, claimed that between 2001 and 2005, dancing was the only entertainment in the capital. “It rocked the whole of Kigali”, he told me. Since singing had “died” in the genocide, dance was the one of the only avenues for artistic expression available to young people outside of the church. American pop music offered alternative identities, ones that were not tied to the country’s violent past. Young artists could dream of becoming American pop stars such as Justin Timberlake rather than local artists such as Sebanani, for example, who had been killed. In these moments of performance, young artists *became* someone else, suspending for a moment their difficult life circumstances.

Dance groups, furthermore, were often associated with particular neighbourhoods of Kigali. Cédric, an entertainment journalist, told me that although he had started singing in the Catholic Church, when he was in Senior 4 he began to be inspired by “the new school of music” and decided to join one of the dance groups. At the time there were two dance groups in Kacyiru, a neighbourhood of Kigali: White Angels and K-Unit (Kacyiru Unit). Youth-organised competitions pitted different neighbourhoods against each other, with rival crews performing complicated choreographies to American artists such as the Backstreet Boys and Usher. “If there was a competition, people from Nyamirambo came to support a group from Nyamirambo; people from Kacyiru came to support a group from Kacyiru”, Cédric remembered. The competition between neighbourhoods could be fierce. As he told me:

There were fights, from 2003 to 2005. There was like an annual dance competition – ah, it was like a fight! It was good, during that time. But the problem was to use music from others and not using our own music. We were dancing to music from English-speaking countries when English was non-existent in Rwanda because French was on top⁸⁵... People were not giving value to songs that we were dancing to. But after people started singing their own songs in Kinyarwanda, people started being much more interested and they started coming to concerts. That's how a new generation was born. Before, the music was Samputu, Masamba, those [of] higher age. But from 2005, it was like a new generation of musicians, like 15 to 25. Two things are important to emphasise here. The first is that dance was involved in

the creation of neighbourhood rather than *ethnic* identity. Instead of identifying oneself as Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa, one identified with one's particular neighbourhood and supported crews from that area. Secondly, we should note the spirit of entrepreneurship and desire to define a specifically Rwandan music that sparked the creation of the modern Kinyarwanda-language music industry. As Kizito told me:

[Just Family] won three trophies in dancing. And around 2006 we started feeling like, no, we had enough of dancing other people's music. We needed to create our own music and dance our own music. That's how the idea came up of forming now a singing group. It was not really easy cause it's not anyone who dances that can really sing. I can say there's a big difference between the Just Family dancing group and the Just Family singing group.

Just Family the singing group went on to include Kizito and his fellow dancer Bahati, in addition to Jimmy, a rapper, and Croisja, a singer who had sung backing vocals for popular Burundian singer Kidum. The group released a single called "Shine" in 2006, which was a mixture of Swahili and English. By the time of my fieldwork Kizito had left the group to focus on entertainment journalism and music promotion. The trio Just Family went on to participate in Primus Guma Guma Super Star Season 2 in 2012 (see Chapter 8).

⁸⁵ In 2008 Rwanda switched from a French-language education system to an English-language one.

Private stations and private studios

The modern music industry could never have flourished, however, without two important developments: the opening up of private radio stations in 2004 and the opening of private recording studios. Between 2004 and 2006, 25 private radio stations were given broadcasting licenses (Frère 2009: 344). Radio stations like Radio 10, Flash FM, Contact FM, City Radio, Voice of Africa, and, later, Isango Star and Radio Salus in Butare, offered new opportunities for young musicians. Liza Kamikazi, a female singer, remembered how difficult it had been to have songs played on the radio when she first started out:

It was difficult before [2004] because to be able to release a song and to put it on the radio, you had to take it to the Ministry, I think, to be approved... But by the time I finished [high school], it was a bit easier because [new] radios were opening... So as Contact FM and Radio 10 opened, it was a bit easier to hand your songs to them and then they play it.

Claudine, an entertainment journalist who had been working for Radio Rwanda since 2003, also remembered the early 2000s as a low point in Rwandan music. “When I started to work on the radio, from 2003 and 2005, we didn’t have any [Rwandan] artists”, she remembered. “We didn’t have one. They started coming one-by-one”.

According to friends, the first private recording studio opened in mid-2000 and was called SH Studio, run by a producer named Jay P. Jay P went on to train a number of young producers who would become influential figures in the new music industry. Rafiki remembered that there would always be a “big line” of artists at the studio waiting to record. “At that time, it was not easy for musicians to record even one song because you paid a song and you found yourself spending like three months, five months, waiting for your song”, he told me. “You never had a time to get in the studio. It was not easy, but we struggled”. The opening of the studio, furthermore, did not mean that young people knew

immediately what kind of songs and music they wanted to record. When Kamichi's friends first proposed going to the studio, he was hesitant to accept. As he remembered:

I was like, really, to go to the studio to do what? What kind of music? Impala [i.e. *igisope*]? No! But Jay P was doing some kind of hip hop, the kind of Afrobeat we do right now... Then I was like, okay, I love what JP's doing. His first efforts in the studio, however, were far from successful. Even though he had sung in the Adventist church, the experience of recording in a studio was vastly different. "I didn't know what the beat was; I didn't know what the key was; I would go off key easily", he told me. It was only through years of practice, often going to Mount Kigali to sing on his own, that he improved.

KGB (Kigali Boys): The "pioneers"

The music that was created at this time, beginning in the mid-2000s, was mostly R&B and Afrobeat in Kinyarwanda. To many observers, one of the first groups to begin creating modern music was the boy band KGB (Kigali Boys). Along with Miss Jojo and Rafiki, KGB was widely considered one of the "innovators" of modern Rwandan music.⁸⁶ Indeed, when KGB first began, there were only two radio stations: Radio 10 and Flash FM. At the time, Radio Rwanda did not play their songs. As Gaston Rurangwa (aka Mr. Skizzy), a founding member of KGB, remembered:

They [Radio Rwanda] were kind of like refusing. They were playing like *igisope* songs, traditional kind of thing. They had their own editorial line... I don't think there was a rule saying that you can't play modern music sang in Kinyarwanda. So it was some personal feelings of the technicians, maybe, the journalists, or whatever organisation, which they didn't want to play those songs. Against the conservative programming of Radio Rwanda, the new radio stations represented new opportunities and began playing modern music, including rap and hip hop.

⁸⁶ I take up Miss Jojo's story in Chapter 7.

Rurangwa had grown up in Kenya, where his family had fled after the genocide. In Kenya he was exposed to American hip hop and rap, and became a devoted fan of Tupac. When his father died in 2001 Rurangwa returned to Rwanda, leaving his mother and two sisters in Nairobi. He began attending College APAPE where he met Henry Hirwa (aka H-Wow) and Ivan Manzi (aka MYP), who would become the other members of KGB.

The group formed officially in 2003, although Rurangwa soon realised he had to tone down his lyrics in order to respect Rwandan culture and gain a local audience. “You know in Kenya, they don’t care whichever hardcore slang you are using”, he told me.

So as I was growing there, so I thought Rwanda was the same... So when I came back to Rwanda, I started changing too, to become really Rwandan, with the culture, with the good manners, with the good language we are using, not really hardcore, because of the people we are targeting. The two other band members, Hirwa and Manzi, had grown up in Burundi. All three members, in other words, were struggling to fit into the new cultural environment of Rwanda, attempting to negotiate their identity as Rwandans with the fact that they had spent large chunks of their childhoods outside of the country. Developing their own musical style, one that took its inspiration from foreign genres but was linguistically and culturally Rwandan, was a way to forge a new identity that reflected the country’s post-genocide diversity. Indeed, the group developed a sound called “Kinya style”, which attempted to mix traditional Rwandan rhythms with modern influences.

The group recorded their first two songs, “Abakobwa b’i Kigali” (The Girls of Kigali) and “Ubuzima” (Life) at a studio called TFP in Kigali. Yet the songs were poorly recorded and mastered so, with the support of their parents, they went to Kenya to “remix” them and record an album in 2004 over their summer holiday. The song “Abakobwa b’i Kigali”, which chastised girls who used their beauty to manipulate men, became a hit. Most

of their songs, Rurangwa told me, were about daily life. The group's biggest hit was "Arasharamye". Much like "Abakobwa b'i Kigali", the song dealt with the dangerous beauty of young women, cautioning young men not to be seduced by their attractive appearances. Rurangwa offered this interpretation:

It's the story of this girl, she's very attractive. If you watch the video clip of it, you will see... So here this girl, everywhere she passes, everyone troubles her... You've seen Rwandan ladies, some of them, how they are. But some, they pretend to be good, they pretend to be Christians, but the pastors also, they are like confused... It's a story, comedy, funny. It attracts a lot of people, depending on the lyrics and the rhythm we get.

According to Rurangwa, the song was a hit in Burundi and Uganda, and even had fans in Europe. "It became a hit for three years!" Rurangwa told me, claiming it was popular from 2007 to 2009. The song became so well known, in fact, that a certain type of mobile phone became known as "Karashyaramye", and telecommunications giant MTN signed a "collaborating deal" with the group in 2008, sponsoring concerts and tours around the country (Mbabazi 2008b). The group went on to win numerous musical awards including the PAM Best Group in Rwanda 2007 and 2008, and the local Salax Award.⁸⁷

KGB were important for the development of the modern music industry in Rwanda as they provided the link between the dance groups and the first generation of post-genocide singers. They were, in Rurangwa's words, the "key":

Going back to the 1970s, the 1980s, there used to be like this old school music, *igisope* kind of thing. Even the traditional things, the Cécile Kayirebwas, the way they sing, the Rujindiri guys.⁸⁸ So by the time I was back in Rwanda, I was like, I can't sing like Cécile Kayirebwa. I can't sing like *igisope* kind of style. Cause, according to my age too, and the environment where I was, I was kind of deep in mind, in my heart, determined in hip hop, reggae, ragga things. So I was like, we can do this in Kinyarwanda too! Because no one used to do it here in Rwanda, there used only to be dancing groups... So we became a key, we opened the doors for youth, for Rwandans to start doing this kind of thing. They were afraid... They

⁸⁷ The Salax Awards were Rwanda's equivalent to the Grammys.

⁸⁸ Rujindiri was a famed *inanga* musician.

didn't have self-confidence in them. So we showed them they can have self-confidence and do modern music. You see? That's how it came. After KGB, numerous singers and groups began to release songs, including MC Mahoni Boni, Just Family, as we saw, Makoni Koshwa, K8, Alpha, Meddy, and The Ben, among many others.

Despite KGB's success and Rurangwa's dreams of a global Kinyarwanda style revolution, by the time I conducted my fieldwork KGB was no longer active on the music scene. Although they had been working in music since 2004 and released single after single, they had only made one album, *Ubuzima*, because, according to Rurangwa, "the music industry came tough, a lot of thieves, a lot of stealings". The group began having "beefs" with journalists who demanded money in exchange for airplay. More tragically, in December 2012, Henry Hirwa, one of KGB's founding members, drown in an accident in Lake Muhazi (Opobo 2013).⁸⁹ KGB, however, was important for showing young Rwandans that they could achieve success and celebrity by performing in Kinyarwanda and composing songs that spoke to the specific life experiences of the country's youth.

Rafiki: The king of coga

If KGB focused on making songs about everyday life, other early musicians focused on peace. In this section I briefly consider two other early popular artists: Rafiki, the king of coga, and Mani Martin.

Born in Goma in 1983, Rafiki returned to Rwanda in 1995. He recorded his first song in 2005, called "Igipende", a "funny" song named after a drink made in the north of the country. "It's a famous drink and it's for Christians", he told me, "those who don't

⁸⁹ To commemorate his death a number of well-known musicians composed a song for him, "R.I.P. Hirwa Henry Wow", and released a moving music video.

drink alcohol, so they drink *igipende*”. His next release was “Igikosi”, a football song, which he later remixed with Professor Jay, a Tanzanian Bongo flavour artist. These songs made Rafiki a star. Not only did he go on numerous tours around the country, sponsored by companies such as MTN and Bralirwa, his music took him outside of Rwanda’s borders. In 2007 he performed at an Afro-Caribbean festival in Saint Martin, which saw him record a song with local band U12. He has also recorded various other “collabos” with regional stars such as Uganda’s Jose Chameleon and Kenya’s Nameless. His first album was released in September 2008, called “Icyambere” (Genesis). “I have almost four albums”, he told me, “but we don’t have market. That’s why I released singles”.

Rafiki’s narrative is important to the development of the modern music industry because he created a style all his own: *coga* style. While KGB had *Kinya* style, Rafiki had *coga* style. “It’s a mix of rumba and reggae”, Rafiki explained to me. “It means Afrobeat and reggae music, mixing of everything. And then the language we use in *coga* style is like dialect, those small languages from villages”. In particular, *coga* uses *urukiga*, a Kinyarwanda dialect form the northwest. This in itself is significant. As Rafiki told me:

You know before, when you come from Ruhengeri, you come here [to Kigali] and you talk, people were laughing at what you said, thinking that it’s funny words. But at the time I started to sing *coga* style, even some radio presenters wanted to use that dialect to interest people in their programme. So it means we have done something with that dialect. People started to use it even though they’re not from that side.

Indeed, through his songs and videos Rafiki worked hard to brand the musical and visual aesthetic of *coga*. In all of his songs he incorporates some mention of *coga*, often calling out “Coga I.N.C.” in the intro and identifying *coga* fans as *abacoga*, the people of *coga*. Part of the *coga* aesthetic hinged on Rafiki’s identity as a Rastafarian, and during my fieldwork he wore his hair in long dreadlocks. Through his music *urukiga* was transformed

from a symbol of rural backwardness and “funny” speaking to one associated with international networks and “swagger”. The marginalised identity of being an *umukiga* became mainstream. Rafiki’s role in maintaining *urukiga* has even been recognised by the government. In March 2013, Rafiki was acknowledged by the Rwandan Academy of Language and Culture, established through the Ministry of Sports and Culture (MINISPOC), for his efforts to conserve Kinyarwanda and its dialects (Tuyishimire 2013).

For Rafiki music was an important unifying force in the country. In his view it had helped to change the mindset of young people. He told me:

Even in the genocide, you know musicians they had power to talk to the audience. They used musicians to put that ideology in people – “Kill Tutsis, kill, kill”. You sing those songs, teaching people bad things. But now, we started to sing love. We have liberated our country; let’s work. And when people love your music here, it doesn’t matter what tribe you come from.

To this end, the inspiration for his music was “love, joy, and happiness”. “I give messages but I give those message that give people a hope of life”, he said. In the popular song “Igikomando”, for example, Rafiki calls upon listeners to put on the boots of a soldier (*Funga booto gikomando*) and fight against the Babylon system, which always attempts to return (*Babylon nifuza ku manuka*). Although the accompanying music video features Rafiki and his backup dancers smearing black war paint on their faces and dressed in camouflage, the outro of the song undermines the aggressive aesthetic: “*Urukundo gifunguzo cya mahoro/Coga nziza gifunguzo cya mahoro*” (Love is the key to peace/Coga is the key to peace). In Rafiki’s conception, peace was not a passive state but something that had to be actively maintained and achieved through (aggressively) fighting the Babylon system.

Yet, like Rurangwa, Rafiki still struggled against the constraints of the industry. As he told me:

The problem here, the industry in Rwanda is still young. So we're still facing so many problems. About companies, sponsorship, piracy, copyright – that's a serious problem. We don't sell CDs here. In your country, you have websites where you can go and download music, they charge you some dollars. We don't have that system and it's not easy to sell CDs. So now we sell on shows, adverts, things like that.

Rafiki dreamed of opening his own coga studio. This way he would be able to control not only the quality of his own music, but also be better positioned to help upcoming artists.

“When we have that studio, we will be able to bring those [artists] who got talent”, he said.

“We will produce them for free, we will make some agreement, promote them”. He also dreamed of putting his music “on a higher level”. “I want to see my music on MTV, on BET, on different channels, big channels”, he told me. “And then when my music will be there, I think people will judge it. I hope they will love it”.

Mani Martin: Longing and peace

Like Rafiki, Mani Martin was also concerned with spreading peace through his music. Born in Cyangugu in 1988, Martin grew up listening to and imitating the songs of Kayirebwa.

When he was nine years old, Martin composed his first song, “Bari he?” (“Where are they?”). He explained the song's genesis to me in this way:

I was wondering about my friends, my schoolmates, my classmates, who died in the genocide. I was wondering where are they, would they come back? Then the song came in my heart... I sang that song for my teacher, and he was crying. He asked me, “Where is that song from?” And I said, “I don't know. I don't know where it is from. It just came like that”. So then I continued to sing for my fellow classmates.

Although the song was not explicitly a commemoration song, Martin's first composition captured the bewildered sense of loss that many young people felt in the aftermath of the genocide. It suggested that absence was felt most profoundly in the rhythms of everyday life. Going to school became a painful reminder of the friends who were no longer present.

Not only was music an important way to express what could not otherwise be said, it created affective relationships with others, even those of a different generation.

When he was 11 Martin joined ADEPR and became a member of the Sunday school choir. He went on to write and record a number of gospel songs, performing at various ADEPR churches around the country. In 2006 he recorded a song called “Urukumbuzi”, which became immensely popular. “That is the song which made me an artist”, Martin explained. “It became the song of the youth in 2006”. Radio 10, one of the new private radio stations that began broadcasting in 2004, awarded him artist of the year in 2006.

Although *urukumbuzi* is often translated as nostalgia, homesickness, or longing, Martin’s use of the word evoked multiple layers of significance. When I asked him to explain the song’s meaning, he struggled to answer:

I don’t know how I can explain it but I can try. [*Urukumbuzi*] means like being alone and when you are missing something. But me, I was talking about the struggling life of this world, but telling people that there will be another life which doesn’t have the struggles. It was a hope song, actually.
Sung in the first person, “Urukumbuzi” speaks of the longing for God and a time when the pain and suffering of the earthly world will be taken away. The first verse declares:

<i>Mfite urukumbuzi rwinshi mu</i>	I feel much longing in my heart
<i>mutima wanjye</i>	
<i>Nkumbuye Imana nkumbuye abera</i>	I long for God, I long for angels, I
<i>nkumbuye wa musozi</i>	long for that mountain
<i>Wa musozi mwiza aho niho abera</i>	That holy mountain where angels
<i>bantegerereje</i>	await
<i>Nkumbuye kuzarebana na yesu</i>	I long to see Jesus endlessly
<i>tutagitandukana</i>	
<i>Wa musozi mwiza aho niho abera</i>	That holy mountain where angels
<i>bantegerereje</i>	await
<i>Nkumbuye kuzarebana na yesu</i>	I long to see Jesus endlessly (x2)
<i>tutagitandukana (x2)</i>	

During my fieldwork the appeal of the song had not diminished. Whenever I saw Martin perform the song – which I did on multiple occasions in various settings – the crowd

always sang along to the lyrics, lifting their arms in the air, closing their eyes, and swaying along to the sombre melody. According to Martin, it was one of the first R&B songs in Kinyarwanda. Building on the success of the song, Martin released a gospel album in 2007 entitled *Isaha ya 9* (The Ninth Hour), which dealt with religious themes such as Jesus's death and resurrection.

After the gospel album *Isaha ya 9*, Martin began broadening his musical horizons. "In 2010, that was when I was thinking about how I can help the society", he told me. "How can I help my country which has a terrible history, and the history which inspired me too? How can I help to build this country that was destroyed by young people like me? So that was when I composed "Icyo dupfana kiruta icyo dupfa". Martin translated the song's title as "our relationship as human beings is more powerful than our difference". (An alternate translation offered by another friend was: "The relationship between us is greater than what we're fighting for".) With its upbeat, reggae-inspired tempo and positive message, the song became a hit. Let's consider the chorus and third verse:

Chorus

<i>Tukaririmba amahoro</i>	Sing peace
<i>Tugasakaza amahoro</i>	Spread peace
<i>Tugatura mu m' amahoro</i>	Live in peace
<i>Tugahumeka amahoro</i>	Breathe peace

Verse 3

<i>Kuki intambara zakomeza</i>	Why should wars keep
<i>kwiyongera</i>	increasing?
<i>Kuki ivangura rya habwa ni intebe</i>	Why should divisionism be
	accepted?
<i>Ishyari nubugome kuki</i>	Why should jealousy and cruelty
<i>byacumbikirwa</i>	be given lodging to?
<i>Ni kuki abantu bakomeze kuzira</i>	Why should people keep being
<i>uko basa</i>	victims of how they look?
<i>Uka zira ubwoko bwawe kandi</i>	Being victim of your ethnicity yet
<i>utarabuhisemo</i>	you didn't choose it?

*Ukazira aho wavutse kandi
utarahatoye
Twarebye icyo dupfana ko
mubyukuri ko kiruta icyo dupfa
(x2)*

Of your origin when you didn't
choose it?
Why can't we see honestly what
unites us is greater than what
separates us? (x2)

The song had a “big impact” on Rwandans, Martin told me. Fans often told him how much the song had changed their lives. One imprisoned genocidaire told him that when he heard the song, he suddenly understood why he had killed people. Genocide orphans and orphans whose parents were killed after the genocide in DR Congo told him that they could now live together after they heard it. “Because we know that our relationship is more than everything which can separate us”, they told him. The song title became a detachable saying in its own right, one that was able to capture a sentiment that was not easy to articulate in everyday conversation (Shipley 2013: 101; Spitulnik 1996).

Yet despite Martin's attempts to spread positive messages through his music, when he stopped performing gospel songs he was more or less kicked out of ADEPR. Many of his original Christian fans criticised him for choosing to sing about “secular” topics. Since Martin's songs promoted peace and reconciliation, they accused him of abandoning Jesus to seek favour and material rewards from the state. (Indeed, Martin later accompanied President Kagame to perform at Rwanda Day 2012 in Boston, USA.) Even songs about peace, then, could incite heated debates about political opportunism and the boundaries of religious identity. I explore the contours of these debates in more detail in the chapters to come.

Conclusion

Just as Rwanda's spiritual heritage offers possibilities of both reinforcing and subverting power, so too does the country's musical history. Under the Nyiginya kingdom elaborate art forms worked to consolidate the *mwami*'s rule and create the Tutsi elite as a privileged

class. At the same time, however, popular forms circulated on the hillsides that borrowed from and also fed into elite genres. Although it is a truism to claim that Rwanda has always had one culture, in the past – and to this day – different ethnic groups have been associated with particular music and dance styles that reflected regional and occupational differences. After the Hutu Revolution all things “Tutsi” were more or less banned, yet Tutsi artists in the diaspora kept their culture alive. Music by Kayirebwa, Samputu, and Masamba united exiled Tutsi and helped the RPF raise funds for its military activities. Within Rwanda popular music spoke of love, relationships, and everyday life. Some artists used their songs to indirectly critique an increasingly violent and corrupt regime. Yet these same artists were killed during the genocide as some Rwandans, incited by Hutu Power propaganda broadcast on RTLM, participated in the killings.

It is this complex and conflicted heritage that young musicians after the genocide were forced to confront and work through. Much as the new *abarokore* pastors claimed they were making a “complete break” (Meyer 1998; Meyer 1999) with the Catholic Church, so too did young artists attempt to break with the older generation of politicised musicians such as Bikindi. In order to enact this break many of them emphasized the fact that they had rebuilt the modern music industry from “zero”. As Miss Jojo, a pioneering female singer, told me:

Before the genocide, there wasn’t really a strong musical culture. There were some groups, some *orchestres* that could do shows here and there, but...it wasn’t something that people really appreciated or gave value to. When we began, it was like breaking out of nowhere, we were putting the foundation, if I can say.

Rafiki made a similar observation:

Now you know the history of Rwanda, so many artists were killed in the genocide. And others, those who are alive, were involved in the genocide. Some stayed outside the country, others are in jail. So we had to start from zero. Even their music, we call it *igisope*, which means it’s a music from before the genocide, it

means [after the genocide] there was another beginning. Other countries, you had old musicians, young musicians, music continues like that. But for us we had a period where music stopped. There was no music in Rwanda. To many young artists the genocide was understood not only as a political and spiritual rupture (see Chapter 2) but a cultural and musical one as well. Popular artists had created genocidal propaganda songs that had helped to destroy the country; in the post-genocide era young artists made songs to rebuild it and, in the process, attempted to redeem the medium of music itself. Many young artists started out singing in the church or joining modern dance groups. The need to make music that expressed a specifically Rwandan experience and identity eventually led to the creation of the modern music industry in the mid-2000s. Much like *igisope* orchestres before them, groups such as KGB sang about everyday life. Rafiki and Mani Martin, on the other hand, focused on themes of peace.

Yet here too the attempted “break” brought its own challenges. Unlike hiplife in Ghana (Shipley 2013), “urban grooves” in Zimbabwe (Mate 2012), kwaito in South Africa (Steingo 2005), kuduro in Angola (Sheridan 2014; Young 2012) or Zouglou in Côte d’Ivoire (Schumann 2013; 2012), no identifiable “modern” post-genocide musical genre had emerged. The local music scene was characterised instead by the localising of global genres through Kinyarwanda lyrics that addressed the specific life experiences and hardships of the country’s youth. Hip hop artists rapped about corruption (*ruswa*) and railed against socio-political inequalities found in the “new” Kigali (*Kigali nysha*). R&B and Afrobeat artists focused on the trials and tribulations of romantic love (*urukundo*), while gospel singers concentrated on praising God (*guhimbaza Imana*), as we saw in Chapter 2. Music technology made it easier than ever before to imitate Western artists and genres, prompting debates about the loss of Rwandan cultural and musical identity. BzB, one of the country’s earliest music producers, put this genre lack to me plainly: “We don’t have a

Rwandan style, apart from the cultural, traditional music. But traditional music is traditional music – we need to have our own style”. Artists were also called up to perform at various state events, revealing the ongoing politicisation and instrumentalisation of music.

The perceived absence of a dominant “modern” musical genre reveals, I suggest, the difficulties and complexities of defining Rwandan identity more broadly in a post-genocide context of quiet insecurity. Given that the old markers of identity in Rwanda – ethnicity, region, and clan – have become taboo under the state’s inclusive *banyarwanda* policy, young Rwandans struggled to find their voice in a context wherein the past had become highly politicised and the state was calling on young people to “*hanga umurimo*”, create their own work, in a neoliberal economic system that seemed to privilege only a few. In their musical aspirations young people refused to be defined by their *amateka mabi* (bad history) and looked instead for new ways to “be” Rwandan. As the singer and producer Pastor P told me, describing the “message” (*ubutumwa*) of his music:

I want people to feel proud of Rwanda, Rwandese to be proud of Rwanda... You know the genocide, some people were scared to say I’m Rwandese. [Everyone] knows this bad history. The bad history happened, but we’re still Rwandese. That bad thing happened but we have good things also. So me, my music is like to love where you’re from, to love each other.

By making music – or covering the local music industry as entertainment journalists and radio presenters – young Rwandans were attempting to rework their country’s past and create new lives and futures for themselves on their own terms. In this way they asserted a quiet agency to help alleviate their experiences of quiet insecurity.

In the next chapter I examine the musical genre that had begun to dominate the country’s airwaves and popular imagination: Kinyarwanda hip hop.

Chapter 6

Giving messages to small people: The temporalities of hip hop identity

In the last chapter I considered the birth of the post-genocide music industry as a way for young Rwandans to create new identities for themselves amidst the complexities of post-genocide life, which I explore through the concept of quiet insecurity. In this chapter I consider the genre that had come to dominate the musical landscape during my fieldwork: Kinyarwanda-language rap and hip hop. In some ways Kinyarwanda hip hop was both the loudest and “quietest” intervention on the country’s music scene. Rappers self-consciously styled themselves as “truth” tellers and articulated vastly different narratives from the forward-looking developmentalist 2020 “vision” constructed by the state. Yet their songs were in no way directly political. They did not name and criticise leading political figures, for example, or call upon young Rwandans to rise up against the state. Rather, the “truth” they told was much more “local” and intimate: they spoke about the hardships, suffering, and anxieties of everyday life, and implicitly – and occasionally *explicitly* – encouraged listeners to contrast this with the “progress” supposedly offered by the RPF. While the government projected an image of Kigali as a city of shiny new buildings, clean roads, and unparalleled business opportunities, rappers described it as a capital of vice, wars, and Illuminati. “Welcome to the world of evil people, traitors, unreliable people, crazy people, ill-wishers, and witches” (*Kaze neza mw’isi y’abagome, mw’isi y’abagambanyi, mw’isi y’abajyambazi, mw’isi y’ibisazi, mw’isi y’abateramwaku, mw’isi y’abarozi*), Ama-G the Black raps to a new-born baby in his hit song “Uruhinja”. This was the life young

Rwandans could expect to inhabit rather than one of high-speed “connection”, security (*umutekano*), and, indeed, even peace and reconciliation.⁹⁰

The growth of hip hop in Africa in the 1990s, as many commentators have noted, has transformed the genre into “one of the most relevant cultural forms of expression for African youth” (Charry 2012:1; see also Saucier 2011a). It has come to represent “the dreams, self-understandings, and projects of self-making of an entire generation” (Schulz 2012:129). This is no less the case for Rwanda. Unlike other studies of hip hop in Africa, however, I am wary of claiming that the genre was the same thing to all people. I suggest instead that hip hop constructed diverse, divergent, and complicated messages (*abatumwa*) whose meanings were not immediately apparent, and that this reveals both the heterogeneity of young peoples’ lives in the post-genocide period and the complex tactics young people have developed to cope with and navigate it. While some artists considered music as a way to a “good” life and new opportunities, consoling and offering hope to listeners, others celebrated a youth-driven consumer culture of drinking, partying, and sexual encounters. While some spoke of personal sadness and suffering, creating what I call a “musical style of sorrow” (*injyana y’agahinda*), others took inspiration from Rwanda’s past to create powerful personas. This breakdown can in part be attributed to the two main styles of hip hop in the country – “old school” versus “new school” – but this division was not absolute. Elements of one seeped into the other.

In this chapter, then, I examine how hip hop created new “bottom-up” forms of Rwandan identity outside of the top-down *banyarwanda* identity imposed by the state

⁹⁰ On November 13, 2014, 4G LTE was launched in Rwanda allowing Rwandans to “enjoy the fastest internet there is” (Mugisha and Mwai 2014). The service is currently only available in Kigali but will be rolled out nation-wide within the next three years.

through its various civic programmes, from *ingando* and *itorero* to *umuganda* and the Agaciro Development Fund. It was in this regard that hip hop intersected with the new *abarokore* churches. As I argued earlier, the post-genocide Pentecostal churches provided new ways to “be” Rwandan amidst the quiet insecurity of the post-genocide period. Hip hop, I suggest, fulfilled a similar role but unlike the mono-ethnic nature of Pentecostal discourse and practice, the community it imagined was much more inclusive, built on the communal “truth” of struggle and “pity” lives. Unlike the country’s political system, which was dominated by Tutsi returnees from Uganda, music seemed to have less of an ethnic ceiling. In this chapter I focus in particular in the temporalities of hip hop, and how it reworked the past to reflect on the present and create new futures. One important way that it did this, I suggest, is through what I call critical or stubborn nostalgia – an engagement with a past one was supposed to forget.

I structure the chapter in the following way. I briefly consider the history of hip hop in the country, before moving on to consider the dynamics of fandom. I then examine in detail two popular hip hop songs – one “new school”, the other “old school” – to develop my concept of critical nostalgia. I conclude by considering the comments of one outspoken rapper who made very clear the politics that were at stake beneath the cryptic and “veiled” language of Kinyarwanda rap.

While I suggest that hip hop provides indirect critique of the current political system, I must also stress that rappers were very much embedded within it. All of the rappers mentioned in this chapter have performed, at one moment or another, for the state. Most notably, Jay Polly performed at the 25th anniversary celebration of the RPF, which took place at Amahoro Stadium in Kigali in December 2012, alongside Nigerian duo P

Square. He also performed in July 2014, along with Nigerian artist Davido, at the country's Liberation Day celebrations. Rather than assume that the state controls the meaning of artists' songs and performances, however, we can examine instead, following, Nyamnjoh and Fokwang, "how musicians, politicians and political communities all strive to appropriate each other in different ways and contexts" (2005:253). While artists may "entertain repression", they can also bring their own "swagger" to these performances through dress, language, and bodily gestures.⁹¹ Some artists transformed state discourse into slang, redirecting it to address their own life circumstances. Here we see the two-way process of appropriation: while the state attempted to harness the star power of young artists to drum up support for its policies, the stars themselves also promoted, in an admittedly much more limited fashion, their own (aspirational and entrepreneurial) agendas.

Hip hop in Rwanda: A brief history

How did hip hop arrive in Rwanda? Given the genre's recent rise to prominence, tracing its origins had become a popular activity in the local media, both in English and Kinyarwanda. Local journalists dated hip hop's introduction to the early 1980s through a DJ and presenter for Radio Rwanda, DJ Berry (Nsabimana Abdul Aziz), but the "then environment" of the time – i.e. the Habyarimana government – reportedly prevented hip hop from flourishing (Mbabazi 2008a; Ibambe 2014). After the genocide, as I detailed in the last chapter, the

⁹¹ I'm thinking here of the recent song, "EDPRS", which was commissioned by the government to promote the second phase of the country's Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS). The song, a collaboration between R&B singer Knowles and rappers Jay Polly and Riderman, encourages Rwandans to work together to build their country. The accompanying video of the song features the artists wearing hard hats and construction apparel. Yet in some of the shots Riderman is pictured wearing a t-shirt with Ibisumizi, the name of his studio and recording label, emblazoned on the front. Just as the government used artists to promote its development agenda, so too did artists use the government to promote their musical brands.

opening of the country's airwaves and new private recording studios allowed the local music industry to grow at a remarkable speed. Hip hop in particular benefited from this liberalisation of the country's radio stations. Indeed, Charry remarks that the privatization of radio in many African countries in the 1990s was a "key factor" of hip hop's growth, "broadening the audience and serving as an outlet to stimulate local creativity" (2012:15). In the mid-1990s rappers such as Tupac Shakur and MC Solaar became popular amongst Rwandan youth (Ibambe 2014). Local journalists claimed that the first Rwandan hip hop song was a 1997 track called "Peaced Up" by KP Robinson, featuring MC Monday Assoumani. While hip hop artists and fans I knew made no mention of Robinson – instead, they claimed to have been inspired by local rappers who came later, notably DMS and MC Mahoni Boni – MC Monday went on to become an influential radio presenter.⁹² His programme, "Duteze imbere umusike munyarwanda", broadcast on private radio station Radio 10 from 2004 to 2011, was considered one of the first to promote local music.

MC Monday's early career, however, sparked controversy. I outline it briefly here as it demonstrates the contentious relationship between the state and popular music. Apart from "Peaced Up", MC Monday made his name as a solo artist through the song "Inyoni" (Birds). The song, however, attracted widespread criticism, most notably from President Kagame. Released in the mid-2000s, "Inyoni" was couched as a playful children's song yet its indirect, suggestive lyrics led listeners to believe its meaning was decidedly sexual. (MC Monday, for his part, has always vigorously denied this.) During a press conference Kagame was reportedly asked about the role of music in contributing to Rwanda's development. He scoffed at the idea and accused contemporary artists of making trivial

⁹² DMS was said to be living in DR Congo; MC Mahoni Boni had moved to Holland in 2009.

nonsense, using “Inyoni” as his example. “Inyoni” was never formally banned but local radio stations stopped playing it and MC Monday’s career as an artist stalled. In 2012 he changed his name to Saga Assou Gashumba, allegedly so he could continue his musical career without further “obstacle” (*nkomyi*) (Ibambe 2014).

Ironically, although Kagame’s dismissal of “Inyoni” meant the downfall of MC Monday’s performing career, it gave artists who came after him more room to manoeuvre. Since the popular music industry was perceived to be frivolous, existing in a sphere separate from politics, artists were more or less left alone if they did not directly critique the country’s political system. There were, however, exceptions to this. Popular musician Benjamin Rutabana, for example, who had been a soldier with the RPF from 1990 to 1995 and later composed and performed pro-RPF songs, was jailed in 2000 (Burnet 2012:119–120). He was accused of supporting a monarchist opposition group known as *ingabo z’umwami* (army of the king), which was rumoured to be organising in Uganda at the end of the 1990s with the goal of invading the country and installing the king as leader (Burnet 2012:119–121). Viewing the group as a threat to its power, the RPF arrested known supporters, including Rutabana and the then speaker of the National Assembly, Joseph Kabuye Sebarenzi. Rutabana was reportedly only released after he agreed “to sing his pro-RPF songs, to do a national tour sponsored by MTN Rwandacell...and to avoid associating with opposition members” (Burnet 2012:121). Rutabana fled into exile in Europe in 2004. In May 2014, it was reported that he had joined the ranks of the opposition party, the Rwanda National Congress (RNC), based in South Africa (IGIHE 2014). He was allegedly voted in as head of the commission responsible for education and culture.

Given this history, censorship was often self-imposed rather than externally enforced. Indeed, McCoy calls this practice “coerced self-censorship”, which, because it is not official, “has the appearance of resulting from a bottom-up consensus” (2013:330). Artists knew exactly how far they could push the boundaries of what could and could not be said. I once asked a popular rapper if he felt he could say everything he wanted to in his music. “No, they’ll kill me!” he exclaimed. Yet compared to the RPF’s iron grip on the political landscape and the mainstream media, Rwanda’s music industry and entertainment press were relatively unregulated, and rappers, as we will see, had developed complex linguistic tactics to “hide” the true meanings of their songs. (This was to change with the arrest of Mihigo, as I discuss in the Conclusion.) The government body ostensibly most concerned with music, The Ministry of Sports and Culture (MINISPOC), was routinely derided for being out of touch with the country’s youth. When it attempted to intervene directly into the country’s music scene, it was frequently ignored. In November 2012, for example, MINISPOC released a statement condemning local artists for failing to respect Rwandan cultural values. The statement came at the conclusion of Culture Week (*icyumweru cy’umuco*), a week of activities and concerts aimed at preserving Rwandan culture and protecting it from “outside” influences (*imico ikomoka ahandi*). Artists and journalists were called upon to promote Rwandan culture (*guteza imbere umuco*), and certain artists were criticised for delivering “unclear words” (*amagambo ateye urujijo*) in their songs and releasing “shameful music videos” (*amashusho y’urukozasoni*). MINISPOC seemed especially keen on censoring the sexual content of popular music, and singled out ten songs in particular for condemnation. Artists targeted were some of the most

well-known and respected in the country: coga king Rafiki, R&B songstress Knowles, Afrobeat group Urban Boys, and singer Miss Shanel.

Despite this official disapproval, however, many of the songs cited continued to receive heavy airplay on the country's radio stations and none of the artists mentioned suffered a dip in popularity. In fact, one of the offending songs, "Bagupfusha ubusa" (They are Wasting You) by Rwandan All Stars⁹³, went on to win "Song of the Year" at the local Salax Awards, Rwanda's equivalent of the Grammys. Although popular rapper Riderman was listed twice on MINISPOC's list – for his song "Umukaraza" (The Drummer) and for being featured on the song "Arankurura" (She Attracts Me) by fellow rapper Neg G – he went on to win Season 3 of the Primus Guma Super Star competition (PGGSS), the country's preeminent popular music competition. Government directives, in other words, were not blindly followed. Indeed, soon after MINISPOC's statement was released I was in a local studio with an R&B singer. He was recording a song with "sexy" lyrics, he told me – the chorus spoke of caresses and romantic love – in order to show MINISPOC just how "unclear" his lyrics could be. "If they want sexy, I'll give them sexy!" he declared. (The song, however, was never released.)

If "Inyoni" had helped to create an image of post-genocide popular music as depoliticised fluff, early rappers were criticised for being "un-Rwandan". Like many pioneering hip hop artists elsewhere, they were accused of mimicking an immoral foreign style that was associated with drugs, gangs, alcohol, sex, and criminal activity. "It was like we were in a war, in a battle, fighting with other styles", rapper Jay Polly, who had started

⁹³ Rwandan All Stars was not a set group but rather the name used when well-known artists came together for a particular collaboration. "Bagupfusha ubusa" featured King James, Princess Priscilla, Fireman, Uncle Austin, Safi from the Afrobeat group Urban Boys, and Ama G the Black.

rapping in 2004 when he was in secondary school, told me. Indeed, as Barbara, a local entertainment journalist, recalled: “I remember the time that hip hop songs would hardly get played on the radio. People wanted R&B, those things. But these guys fought, they fought! No one wanted to hear them. They fought and started releasing songs that talked about their problems”. Not only were rappers considered of questionable moral character, their street-savvy fashion sense was considered an affront to Rwandans’ more conservative dress styles. “Male artists wear oversized clothes with heavy necklaces hanging along on their necks and huge fingerings” (Mbabazi 2008a), one early article proclaimed. “While as their sister vocalists wear extremely tight clothes or go almost half naked, all in the name of fame”. The moralising – and disapproving – tone here was telling.

Public opinion slowly started shifting, however, when listeners began paying closer attention to rappers’ lyrics. Unlike the country’s pop singers, who sang about love and relationships, rappers claimed to speak about the “realities” of everyday life. They accused R&B singers of being “liars” and positioned themselves as truth-tellers. (R&B singers bristled at this characterisation, and many of them told me their songs could also be considered social commentaries as they sang about poverty and fractured familial relationships.) Riderman, whom I mentioned above, summed up this viewpoint for me:

We [rappers in Rwanda] talk about realities. The R&B singers, the Afrobeat singers, they sing always about love, “I love you so much. I will do this, I will do that”. But we as rappers, we think; we rap about reality. We talk about things that happen. There are so many things that are not going very good in this country, and we see that and we talk about that. So I think that people love to listen to that reality.

Just as the *abarokore* defined themselves against Catholics, so too did rappers define themselves against R&B and Afrobeat singers. Yet, as I discuss below, the community they

imagined was inclusive rather than exclusive, based less on the “hidden dynamics” of ethnic identity.

Rwandicising hip hop: The new school and the old school

Like their contemporaries elsewhere on the continent, Rwandan rappers were at pains to localize – in this case “Rwandacise” – hip hop (Charry 2012:3–4). In Ghana, Shipley observes that young rappers “infuse the direct bravado of hip-hop with traditional respectful oratory and familiar highlife rhythms, legitimizing it in the eyes of a broader Ghanaian public” (2013:4). West African rappers style themselves as “modern griots” (Tang 2012; Appert 2011) and Malian rappers claim their inspiration from *baara*, the traditional musical genre of youth critique (Schulz 2012:137). While Jay Polly was inspired by American rappers such as Nas, Biggie, and Tupac, he also claimed that Rwandan hip hop was unique because it spoke to the specific life circumstances of Rwanda. “Our hip hop is different from their [American] hip hop because life [here] is different”, he told me. Rappers also often claimed that hip hop was a modern form of the traditional oral genre of *kwivuga*, which involved bragging about one’s exploits. (The literal translation of *kwivuga* is “to speak of oneself”.) One form of *kwivuga* was *ibyvugo*, warrior praise poetry. In the past, *ibyvugo* were performed as uninterrupted flows of words in a wide variety of contexts, from the battlefield (before, during, and after combat); hunting sessions (*umuhigo*); and recreational evening gatherings (*inkera*) (Ganseman 1988:16; Barber 2007:63–4).

Warriors were taught how to compose *ibyvugo* during *itorero*, military and cultural training camps, and, unlike other forms of traditional poetry, *ibyvugo* were not restricted to Tutsi but rather every Rwandan man “had a praise poem which he composed and declaimed himself” (Barber 2007:63). Despite their ubiquity, however, *ibyvugo* were not created in a

“popular” or easily accessible style; they were obscure and allusive “name-like epithets” that required “insider knowledge” to be deciphered (Barber 2007:64). As we will see, contemporary hip songs were equally cryptic, but their obscurity was in part due to their heavy use of Kinyarwanda slang.

There were two main genres of hip hop in Rwanda during my fieldwork: “old school” and “new school”. This division can be traced back to hip hop’s inception in the United States. Whereas “old school” American rappers were concerned with social consciousness and speaking truth to power, “new school” rappers were more concerned with celebrating consumer culture. This distinction has also transferred to the continent, taking on local inflections. In Tanzania, “old school” hip hop dominated from the mid-1980s to 1999, when the genre was first establishing itself; the “new school” emerged after 2000, when business interests and rap became intertwined (Casco 2006:232). While the “old school” rappers tended to focus on social issues, the “new school” is more concerned with the “sunny side of life” (Casco 2006:233–4). Similarly, in South Africa, “old skool” hip hop – politically conscious hip hop that originated in Cape Town in the 1980s and spoke out against apartheid – has been defined against the “new skool”, which emerged after the end of apartheid and has often been criticised for its frivolity and commercialisation (Becker and Dastile 2008:21; see also Watkins 2012).

In Rwanda the rappers of Tuff Gang were considered “old school”, and rappers such as Rideman and Danny Nanone were considered “new school”.⁹⁴ “Old school” hip hop songs were said to articulate the hardships of everyday life, and “new school” hip hop was more concerned with making people dance and having fun. When I asked Danny Nanone to

⁹⁴ Tuff Gang was composed of Jay Polly, Green P, Bulldogg, and Fireman.

describe the difference between old school and new school rappers, he told me it was a matter of both beat and lyrical content. Old school rappers used simple beats, while new school rappers tried to incorporate more musical elements. They also tackled different subject matter. “If you rap new school, you try to say what you see right now, the money you get, there is many swags”, Nanone explained. “But in old school they try to rap about life; it’s only about life. You talk about the hard things only. But now new school, it’s like easy life; there are not complicated things like that”. Indeed, one of Nanone’s most well-known songs, a collaboration with R&B singer Christopher, was “Iri joro” (Tonight). It is more or less a love song, with the speaker imploring a young woman to dance with him.

Yet the division between “old school” and “new school” in Rwanda, however, was not fixed. Although Riderman wrote songs about drinking, dancing, and partying – one of his hit songs, “Bombori Bombori”, encourages listeners to “Jump, go up to the sky, dance, have fun” (*Simbuka jya mubirere byina widagadure*) – he was equally respected for the “messages” of his songs. I discuss one of these songs, “Umurashi”, below.

Fandom: Speaking for “small people” and the music of sorrow

Rappers’ claims to represent the people were not empty bravado. Hip hop was said to have “conquered the hearts” (*yigaruriye imitima*) of fans (*abafana*) in the country. This popularity was reflected in the line-up of the Primus Guma Guma Super Star (PGGSS) Season 2 competition: five out of the 10 contestants, who were already considered the most popular artists in Rwanda, were rappers.⁹⁵ When I asked young people what attracted them to rap, they almost always responded in the same manner. Hip hop, they told me, gave “good messages” and described “everyday” or “natural” life in Rwanda. Perullo has

⁹⁵ These artists were Riderman, Jay Polly, Bulldogg, Young Grace, and Danny Nanone.

observed a similar process in Tanzania, where rap songs are evaluated based on whether or not they have “strong messages” (*ujumbe mkali*) for the country’s youth (2005:79; see also Fenn 2012). Unlike the government, Rwandan fans did not find the messages found in hip hop songs “unclear” but rather believed they spoke to their particular life circumstances. Tagging along to PGGSS 2 events and roadshows across the country, I was struck by the devotion young fans had to their favourite artists.

At the PGGSS 2 Muhanga roadshow in the summer of 2012, for example, I encountered a contingent of fans from the Jay Polly Muhanga Fan Club. Members had decorated a car with a large banner and photos of the rapper, and were driving around in the parking lot of the concert venue to show their support. After criss-crossing the parking lot several times, they stopped the car and climbed out, revealing themselves to be clad in white golf shirts with Jay Polly’s photo on the front. A small crowd gathered around them, and they began posing for photos beside the car, making a “T” with their arms, placing the fist of one arm into the forearm of the other. This “T” was for Tuff Gang, the rap crew of which Jay Polly was a member. Whenever a Tuff Gang rapper performed, he made the “T” on stage and fans made it back at him in a bodily call and response. Making the gesture involved a certain amount of aggression and signalled that one was equally as “tuff” as the crew’s rappers. In a similar vein, fans of the rapper Riderman wore caps and t-shirts with the logo of Ibisumizi, Riderman’s studio, printed on the front.⁹⁶ Hip hop involved various processes of self-fashioning to create a community not of the saved, as we saw with the *abarokore* churches, but of devoted fans. In this way fandom created what Fenn has called

⁹⁶ This was not limited to rappers. Near the end of my fieldwork the Afrobeat group Urban Boys opened the studio Super Level and began wearing clothing with the name on it.

“musical sociality”, or “ways for building peer networks and identities via participation in popular music cultures” (2012:109).

I struck up a conversation with one of the fan club’s members, Patrick, who was 25 years old. He told me that the fan club had started with the first PGGSS competition and that it included hundreds of members. When I asked him why he loved Jay Polly, he responded: “The message, he gives the message to work hard and live peacefully, especially for small people. And maybe he’s personally had a very bad life, that’s why when he repeats the life he spent, you hear the message”. Ironically, although hip hop was considered “the musical style of anger” (*injyana y’umujinya*) due to its aggressive aesthetic, it was more often than not what I call the musical style of sorrow (*injyana y’agahinda*). Indeed, Jay Polly’s music spoke of very personal loss and suffering. In his hit song “Akanyarirajisho” (A Thorn in my eye), for example, the speaker begins by declaring: “I need some volume to tell about the sorrow I have because of my sister” (*Nyongerera ijwi cyane mvuge agahinda mfite nterwa na sister wanjye*). He then goes on to describe how his sister contracted HIV. (In the accompanying music video, Jay Polly appears carrying a large wooden cross that he then plants in a cemetery as a grave marker.) His parents had also died of the disease and the speaker explains how he tried to protect his sister from the same fate, to no avail. Despite these difficult circumstances, he vows to stand by her. As the chorus goes: “Don’t cry, ease your heart/I will walk by you all your days here on earth/I feel what you went through/It is like a thorn in my eye” (*Hora ceceka wibabaza umutima/Uru rugendo ufite kw’isi ndacyakuri inyuma/Ibibazo wacyiyemo ni ingaruka zingeraho/Ni nk’akanyarirajisho*).

For fans who were orphans – quite a sizeable percentage of Rwanda’s population, after all – the song provided comfort and hope, assuring them that they were not alone in their sorrow. Here the “I” and the “you” were shifting: it could be interpreted as the speaker addressing his sister or as Jay Polly addressing the Rwandan public more generally. As Patrick’s remarks made clear, fans often employed the latter interpretation, seeing Jay Polly as the conduit through which the pain of their “bad lives” could be articulated. What was at stake in many of Jay Polly’s songs was a certain understanding of “voice” (Weiss 2009:206). His songs were seen not necessarily as “a means of speaking on behalf of some underrepresented voiceless constituency”, but rather as “a way of expressing a commitment to the truth of the reality that constituency lives” (Weiss 2009:206).

Similarly, in “Ndacyariho” (I’m Still Alive), the song that made Jay Polly a star, the rapper also speaks of sorrow, yet his tone is decidedly more defiant. The chorus goes:

<i>Ndacyariho ndahumeka</i>	I’m still alive and breathing
<i>Nahejwe kuva kera</i>	Kept away for a long time
<i>Ariko nakomeje imfuruka</i>	But now I’m the corner stone
<i>Mwe mwanteye agahinda</i>	You who made me feel sorrow
<i>Ntawari uziko naba kizigenza muri muzika</i>	Didn’t know I would rule music

Although the speaker has suffered, he refuses to be cowed by it, boldly declaring that he is still alive and breathing. Here music becomes the route to new opportunities, a chance to prove the speaker’s enemies wrong. Despite this aggressive tone, however, the speaker identifies himself with his comrades on the street and counsels them to work hard and strive towards the future. “Friends, don’t compare yourself with men of check books, you are hungry” (*Shumi ntushiduke ngo wigereranye n’abanyamasheki uri umushonji*), he warns. “If you’re still alive that’s your capital, start business” (*Kuba uriho nicyo gishoro tangira business*) he declares, and promises them that their lives will improve, that they may even

start school and succeed. It was these sorts of “messages” – of camaraderie forged in sorrow (*agahinda*); of working hard in spite of the obstacles; of music stardom as an alternative pathway to fortune and success – that had made Patrick such an ardent Jay Polly fan.

In this way pain is both an individually experienced emotion and a “social mode of consciousness” or “being-in-the-world” (Weiss 2009:120; see also my earlier discussion of Ahmed 2004). In his work on barbershops and popular culture in Tanzania, Weiss argues that the experience of pain can provide the possibility of agency. “To experience and self-consciously identify oneself as one who suffers is simultaneously an act of diminution and an assertion of entitlement”, he writes. “To have pain is to demonstrate oneself to be one who endures through adversity” (2009:122). When young Tanzanians identify with the pain of global rap artists such as Tupac Shakur, they participate in a “powerful global order of meanings and relations” (2009:126; see also Prestholdt 2009). It is here that a certain agency through subjugation can be discerned (see also Mahmood 2005). Identifying oneself as a subject in pain can ultimately be understood as “a potent claim to agency and self-construction” (Weiss 2009:129). In a context wherein only certain kinds of loss and experiences of pain can be spoken about in public, hip hop songs like “Akanyaririjisho” and “Ndacyariho” work to create a counterpublic of shared pain. This sense of shared suffering could create the possibility of social healing (Das and Kleinman 2001:19). Indeed, as Burnet has observed, one path to reconciliation in Rwanda is through “the mutual and empathetic exchange of stories about...individual suffering” (2012:173). In many ways hip hop songs performed this exchange on a national scale.

I now turn to explore two popular hip hop songs in greater detail and develop my concept of critical nostalgia.

“Umurashi” (The shooter): The reign of the street king

During my fieldwork, Riderman was one of the most popular rappers in the country. Like many of his peers, Riderman adopted an aggressive masculine persona in his music. Yet his song “Umurashi” (The shooter) stands out for the way it combines both modern consumer culture with Rwandan military history. Indeed, when Riderman performed the song during a “live” television broadcast of the PGGSS 2 competition in 2012, he did so wearing a white sleeveless hoodie, black combat boots, and sunglasses – all whilst brandishing a fake machine gun that he used to “shoot” into the crowd. In “Umurashi” the speaker seamlessly draws on both the past and the present, the “traditional” and the global, to assert a new form of Rwandan masculinity. Here the past is not a source of sorrow (*agahinda*), as we saw in the songs of Jay Polly, but rather of pride and cultural renewal.

Let’s begin by considering the chorus of “Umurashi”. It is here that the speaker declares his affinity for American commodities, particularly for the footwear often worn by American hip hop artists:

*Ndi umurashi nyawe
Imbunda yanjye yitwa mic
Amasasu yanjye ni ama flow kuri
flow
Nkunda icyitwa boot, Timberland,
cyangwa Nike
Nzaitwa karabaye menyereye
ikitwa so!*

I’m a real shooter
My gun’s name is mic
My bullets are flow after flow

I like boots, Timberland or Nike

I know the place Karabaye (watch
out)!

The speaker participates in a global American consumer culture, boasting that his favourite boots are Timberland and Nike. The successful American rapper and producer, Timbaland, after all, takes his name from the same boots. Yet at the same time that the speaker clothes

himself in the “symbolic repertory of U.S. hip hop culture” (Schulz 2012:138) he declares that he is the “leader of the soldiers called Ibisumizi/Revolutionaries coming to put down roots” (*Ndi umugabo w’ingabo zitwa Ibisumizi/Revolutioneri uje gushinga imizi*). Ibisumizi is the name of Riderman’s recording studio and music label, based in Nyamirambo. In an interview with the Kinyarwanda press, Riderman explained why he chose the name:

When I was a child growing up I loved reading books and then I fell upon a book about Ruganzu Ndoli. I read his history, I read that the era of Ndahiro Cyamatare ended and afterwards when Ruganzu came to rule in Rwanda there were many problems because at the time there was no leader in the country. Afterwards, Ruganzu create an army of ibisumizi to unite it so there would be peace, people were settled, cows gave birth...

Me I see Rwandan music, I see that much of it was destroyed, many things were not being done but could be done. I said am I not someone who can come in this war and change things by establishing a studio called Ibisumizi like Ruganzu came with Ibisumizi to bring peace in Rwanda, can I not bring Ibisumizi to give value (*agaciro*) to Rwandan music? (Selemani 2012)

Here Riderman claims that the country’s military past can be a source of reconciliation in the present and future.

While the RPF, as we have seen, has equally drawn on a certain reinterpretation of the country’s past to legitimise its various social engineering programmes – *gacaca*, *ingando*, and *itorero*, to name a few – “Umurashi” suggests that the past can also be drawn on for other ends. Let’s consider part of the second verse:

*I niga icigatiye inigi nyinshi mu
ijosi
Biroroshye guhita ubona ko mva
Ijosi
Ndi rusake mbyuka bamwe bakiri
mu bitotsi
Ndi fire bityo aho ndi ntihabura
akotsi
Ntiza ikamba abana ngira ngo
batagambana*

A nigger with a lot of jewels
around my neck
When you see me you know
where I’m from: Ijosi⁹⁷
I’m the rooster, I wake up others
still sleeping
I’m the fire, where I am there’s
smoke
I lent my crown to kids to avoid
fighting

⁹⁷ Ijosi is a neighbourhood of Nyamirambo.

*Mbereke ko mbana nubwo bo
 badasabana
 Ntibashaka kubyumva bityo ngiye
 kuribambura
 Next album izaba yitwa
 Kwibambura
 Ndi umwami waryamye igihe
 kirageze mbyuke
 Nk'inda ikuze igihe kirageze
 mvuke*

*Nka Ruganzu Ndori umunsi ajya
 gucika Karagwe
 Ngo atabare Rwoga abaturage be
 ntibahagwe
 Maze iminsi masha mbasha mu
 ishyamba ntari gutashya
 Ndi tayari ubu haduyi ndi hafi
 kumuhashya
 Imyambi ndi nayo, imiheto
 impembe ndazihuza
 Ikintu ndagifata défaut yanjye
 nugutinda kuza*

To show them I share even if they
 don't do so
 They don't want to listen; now
 I'm taking it back
 My next album will be called
 Kwibambura [The King wakes up]
 I'm a king who slept for a long
 time
 Now it's time to wake up, like a
 completed pregnancy it's time to
 be born
 Like King Ruganzu Ndori the day
 he left Karagwe
 to save Rwoga and his people

 I've been long in the forest
 practicing my skills
 I'm ready, I'm about to take down
 the enemy
 Arrows I have, I can stretch bows
 to the maximum
 The only mistake: I'm taking too
 long to attack

We can see here that the song references and reworks Rwandan history in a very explicit manner. The speaker frames his lyrical prowess through the language of global hip hop – he brags that he wears multiple “jewels” around his neck – *and* the history of the Tutsi monarchy. Not only is he the rooster (*urusake*), he is also the king (*umwami*) with the crown (*ikamba*). His next album will be called “Kwibambura”, the verb used exclusively to denote the waking up of the king. (The verb used for commoners is *kwikangura*.) Indeed, as early anthropologist Maquet noted, there was a special vocabulary for the king and his everyday practices, which underscored the fact that his daily activities and objects “were fundamentally different from what they were for ordinary people” (1954:146). In addition to *kwibambura*, there were also special words to say “it is raining on the hut of the king”; “the bed of the king”; and “the house of the king” (1954:146).

In the verses quoted above, Riderman focuses on a specific moment in the country's history: the day King Ruganzu Ndori left Karagwe to save Rwoga and his people. Ruganzu Ndori is credited for founding the Nyiginya kingdom in the late 17th century (Vansina 2004). Newbury reports that Ruganzu's reign was characterized by military expansion as the king conquered "all the areas now included within the postcolonial state of Rwanda" (2011a:xxxiii). When Ruganzu settled in central Rwanda, he also "co-opted" local authorities to become the Nyiginya kingdom's hereditary ritualists, which allowed for the "convergence" of military and ritual power, particularly through the crafting of a new drum as "the symbol of royalty" (2011a:xxxiii). In this way, Ruganzu's reign was associated with "the construction of royalty itself" (2011a:xxxiii). Indeed, in the first verse the speaker of "Umurashi" declares: "I decide the men through the drum of Rwoga/I am the prince of princes melting down the Enemy" (*Ndirugambirira abagabo wo ku ngoma ya Rwoga/ Ndi igisonga gisonga umwanzi agashonga*).

While drawing on a "traditional" African past to create hip hop personas in the present is a common feature of the genre on the continent, what is notable about Riderman's use of history is that it diverges from the government's politically motivated interpretation of the past (see Chapter 1). Unlike Riderman's interest in and celebration of Rwanda's former kings (*abami*), the RPF is less keen to embrace them. Although the monarchy was abolished in 1961, the last king, Kigeli V Ndahindurwa, is still alive, living in exile in America (Sabar 2013). Yet, as we saw with the arrest of Ben Rutabana, advocating for his return can lead to imprisonment and exile. Longman argues that the RPF sees the monarchy as a "threat" because it has "come to be seen potentially as a source of moderation and ethnic reconciliation" (Sabar 2013). In a recent study, Watkins and Jessee

(2014:22) observe that Rwanda's current political climate requires an ambivalent approach to the monarchy: enthusiastically supporting it could signal "dissatisfaction" with the current RPF state yet outright condemnation could suggest clinging to the genocidal ideology of the former regimes. They conclude that "the general reticence surrounding how ordinary Rwandans speak about the monarchy in public settings exposes the fear that characterizes everyday life in post-genocide Rwanda" (2014:24).

While I am inclined to agree with Watkins and Jessee that "fear" does indeed govern everyday life in post-genocide Rwanda – although quiet insecurity, as I have argued, is a much more helpful framework – "Umurashi" suggests a complex engagement with the country's past. Although the song in no way supports the return of the king, it appropriates royal history and symbols to create a powerful hip hop persona in the present. This appropriation and re-imagining takes place in a very public way: through a hip hop song played over the country's airwaves and broadcast on RTV, the national television station. The song suggests that young rappers have developed creative modes of engaging with the country's past, present, and future, which seem a far cry from the "reticence" claimed by Watkins and Jessee. It is precisely rappers' ability to do so that gains them the admiration of fans.

It is not only in content that "Umurashi" makes reference to Rwandan history and tradition. We can see "Umurashi" as a modern form of *ibyvugo*, discussed above. Instead of wearing the traditional garb of an *intore* (warrior), the speaker of the song claims the microphone as his weapon, rap flows as his bullets, and Timberland boots or Nike shoes as his armour. The intricacies of courtly Kinyarwanda are replaced by street-wise Kinyarwanda slang. Indeed, as much as the speaker relies on Rwandan history, he also

declares himself a “street boy” (*wu’imuhanda*) and a “hustler” (*ikirara*) who “eats dirt” (*jye umwanda niwo nariye*). The two personas – king and streetboy – are not in conflict, but rather fuse into one, creating the possibility of a sort of street king who can speak for and represent the marginalised. Here his legitimacy is based not on ethnic lineage, as under the Tutsi monarchy, but rather on popular support. What binds young Rwandans together, the song seems to suggest, is the experience of hardship and street life. In some ways too we can see Rideman’s use of a warrior aesthetic as a way to reframe violence in the country. Instead of being associated exclusively with the genocide, it becomes part of Rwanda’s longer history of military conquest and expansion. It suggests a new form of (male) subjectivity for the post-genocide era: one that derives confidence and “swagger” from knowledge of the country’s past yet articulates it through the aspirational flows and style of global hip hop.

Despite an inclusive street identity, however, the song also seems to leave no place for women. In the second verse, the speaker addresses a woman, telling her that he’s too busy to spend time with her. He has other things to do. “In my projects none includes a wedding” (*Mu mishanga yanjye ntihabarizwa iby’ubukwe*), he declares. “Please go away, don’t come near/You’ll end up hurting yourself” (*Fata inzira caha wiza unsanga/Hato utibabariza umushaha*). He is too busy fighting to bother with romantic relationships; women are distractions who want to tie men down with marriage. The gender politics of hip hop here are patriarchal. I take up women’s role in the music industry – and the challenges they encounter over cultural notions of what a “proper” Rwandese girl should and should not do – in the next chapter.

Furthermore, although the speaker proudly boasts of his love of Timberlands and Nikes, accessing brand-name goods in Rwanda was not an easy matter. Most young Rwandans, even the country's stars, wore second-hand clothing from Kigali's markets, suggesting that although consumption "constitutes a site of seemingly unlimited opportunities for identity construction" it was ultimately one of "restricted access" (Schulz 2012:143; see also Hansen 1999).

We can see "Umurashi", then, as an example of how young rappers draw inspiration from Rwanda's pre-colonial history to work through the quiet insecurity they encountered in the present. The song creates an alternative "timescape" (Otto 2013) that offers the possibility of a more inclusive form of identity than the top-down *banyarwanda* identity imposed by the state. At the same time, however, women seem to play a marginal role in this process, suggesting a certain exclusivity based not on ethnicity but rather on gender.

"Bye-bye Nyakatsi": The dangers of the "new" Kigali

"Bye-bye Nyakatsi", by the Tuff Gang rapper Bulldogg, also draws on the country's past but in a decidedly different manner. Bulldogg, who began his music career while still in high school in Kigali in 2006, was known for tackling important social issues in his songs. A recent profile on a Kinyarwanda-language entertainment website described him as "an outspoken artist" who "speaks his mind on problems in the Rwandan music industry such as injustice and inequality" (Munyentwari 2013). His fans never tired of telling me how he was "good in Kinyarwanda", and one of the smartest rappers in the *agakino* (game). Born and raised in Kigali, he'd studied for a time at the National University of Rwanda in Butare, and was studying literature at the Kigali Institute of Education (KIE) during my fieldwork.

Before moving on to the song lyrics themselves, let's consider for a moment the enigmatic title of Bulldogg's song. What, we may ask, are *nyakatsi*? And why is Bulldogg using the phrase "bye-bye *nyakatsi*"? The answer to these questions reveals the song's (indirect) political engagement: *nyakatsi* are thatch-roofed houses and Bye-bye Nyakatsi was the name of a government programme to eradicate them. Inaugurated in 2008, the housing project – also called "Guca Nyakatsi" – was an effort to support "national social economic development".⁹⁸ The project was run by the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC), the Rwandan Defence Forces (RDF), and the Rwanda National Police (RNP), and formed part of the country's larger Vision 2020 programme, which, as we have seen, "aspires for Rwanda to become a modern, strong and a united nation, proud of its fundamental values, politically stable and without discrimination amongst its citizens".⁹⁹ More specifically, the Bye-bye Nyakatsi programme contributed to a nation-wide effort to reorganise communities, traditionally composed of rural homesteads scattered across hillsides, into clearly defined administrative units (*imidugudu*) that would allow for easier access to infrastructure, healthcare, and education. Yet to some, this forced villagization, which was introduced in 1996 supposedly for national security purposes, was yet another way the authoritarian RPF regime was enacting an aggressive "social engineering" programme (Straus and Waldorf 2011b). While some genocide survivors reportedly moved to *imidugudu* "to benefit from the safety of each other's company" (Buckley-Zistel 2006:143), to critics, the *imidugudu* policy ultimately "reinforced social tensions around land, often along ethnic lines" (Catharine Newbury 2011:235; see also Des Forges 2006).

⁹⁸ See Terms of reference guiding the campaign, (27 December 2010)
<<http://www.minaloc.gov.rw/index.php?id=514>>

⁹⁹ Ibid.

The implementation of Bye-Bye Nyakatsi policy attracted criticism. In some areas it was employed too swiftly – *nyakatsi* were destroyed before replacement housing could be built, leaving their previous occupants homeless (Kanuma 2011; Rwirahira 2010). Augustin Kampayana, the official in charge of the Bye-bye Nyakatsi project, was unapologetic. “[T]he people were sensitized long enough”, he declared. “They knew well in advance that they had to save money to buy iron sheets and to have bricks made, so for anyone to still be in *nyakatsi* up to now only means that it is in their general attitudes to prefer to live in grass thatched houses. Some of them just do not want to change, but we cannot let these drag everyone else back” (Kanuma 2011). Once again, the country’s citizens were being forcefully propelled into the bright developmentalist future regardless of their own thoughts or feelings on the matter. Criticising the Bye-bye Nyakatsi programme, after all, could lead to real-world consequences. During his Christmas sermon in December 2010, Abbé Emile Nsengiyumva, a Catholic priest at the parish of Karengé in eastern Rwanda, spoke out against the Bye-bye Nyakatsi housing programme and the government’s proposed restrictions on family planning. After the sermon, Nsengiyumva was arrested and charged with “endangering state security and inciting civil disobedience” (Human Rights Watch 2012). In July 2011, a court in Rwamagana sentenced him to 18 months in prison (Freedom House 2012).

With this background in mind, let’s consider the chorus and first two verses of Bulldogg’s song. “Bye-bye Nyakatsi” begins with Bulldogg introducing himself to the listener, listing a number of his aliases (El Patron, Buddha, the chameleon’s eye, etc.),

before the chorus, sung by a female artist named Gloria, kicks off.¹⁰⁰ Gloria sings the lines of the chorus, while Bulldogg raps the alternate lines, which I indicate below in brackets:

Chorus

*Ntabuzima bwiza nagira ntabwo
nagira
(nkiri muri nyakatsi)
Mfashe mu gitaro ndagitaye ni ko
bimeze
(Bye-bye nyakatsi!)
Nyorohera nyobora pfumbata
ntundekure nfasha ngere kure*

I can't have a good life, no I can't

(If I still live in *nyakatsi*)
I've got my bags ready, I've got to
go, that's the way it is
(*Bye-bye nyakatsi!*)
Be easy on me, guide me, hold
me, don't let me go, help me get
far

Verse 1

*Ubuzima: intambara,
amafaranga...ikibazo
Illuminati: shitani, ubutunzi...
ibitambo*

Life: wars, money, [it's] a
problem
Illuminati: the devil, riches,
sacrifices

*Imiryango: urubyaro, imirage,
abavandimwe, umwuka mubi,
amarozi... Kigali nshya hahahaha*

Family: offspring, inheritance,
siblings, tribulations, poisoning,
[that's] the new Kigali, hahaha!

Hangana: shotorana

Resist: provoke

*Kubara: shugurika, funga kamali,
kaza kimono, kora kata zawe... lala
salama*

Work hard: hustle, be alert, tie up
your kimono, do your kata, sleep
tight

*Garagara: fata ifoto, shyira mama
atazibagirwa*

Look good: take a picture, send it
to your mother so she doesn't
forget

*Iy'ibiremwa: panga ikironda, ok,
ok!*

The Creator: blesses who He
pleases, ok, ok!

*Sumba – sumbisha, risha –
rishisha, ngunda – gundira*

Get on top: create misbalance, eat
greens, feed whom you please;
greed, selfishness

*Buddha: zibukira, fraude: faux
papiers, polisi: ruswa*

Buddha: dodge, fraude [fraud],
faux papiers [fake documents],
police: corruption

¹⁰⁰ Bulldogg boasts of having more than 30 names. Notable names in English included Notorious, Motherboard, Database, Undertaker, and Viper.

*Infirmière: fénéante... abarwayi
bapfe!*

Infirmière: fénéante [nurse: lazy],
let patients die

Verse 2

*Technologie: iterambere,
Facebook: ibiganiro
Vision nshya: impinduka,
imyambarire... nyagasani...
Icyorezo*

Technologie [technology],
progress, Facebook: chat
New vision: change, new fashion,
Lord almighty, a virus

*Urugendo: SAR IK 4, Come
again: entretien*

A journey: SAR IK 4, Come
Again¹⁰¹, entretien [maintenance]

*Déception, oh lala, fuck me
good...*

Déception [deception], ohlala!
Fuck me good

*Yemwe munyobore, narinyobye,
mumpe umusada
Rastafari, El patron: peace and
love*

Oh I had gone astray, guide me,
help me
Rastafari, El Patron, peace and
love

*Fata kamwe, ca ubwenge, zura
umugara, zunguza umutwe
Kubita umugore, ntagikubitwa
natahe nzitunga*

Get a drink but be wise, man up

Hit a woman: no, that's taboo
nowadays, 'Let her leave, I'll be
fine'

Rwanda: swagger, Kigali: capitali

Rwanda, swagger, Kigali, the
capital

*Nta nyanga, nta ndaya, customer
care. Oh yeah!*

No haters, no bitches [prostitutes],
Customer care, oh yeah!

Using clever and humorous wordplay, "Bye-bye Nyakatsi" creatively juxtaposes

two conflicting images of Kigali and, in the process, unravels easy distinctions between the urban and the rural, the past and the present, the traditional and the modern. Although the chorus of the song seems to suggest that life will improve once the speaker says goodbye to his *nyakatsi* home – here representing the traditional/rural/past – the verses themselves suggest that the city does not provide much of an alternative. The "new Kigali" (Kigali

¹⁰¹ According to my co-translator Alex, SAR IK 4 is the address of the popular Kigali restaurant, Come Again.

nshya) is one of wars, money, Illuminati, the devil, riches, sacrifices, disgruntled family members, poison, greed, selfishness, fraud, corrupt police, lazy nurses, deception, disease, and violence – the list goes on and on. Even God is seen as biased, blessing whom He pleases. Indeed, as my friend Alex, who helped me translate the song, glossed it: “From having offspring to the drama that’s related to sharing inheritance till family members kill each other – this is what the speaker calls the new Kigali”. This image of the city is decidedly at odds with the official image of Kigali as one of the “safest and friendliest of African capitals”, the easiest place to do business in Sub-Saharan Africa (The World Bank 2014). Faced with this tumultuous social world, the speaker issues a number of directives: resist, provoke, work hard, hustle, tie your kimono, practice your kata, “man up”,¹⁰² and adopt a posture of “swagger”. Swagger, as numerous commentators have pointed out, is a common trope in global hip hop. Shipley, for example, writes that youth in Ghana adopt the “swagger and confidence” of African American rappers in order to cope with “daily frustration, lack of economic opportunity, and anxieties about social and sexual possibility” (2013:50). Here too the speaker suggests that “swagger” can allow one to navigate the quiet insecurity of the post-genocide present. In a world where there are real-world constraints on young men’s behaviour, the confident performance of swagger remains one of the only possible forms of masculine agency.

Yet even though the speaker performs an aggressive masculinity, gender relations are revealed to be unstable. “Hit a woman: no, that’s taboo nowadays”, the speaker declares

¹⁰² The Kinyarwanda phrase is “*zura umugara*”, which literally means “the mane of a lion rises up”. The saying was normally employed to remind someone – specifically a man – to be courageous. Yet *zura umugara* was also used in the chorus of a popular Afrobeat song, “Take it Off”, by the Rwandan boy band Urban Boys, featuring the Ugandan R&B diva Jackie Chandiru. In that song *zura umugara* had a decidedly sexual overtone: the man’s “mane” rises, the chorus goes, the moment he sets eyes on a woman.

in the second verse.¹⁰³ This line refers to the dramatic shifts in gender politics under the RPF, as we saw in Chapter 3. For men, women's newfound political empowerment was seen as a threat, with gender ultimately conceived as a zero-sum game. A man couldn't even beat his wife anymore without getting into trouble, the speaker complains. At the same time, however, the line reflects a more general sense of resentment that change was always imposed from the top down. Not only must Rwandans say goodbye to *nyakatsi*, new policies govern relationships between people, particularly between men and women. Here again the state entered into its citizens' private lives, dictating its own code of "appropriate" conduct.

Ultimately, the song's use of the phrase "Bye-bye Nyakatsi" is extremely ambivalent. It is, after all, an RPF slogan, a piece of government propaganda. Yet unlike, say, Tiken Jah Fakoly's 2000 song "Promesses de Caméléon" (Promises of the Chameleon), which incorporates a recording of a speech by military junta leader General Robert Gueï – the song's politics, Reed points out, are "about as far from oblique as one could be" (2012:101) – Bulldogg's use of "Bye-bye *Nyakatsi*" is in no way directly political. While he employs "the government's own propagandistic text to counter their very message" (Reed 2012:103), his song offers a much more layered, personal, and ambiguous critique. He juxtaposes the bright future of the RPF against the realities of the "new" Kigali, inviting the listener to reflect upon this discrepancy. The song, in fact, turns the government slogan into slang. It appropriates the phrase and imbues it with new meaning, allowing young people to articulate their disappointment and frustration that the country's development gains never seem to trickle down to them. Indeed, young people

¹⁰³ The literal translation of the line is: "Hit a woman, they are not hit anymore".

employed the phrase “Bye-bye Nyakatsi” in a number of unexpected settings and contexts: as a way to boo a performer off the stage, for example, or to celebrate successfully immigrating to the United States. Here they reincorporated government propaganda into the rhythms of their everyday lives on their own terms.

Critical nostalgia

I want to take my discussion a step further and suggest that hip hop songs such as “Umurashi” and “Bye-bye Nyakatsi” rework time in an important way. In particular, they articulate what I call a critical or stubborn nostalgia – an engagement with and even longing for a past Rwandans were not supposed to want to remember, let alone remember fondly (Dlamini 2009). Given the control that the RPF has on the country’s historical narrative, I suggest that critical nostalgia is one of the key ways that Rwandans are critically reflecting on their past and, in so doing, challenging the country’s full-speed-ahead, no-holds-barred approach to development. Both songs raise difficult questions about social and cultural memory, and the violence – structural and psychological – enacted by the state on its citizens.

Nostalgia, after all, is not only concerned with the past, but is firmly rooted in the present. As Stewart notes, nostalgia is a “cultural practice, not a given content; its forms, meanings, and effects shift with the context – it depends on where the speaker stands in the landscape of the present” (1992: 252). While Stewart is interested in nostalgia in the context of “late capitalism” and postmodernism in the West, a few of her insights into the nature of nostalgia are helpful. She highlights nostalgia as an embodied, narrative, and social practice – it relates “something to someone” (1992: 252). Most useful for our purposes here is the distinction she makes between two forms of nostalgia, one that is, in

my crude simplification, concerned with power, with manipulating the surfaces and images of the social world for the aggrandizement of the self, and another that operates from the “margins” and is concerned with “contexts” (1992: 253-4). While the former is born of the desire “to act *on* ‘the world out there’”, the latter is born of the desire “to act *in* a world that surrounds” (1992: 253). This second mode of nostalgia involves a “faith in human fictions”, and so drives nostalgia ‘makers’ from the margins to “continuously dis-member and re-member the model of what it is to be ‘human’ in order that it can include them and their lives as they now know them” (1992: 264). This nostalgia is a specific, embodied experience of two conflicting worlds – “the bodily realization of knowing one life and also another life that displaces the first” (1992: 261).

I want to suggest that this nostalgia from the margins – what I call critical or stubborn nostalgia – is an important way for Rwandans to critically engage with state discourses about development and modernity, a way to slow down for a moment and reflect upon what the country’s rapid “sprint” into the future really meant – and what and whom were being left behind in the process. While the state encourages ambivalence towards the country’s monarchy, Riderman draws upon royal history to create a powerful (masculine) persona in the present who gains legitimacy not from his ethnic background but from the street. While the state claims that eradicating “traditional” *nyakatsi* was a sign of the country’s development and a key aspect of its Vision 2020 programme, Bulldogg suggests that this thrust into modernity has not delivered all that was promised. Significantly, critical nostalgia is not “chosen amnesia” or “[r]emembering to forget” (Buckley-Zistel 2006: 134) in order to participate, however unwillingly, in the state’s programme of national unity and reconciliation. It is instead remembering the past how one chooses even when it butts up

against official discourse and stubbornly insists on remembering what one is supposed to forget.

These songs, in a sense, perform what Ricoeur has called the “labour of memory” or the “critical use of memory”. Lemarchand relies on Ricoeur’s notions of “thwarted memory, manipulated memory and enforced memory” to explore the politics of memory in post-genocide Rwanda, arguing that “[t]hinking or grappling with the past is what is conspicuously missing from Rwanda’s official memory” (2008: 69). Within such a context, the “labour of memory” becomes even more important as it involves “narrating differently the stories of the past, telling them from the point of view of the other – the other, my friend or my enemy” (Ricoeur in Lemarchand 2008: 75). This memory work discharges the “moral freight” of the past and opens up the possibility of forgiveness. Yet although “critical memory” is a helpful concept, it does not draw attention to or suggest how the past can be critically engaged with in practice. I suggest that an important practice of “critical memory” is critical nostalgia, performed through popular culture. In a socio-political context in which memory is “thwarted”, “manipulated”, and “enforced”, alternative narratives of the past can only be accessed indirectly, in songs such as “Umurashi” and “Bye-bye *Nyakatsi*”. Importantly, critical nostalgia is not the “nostalgia for the future” that Piot associates with West Africa, “the wager of a people willing to trade a past for a future still unknown” (2010: 16). In some ways, what I’m describing here is exactly the opposite: an unknown and unacknowledged past jarring against a future that, in the logic of Rwanda’s Vision 2020 plan, has been mapped out down to the smallest detail. Here, the possibility of a wager, the very notion of gambling with the future, is severely curtailed.

Fiston: Taking off the “blindness” of Rwandans

In this final section, I want to consider one rapper who spoke candidly to me about the indirect politics of his music. Here we get a sense of what really was at stake when rappers claimed to represent the country’s “truth” and “reality”. While other young rappers I spoke to told me they had started rapping for fun or to make money or express themselves, Fiston’s reasons for entering hip hop were unmistakably political. “My big intentions of doing music was trying to take off the blindness of Rwandans”, he told me. “There is too much inequality in our society”. Fiston often rapped about the country’s “hidden” history and critiqued those currently in power, albeit indirectly. His music communicated a “truth”, he told me, that the local media was incapable of communicating. As he declared:

You came as a Canadian researcher, [but] because of that system of terrorising the people, when you meet a lower-class person and start asking him how he is, how the situation is in Rwandan, how our politics are, he will not respond the way I’m responding. He’ll be telling you that everything is good, that our politics are good. He will tell you he likes the politicians because he is seeing the microphone. But back in his small hut, he will start saying how this government is unjust, there is no justice, people are suffering. Some people are exploiting and blinding the big majority of the people. And when I came I was trying to rap about such things. In particular, Fiston was outspoken about what he called “racism” and “silent

terror”. When he first started to release his songs, they were not getting the airplay he wanted and Fiston began to suspect that it was because of his ethnicity. Fiston never used the words “Hutu” or “Tutsi” but rather couched his understanding of the country’s hidden ethnic politics in terms of the “majority” and the “minority”. To Fiston, “racism” governed every aspect of contemporary Rwandan society, from employment to education, yet this reality was being concealed from the foreign media. “We’re living in a kind of silent terror”, he told me. “People are not allowed to speak. Like publishing this interview that I’m giving here in Rwanda, it’s going to cost me my life”.

Fiston had good cause to be worried. He told me that he had been “warned” on numerous occasions by anonymous callers who told him that he was a young kid who should watch his mouth. After these warnings, Fiston changed his musical style. He started incorporating more slang and allusion to “hide” his messages. As he told me:

I started using too much slangs in order that they will not realise what I’m saying. [But] maybe a long time [later], when the song will be promoted and everybody will hear it, [listeners] will try to analyse by himself or by herself the content. Here slang introduced an important time delay. Fiston’s songs required work to decipher, and he counted on the fact that not many listeners would be bothered to put in the effort. Furthermore, if Fiston was accused of performing music that was too political, he could take refuge in the song’s ambiguity: he could always claim the listener had misinterpreted the song.

Importantly, Fiston created his “messages” not only through slang but also by adopting the rhetorical tactics of certain pre-genocide artists. As he told me:

The style was possessed by some 1980s artists. One was Cyprien Rugamba, another one is called Byumvire, but nowadays he’s a kind of a refugee in Belgium. But Rugamba was killed in the genocide but his message at the time, he was singing his songs but attacking the late president, Habyarimana. He was attacking him, saying how he was damaging the country, things like that. But doing that imagery style. Many times he was using animals like that French poet, Jean de la Fontaine. He was using animals but they were representing some personalities. Like [the song] “Agaca”... He was attacking directly that late president.

We encountered “Agaca” (The Falcon) by Cyprien Rugamba in Chapter 5. By insisting that he was employing the same indirect critical style as Rugamba, Fiston created continuity between pre-genocide and post-genocide musical forms. Although, as we saw in the last chapter, young musicians attempted to distance themselves from propagandist music, Fiston suggests that the country’s pre-genocide music was not only extremist Hutu

invectives.¹⁰⁴ While the songs of artists such as Simon Bikindi did incite Rwandans to kill, Fiston lays claim to an alternative musical history. In the process, he is able to open up new musical possibilities. Just as Rugamba's songs exposed the excesses of the Habyarimana regime, so too does Fiston draw on his work to critique the current RPF regime. His very employment of Rugamba's musical tactics to critique power suggests a continuity between RPF rule and that under Habyarimana: both employ strategies of intimidation and terror and thus can be critiqued in a similar fashion.

When I asked him how exactly Rugamba had influenced his style, Fiston responded with an unexpected analogy:

Not using maybe his [Rugamba's] style [exactly] but me too I'm hiding my message through slang. Saying maybe like a person has a house. Maybe he is very wealthy and has many properties. And his neighbour has nothing, but maybe he has a little dog. The little dog is coming and pissing on [the wealthy man's] fence. One time, two times. And the guy will not come and maybe shoot the neighbour's dog but he will go straight for the neighbour's kid. Using that kind of hiding a message... It means that wealthy person is using injustice, is judging by injustice. Instead of shooting that dog who is pissing on his fence, he's killing his neighbour's son or daughter.

To Fiston, the current regime operated through injustice, "judging by injustice", as he put it.

The mode of communication in the country now, he suggested, was one of excessive, retributive violence. One was punished not for one's crimes but for one's future crimes: one's child was killed instead of one's dog. His comments underscore the dangerous possibility of violence that comes with "hiding" messages. I will have more to say about this in the Conclusion.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, despite the truths that Fiston felt he was communicating through his music, he was ready to change his style yet again. "I've spoken a lot about the

¹⁰⁴ Similarly, Steingo (2005:336) points out that although kwaito artists attempt to "break" with apartheid musical styles, the break has not been complete as they continue to "acknowledge" them through sampling and remixing.

society problems and I'm now tired", he told me. "I'm not getting anything, I'm not getting that love from the people because they are terrorised... I just want to change my lyrics into another style, rapping about maybe having fun, the life we live nowadays". In this way, creating "fun" new school music – rapping about women, parties, and drinking, for example – was not apolitical but rather a "radically new politics", to borrow Steingo's framework for understanding kwaito music in South Africa (2005:342), one that negates or refuses politics itself.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined how hip hop songs attempt to speak the "truth" about young people's everyday realities. Kinyarwanda rap songs were a way to articulate painful experiences of the past; reconceptualise the country's history; articulate new forms of masculine subjectivity; and create moments of pleasure and amusement. They creatively engaged with the country's past, present, and future through a process that I have called critical nostalgia. Despite the subversive potential of particular songs and artists, however, it would be a mistake to classify hip hop in the country as "resistance". Young artists – and here I speak both of rappers and other popular singers – were regularly called upon to perform at various state events and to become spokespeople for youth-targeted government programmes. This collaboration was seen as inevitable: artists were well aware that their participation was mandatory, that it was not requested but commanded. Within this context, an analytical binary that splits political action into domination and resistance – or, indeed, conceives of a clear separation between the state and civil society – becomes decidedly unhelpful (Saucier 2011b:xix). Instead we can see that the relationship between young artists and the state was contentious, cajoling, and constantly shifting. Due to the unstable

nature of performance and language the government could ultimately not control the meaning of hip hop songs and the affects they created amongst listeners. While artists did not provide direct political critique, they offered “unofficial” narratives of the country’s past, present, and future and asserted quiet agency. By throwing into sharp relief the discrepancy between the state’s image of the city – a Kigali of efficiency, cleanliness, and prosperity – and the lived experience of everyday life in the “ghetto”, young rappers revealed that government promises of a “bright future” (*ejo hazaza*) were only available to the privileged few. In this way hip hop songs created moments not of freedom, as Fabian (1998) would have it, but of reflection and shared affect. They not only reflected but produced the “episteme of the African street” (Newell and Okome 2014:13).

Yet at the same time that young people attempted to bridge this gap through fantasy, fantasy itself was called into question as an alternative site of value production (Weiss 2009:37–8; see also Newell 2012). As we will see in Chapter 8, vigorous debates about “live” music versus “playback” ultimately revealed anxieties about the possibilities of performance, with corruption and technological fakery undermining artists’ claims to speak the “truth”. Before moving on to this debate, however, we must first consider the gender politics of popular culture.

Chapter 7

“Pleasure girls”, *agaciro*, and not wasting time: Women in Popular Culture

In the last chapter I examined the temporalities of hip hop and the various ways it created new (masculine) identities for young Rwandans through reconfigurations of the country’s past, present, and future. This chapter continues my exploration of popular culture but, like Chapter 3, it focuses on gender. While in Chapter 3 I examined young women and their conceptions of personhood and the future within the *abarokore* churches, in this chapter I explore how female identity and personhood were defined and created within popular culture. In Chapter 3 I argued that the state’s gender-sensitive policies butted up uneasily against *abarokore* interpretations of the proper place of women in society. Both the church and the state drew on very different understandings of women’s agency in “traditional” Rwandan culture, creating new possibilities of love and legacy-making for some young women and actively “rupturing” relationships with others. In this chapter I argue that these competing and conflicting understandings of female identity were equally present within popular culture. How, I ask, did female artists navigate the *gendered* terrain of quiet insecurity? What were the temporalities at stake?

Young women who participated in the booming entertainment (*imyidagaduro*) industry – or who aspired to do so – were forced to overcome cultural assumptions that “good” Rwandese girls did not perform in public or seek fame and fortune outside of their “traditional” roles as wives and mothers. Family members often actively discouraged young women from pursuing careers in music, fearing they would become “pleasure girls” and permanently ruin their reputations and futures. Against this, I argue that young women who decided to work in showbiz were redefining, often quite self-consciously, Rwandan female

subjectivity in new and unexpected ways. While some female artists used fame as a platform to raise debates about women's "issues", others considered it an opportunity to realise their "whole" selves. Young women who became gospel artists, on the other hand, faced less social criticism as they framed their love of music as a calling from God.

Yet even if some young women were able to succeed as musicians, they continued to encounter various forms of "sexual corruption" (*ruswa y'igitsina*) and speculation about their private lives. While the modern post-genocide music industry offered young women new possibilities for self-realisation and financial empowerment, success meant exercising strict vigilance over their private and public selves. Young women had to ensure they stayed on the "right rails" of society, and those who strayed from them faced "harsh" social critique. The recent rise of Kinyarwanda-language gossip and celebrity websites introduced new anxieties: rumours and allegations could become permanent stains on one's reputation, especially if "inappropriate" photos were involved. Despite these obstacles, however, some young women were able to carve out new identities for themselves as *abahanzikazi* (female artists) rather than as *abagore* (wives and mothers), despite the fact that the two categories were often considered mutually exclusive. Often these young women relied on the cultural concept of *agaciro* (dignity or self-respect) to culturally legitimate their participation in the burgeoning music industry. Although recent work within anthropology has examined celebrity as a culturally specific process – celebrity cultures, Pype notes, "are not unified, homogeneous symbolic spaces", but rather linked to "local cultural, moral and social complexities that are inherently related to ruling notions of representation and morality" (2009:554–5) – it often ignores the gendered aspects of fame and how it is tied to local understandings of the "proper" place of women in society.

Drawing on conversations and interviews with a wide range of young women working in various aspects of the entertainment industry, I explore the new performance possibilities that were opened up to young women after the genocide. This chapter demonstrates the complex, variegated, and *gendered* nature of Rwanda's public culture, helping us to move beyond broad-stroke assumptions that paint it as inherently "silent" (Goodfellow 2013; Burnet 2012; Thomson 2013a). Following Newell's important work on African women's writing, we can see how "noisy debates" (1997:1) were taking place within Rwandan popular culture about what women should and should not say – and how they should and should not behave – in public. In the first half of the chapter I set the stage and examine the gendered nature of popular music. In the second half I turn to three narratives from young female artists who aspired to very different forms of musical success.

"Wasted" girls and the politics of appropriateness

In my guise as an entertainment reporter it soon became apparent that the vast majority of the country's artists, journalists, radio presenters, DJs, and producers were men. A recent article in *The East African* highlighted this unfortunate demographic. "Not enough Rwandan female touch in music, the arts", it proclaimed, with the first sentence reading: "While Rwandan women take the lion's share in political positions, the same cannot be said of their presence in music and arts industry, where men dominate in fine arts, theatre, comedy, and traditional music among others" (Kazibwe 2014). Carole Karemera, a well-known actress and cultural activist, attributed women's absence in the arts to "Rwandan traditional values". "Women or young girls often obey parents' decisions [not to pursue careers in the arts] unlike young men", she commented. "But women have a connection to

all persons in society, so they can make things happen and in a better way” (Kazibwe 2014).

Within this “traditional” value system the proper place of young, unmarried women was in the home. Under Rwanda’s patrilineal kinship system women derived their social identity from men, as the proverb “*Abagore ntibafite ubwoko*” (wives have no identity) makes clear (Burnet 2012:43). Women were supposed to be “reserved, submissive, modest, silent, and maternal”; they should “maintain a ‘respectable’ household” and “raise ‘wise’ children” (Burnet 2012:43). They should not “gossip” or be “loud”, “overly emotional”, or “have a dirty house or rude children” (Burnet 2012:44). Young female artists often felt constrained by these “traditional values”. Miss Jojo, a pioneering modern female singer, labelled African culture – and Rwandan culture in particular – “conservative”. “They judge women so easily whenever they see them on the stage”, she told me. Similarly, Leah, an up-and-coming R&B singer, was discouraged from pursuing music by her “strict” family. “It’s this mentality of people here in Rwanda”, she explained. “They think if you’re a girl and you go into music, you’re going to get destroyed, you’re going to be wasted, you’re going down to the streets”. Young female artists who strove to be “modern” – by performing Western musical genres such as R&B, rap, or pop and/or dressing in revealing outfits like those worn by American celebrities – transgressed “traditional” understandings of the rightful place of women in Rwandan society. Performing in the secular music industry made young women vulnerable to the possibility that their lives would be “wasted” by either getting pregnant outside of marriage or becoming unmarriageable because of cultural assumptions that singing in public equated to little more than prostitution (*uburaya*).

These debates, of course, are nothing new. Periods of social change – in particular, colonisation and urban migration – often resulted in new moralising discourses about women’s role in society (Allman 2001). Yet, as Hodgson and McCurdy point out, women who go against the grain of societal expectations – so-called “wicked” women – “are pivotal in transforming gender relations and other domains of social life” (2001b:1). The notion of “respectability” is often a flashpoint in these debates. Following Hodgson and McCurdy, we can see respectability as “a potent force in delimiting and regulating the dominant configuration of gender, that is, the ‘norms’ of ‘appropriate’ gender roles, relations, responsibilities, and behaviour” (2001b:6). Women’s transgression of these norms are said to “threaten the moral foundation of society”, yet they can also “create new spaces in which other women can act and think” (2001b:6,8). As Davis (2000) has shown for Kampala and Haram (2004) for Arusha, unmarried “town women” were often perceived as sexually “loose” because they refused to follow the traditional paths of “respectability” through marriage and motherhood and instead choose to engage in sexual relationships with multiple partners to support themselves financially.

Similarly, in her work on women’s dance in urban Senegal, Heath (1994) has relied on the notion of the “politics of appropriateness” to examine the gendered dimensions of performance. “Appropriateness”, she writes, can be understood as a shifting “set of relations linking alternative meanings and diverse situations” that were ultimately “grounded” in wider structures of power (1994:90). Women’s dance was ultimately evaluated within “a web of interconnected performances in which notions of appropriateness become a contestable cultural resource” (1994:90). While dances deemed

“inappropriate” were “subject to restriction and control”, “appropriate” dances had the potential to become “a site of resistance” (1994:90).

Building on this work, we can see how female artists in Rwanda were equally governed by a politics of “respectability” and “appropriateness”. Before exploring how they constructed their behaviour as “respectable” and “appropriate”, I want to consider the real-world consequences on young women’s lives and futures if they strayed into the “inappropriate”.

“Arandusebeje” (She shames us): The dangers of inappropriate behaviour

To illustrate this point I relate here an episode that occurred near the end of my fieldwork in 2012. One Saturday evening I attended the album launch of a well-known Afrobeat group. Before the group took to the stage, a popular rapper was warming up the crowd and running through his hit songs. During one song members of his entourage bounded onto the stage to help him perform, including a female rapper who was dressed in an oversize baseball hat, a short skirt, and a top that was tied to cover her breasts, leaving her bare stomach exposed. Unlike the “excess of sexuality” (Pype 2012:262) that is said to govern Kinshasa’s public culture, in Kigali there is an excess of modesty, if anything, and “proper” young women rarely wear skirts above their knees. At the time I thought the rapper’s attire fairly risqué, but did not give it much further thought and concentrated instead on the evening’s performances. (In fact, when I later went back to check my fieldnotes, I had not even noted the rapper’s appearance at the concert because it had been so brief.)

The next day, however, entertainment websites ran stories with photos of the rapper, with many readers leaving scathing comments. “*Arandusebeje*” (“She shames us”), one wrote; “*birababaje kubona yiha gushyira urunda nka ruriya ku muyaga yiyambika nabi*

kandi nta nicyo afite arata... bakobwa b'i Rwanda mwisubireho" ("It is sad to see her showing her big belly, she wears small things without anything to show off... girls of Rwanda come back to your senses"), wrote another. One website even ran photos of the rapper clad only in her bra and skirt. The photos appeared to have been taken backstage, snapped whilst she had been changing. For weeks afterwards, whenever I told friends that I had attended the concert, the first thing they asked me about was the rapper's outfit. (Questions about the quality of the show itself always came later.) "What was she wearing?" one female friend asked when I went to visit her at her home a few days after the concert. In another conversation with a male friend on the subject, I asked him what had been so wrong with the rapper's clothing. "It's disrespectful to all the aunties!" he exclaimed.

Although this reception is par for the course for female artists worldwide – one needs only to reflect on public reactions to the wardrobe of American singer Lady Gaga, for example – in the Rwandan context such publicity could negatively impact a young woman's future and ability to secure financial sponsorship. Sometime after the concert, I was talking to a friend who worked for a company that had recently started sponsoring artists, including the young female rapper mentioned above. He told me that she had been dropped by the company because of her antics, particularly her scandalous dress at the concert.

Indeed, since modern female artists were considered "not serious", male audience members often felt they had free access to their bodies and attempted to touch and grab them whilst they were onstage or ventured into the audience during performances. Popular music with often associated with bars, alcohol, and a licentious sexuality that threatened the

stability of the social order, particularly that of families. The recent rise of the music industry had introduced new expectations on young women and their bodies. Miss Jojo made this clear to me when she remarked:

Show business, it's all about showing yourself... [A man] thinks, "Okay, she's a singer, that means she's a pleasure girl, you can go, you can touch, you can do whatever". And they just go ahead and they do it! Sometimes you feel like you want to strangle someone. It's just a whole bunch of stories.

Although Miss Jojo considered the growth of the music industry over the past five years as a positive development, the increased competition for airplay and sponsorship meant that there was more pressure than ever on young women to "show" themselves and exploit their sexuality to gain fans. Such behaviour, however, "discredited" them within Rwandan society. "You can win in the industry, but in the society...", Miss Jojo told me, her voice trailing off.

While I argued earlier that for many young men gender was considered a zero-sum game as they perceived women's empowerment to come at their expense – recall Bulldogg's line about it now being "taboo" to hit women – here we see that for many young women in Rwanda fame was considered in similar terms. While the industry demanded and rewarded sexually provocative songs, performances, and music videos, Rwandan society considered girls who fell into its traps as morally loose and corrupt "pleasure girls" who were "exposed" and therefore not "serious" individuals and citizens. Who, after all, would want to marry a young woman who had been so publicly compromised? Who, we could ask, was winning in this game?

The gendered nature of celebrity

While a politics of respectability and appropriateness attempted to draw distinctions between the moral and immoral conduct of young female artists, these same rules did not

seem to apply to young male artists. Indeed, male artists who engaged in similarly “immoral” practices were rarely, if ever, penalised. It was common knowledge, for example, that many of the country’s most popular male artists – especially its rappers – had all had children outside of marriage. This fact was routinely discussed within the local entertainment media. One website ran an article entitled: “Abahanzi 10 ba Hip Hop mu Rwanda bamaze kubyara batararushinga” (“10 Hip Hop artists in Rwanda who have had children without getting married”) (Kamanzi 2012). More recently, another site compiled a list of 25 *abahanzi* (artists) who had all had children without first getting married (Munyengabe 2014). Only two out of the 25 *abahanzi* listed were women. To the best of my knowledge none of these 23 male artists had suffered the loss of sponsorship or a dip in their popularity due to their status as unwed fathers. In fact, many of them had been participants in one of the four seasons of Primus Guma Super Star (PGGSS), with some of them even appearing on multiple seasons. Two of them were even sponsored by the same company that had dropped the female rapper.

Here the gendered nature of celebrity becomes clear. Pype (2012:87) also found this in Kinshasa where the morality of Kinois celebrities was a source of heated debate. Scrutiny was particularly focused on female actresses as their appearance in public, locally defined as a “male space”, often incited accusations of prostitution, making their social position especially “fragile” (2012:87). To combat these accusations, actresses repeatedly asserted their Christian identities “in both behaviour and speech” (2012:87). This was certainly the case with Clarisse, a gospel singer whose narrative I consider in the second half of this chapter.

Yet despite this, Pype tells us that *all* youth dream of media celebrity in Kinshasa. “No distinction is made based on gender, and although the public sphere is still dominated by men, *vedettariat* (being a celebrity) also appeals to young women”, Pype writes. “Already in 1974, Jean La Fontaine noted that for Kinshasa’s women, being a *vedette* was one of the new models of femininity that reigned among the young in the postcolonial city” (2009:545–6). Even young women working as actresses in Kinshasa’s present-day Christian teleserials dream of becoming *vedettes* and believe appearing on TV will “attract more interesting marriage prospects” (2012:88). In Rwanda, as we have seen, this was decidedly not the case, and there was no local equivalent of the *vedette* figure for young Rwandan women. While there were well-known traditional female singers – Cécile Kayirebwa, for example, as we saw in Chapter 5 – they were the exception. Even when we consider the pre-genocide “modern” genre of *igisope*, there were very few female singers in the *orchestres*, although some participated as dancers. Young Rwandan women who strove to become modern singers had few positive local role models they could follow.

Young women, furthermore, had to contend with significantly different moral challenges in order to achieve celebrity. If the music industry was routinely described as riddled with corruption, as I discuss in the next chapter, young women were forced to contend with a very specific form of corruption: sexual corruption (*ruswa y’igitsina*).

***Ruswa y’igitsina* (sexual corruption)**

While it took on many forms, sexual corruption (*ruswa y’igitsina*) was most commonly found in the relationship between female artists and male producers. In exchange for producing their songs or albums, male producers often demanded sexual favours from female artists. Since there were no female producers in the country – during my 16 months

of fieldwork, I never met one nor even heard of one existing – female artists had no choice but to work with them. In a somewhat notorious case, a well-known producer impregnated one of the female artists he had been working with at the time. According to well-informed friends, the producer had “chased” away the artist in question, refused to produce her music, and banned her from his studio. While the female artist was forced to quit the music industry for a year to have their child, the producer went on to win an award for his production skills and was still considered one of the best producers in the country. The episode became a cautionary tale and was used to discourage young women from striving for musical success.

Male radio presenters were also said to demand sexual favours in exchange for airplay and promotion. One male radio presenter told me that girls constantly propositioned him on Facebook, more or less promising him sex if he played their songs on the radio. (He claimed to always refuse them.) Another put it much less discreetly: “We presenters, we got some girls here, you just sleep with her one day, you play her song, and she’s a hit. And that’s it... With all those stupid young girls here on radios, that’s what they do”.

Unsurprisingly, given such derogatory comments, young women were wary of entering the industry. “We don’t have many artists that are women because of that issue [sexual corruption]”, Claudine, a well-known entertainment journalist, told me. However, she claimed her role as a journalist made her more independent and able to avoid certain forms of *ruswa y’igitsina*. “Because I’m a radio journalist, I don’t need a producer”, she pointed out. “I’m working my own job”.

Repeated claims that Rwanda is one of the least corrupt countries on the continent (Tabaro and Kwihangana 2013) ignores the gendered nature of various forms of corruption

and the real-world effects it can have on young women's lives. While undoubtedly some female artists were able to use their sexuality to their advantage (Archambault 2013), the young artists I spoke to felt trapped by their conflicting desires: to remain a "respectable" young Rwandan woman and to gain musical success.

Fame and *agaciro*

Given these difficult conditions, why, we may ask, did young women aspire to musical success and celebrity? Fame, I suggest, offered young women new narratives to reframe their experiences outside of the prevailing genres of genocide testimonials and religious conversion. As we will see, when young women narrated their stories to me, they rarely mentioned the genocide or violence they had experienced or witnessed in the past. Instead, they created new narratives of their pasts, presents, and futures that focused not on loss but on musical inspiration and aspiration. Here we entered into the realm of the imaginary rather than of "truths" or "lies" (Fujii 2010). The possibility of fame allowed young women to find meaning – or envision arriving at meaning at a later date – in their struggles and past pain. It also opened up new opportunities, allowing young women to leave legacies for others in the future. As the Kinyarwanda saying went, "*uwanze kuvurwa yagumye munda ya nyina*": whoever hates to be spoken about, remain in the womb of his/her mother.

In Rwanda, as we will see, young female artists attempted to carve out new identities for themselves as female artists (*abahanzikazi*) rather than as wives and mothers (*abagore*). In doing so, they often drew on the "traditional" cultural concept of *agaciro* (dignity or self-respect) to legitimate their participation in the country's new music industry. Just like the country's rappers, they claimed that they had important "messages"

to give, particularly to young women. To explore how this worked in practice, in the second half of the chapter I consider the narratives of three female artists.

Miss Jojo: The pursuit of music and being the “rightest person”

From a young age Miss Jojo loved dancing and singing. She would perform for friends and family members, and when her mother asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up, she always responded by saying that she wanted to be a singer. Her mother, however, had tried to steer Miss Jojo towards another career path. All the female singers she knew were “not really good role models” and she wanted something “bigger” for her daughter. When Miss Jojo was 12, her mother died. Since her father had passed away when she was six months old, Miss Jojo went to live with her uncle’s family. It was in high school that she started writing songs and performing them for friends. Although everyone who heard her sing encouraged her to pursue music, Miss Jojo remembered her mother’s words and refused. Yet as time passed and Miss Jojo continued to write songs, she realised that she could honour her mother’s wishes and still become a singer. As she told me:

So I sat and I thought about it. I said, even though my mom didn’t want me to sing, she had a reason. She didn’t just want me not to sing. Now, if I can change those reasons so that they won’t happen to me, if I try to do my best, like if I even sacrifice myself...so that I can be the rightest person, so that I can be someone that any parent in Rwanda can be proud of... I said, “I think probably this is my moment to change the history of things”.

When she was in her third year of university, studying English literature at the National University of Rwanda in Butare, Miss Jojo recorded her first song, “Mbwira” (“Tell me”). “Mbwira”, a love song that spoke about the heartache and loneliness of missing a loved one, became a hit. To this day, fans still approached Miss Jojo to tell her, “You can die now, we have our song!”

After “Mbwira”, Miss Jojo released a more up-tempo “moving” track in 2007 when

she was in the final year of her university studies. Officially, the song was called “Ubona ko ndi nde” (“Who am I?”) but it came to be known as “Respect” because it urged listeners to reflect on how Rwandan society treated women. In particular, the song challenged Rwandans’ tendency to unfairly judge a woman’s moral character based on appearances rather than taking the time to get to know her first. “If I take care of myself, if I’m keeping every effort that I have to be a respected girl in the society, and you just come and say whatever you feel like saying, that’s an insult to me”, Miss Jojo told me when I asked her about the song’s meaning. According to Miss Jojo, “Respect” incited debate across the country because it was “the first time ever that a girl could sing about that kind of issue”. She explained:

I was giving examples of things that people do and they don’t really know that they are hurtful, and we can’t tell it because that’s the culture. [Rwandese] women do not really go straight like, “What the hell? What’s wrong with you?” We do not say that. So you try to give an excuse... I wanted to say those untold stories... From the very beginning of her career, then, Miss Jojo was concerned with being

the “rightest person” and speaking about women’s “untold stories”. “Respect” made Miss Jojo a national figure and encouraged her to continue in music. She started experimenting with different musical styles, including dancehall and R&B, and won the National University of Rwanda Rector Excellence Award as Best Female Artiste in 2007. In 2008, she released her first album, “Genesis”; that same year, she won the Pearl of Africa Music (PAM) award as Best Rwandan Female Artiste. In March 2012, she released her second album, “Woman”, which was launched the day after International Women’s Day. Miss Jojo dedicated the album to all women across the world, but particularly to African women. In an interview with local English-language media at the time of the launch, she declared: “As an artiste, I have a strong cause for women, and I believe that it is our turn, the youth, to

participate in activities that will empower the woman and liberate her from all the stereotypes and traditional beliefs” (Mbabazi 2012). In another piece in the Kinyarwanda-language media, she called on Rwandans to value women for more than their ability to give birth (*kubyara*) and stressed instead the dignity (*agaciro*) that women gave to their homes (Icyo Miss Jojo Avuga Ku Munsi w’Abagore 2012).

Ogden (1996) has explored how local constructions of the Proper Woman (*omukyala omutufu*) shaped the conduct and personhood of women in Kampala. Working against colonial and postcolonial discourses that stereotyped them as morally corrupt, these women adhered to the notion of *empisa*, a “complex moral concept”, tied not only to modest dress but also to “being reserved, respectful, sensible” (1996:179). Thus, she concludes, women in Kampala “engender respect (produce positive identities) by demonstrating *empisa*, and by ‘producing’ children within locally sanctioned marriages” (1996:187). By employing the notion of *agaciro*, Miss Jojo and other female artists were able to articulate a respect for traditional Rwandan values yet also pursue their musical careers.

For her part, Miss Jojo promised herself from the beginning of her career that she would be a role model for young women in Rwanda. “I try to stay on the right rails of my society”, she told me. “I’m not a revolutionist singer. I keep on my society’s track. I’ve been raised as a Rwandan lady...and I just think that not everybody has to look like everybody in the show[biz] industry”. While she considered American artists such as Beyoncé and Madonna her inspiration, Miss Jojo’s goal was not to mimic their style or dress but rather translate some of their appeal into a mode of singing and behaving that was

appropriate for the Rwandan context. “I have to get what I can and put it in my culture, in my country, for my people, and that can work with them”, she told me.

Miss Jojo, then, employed the concept of *agaciro* to her personal and public life. She emphasised, for example, her status as a university graduate. Given that education was highly valued in Rwanda, by graduating from university Miss Jojo positioned herself as a “serious” person. She also stressed the artistic creativity and complexity of her lyrics. Miss Jojo had studied literature, after all, and always tried to “put some art” into her songs. As she told me:

If someone listens, they will say, “Oh, she’s a singer, she’s nobody”. But if someone listens to something really artistic, they’ll say, “Alright, but that song is nice”, or the next song is nice. And probably they get to know more of me. They will move out of the prejudices and start to consider me as just a person who has something to give.

Although in Chapter 6 we saw that male hip hop artists concealed messages through slang, Miss Jojo suggests that language can be used not to build street credit but to construct the speaker as someone with education and *agaciro*. Miss Jojo was not fashioning herself as the queen of the ghetto, in the vein of Riderman’s “Umurashi”, but rather as someone all Rwandans could look up to and admire.

Gossip and religious conversion

Despite Miss Jojo’s best efforts, however, the nature of the showbiz industry and the burgeoning field of celebrity gossip meant that journalists were often more interested in her personal life than in her music. Her conversion to Islam in 2008, for example, attracted widespread media attention. Once she converted, everything changed. Islam, she told me, was not just a religion, it was a way of life. “It’s from the way you go to sleep, the way you wake up, the way you eat, the way you sleep, the way you go to the bathroom – each and everything”, she said. Her new Muslim faith also governed her career choices. In 2011 she

pulled out of the inaugural Primus Guma Guma Super Star (PGGSS) competition because it was sponsored by a beer company, and participating would have entailed promoting Primus.

What bothered Miss Jojo about the public interest in her conversion, however, was the fact that everyone assumed she had converted because of her boyfriend. As she told me:

Everybody thinks I became a Muslim because of him. I tell them [journalists], “You know, it’s not about him. It’s about me, it’s my decision that I took... They say okay, but all the time they keep on asking... Now I broke up with him it’s been like a year. And they were expecting me to come back to Christianity! I didn’t, but even now, they’re still waiting. They’re writing on the internet, “Eh, we saw someone looking like Jojo and she doesn’t look Muslim. Do you know anything about that?” It’s always like putting them in my life in an old way that makes things hard.

As we saw in Chapter 3 through my discussion of the saying “*umukobwa ntagira idini*” (“a girl does not have a religion”), it was culturally assumed that women would convert to their husband or partner’s religion. Yet this assumption, as Miss Jojo’s case illustrates, often stripped women of their spiritual agency. The idea that Miss Jojo could convert for her own reasons – that Islam, as she said, made sense to her and offered her “truth” – went unacknowledged. Given the proliferation of online entertainment websites and their insatiable need for rumours and gossip, Miss Jojo was unable to control the public narrative of her personal life no matter how many interviews she did to set the record straight. Just as photos of the female rapper discussed above were still available online, so too were numerous articles about Miss Jojo’s conversion, which lent a sense of permanence and credibility to them. While young female artists attempted to create new futures for themselves through their music, online chatter that documented every misstep and scandal often dragged them back into their pasts.

Despite her success, Miss Jojo was looking for a “side” job outside of music. Although singing had allowed her to perform in a number of different countries – in 2011 she had even travelled with the president and a number of other Rwandan artists to perform at Rwanda Day, an event that brings together the Rwandan diaspora, in Chicago (Kabeera 2011) – the nature of the music industry had changed. “There’s a lot of people in the industry now”, she told me, “and they sell their music for too little”. Miss Jojo had put in her time, and she was not prepared to have her work undervalued. “Now I’m growing up”, she told me. “Sometime in the future I’m going to have a family to take care of. I can’t just go there expecting to be singing whatever to have 50,000Rwf. I don’t feel like that. I don’t feel I’m that kind of person. I want to have a consistent life”. If she felt compelled to give a “message” to her fans, she would perform concerts, but only one or two a year. “But I don’t want it [her music career] to just squeeze out my life into some small thing”, she said. “I want to keep on controlling myself on a certain level”.

Here we see the difficulties of sustaining a profitable and rewarding musical career for young Rwandan women. If Miss Jojo wanted to marry and have children – the cultural markers of successfully attaining womanhood (Sommers 2012) – a career in music was ultimately incapable of giving her the means to achieve this. Even the country’s most successful artists were always aware that the line between success and failure, between riches and poverty, was thin indeed.

Leah’s “message”

By way of contrast, I consider now the story of Leah who, unlike Miss Jojo, was an up-and-coming R&B singer. Born and raised in Kigali, Leah was in her early 20s and had started singing at the age of 8 or 9. When I met her in October 2012, she was still very much an

industry newcomer. She had only released three solo songs, in addition to a number of “collabos” (i.e. collaborations with other artists). One of the most striking aspects of Leah’s pursuit of music was how she understood and spoke about her “talent”. Since her ability to sing was a gift from God, she told me, she felt compelled to make the most of it. “There’s so much talent hidden in me”, she said, explaining that she also had a flair for fashion and design. (Indeed, a few weeks later Leah invited me to the shooting of her second music video, which was being filmed at a local hotel. The shoot involved a number of elaborate costume changes and Leah had borrowed clothing, shoes, and accessories from friends to make sure everyone appearing in the video was dressed just right.) Leah explained her “talent” to me in this way:

I just feel like there’s so many things I have in my head... I just need to develop my talent, that’s all. And that day when it’s already developed, at the climax hour, I don’t know what I will do, but I’m also curious. That moment, that day when I will be very confident, that day when I will be – I’ll have that whole confidence. I can give my whole self. The whole self of my talent. I know people will love what I’m doing.

To Leah, fame offered the possibility of creating a particular kind of future: it allowed her to dream of the “climax hour” when her confident, whole self would be revealed not only to adoring fans but also to her. Significantly, Leah did not know in advance the shape her talent would take and was “curious” about it. Through rehearsals, studio time, and performances, she was developing her talent in anticipation of a particular “moment” or “day” of completion. Fame to Leah was not overnight success but rather a time-consuming process that required patience and hard work.

What is remarkable about Leah’s words is how closely they echo those of Agathe, whom we encountered in Chapter 3. Agathe, we will remember, spoke of how her wounds from the genocide – more specifically, of being a survivor who had lost her parents – were

so deep and buried in her that even she was unaware of them. Pentecostal conversion was a way for her to acknowledge and work through these wounds through prayer, deliverance, and intercession. In a similar way, Leah believed that the depth and breadth of her talent was “hidden” to her. It would only be called out and into being at a future “climax hour” of fame and recognition. In this way we can see how both women articulated a certain understanding of personhood as fractured and in need of completion. For Agathe, it was through Pentecostal conversion; for Leah, it was through fame and developing the “whole self” of her talent. For many young women, growing up in the quiet insecurity of post-genocide Rwanda had created wounded or hidden selves that required specific processes of healing and completion. Importantly, although *abarokore* women positioned themselves as diametrically opposed to secular female singers, we can see here that they shared similar “holistic” aspirations.

Intimately linked to this sense of “whole” self that Leah was attempting to create through music was her insistence on forgetting the difficult moments of her past. When I asked her what the best and worst moments of her music career to date had been, she gushed about the good ones: the first time she had recorded a song in the studio; certain live performances that had gone particularly well; shooting her first music video. When I asked her to tell me about any low moments – had she ever felt like quitting the industry? – she brushed off my question. Although she had encountered obstacles – producers who took much longer than promised to finish her songs; fellow artists who were jealous of her talent and paid radio presenters not to play her music – she considered them “small things you have to overcome”. These challenges, she insisted, motivated her to try harder. “I wouldn’t take [them] like very bad cause [they] encourage me, [they] give me experience. And it’s a

lesson that I have to get ready for what will come, even after that... I try only to record the best moments so that I can go on". For Leah, dwelling on the past would prevent her from moving on and taking advantage of new opportunities. Leah had no time for the critical nostalgia that I explored in Chapter 6.

Similar to many other artists, both male and female, that I knew, Leah did not dwell on her family's past. She alluded to having a "difficult" family situation and mentioned casually that she didn't live with them anymore, but she never offered any specifics. Seeking or attaining fame in this sense gave young people a new way to narrate their lives and experiences. Although this fact has been well-noted for Pentecostal conversion – the public testimony becomes a way for born-again Christians to imbue their life stories with divine purpose – we can see here how the quest for celebrity equally offered it as well. Leah, just like all the other artists I knew, was well-versed in the self-making possibilities offered by celebrity. By speaking about her talent and dreams of fame, she was participating in a global celebrity culture.

Just like the young women we encountered in Chapter 3, Leah was particularly concerned with leaving her mark on the world. Although in Chapter 3 young women framed their contribution in terms of "legacy", Leah considered it in terms of her "message". As she told me:

I don't want to only leave the record on the earth that I was a great singer. Not only that. I need to do something out of my music. I need to make sure that there's this other message that I left to people. Not only in words, but also in action. In this way, we can understand popular music as a space wherein particular kinds of "messages" can be created, circulated, and left behind for others. While some of these "messages" were about telling the "truth" of "pity" lives as we saw in Chapter 6, others were about projecting the self into an unknown future and leaving part of it behind.

Despite these difficulties, Leah wanted to encourage more women to enter the industry. “They shouldn’t be scared”, she told me.

They should feel like one day they will make it. Cause there’s so many things that can always discourage us but they should remember that each one has their own day. And what you will be is always there, it won’t go anywhere. So when the right time comes, they will be where they want to be, as long as they’re focused... They should just believe in themselves [and] value their talent.

In this way, fame or “making it” was about singularity and timing. In Leah’s understanding, there was a certain inevitability to it. If a young woman focused on and gave value to her talent, she would eventually have her “own day”. Leah’s philosophy – “what you will be is always there” – gave her an importance sense of confidence in the present. Although she was struggling for recognition now, she knew that one day the “right time” would come and all her efforts to slowly, almost methodically, develop her talent would be rewarded.

In this way, Leah articulates a very different temporal logic of fame. Pype writes that young people in Kinshasa desire to “make a name” for themselves in order to become socially mobile. “In Kinshasa”, she writes, “it is commonly held that the more people speak about a person, the more chances that individual has to acquire money, a lover, and social prestige” (Pype 2012:63; see also Pype 2009:545). Their actions and aspirations, in other words, are targeted towards achieving success in the present or the very near future. In Leah’s conception of fame, an entirely different temporal logic is at work. Although she dreamt of success, she was equally concerned with leaving a lasting “message” behind after she was gone.

Clarisse: Singing for Jesus and not wasting time

Yet not all female singers faced the same challenges. Female artists who performed gospel were often less susceptible to social critique. Instead of framing their participation in music

as the pursuit of fame and earthly rewards, gospel singers stressed that it was a calling from God. Let's consider here the narrative of Clarisse, a popular *murokore* singer.

Unlike the other young singers considered in this chapter, Clarisse was born in the Congo and had returned to Rwanda in 1995. From a young age, she had been interested in music. Her father had been a Catholic choir leader and her older brothers were devoted music fans, particular of Congolese groups such as Wenge Musica. Clarisse became born again in early 1997, whilst attending an overnight prayer session with her sister and cousin. She began attending a popular *murokore* church in Kigali. In 1999 she joined its new praise and worship team. In no time Clarisse established herself as an exceptionally gifted singer. Other Christian artists – from Rwanda and elsewhere in East Africa – asked her to sing on their albums. In 2006 she stopped these collaborations and decided to concentrate on her own music. She released two singles in 2009 and recorded her first album in 2011. During my fieldwork, however, it had not yet been released. Despite her talent, Clarisse still struggled to find the funds to finance her music career. Her songs often spoke of the grace and grandeur of God, and encouraged Christians to know that God will always be with them, no matter how difficult their circumstances. As she explained to me: “In my songs I always ask, ‘What is it in me that God can love?’ Because God is really good and simple. Why does He love us?”

Despite her talent for singing, however, Clarisse had initially been very shy. Although she had no trouble singing with friends and family members, she had been terrified of going in front of a full church to sing. One day she discovered the music of Australian worship leader Darlene Zschech. She began obsessively collecting her music, following the singer's career as best she could. She happened to watch a video of Zschech

performing while she was pregnant, which “shocked” her. “I said, ‘she’s jumping like that and she’s pregnant?’” This was not how Clarisse knew pregnant women to behave, and she realised in that moment the extent of God’s power. “That’s when God talked to me”, she told me.

He said, “Clarisse, I call you to do praise and worship. I call you like I called that woman there [Darlene]. You must be like her. I want you to attain the same level [of fame and recognition] that she has. Do not be shy anymore. Be free in my presence. Free yourself from all the things that prevent you from worshipping me in full freedom... If you feel like you want to dance, dance. If you want to sing, express yourself. I’m going to use you so others are blessed”.

After that day, Clarisse was never shy when she performed. In fact, she was often overwhelmed by God’s greatness and expressed this through her voice and body. “When I’m singing I’m like, Christ, He is amazing! I think of all those things He has done for me, and really nothing stops me. Nothing! I’m always free, I’m always dancing, I’m always expressing what I feel in me”. Here we see that the “direct” relationship between the divine and the individual in Pentecostal practice can “empower” young women (Parsitau 2011:142). Furthermore, by positioning herself as a “witness” to God’s glory, Clarisse was able to “subvert” (Peterson 2012) expectations of how a “proper” woman should and should not behave, particularly in public. She could jump, dance, cry out, and act as “crazy” as she wanted. These practices demonstrated a certain amount of Christian *agaciro*. In giving value to God, she was giving value to herself, despite the fact that such emotional outbursts were not how “proper” Rwandan women were supposed to behave. Indeed, as Parsitau has remarked, “the second birth can lead to a revaluing of the self in relation to God and others that undermines patriarchal public culture” (2011:143). For Clarisse, this revaluation was mediated by Zschech, suggesting an important *gendered* dimension to

global Pentecostal networks. We can also see how the sociality of emotions, as discussed in Chapter 2, had important gendered effects.

Clarisse was adamant that she would never stray from gospel music. In her opinion all other forms of music were a waste of time, even those that promoted the government's development agenda. To Clarisse God's power surpassed that of any state, and evangelising was more important than promoting any particular political programme. As she explained to me:

Many people ask me why I don't sing other songs. Do you think that I can do any other music? Yeah, I can talk about peace and reconciliation, you know, "please stop fighting". So what? I can say stop fighting but if you don't have Jesus, you will fight... But if I tell you what happened in my life, if I tell you, "stop killing, receive Jesus Christ as your personal saviour", then you will stop fighting. He will help you not to hate your brother or sister. He will help you to forgive. It's true... You know that we have this ethnic conflict in Rwanda. Maybe a man saw his wife killed during the genocide. You can't explain this to him. You can't just tell him, "You have to forgive". But if you sing about Jesus, if you talk about what Jesus did in your life, if you praise Him and worship Him, he will know the truth. Then by receiving Jesus, he will be able to live in this life, even if it's difficult...

Here we see a decidedly different model of reconciliation than that proposed by the state.

To Clarisse the only truth was in God, expressed through the affective power of music.

Since so many souls were at stake – Clarisse believed the End Times were imminent – she didn't want to "waste her time" singing about anything else.

Although Clarisse had tried getting other jobs – she had worked in communications, administration, accountancy, radio, travel, and telecommunications – nothing had ever worked out. Even though there would have been more opportunities for her if she opened herself up to the secular market – indeed, this was the reason that many young gospel singers left the church – she refused to do so. "Today I'm very happy with my life, even if I can't buy some special clothes", she told me. "Sometimes I'm like, I wish I could buy this, I wish I could live a life where I can use my money the way I want because every month I

have a salary. But then I'm like, God, please forgive me. I can't live again doing other things... I want to be in my music only".

In this way, we can see how gospel provided some young women with more "respectable" careers in music. Since Clarisse saw herself as serving a higher power, she was little concerned with how she was perceived by others. She was known as a committed *murokore* and I never heard any rumours circulating about her moral character. Performing her *murokore* faith through music, furthermore, allowed her to assume a position of power and authority: her songs would help others to receive Christ; she was not "wasting" her time. Clarisse created a new public position for herself despite the fact that many *abarokore* churches emphasised the subordination of women to male pastors, as we saw in Chapter 3. Her understanding of time – and its urgency – was in many ways incompatible with the government's developmentalist vision. Clarisse was little interested in singing about peace or reconciliation. Here again we see the "subversive" (Peterson 2012) possibilities of *abarokore* practice, particularly how it was articulated through music.

Conclusion

In this chapter I explored Rwandan popular culture as a gendered space of conflicting temporalities. Although the state promotes women's involvement in the country's politics, as we saw in Chapter 3, there were very few young women working in the modern music industry. One reason for this was that "traditional Rwandan values" created expectations that young women should behave modestly and stay within the household. They were not supposed to "show" themselves in public, let alone on stage. Women who did so were considered "pleasure girls" and their reputations were more or less ruined. While they may have "won" in the industry, they often "lost" in Rwandan society. There were very real-

world consequences for being seen as a “wicked” woman, such as the loss of sponsorship opportunities. Young women, furthermore, had to contend with *ruswa y’igitsina* or sexual corruption. Stories abounded about the dangers of getting caught up in its clutches.

Some young women, however, did venture into the music industry. By doing so they created new identities and lives for themselves. In order to justify their participation in music, they often relied on the cultural concept of *agaciro*. By maintaining strict codes of behaviour and dress, they were able to claim that they were acting with *agaciro* and encourage other young women to express themselves creatively. Gospel singers, because they answered not to the public but to the higher power of God, were more immune from social critique. They saw music as a form of Christian evangelism, and drew on global female singers as role models. They were able to “subvert” cultural norms on how young women should act in public as the coming of the End Times made their performances of the utmost importance and urgency. While male hip hop artists claimed to deliver “messages” on the “truth” of everyday life, as we saw in the last chapter, female artists had their own messages to communicate. In this way, female performances can “provide a means for women to report, comment on, and critique practices and policies with which they disagree, as well as propose their own alternatives” (Hodgson and McCurdy 2001b:15).

I also suggested that the possibility of achieving fame was a way for young women to reframe their life stories. Instead of focusing on the violence of the genocide or its aftermath, they spoke of their dreams, hopes, and successes within the music industry. Here celebrity provided an alternative narrative form, one that bore a striking resemblance to the born-again testimonial. Instead of God working as the structuring principle, in these

women's stories it was the attainment of fame. They gave value to their talent, not to God, although the two processes, as we saw, were not mutually exclusive.

Although in this chapter I explored the specific form of sexual corruption, in the next chapter I open up my analysis to examine corruption in the music industry more generally.

Chapter 8

When a tree is not a tree: The politics of musical corruption

After months of events and roadshows around the country, the 10 hopeful contestants of the Primus Guma Guma Super Star Season 2 (PGGSS 2) competition had finally returned to Kigali for a final – and decisive – round of performances. Unlike the previous roadshows, which had involved “playback” performances – i.e. singers and rappers lip synced along to recorded tracks – the performances at the Gikondo Expo Grounds would be conducted live and broadcast on RTV.¹⁰⁵ The venue was crowded with industry big-wigs, entertainment journalists, photographers, radio presenters, promoters, and fans. The air was filled with excitement on what the night would bring. How would artists fare in “live” (*kuririmba imbonenkubone*) performance?

On the bill were R&B singers King James and Knowles; boy bands Urban Boys, Dream Boys, and Just Family; rappers Jay Polly, Riderman, Bulldogg, Dany Nanone, and Young Grace. As performer after performer took to the stage, hopeful expectation soon turned into bitter disappointment. While the rappers had confidently performed their flows accompanied by the live band, the R&B singers and boy bands had not fared as well. Many of the singers were off-key, off-beat, and seemed blissfully unaware of how they sounded, belting out their songs while audience members around me cringed. To many in the crowd, the competition was confirmation of what they had long-ago suspected: the vast majority of the country’s so-called “stars” had been lying to them. They didn’t know how to sing and had manipulated the public’s goodwill into achieving fame and (relative) fortune.

¹⁰⁵ The station, which broadcast a random mix of government conferences, news bulletins, music videos, and outdated Western documentaries, was a source of amusement to many friends. Although the station billed itself as “RTV: The network of your choice”, friends riffed on its French acronym: “TVR: Tu vois rien” [TVR: You see nothing].

When the first round of live performances was posted on YouTube, the criticism was scathing. “Full of talent-less!!! Auto tune *bakoresha mu ma studio zirabagaruka kuri* live performance [The auto tune they use in the studio doesn’t come back in live performance]”, wrote one. “None of these so-called artists can sing except Dream Boys (TMC [a member of Dream Boys] has a good voice but he also needs to work it out). I’m telling you guys, if you audition on Britain’s got talent, America’s got talent or x-factor and american idol, all of you can be rejected in the first place. For sure, i’m so shocked to hear that urban boys won 4 salax awards.¹⁰⁶ That’s ridiculous! They sound so bad!!!!” wrote another. To its critics, PGGSS 2 was proof that commercialisation and the corrupt practices of the entertainment media had “killed” music in Rwanda.

Introduction

In the last chapter I examined the gender politics of popular culture and the ways that female artists attempted to rework and re-imagine female personhood. In this chapter I focus on the various forms of “corruption” (*ruswa*) that was said to dominate the music industry during my fieldwork. Although the country’s early pioneers had worked hard to build the local music industry from “zero”, as we saw in Chapter 5, by the end of the 2000s disillusion had set in. Radio presenters demanded bribes (*igiti*) in exchange for airplay; producers insisted upon sexual favours (*ruswa y’igitsina*) from female artists; and singers produced heavily Auto-Tuned “fake” music (*gushishura*) that they were incapable of performing live. Showbiz, friends grumbled, was not a meritocratic system that allowed talent to rise to the top, but an *agakino* (game) controlled by a handful of powerful

¹⁰⁶ The equivalent of the American Grammys, the Salax Awards are given to Rwanda’s best musicians in a number of different categories.

entertainment journalists. Tellingly, this small clique was referred to as an *akazu* (a small house), the same word used to describe the Hutu elite surrounding Habyarimana that had orchestrated the genocide (see Chapter 1). Here, however, the term did not have the same ethnic connotations.

While allegations of corruption in any music industry in Africa or elsewhere are hardly surprising, I argue that they are significant in Rwanda as they took place against a backdrop of “zero” corruption. The RPF-government prides itself on having ruptured with the corrupt practices of the former Hutu regimes, replacing “bad” governance with “good”. Transparency International routinely ranks Rwanda as one of the least corrupt countries in Africa. Yet despite this supposedly corruption-free environment, just about every conversation I had about the music industry and entertainment media during my fieldwork involved some discussion of corruption. How, I ask, can we account for this puzzling discrepancy? What does it tell us about contemporary social life, performance, and the nature of post-genocide public culture (Englund 2011c)?

I argue that in a context of quiet insecurity and limited freedom of speech we must take talk of musical corruption seriously. Although discourses of political corruption have been understood as a “diagnostic of the state” (Gupta 1995:376), in Rwanda we can see discourses of musical corruption as a way for young people to voice their concerns about wider socio-political inequalities (Smith 2007; 2012). These debates came to a head during the Primus Guma Guma Super Star Season 2 (PGGSS 2) competition. Allegations of corruption and exploitation flew fast and furious. Artists were accused of buying votes; organisers were accused of exploiting the labour and popularity of the country’s young stars; and fans expressed serious concerns about the “transparency” of the voting process. I

argue that we can see these debates as articulating certain kinds of “claims” (Englund 2011b; Ferguson 2013; Haynes 2013), not only regarding the responsibilities of those in authority to their dependents, but also in terms of the kind of social world young Rwandans wanted to live in. These debates can be understood as attempts to create a certain kind of democratic dialogue within the entertainment media that was absent within the country’s wider political culture. Kagame’s landslide victory in the 2010 presidential election – he won with 92.9% of the vote – after all, had not prompted debates or outrage, despite the fact that it had been “an election marred by several murders and a clampdown on opposition groups” (Rice 2010).

As my opening vignette demonstrated, PGGSS 2 sparked heated debates about the merits of performing “playback” versus “live” music. While we can relate this shift to the moral anxieties that often accompany any transformation in technology (Larkin 2008) – i.e. live music giving way to technologically produced sounds – I suggest that it revealed greater concerns about truth and truth-telling in Rwanda’s public culture. In some ways, “live” performance offered one of the only public moments where it was possible to discern any modicum of “truth” with any certainty. On a stage, microphone in hand, either a singer could sing or he or she could not. Unlike the country’s social, political, and moral landscape, which was governed by quiet insecurity and the inability to discern whether or not politicians, pastors, lovers, family members, or friends were telling the truth at any given moment, live performance allowed young people to actively *co-create* truth, however fleetingly. I suggest that it is perhaps not insignificant that this debate about “playback” versus “live” music took place just as the *gacaca* courts, community courts used to try cases of genocide and establish the “truth”, were formally coming to a close. While I do not

attempt to make a direct link between *gacaca* and the playback versus live debate, I want to suggest that *gacaca* has in some ways shaped the public culture in the country, linking performance to notions of truth and truth-telling. We can see the debate as a way for young people to participate in their own *gacaca*, holding artists accountable for their own performative “truths”.

I structure this chapter in the follow way. I first discuss Rwanda’s aspirations of “zero” corruption and then move on to catalogue the various forms of corruption that were said to plague the music industry during my fieldwork. I then consider the PGGSS 2 competition and the contours of the “playback” versus “live” debate. I conclude with a discussion of the problematic nature of “truth” within Rwanda’s public culture.

“Zero” tolerance for corruption

Despite the various forms of corruption that were said to rule the music industry, Rwanda prides itself on its “zero” tolerance for corruption. The 2013 Global Corruption Barometer by Transparency International ranked Rwanda as the least corrupt country in Africa and 13th worldwide (Tabaro and Kwihangana 2013). Rwanda was also named the least bribery-prone country in East Africa (Tabaro and Kwihangana 2013). The government’s emphasis on transparency and anti-corruption is an attempt to break with the abuses of power and ethnic favouritism that were said to characterise the former Hutu regimes. Corruption is conceived as antithetical to Rwanda’s Vision 2020 goals. The country’s official Anti-Corruption Policy thus claims to “focu[s] on people, systems and organizations and on building a culture where integrity is valued and corruption rejected” (2012:4). Fighting against corrupt will “support national development...; a better quality of life for people; a strong competitive economy; [and] effective and efficient public services” (2012:4). The

Office of the Ombudsman, which handles corruption cases, has implemented a number of anti-corruption initiatives. In 2007 it instituted both the national Anti-Corruption Week and a national competition on good governance that pits districts against each other to see who can be named the least corrupt (Office of the Ombudsman 2013). Youth are also involved in the battle through anti-corruption clubs. In 2013 there were 47 such clubs in high schools and nine in higher learning institutions (Office of the Ombudsman 2013).

Ordinary Rwandans routinely made similar claims to me in everyday conversations. I was often told, particularly by *abarokore* Christians, that there was no corruption in Rwanda. “People know that if you take a bribe, however small, you will get in trouble and go to jail. Their lives will be over”, one born-again couple told me. The husband, who had spent five months in West Africa on a training programme, asserted that although there were more opportunities in countries such as Nigeria and Ghana, they were too corrupt for anything to truly function. “For ethics, Rwanda is best”, he declared.

Despite political will and popular perceptions, however, the government’s anti-corruption tactics seem to target low-ranking officials rather than “big fish” (Kagire and Rwirahira 2014). While a number of high-profile corruption cases involving ministers and permanent secretaries were tried between 2009 and 2011, Kagire and Rwirahira (2014) point out that since then no “outstanding corruption case” has been brought before the courts.

Despite this supposedly sterling anti-corruption record, NGOs and human rights groups routinely criticise Rwanda for its lack of freedom of speech and freedom of the press (Freedom House 2013; Freedom House 2012; Gonza 2012; Human Rights Watch 2014a). Although both are enshrined in Rwanda’s constitution, in practice “[r]ampant

abuses of journalists' rights persist", meted out in particular by security personnel (Gonza 2012:325; see also Freedom House 2013). Given the country's history of "hate media", the government "continues to justify censorship and propaganda as a necessary safeguard against the recrudescence of genocide" (Waldorf 2007:404). Journalists critical of the government flee into exile, while those who remain either practice "play it safe journalism" (Gonza 2012) or face imprisonment. Although a revised Media Law (Law N°02/2013) was adopted in March 2013 that seemed to "increase the scope for independent journalism, for example by enshrining journalists' rights to freedom of opinion and expression and by introducing media self-regulation", the media remains "heavily dominated by pro-government views" (Human Rights Watch 2014a; Article 19 2013). Indeed, Waldorf has argued that "there is less press freedom and media pluralism in Rwanda today than there was before the genocide" (2007:404).

Investigating corruption, furthermore, has proven dangerous. In July 2013 Gustave Makonene, the coordinator of Transparency International Rwanda's Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre in Rubavu, was found strangled to death along the shores of Lake Kivu. When little headway seemed to have been made in the case six months later, Human Rights Watch (HRW) called on the government to investigate Makonene's murder (Human Rights Watch 2014b). Makonene had been working on allegations of corruption, some involving the police. According to HRW, the silence surrounding the case demonstrated "the weakness of independent organizations and media in Rwanda" (Human Rights Watch 2014b). Years of "intimidation, threats, and infiltration" have made NGOs hesitant to investigate "politically sensitive issues or human rights abuses by government agents", particularly when it comes to corruption (Human Rights Watch 2014b). Indeed, this lack of

investigative journalism had even been noted by the country's Media High Council, the body in charge of regulating the media, a year earlier. A 2013 report on the role of media in corruption and crime prevention found that journalists focused on event reporting rather than investigative journalism. In fact, event reporting accounted for 90% of the reporting, and investigative journalism a meagre 1.3% (Kabeera 2013).

Following Gupta, we can see the *absence* of discourses of political corruption as a “diagnostic” of the various silencing mechanisms of the RPF state (Burnet 2012). Yet this silencing was not absolute. Instead, corruption discourses were displaced into the realm of the “unofficial”, allowing young people to engage in serious debates about inequality, transparency, and truth on their own terms. As one entertainment journalist told me:

In showbiz, we talk about musicians or other people who are cool, whom we can reach. And there are not many consequences. You're not afraid to talk the truth. That's true. That's real journalism. But politics? You only say what the RPF says. You say what you're allowed to say. That's not journalism.

Since these debates about corruption took place within the “apolitical” sphere of popular culture, an overwhelmingly youth space, they were mostly ignored. To many young people, entertainment journalism was considered the only “real” form of journalism in the country.

More than a tree: *Igiti*

I turn now to consider the various forms of corruption that were said to dominate the modern music industry. When I started speaking to artists, entertainment journalists, radio presenters, producers, and fans, they almost always brought up the problem of corruption. “There is corruption everywhere”, popular singer Miss Jojo told me. “When money comes into something, people get corrupted. People take bribes”. Although there had been few opportunities for economic success when pioneering artists like Miss Jojo began their careers in the mid-2000s – indeed, this lack of opportunities was cited as the reason why

early R&B “stars” such as Meddy and The Ben had left the country in pursuit of brighter futures – the introduction of the PGGSS competition in 2011 had changed the game. Suddenly, corporations were taking popular music seriously and offering young artists the possibility of surviving on their music alone. Rwanda’s three major telecommunications companies – MTN, Tigo, and Airtel – all began using popular artists as their “brand ambassadors”. Popular artists were featured on billboards, in radio advertisements, and in television commercials. More wealth seemed to be circulating in the system, yet the vast majority of entertainment journalists and artists did not seem to be benefiting from it.

The most widespread form of corruption in the music industry was *igiti*, cash bribes employed in a wide range of settings, but usually as incentive for a radio presenter to play an artist’s song. Ironically, the first time I heard the word *igiti* was during an interview with a young *murokore* (born-again Christian) man named Jean-Marie. I had wanted to speak to Jean-Marie about his conversion from ADEPR, the “old” Pentecostal church, to a new *murokore* one yet before he agreed he asked me if any *igiti* would be involved. “*Igiti*?” I replied, puzzled. In standard Kinyarwanda *igiti* means “tree” and I was at a loss as to how a tree had anything to do with religious conversion. Jean-Marie explained good-humouredly that *igiti* was the slang word for bribe. Although there were other standard Kinyarwanda words for bribe – principally *ibitutire* and *igishuko* – using the slang of *igiti* was a way to confuse listeners and conceal the transaction. Jean-Marie was familiar with the term as he worked as a journalist on a Christian radio station. (*Igiti* was common even in the Christian media.¹⁰⁷) Fortunately, he agreed to an interview without *igiti*.

¹⁰⁷ I distinguish *igiti* from the money that was routinely given to journalists to attend press conferences or events under the guise of “transport”. This money was doled out openly and systematically, and did not have the negative moral connotations that *igiti* did.

Jean-Marie offered this definition of *igiti*: “It’s a system that journalists use in Rwanda”, he told me. “It’s the money that you can get from someone who wants information”. Much like other slang terms, *igiti* had been coined specifically to conceal the activity from authorities. “We know that our government fights against corruption”, Jean-Marie explained to me sheepishly, “that’s why we hide the corruption and call it *igiti*”. Hasty reports a similar practice in Ghana, where journalists received “*solis*”, cash “gifts” from a source to cover travel expenses (2005:15). Similarly, Pype (2013) writes that Kinshasa’s journalists receive “*coupagne*” from their elite sources. In Rwanda *igiti* suggests the value of information, and how being in possession of the right kind of information or social connections could translate into material benefit.

When I started asking friends about the origins of *igiti*, they told me the *igiti* system had developed at the end of the 2000s. Yet the origins of the term itself was said to trace back to the pre-genocide period. Janvier, a well-known radio presenter, explained the history of *igiti* to me in this way:

There was a commune called Igit. You know, a commune-district. Before there were not districts, we called them communes.¹⁰⁸ I think the story told by people – if it’s the truth, I don’t know – is that the *bourgmestre* [mayor] of that commune, he was the first person who gave money to a journalist so that he would talk about his commune. That’s why they started to say *igiti*.
Ironically, although the RPF holds up the country’s corrupt pre-genocide past as the foil to its regime of “good” governance, young people drew on this very past for new ways to secure their livelihoods. In some senses, by calling bribery in the music industry *igiti*, young people were creating a sort of continuity of corruption, drawing on the past in innovative and unexpected ways to evade authority.

¹⁰⁸ In 2006 under a policy of decentralisation, the RPF changed the country’s administrative structure and place names. There are now five provinces, 30 districts, 416 sectors, and 9,165 cells (Thomson 2013a:121).

How, then, did *igiti* work? Claudine, an entertainment journalist, explained the system to me in this way. An artist with “no talent” would go to a producer and record a song.¹⁰⁹ He would then take the song to private radio stations and give a small *igiti* bribe – say 5,000Rwf – to various presenters to play it. The song would then become popular not based on its own merits – the cleverness of its lyrics or catchiness of its chorus – but because it had received heavy airplay. The song’s singer would become a star, making money from playback concerts and, if he was lucky, corporate sponsorship and state events.

Igiti, furthermore, was not limited to journalists and artists but also involved producers. For example, an artist would pay a producer to make a “bizarre” song for a rival. Félicien, a gospel journalist we encountered in Chapter 2, explained to me that an artist would go to a producer with this proposal: “He [rival artist] will pay you the normal amount, maybe 50,000Rwf, but I will give you 100,000Rwf, so you produce something bizarre for him”. This form of *igiti* meant that the paying artist would receive the best production and thus the best track, while his rival received a poorly produced song. Another type of *igiti* involved an artist approaching radio presenters and paying them *not* to play the songs of certain artists. “He goes to the radio presenter”, Félicien explained. “He says, ‘Listen, it’s a deal. If someone brings his song, please, don’t play it. Erase it. If he gives it to someone else at your radio [station], erase it. I want my song to be played. You understand?’ He pays. So you see a triangle like that: artist, producer, journalist. Breaking into that triangle takes energy”.

While *igiti* was seen in highly moralistic terms, it also revealed the precariousness of employment for many young people. Journalists, as Hasty (2010; 2005b) has observed,

¹⁰⁹ As I discuss in Chapter 7, to my knowledge all the producers in the country were men. This gender dynamic has discouraged some young women from entering the music industry.

occupy an ambiguous social position. While they are “highly literate, discursive producers with privileged access to the political field”, they are also often “poorly paid and lack the social and intellectual capital of local elites” (Hasty 2010:143). While some friends blamed corruption on the lack of professionalism in the industry – very few radio presenters and reporters had actually studied journalism, though this was changing – others told me that it was the result of precarious employment practices. “Many journalists and radio presenters in Rwanda don’t get monthly salaries”, Claudine told me. Since they could not count on receiving their paycheques on time, they had to survive by taking bribes. Unstable labour conditions meant that journalists had no choice but to enter into patron-client relationships with artists, which involved complex relationships of reciprocity and risk (Pype 2013).

Igiti suggested was that young peoples’ employment hid their poverty, and having a supposedly stable job did not always amount to receiving a regular income. *Igiti* revealed that even “stable” employment was *ibiraka*, a slang term used to refer to low-paid part-time jobs. While some entertainment journalists became stars in their own right, they had much more difficulty than artists converting their celebrity into economic value (Shipley 2013). This gave rise to acrimonious relationships between artists and journalists, with each accusing the other of corruption.

***Gushishura* and “pirate” modernity**

Another aspect of musical corruption was the phenomenon of *gushishura*. The literal translation of the Kinyarwanda verb is “to peel”, but in the music industry it was used to refer to the practice of taking a foreign song and translating it into Kinyarwanda without changing the musical structure or content. One journalist defined *gushishura* as “stealing beats of songs of famous artists and using them for personal productions” (Prince 2011).

Other critics called it “copy-paste” or simply “stealing”. Rurangwa, a member of the group KGB and a radio presenter, explained it to me in this way:

Gushishura, it’s a slang. [It’s] like I take your name and then I call it my name. So it’s like these guys, especially the R&B singers, they take like Chris Brown’s lyrics, they change it into Kinyarwanda, they take his melody and rhythm, and then they sing it. You see? And then they call it their songs. Artists such as Tom Close, Just Family, Meddy, Diplomat, and Tuff Gang have all been accused of *gushishura*. Well-known examples of *gushishura* songs include Tom Close’s “Komeza Utsinde”, which bears a striking resemblance to American R&B singer Kat DeLuna’s song, “Am I dreaming”; Tom Close’s “Ubuziraherezo”, which was said to be a copy of British artist Taio Cruz’s song “What You Need”; and Just Family’s “Arahebuje”, which was a translation of Puerto Rican artist Don Omar’s hit “Danza Kuduro”. More recently, R&B singer Bruce Melody faced accusations that his song “Copy” was, in fact, a copy of “Yes or No” by the Nigerian singer Banky W (Irakoze 2013).

When well-known producer Lick Lick won the best producer award at the 2011 Salax Awards, the Rwandan equivalent of the Grammys, audience members reportedly called out “*arashishura!*” (“he steals!”) (Prince 2011). As DJ Adams, a radio presenter and vocal critic of the music industry – indeed, he is often credited for first exposing the phenomenon of *gushishura* – commented dryly at the time: “It is surprising how someone can be crowned ‘best producer of the year’, yet he barely has an own made instrumental” (Prince 2011). For their part, artists claimed that they stole beats because local producers did not have the technological savvy to make their own. “We desperately use the downloaded ones because we want quality records which the local producers cannot deliver”, one local artist was quoted as saying (Prince 2011).

According to Rurangwa, it was because of *gushishura* that many of the industry's "big names" such as Miss Jojo and Rafiki were no longer as popular as they had been. When I talked to him in 2012, Rurangwa claimed that the music industry in the country was "de-growing". Although it had flourished between 2003 and 2009, from 2010 onwards it had become dominated by "fake", self-taught producers and *gushishura* artists. "Nowadays music has become money-making more than like capturing people's hearts, capturing people's minds", he lamented. The airwaves, he said, were dominated by "unquality music".

Indeed, according to Félicien radio presenters were responsible for "killing" the local music industry. He explained:

The guys of today are not musicians. Why? Because of the media. The media promoted fake products [*faux produits*]. Why? Because of money. Someone releases a product. He knows that his product is not good... So he gives a lot of money to radio presenters who say, "Yes, we will play you". People like Rafiki who can sing, people like The Brothers [a popular boy band of the mid-2000s]. These guys are strong in music. They can't buy promotion. They can't run after journalists saying, can you promote me? Why? Because they know well that their products are good, they can defend them. But guys like for example Dream Boys, Urban Boys, Just Family [popular boy bands] – they are stars, they are known, but what product? They have good songs, good words, but the product? [...] This is why I say that the media killed Rwandan music.

The endemic corruption in the industry had put artists who were truly talented in a difficult position. Since they produced "real" as opposed to "fake" songs, they could not lower themselves to bribe presenters. Not only was it a matter of pride, it was also a matter of value (Graeber 2001). If you truly believed in the quality of your music, bribing someone to play it diminished its quality. As Guy, a singer who was renowned for his live performances, told me:

The only person who pays is the person who knows that he's somehow unable. Because he knows that the music he has is not good... Me, I know the music that I give is good. How can I give you money?

While Guy refused to pay presenters *igiti*, his refusal came at a cost. Although he was considered one of the best singers in the country, his songs were rarely played on local radio stations.¹¹⁰

Larkin (2004:289) has argued convincingly that media piracy reveals how urban Africans, cut off from official global infrastructures, have developed their own informal networks of circulation and exchange. Piracy, he points out, is not a pathology of these circulations but rather “creates an aesthetic”; technology “influences through its failure as much as through its successes” (Larkin 2004:289). Of particular interest is Larkin’s argument that pirate infrastructure creates particular experiences of time and space. Drawing on Kern’s (1983) observation that societies experience time differently – too attached to history or divorced from it; future-less or accelerating towards one – Larkin points out that the media “provides the conduit for our experience of being ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ history” (2004:303; Larkin 1998:11). Although new technologies and urbanisation have accelerated time for Nigerians, they have also exposed inequalities. “[T]he poor material infrastructure of Nigeria ensures that as the speed of Nigerian life increases, so too does the gap between *actual* and *potential* acceleration, between what technologies *can* do and what they *do* do”, he writes. “Thus, even as life speeds up, the gap between how fast society is moving and how fast it could move become a site of considerable political tension” (Larkin 2004:289). Transnational media forms become fantasies of places where distortions and infrastructural degradation do not exist,

¹¹⁰ Indeed, the rap crew Tuff Gang won respect when it refused to pay *igiti* to radio presenters. For a time, certain presenters stopped playing their songs but the group’s popularity meant that the ban was eventually lifted.

representing “implicit and sometimes explicit critiques of the failures of the Nigerian state to provide basic infrastructures for everyday life” (Larkin 2004:289).

In this way, we can see how discourses of corruption in the Rwandan music industry allowed young people to articulate their anxieties about this contradiction. Although new recording technology and the privatisation of the media promised connections to transnational musical networks, the subsequent corruption or breakdown of this infrastructure suggested their marginalisation. While the state may promise modernity and progress for all through its Vision 2020 programme, young Rwandans did not have equal access to these opportunities, musical or otherwise. Discourses of corruption surrounding the music industry can be seen as anxious narratives of modernity, highlighting the gap between what has been promised to young people and what is possible in their lived realities of poverty, unemployment, and quiet insecurity (Pells, Pontalti, and Williams 2014). In this way, “pirate” or “recycled” modernity can be seen as an “unintended mocking of the state” (Sundaram 1999), revealing the prevalence of non-legal and informal infrastructures even under its authoritarian gaze.

PGGSS Season 1: The dirty politics of music

Debates about corruption crystallised around the PGGSS competition. Although the first PGGSS took place in 2011, Joseph Mushyoma, head of the promotion company East African Promoters, claimed he had come up with the concept in 2009. “I was looking how I can help our industry to grow up”, he told me. Knowing that the budget required for the project would be substantial, he approached Bralirwa, the largest brewery and soft drink manufacturer in the country and part of the Heineken Group, for backing. They agreed, and in May 2011 the first PGGSS was officially launched. Ten potential “super stars” were

selected by journalists and industry insiders. For the months of May and June they performed “playback” roadshows throughout the country. Attendance at the shows was free. In July, the contestants performed live on RTV and, in a series of elimination rounds, the public voted for the winner by SMS. Notably, unlike American Idol, X-Factor, or other popular singing competitions, the contestants were already well-known artists in Rwanda. In fact, one of the selection criteria was that they already have “music hits”, dating from 2008 onwards, under their belt. Contestants were competing for US\$10,000 and the opportunity to perform with Jamaican-American singer Sean Kingston at a final event at Kigali’s Amahoro Stadium. Also up for grabs was a trip to the US to record a song with Kingston and film an accompanying music video. The scale of the prizes was unprecedented in the Rwandan music industry.

Given that so much was at stake, the first season of PGGSS stirred controversy. Not only did three of the original contestants drop out almost immediately after their names were announced – Miss Jojo, Miss Shanel, and Kitoko – but once the voting started it seemed as though PGGSS privileged popularity over talent. Well respected artists Mani Martin, Faysal, and Dr Claude, all of whom were seasoned performers with established fan bases, were eliminated in the first round. “We were very, very disappointed”, Félicien told me. “Everyone was disappointed”. What kind of competition eliminated singers of Mani Martin’s calibre over Afrobeat boy bands who could not carry a tune live?

In the finale at Amahoro stadium, it came down to two finalists: Tom Close and King James, both R&B singers. When it was announced that Close had won, the crowd revolted. Fans – particularly of runner-up Jay Polly, a rapper who had narrowly missed a spot in the top two – saw Close’s win as evidence that the competition was rigged. They

began throwing stones at the stage – a far cry from the supposedly “silent” (Goodfellow 2013) character of the country’s public culture. The emcee of the event, Lion Imanzi, “was forced to beg for mercy from the mad crowds” (Munyaneza 2011). Close, for his part, took the stoning in stride. As he later told me, “Six or seven years of experience in this music industry, I knew that anything could happen. And the music industry is also a dirty game. It’s almost like politics. People can plot something like that to happen”.

In the aftermath, fans and journalists alike blamed a corrupt voting system for the crowd’s rowdy response. As one journalist observed:

How would you convince crowds roaring Jay Polly, Jay Polly...that Tom Close registered more SMS votes, without anyway of proving it? From the opening show when the top ten artists were announced, to the final day when the winner was pronounced, most fans were never contented with mere announcement of who won, without any sort of proof. BRALIRWA should perhaps consider improving transparency in the SMS voting exercise. (Munyaneza 2011)

The same journalist also called for a judging panel to be introduced so experts could weigh in on the performances and educate the public in the process. (Indeed, this was implemented in PGGSS Season 3.)

The competition was ultimately seen to be about money. Since votes were tallied by SMS, contestants bought SIM cards and voted for themselves. Although many fans saw the practice as dishonest and corrupt, it was not officially against the rules. Tom Close won simply because he could mobilise more resources. As one entertainment journalist told me:

Tom Close was richer than Jay Polly. Maybe not more popular, but richer... Jay Polly, his fans are poor. They’re street kids, they can’t buy [phone credit]... He’s really popular because he sings the street life, he calls himself the gospel gansta... He’s a good rapper, he has good message for the people. But those people are poor.

In this way, we can see how the competition brought hidden socio-economic inequalities to light, suggesting that fame and fortune came to the wealthy rather than to the most talented or deserving. SMS voting gave the competition the façade of democracy, but it was

democratic in name only. Socio-economic disparities also became apparent when Sean Kingston performed in Rwanda in September 2011. Much to the crowd's disappointment, Kingston performed a short lacklustre playback set. While he did record a duet with Tom Close called "Good Time Tonight", the song did not become a hit locally or internationally. Indeed, in the accompanying music video Close and Kingston do not appear in the same frame together, revealing that they shot their parts separately. Although Close continued his career after his PGGSS win, he was not catapulted into international super stardom. The "collaboration" was ultimately one of "failed recognition" (Shipley 2013:272), as Kingston refused to confer celebrity value onto Close or other local artists. He remained for them "a distant icon of both hope and disappointment" (Shipley 2013:272).

PGGSS Season 2: Regionalism and "Me2U"

PGGSS 2 followed the same general format as the inaugural season, but with some notable modifications. For one, the prize package now amounted to 24 million Rwf. When the top 10 artists were announced live on RTV, they each received a cheque of 500,000Rwf. This time around the featured foreign artist was American R&B singer Jason Derula. More importantly, however, the PGGSS experience was now four months long and involved not only roadshows and "live" televised performances but a number of community activities. Contestants participated in *umuganda*, visited an orphanage, a school for disabled students, and genocide memorials. There was even a friendly "stars" versus journalists football match in Amahoro Stadium. When I asked Mushyoma why the community outreach activities had been included in the second season, he responded: "The idea came because you know I'm Rwandese, and we have the history. Even if you do these kinds of events, our artists should know what is happening, they should be involved in government

programmes”. A super star was someone who actively participated in the country’s reconstruction. By visiting genocide memorials, for example, it was hoped that artists would learn about the country’s past and work to create music that would reconcile people rather than tear them apart.

Like its predecessor, PGGSS 2 was the site of intense speculation, gossip, and controversy. After the first roadshow in Cyangugu, Emmy, an R&B singer, unexpectedly left the competition – and the country – to pursue his studies. He had not informed competition organisers beforehand, and they were left scrambling to fill his spot. (In the end, they admitted the Afrobeat group Urban Boys to take his place as they had narrowly missed being in the original top 10.) Even the promise of becoming a local super star, it seemed, did not outweigh the possibility of higher education in America.

As in the first season, the live shows at the Gikondo Expo Grounds were the source of the most debate. In the second elimination round, controversy erupted over MC Lion Imanzi’s questioning of Young Grace, an 18-year-old rapper from Gisenyi. In the format of the live shows, artists would perform individually and then Imanzi would ask them a few questions afterwards. After Young Grace’s performance, Imanzi asked her about her supporters. Given Young Grace’s hometown, Imanzi jokingly asked her if her fans were only family members or those from the north (*Majyaruguru*). Since Rwanda’s north has historically been considered a predominantly Hutu area, Imanzi was accused of “regionalism” or publicly alluding to ethnicity. Journalists and fans accused him of “offending” (*yabajije*) the young rapper (Muhawe 2012). His questions were deemed “inappropriate” (Kagire 2012a) and there were rumours that he would be forced to resign. In the end, Imanzi publicly apologised to Young Grace (*gusaba imbabazi*) and continued

on as the competition's MC (Muhawe 2012). Yet the incident demonstrated that regionalism and ethnicity lurked beneath the surface of the competition and popular culture more generally. Here we can see how ethnic identities, although banned by the government, "return as a kind of performative haunting" (Breed 2013:5). While everyone suspected Young Grace's fans were predominantly from the north, admitting it out loud undermined an inclusive *banyarwanda* identity that was supposed to have replaced ethnicity and regionalism.

The most heated debate, however, was about voting practices. When I attended a PGGSS press conference before the voting began, almost every question posed by journalists concerned how Bralirwa could prove that their voting practices were fair and transparent. Journalists wanted to know exactly how votes were tallied, and by whom. Even the appearance of a representative from outside auditing firm PricewaterhouseCooper, the company charged with vote counting, did not reassure journalists. Why should they believe him? How could the contest organizers guarantee that the winner would be the most talented and worthy? How did they know the winner wasn't decided upon in advance?

Indeed, when Riderman and Urban Boys were eliminated in the third round of voting, leaving Knowles, Young Grace, Jay Polly, and King James in the competition, fans were outraged. Knowles and Young Grace were perceived to have far fewer fans than established artists Riderman and Urban Boys. They were industry newcomers who had not yet proven themselves as performers. Friends I spoke to grumbled that the results were fixed and that the only reason Knowles and Young Grace remained in the competition was because they were female. "There are rumours that one of them is going to win because now that Rwanda is about gender, they want a female winner", my friend JP told me.

Accusations arose that the pair had conducted illegal voting practices by giving fans airtime via “Me2U” transfer. After these allegations came to light, Bralirwa, PricewaterhouseCooper, and East African Promoters called another press conference to reassure the public. Also present were the four finalists, who were each given time to speak. Jay Polly criticised Bralirwa for not taking the allegations seriously and alleged that his fellow contestants were “buying their way” to the top (Kagire 2012a). This sentiment seemed to be shared by his supporters. In the next elimination round, Jay Polly won the second most votes, securing his place in the final alongside King James.

The grand finale took place in the parking lot of Amahoro stadium on July 28. Jay Polly and King James performed alongside Jason Derula. Unlike Sean Kingston’s disastrous performance the year before, Derula’s performance was well-received. He sang live and danced to his hits such as “It Girl” and “Whatcha Say”. Although the crowd enjoyed Derula’s performance, they were mostly there to see who would be crowned the PGGSS 2 winner. After four months of build-up King James ultimately received the most votes. After his name was announced, King James fell to his knees to thank God for his victory. Jay Polly left without collecting his participation certificate and consolation prize of Rwf3 million. As Kagire remarked, “He was later heard on radio stating that he might not take part in next year’s competition” (2012b). Unlike the previous year, this time no stones were thrown.

The fallout: Of thieves and conmen

What, then, can PGGSS 2 tell us about the context of quiet insecurity and the nature of Rwanda’s popular culture? Why was public attention focused on corrupt voting practices and the playback versus live debate? Despite the controversies, PGGSS 2 was considered

an overwhelming success. The competition, in fact, allowed Bralirwa to rebrand Primus. Instead of being considered a beer of the poor (Sommers 2012:32), it was now associated with the country's hottest young artists. In 2011 and 2012, Bralirwa boasted huge profits, in part because of the PGGSS competitions. In the first half of 2012, for example, Bralirwa Ltd saw its net profit increase by 45.3%. In the accompanying press release, the company proclaimed: "Our increased marketing investments allows us to build quality brands with strong connection to our consumers. Particularly relevant in this context...has been the great success of the Second Season of Primus Guma Guma Super Stars. In only its second year the four month national even has established itself as the biggest thing in Rwanda's growing and vibrant music scene".¹¹¹

Yet fans, journalists, and artists were conflicted on whether or not the competition was a step forward for the music industry or a step backward. To Barbara, Guma Guma was important because it made popular artists into national stars. As she told me: "Most of the artists, yes, they were known, but mostly in Kigali. People in the countryside, while some of them knew the songs through the radio – I won't say TV because very few have access – they didn't know who the person behind the song was". Guma Guma, she said, gave faces to artists in the public imagination.

Yet to others, the competition commercialised the music industry and made the focus solely on money. Although the PGGSS franchise had helped to build the careers of young artists, this success was temporary. Since the company was motivated by profits, there was no guarantee that the competition would continue into the future. This could have dire consequences for artists who depended on it for their livelihoods. Cédric made this

¹¹¹ <http://www.bralirwa.com/cms/index.php/press-releases>

clear to me. While he appreciated that the competition had helped to create a national music market, he had his reservations. As he told me:

My worry is that Guma Guma is not helping artists to perform their talent but is pushing them to do the music for getting money only, not the quality. For example, this time, every artist in Rwanda has to focus to do the quality music for the Salax Awards and to do the hit songs for Guma Guma [to make money]... But what will the future be? Cause if you prioritize money, the event will not last long. For example tomorrow Bralirwa can say, “Ah, our product is being consumed at the level that we want so, we are no longer giving the money”.

Grand events like Guma Guma, Cédric suggested, were not sustainable in the long-run.

Instead of supporting the everyday creativity of artists, they turned music into a monetary competition where they were forced to produce hits rather than “quality” music.

As my opening vignette suggested, PGGSS 2 also brought to light new moral economies associated with “playback” versus “live” music. Artists who had found success through “fake” music were exposed as “liars”. In this way, although PGGSS helped to feed music corruption in the country, it also helped to expose it. As Rurangwa explained to me:

People didn’t know that playback was spoiling the music. When it comes to Guma Guma, that’s when people started hearing, oh, these were the people who are singing good and they don’t know how to sing! Autotunes, effects, the sounds, the vocals is good, but when it comes to the microphone, it’s like a frog. [chuckles] That’s when people started hating these guys, started realising that these artists are lying to them. So that’s how things are starting to change. That’s how fans are starting to clamour, no, we don’t want this!

Popular radio presenter DJ Adams, who we encountered above, was known for his harsh critique of the local music industry, particularly its reliance on playback. He explained his dislike of the technology in this way:

The last time I was talking about playback, I was really so harsh. You know what I said? I said, whenever you see artists who are coming to do playback, first of all they are thieves. How are they thieves? They are guys who steal something from somewhere and they want to call it theirs... Now the second thing: they are people who make us go against the law of the government. They pay bribes... Now three, these guys are conmen. Because they’ll come with a CD, put it in the deck, and then hold a microphone and pretend they’re singing.

In his work on corruption in Nigeria, Smith argues that corruption “has become the dominant discourse of complaint in the postcolonial world, symbolizing people’s disappointments with democracy and development, and their frustrations with continuing social inequality” (2007:9; see also Smith 2012). Smith points out that while the Nigerian government’s attempts to implement democracy may have failed, these very efforts have transformed citizens’ expectations of what the state can and should be. In this way, it has given them the “discursive language with which to demand that these expectations be fulfilled” (2007:136). Here we can see young peoples’ complaints in a similar light. By advocating for a transparent PGGSS voting process and publicly protesting when the vote was perceived to be corrupt, they were actively engaging with the country’s wider political economy and holding those in authority accountable. In this way, they were calling artists’ “bluff” (Newell 2012).

Placing “live” versus “playback” in context: *Gacaca*, truth, and claims

I do not suggest that Rwanda is unique for debates surrounding “playback” versus “live” music. Lamont (2010), for example, writes of “lip-sync gospel” artists in Kenya who engage in street performances to sell their cassettes. Within the American music industry the use of Auto-Tune has attracted controversy and artists who use it are heavily criticised. Rapper-turned-singer T-Pain, for example, made his name using Auto-Tune on hit songs such as “Buy U a Drank”, but was eventually considered a “joke” and “an uncool novelty act” (Neyfakh 2014) for overusing it. Similarly, when an unedited version of a Britney Spears’ song leaked online at the beginning of July 2014, the pop songstress was pilloried in the press for her off-key singing (Weisman 2014; Kristobak 2014; Fallon 2014).

Yet I argue that the debate over playback versus live music takes on different contours in Rwanda. Within American popular culture, using technology to manipulate an artist's voice does not seem to prompt the same moral anxieties. For all the talk of T-Pain being a "joke", no one accused him of *lying* to the audience. I suggest that in order to make sense of the debate we must consider Rwanda's specific socio-historical context, in particular the ways that *gacaca*, community courts used to try cases of genocide, has shaped public culture and understandings of performance and truth. I am not suggesting a direct overlap, but I want to propose that it may be helpful for us to consider the playback versus live debate in light of *gacaca*'s legacy (Clark 2011; Human Rights Watch 2011; Ingelaere 2009; Rettig 2008; Thomson 2011). Indeed, a cultural activist once remarked to me that *gacaca* was "the first theatre form that we had here in Rwanda after 1994". Breed has argued that *gacaca* should be seen as social performance, arguing that "the structure of *gacaca* was inherently scripted, rehearsed, and performed to create Rwandicity" (2013:6). It is this theatricality of *gacaca* – in addition to its status as a platform for contentious truth-telling – that interests me here.

In 2001 the RPF "reinvented" *gacaca*, a traditional dispute resolution mechanism, to help prosecute the backlog of more than 100,000 genocide suspects who were being held in Rwanda's overcrowded prisons. The courts were presided over by elected lay judges, called *Inyangamugayo*, who heard testimony from survivors and the accused. Participation was mandatory. *Gacaca* officially came to a close in 2012, after having tried almost two million people and finding approximately 65% guilty (BBC 2012). In a speech commemorating the closing of *gacaca* on June 18, 2012, President Kagame declared the 10-year experiment in participatory transitional justice a success. It has resulted, he

claimed, in “truth-telling, national healing, reconciliation and justice” (2012). He stated:

Gacaca has empowered Rwandans in ways few could have envisaged. It has illustrated the liberating value of truth. When truth came out in court, from both the perpetrators and survivors of genocide, from witnesses and the community – freely, not at the prompting or tutoring of paid lawyers – it set everyone free and prepared the ground for the restoration of social harmony. (2012)

We could question, however, “whose truth” *gacaca* really told as crimes committed by the RPF – in particular the killings of Hutu civilians – during the genocide and after were not tried (Burnet 2009). Instead of empowering Rwandans, Thomson has accused *gacaca* of being a “mechanism of state power” (2011:386).

In an article that is germane to our purposes here, Ingelaere (2009) argues that *gacaca* must be understood within the broader history of communication and truth-telling in Rwanda. Within the “ethics of communicating” in ancient Rwanda, he writes, speech acts did not exist in a one-to-one relationship with reality (2009:515). They were, rather, “a means to an end”, evaluated on their “usefulness in a complex socio-political context” (2009:515). He elaborates:

The Rwandan system of communication was (and is) *esoteric*: statements at the same time reveal and conceal. This is paradigmatically captured in the proverb: “What is in the belly of the drum is only known to the ritualist and the owner.” While the drumbeat sends a message to the outside world, the interior of the communication vehicle (its secret) remains unknown. This proverb refers in the first place to the fact that no one is totally able to gain insight into someone else’s interior and motives. Since the drum symbolises power in Rwandan custom, the saying refers on another level to the fact that communication is used by the ruler(s) to convey and conceal what is useful for him/them to stay in power. The communication system was a function of the social organisation in a hierarchical society and supported the power structure. (2009:515)

In such a system, those in power were said to “possess” the truth, while the powerless were forced to “accept” it (2009:515). Within the post-genocide context, the RPF defines itself as the sole purveyor of “Truth”. Yet this top-down imposition of RPF ideology has not served to stabilise the “Truth”. Although *gacaca* was built on “speaking, revealing or hearing the

truth” (2009:515) – with the goal of establishing, in other words, a “forensic” truth – the earlier “esoteric” model of communication continued to operate. The *gacaca* process caused these two systems to come into conflict and “clash” with each other, creating a “crisis of transparency” which ultimately served to exacerbate social divisions (2009:515).

I suggest that we can see the playback versus live debate within popular culture as part of an ongoing “crisis of transparency”. When fans and journalists realised that they had been duped, that their favourite artists – those upon whom they had heaped (relative) fame and fortune – had been “lying” to them, they revolted and began demanding “live” performances. It is helpful here to understand this debate in terms of claims, and how claim-making has recently been theorised in anthropology. Englund has convincingly demonstrated that the African-language media – even avowedly “apolitical” radio news programmes – offer audiences the possibility of demanding equality through “claim-making” and in turn mediate “moral debate outside the purview of political leaders, human rights activists, and aid agencies” (2011b:3). By taking local authority figures to task for their failure to make good on their promises, the poor reinforce hierarchies but also demand equality as a “condition of relationship” in the process. Ferguson (2013) has also written of the importance of “social obligation” within contexts of inequality, examining how the subjugated often seek to enter into relationships of dependence with the powerful. Similarly, Haynes (2013) writes of a “hierarchy of charisma” within Pentecostal churches on the Copperbelt. By giving gifts or “seed offerings” to pastors, church members attempt to create ties of obligations in an uncertain economic context. In this way, Pentecostalism can be seen as a “mechanism for creating social structures similar to those that have been

eroded by the circumstances surrounding neoliberalism, for reclaiming relational terrain that economic uncertainty has made very difficult to inhabit” (2013:93).

In Rwanda I suggest that the playback versus life music debate – and discourses of corruption more generally – can be understood as attempts by fans and journalists to make “claims” on authority figures that were the most accessible to them: the country’s “stars”. Given the limits on freedom of speech and the government’s regime of “silent terror”, as Fiston called it in Chapter 6, young people knew all too well the futility of making similar claims on political leaders. There were, after all, so many claims that could not publicly be made: for public commemoration of Hutu killed by the RPF; for transparency in political elections; for discussion of the government’s involvement in the Eastern DR Congo; for investigations into citizens who had recently been “forcibly disappeared” (Human Rights Watch 2014c; Santoro and Thomson 2014). As Burnet has insightfully observed, the socio-political landscape in Rwanda is one of “amplified silence” – “intense public silence surrounding RPF-perpetrated violence experienced by Rwandans of all ethnicities” (2012:111). In such a climate, perhaps claims on the responsibility of “stars” to perform the “truth” and prove themselves worthy of admiration and celebrity were the only kinds of claims young people could make in a post-genocide context of quiet insecurity. Although modest, they were demands, in a sense, to make the country’s “soundscape” more ethical (Hirschkind 2006).

Conclusion

While the increased opportunities for artists have allowed some to prosper and support themselves solely through music, many felt that the commercialisation of the industry has led to greater corruption. Practices such as *igiti* and *gushishura* have transformed the

industry into a contested *agakino* (game) that forced those who wanted to succeed to resort to any means necessary. The system placed talented artists at a distinct disadvantage. They could not bribe radio presenters and journalists because doing so would be to admit their songs were “fake”. Yet by refusing to engage in corruption, their music was rarely played on the airwaves and “unquality” music was said to dominate.

I suggested that the public discussion of musical corruption in the country is significant, particularly because it takes place against a backdrop of “zero” tolerance for corruption and limited freedom of speech. While journalists and NGO workers faced intimidation, interrogation, and even death for investigating corruption, entertainment journalists and radio presenters who openly discussed and investigated musical corruption were left unharmed. If discourses of corruption are a way for citizens to critique social, political, and economic difference (De Sardan 1999; Smith 2012; Smith 2007; Gupta 1995), then the discourses of musical corruption in Rwanda suggest that the country’s young people are not “silent” on the inequalities they encounter in their everyday lives, but rather “channel” them through popular culture to make claims on those in authority (Goodfellow and Smith 2013:3196–7). “All power relationships are represented and enacted within a polemical arena”, Lonsdale (2004:75) has noted. “Power may control the public address system, but crowds also have a voice, generally a murmur, at times a roar”. While demanding live music and deriding playback artists as “liars” constitutes more of a murmur than a roar, this claim deserves to be taken seriously. We can see, in fact, that it articulates a certain (utopian) vision for social life and structure in the country, however modest: to inhabit a world in which artists could really sing and deserved the prosperity and responsibility that they had been given.

These “murmurs” continue and take on new forms within the realm of Rwanda’s popular culture. Although witchcraft (*umurozi*) was never something I heard mentioned in my conversations about musical corruption during my fieldwork, after I left it slowly started seeping into popular discourse. Artists were accused of visiting witchdoctors (*abafumu*) to secure their success or of bewitching their rivals to fail. One journalist even went undercover as an aspiring artist and visited a shrine in Nyamirambo (Karemera 2014b). Most interesting was how witchcraft was interpreted as a force that would “kill” the music industry, much like the forms I discussed in this chapter. *Igit*i and *gushishura* have been replaced, it seems, by witchcraft as more and more money enters the industry through corporate sponsorship.

Despite these changes in form, musical corruption remains a way for young people to articulate their frustrations that success comes only to a few and that the system seems stacked against them. Yet we should also take Hasty’s point about the distracting potential of corruption discourses to heart. The “tedious preoccupation with bigmen in urban politics”, she points out, deflects attention away from “broader social issues especially in rural areas” (2005:94). What does it mean when the country’s most probing investigative journalism takes place in the realm of entertainment? What other forms of corruption are being hidden? The specific socio-political context of contemporary Rwanda means that investigating non-musical corruption in the country comes at too great a risk.

Conclusion

Kizito Mihigo and the “value of suffering” (*akamaro k’akababaro*)

On April 14, 2014, Kizito Mihigo, a well-known Catholic singer and peace and reconciliation activist, was arrested and charged with “offenses against state security” (Times Reporter 2014). Along with two others – Cassien Ntamuhanga, a journalist at Amazing Grace Radio, and Jean-Paul Dukuzumuremyi, a demobilised soldier – he was accused of collaborating with the South African-based opposition group, the Rwanda National Congress (RNC), and the Hutu extremist group, Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR). The Rwandan National Police claimed the trio were “planning terrorist attacks against Rwanda, planning violent overthrow of the government, [and] planning to assassinate government officials and inciting violence among the population” (Times Reporter 2014).

Rumours had been circulating the week beforehand that Mihigo, whom we encountered in Chapter 4, was in trouble. I had read an article on a Kinyarwanda-language website that claimed the singer was missing. Given that these websites often played fast and loose with the truth, I hadn’t given the piece much further thought. Indeed, a friend and local journalist dismissed these rumours outright on Facebook. “I have just spoken to Kizito Mihigo”, he posted. “He is fine and oblivious of the reports that he is missing. He was in shock when I asked him. As journalists we should desist from falling for false and misleading reports from the likes of Inyenyeri news when we are on the ground and can verify such reports before rushing to publish sensational stuff”. Inyenyeri News, a website that regularly publishes articles critical of the Kagame regime, is seen as the online mouthpiece of the exiled Rwandan opposition.

Yet the rumour was a harbinger of things to come. Four days later, Mihigo was arrested. The news shocked the country, particularly those involved in the local entertainment industry. Mihigo was arguably the most well-known young singer in Rwanda. His NGO, Kizito Mihigo for Peace (KMP), held various peace and reconciliation events in schools and prisons across the country. He hosted not one but two television programmes on the state-controlled television channel, RTV: “Umusanzu w’umuhanzi” (The contribution of an artist) and a show on “Interreligious dialogue”. Mihigo had in many ways become the public face of *icyunamo*, the annual genocide commemoration period. Since 2007, he had released a commemoration song (*indirimbo yo kwibuka Jenocide*) and accompanying music video every year. During *icyunamo* it was all but impossible to turn on RTV and not see his face on the screen, either in one of his music videos or performing at an official commemoration event.

After news of Mihigo’s arrest broke, I began messaging friends in Rwanda to try to make sense of the accusations. “Dear, no one here can understand what’s going on, we are lost”, one entertainment journalist told me over social media. When I expressed my disbelief that Mihigo could have been planning terrorist attacks, my friend switched to Kinyarwanda. “Why not? *Kandi abyemera?* [And he admits it]”, he told me. “It’s too bad and I hate politics”, another entertainment journalist told me. “It’s why I can’t believe in politics”. During my fieldwork, friends had criticised Mihigo’s cosiness with the RPF, remarking that he was a modern-day Simon Bikindi, the notorious Hutu Power singer (see Chapter 5). Like Bikindi, Mihigo was too close to the government and many worried that he would get burned if the political system in the country changed. These fears turned out to be well founded. “What surprised me is that he has not been accused of denying the

genocide; many people were expecting that”, one friend, who was also a genocide survivor, commented dryly.

On November 7, 2014, in a “terrorism trial” before the High Court in Kigali, Mihigo pleaded guilty to the five charges that had been brought against him. Since his initial detention in April, the charges had been refined and were now listed as the following: “forming a criminal gang, abiding the formation of a criminal gang, conspiracy against the established government or the President of the Republic, complicity in a terrorist act, murder and conspiracy to murder” (Musoni 2014b). Agnes Niyibizi, an accountant, had also been added to his co-conspirators. Mihigo had been plotting to overthrow the government with the RNC, the prosecution alleged, through WhatsApp and Skype conversations. This evidence against Mihigo had been collected thanks to a new law passed in August 2012 that enabled the government to tap telephone conversations and monitor online messages (Phone Evidence Used in Terror, Treason Case 2014).¹¹² Critics of the law pointed out that messages themselves did not prove intent. Would journalists face prosecution for merely communicating with “criminal” sources in the course of their reporting (Phone Evidence Used in Terror, Treason Case 2014)? One of Mihigo’s lawyers made this discrepancy between evidence and intention clear. “The court should find a way of separating pleading guilty to facts and pleading guilty to the charges”, he stated. “Our client pleaded guilty to facts but they don’t match the charges. He is not a founder of RNC or FDLR, neither is he a signatory to any of those groups” (Musoni 2014b).

¹¹² In fact, the law in question referred to amendments made to the 2008 Law Relating to the Interception of Communications passed in Parliament in August 2012. It allows the police, army, and intelligence services “to listen to and read private communications, both online and offline, in order to protect ‘public security’” (Freedom House 2013). Furthermore, the law also “requires all communications service providers to have the technical capability to enable interception upon request” (Freedom House 2013).

“Igisobanuro cy’urupfu”: A song of suffering

Despite these accusations of terrorism, many friends claimed that the real reason that Mihigo had been persecuted was because of a song. In March 2014 Mihigo released “Igisobanuro cy’urupfu” (“The meaning of death”). Mihigo explained that the song was both for commemoration and the Christian period of Lent (*igisibo*). In fact, Mihigo stressed that the song was first and foremost a Christian song. As he told a local journalist: “This is not a genocide commemoration song. This is a Christian song, it will help us think about death in this time of Lent” (*Iriya si indirimbo yo kwibuka Jenocide. Iriya ni indirimbo ya gikristu, idufasha kuzirikana ku rupfu mu gihe cy’igisibo*) (Igihe 2014b). This was the reason he had released the song in March rather than in April, the official commemoration month.

Perhaps anticipating the debate the song would cause, Mihigo posted a statement in Kinyarwanda on his Facebook page to coincide with the song’s release (Igihe 2014a). He began by giving an explanation of suffering (“*Igisobanuro cy’akababaro*”), stressing in particular the value of suffering (*akamaro k’akababaro*). Although it was difficult for us to understand why we had to suffer, he wrote, it was an important and necessary part of life as it taught us to have compassion for others. More importantly, it helped us to understand the suffering that Jesus had endured on the cross. Mihigo was at pains to point out that when people suffered, it was not because God didn’t love them or because they had made mistakes or were sinners (*abanyamakosa cyangwa abanyabyaha*). He gave the biblical example of Jesus healing the blind man in the Book of John. When the disciples asked Jesus if the reason why the man was blind in the first place was because he or his parents had sinned, Jesus answered: “It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was

so that the works of God might be displayed in him” (John 9:3). Mihigo also gave the example of Job, who suffered although he had not sinned (*yababaye atarakoze icyaha*). The suffering of Job, in fact, demonstrates that only through darkness can we understand light (*Ububabare bwa Yobu bwabaye nka wa mwijima utuma tumenya ibyiza by’urumuri*). Similarly, it is only through the suffering of Christ that we can understand His love. “Brethren”, he wrote, “our suffering is what will help us give birth to a new world” (*Bavandimwe, akababaro kacu kajye kaba ako kudufasha kuvuka mu isi nshya*). Jesus suffered and died on the cross and in so doing “destroyed sin” (*yasenye icyaha*) and “defeated evil” (*yatsinze ikibi*). He suffered so that we could have eternal life. Suffering, in this sense, should be seen as a source of strength as it brought us closer to God. Mihigo went on to wish his fans a “good commemoration period” (*ngira icyunamo cyiza*). We can see here Mihigo engaging with many of the same themes as he had during his appearance at Rwanda Thanksgiving Day (see Chapter 4). This time, however, there was no Apostle around to “correct” him.

With these comments in mind, let’s turn to the song’s lyrics.¹¹³ I reproduce here the chorus and verses two through four.

Chorus (x2)

*Urupfu ni cyo kibi kiruta ibindi
Urupfu ni cyo kibi kiruta ibindi
Ariko rutubera inzira,
Inzira igana icyiza
Kiruta ibindi*

There is nothing worse than death
There is nothing worse than death
But, what a path for us
A path to good
The greater good

Verse 2

*Nta rupfu rwiza rubaho

Yaba jenocide cyangwa
intambara,*

There is no such thing as a good death
Be it by genocide or war,

¹¹³ I worked with the English translation of the song found here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2n8hTQl2II>.

*Uwishwe n'abihorera,
Uwazize impanuka,
Cyangwa se uwazize indwara.
(Abo bavandimwe
aho bicaye baradusabira) x3*

Slaughtered in revenge
Vanished in an accident
or by illness
(Those loved ones
are praying for us) x3

Verse 3

*Jenoside yangize impfubyi,

Ariko ntikanyibagize abandi bantu,

Nabo bababaye, bazize urugomo

Rutiswe jenoside.
Abo bavandimwe, nabo ni abantu
ndabasabira,
Abo bavandimwe, nabo ni abantu
ndabakomeza,
Abo bavandimwe, nabo ni abantu
ndabazirikana.*

Even though genocide orphaned
me
But let it not make me lose
empathy for others
Their lives, too, were brutally
taken
But not qualified as genocide
Those brothers and sisters they
too are humans I pray for them
Those brothers and sisters they,
too, are humans I comfort them
Those brothers and sisters they
too are humans I remember them

Verse 4

*Ishema n'urukundo byanjye
Si ibyo mvana mubuzima bw'aha
mu nsi.
Si n'ibyo mvana mu bintu
Ahubwo mfite ishema
ry'ubumuntu
(Ndi umunyarwanda

Ijye ibanzirizwa na ndi umuntu) x3*

My dignity and love
Are not rooted in carnal life

Nor in material possessions
But I have the dignity of humanity

(Let "I am Rwandan" [i.e. Ndi
umunyarwanda campaign]
be preceded by "I am a human")
x3

To the Rwandan state these lyrics were nothing short of incendiary. Mihigo asserts that no deaths are good, from those killed in genocide or war to those "slaughtered in revenge".

Even though he is a survivor, he sings, this should not prevent him from feeling compassion for those who lost loved ones in killings "not qualified as genocide". In official discourse, as we have seen, Tutsis are the only victims of the genocide and publicly discussing any other forms of violence before, during, or after the genocide runs counter to the government's policy of national unity and reconciliation (Thomson 2013a:108).

Remembering in Rwanda, after all, is a “political act” (Burnet 2012:8), and Mihigo purposely challenged the RPF’s official narrative of the past.

Mihigo also seemed to take aim at the government’s recent “Ndi umunyarwanda” (I am Rwandan) campaign. The programme, which originated as a youth initiative but has since been embraced by the government, has been criticised for exacerbating ethnic differences. In the campaign, Hutu are called upon to apologise to Tutsi on behalf of their entire ethnic group, which, critics point out, creates a sense of collective Hutu guilt (Mbaraga 2013). Yet here Mihigo seems to undermine the campaign, claiming that he is human first and foremost. His humanity precedes his citizenship. In fact, his Christian identity, he goes on to assert, is more important than respecting any secular authority. The song’s music video, it is worth noting, was shot in Kibeho. This location was a powerful choice. Not only is it Mihigo’s birth place and the site of the famed Marian apparitions in the 1980s, in 1995 thousands of Hutu were killed there at a camp for internally displaced persons when the RPF forcibly closed it. The government has always downplayed the extent of the massacre.

In an interview a week after the song was released, Mihigo was interviewed by a popular entertainment website (Igihe 2014b). The journalist questioned him about the second verse of the song, pointing out that some people might think that he was comparing those killed during the genocide to those killed in revenge. Was Mihigo not opening himself up to charges of trivialising (*gupfobya*) the genocide? Mihigo emphatically denied this, stating, “Pas du tout” (Not at all). “Instead I show the many ways of dying, I show that all [ways] are death, and that it prevents a family from continuing life”, he answered. “Indeed to have experienced the genocide does not need to blind you to the fact that on

earth there are others who died in other ways. Those people should be remembered”
(*Ahubwo nderekana uburyo bwinshi bwo gupfa, nkerekana ko byose ari ugupfa, kandi ko bitubera nk’umuryango tukinjira mu buzima buhoraho. Erega kuba twarahuye na Jenocide ntibigomba kuduhuma amaso ngo bitwibagize ko isi hari abandi bantu bapfa bazize ibindi. Abo nabo ni abantu tujye tubibuka*) (Igihe 2014b).

Publicly, other artists denounced Mihigo. “I’m still in shock”, Masamba Intore declared in a piece in *The New Times*. “This shows how you can live with someone but you do not know who they are. Musicians should strive to participate in the renewal and reconciliation process. Kizito is an example of someone who has failed to put his talent to good use” (Karemera 2014a). Up and coming singer Diane Teta interpreted Mihigo’s arrest through the lens of the past, asserting, “It is a shame that some people still want to use music as a platform to indulge in illegal activities... It is our duty as musicians, just like all the citizens, to take part in the country’s reconstruction process, we should use our talents to build a better country” (Karemera 2014a). When the article was published online, the comments were surprisingly mixed. While a few claimed that Mihigo’s arrest revealed that he was a “double minded person”, many others defended him. “You all know that Kizito is innocent, but no one wants to stand up for justice!!!!!! Today it is him, tomorrow will be you guys!!!!!!”, one Piamukundwa from Kigali wrote. When I talked to my friend JP about the case, he told me he was surprised Mihigo had even attempted to broach such a sensitive issue. “*Abahanzi* [artists], we don’t mind and never tried to sing on that topic”, he told me. “But I feel sorry for him”.

The Mihigo case brought into sharp relief the extent of the state’s “reach” (Purdeková 2011a) and suggested that it had developed a new method to persecute its

“enemies”. If early critics of the RPF were charged with divisionism and/or genocide ideology, they were now slapped with terrorism charges. We can see the RPF employing a particularly powerful global discourse to silence its opponents, suggesting that just as young Rwandans “localise” the global forms of Pentecostalism and popular music, the state is equally capable of this process. As Zarakol notes, “The confusion invoked by both the label of ‘terrorism’ and the substance of acts so designated hinge on the question of who has legitimate authority” (2011:2313). Within Rwanda the RPF creates itself as the sole form of legitimate authority, able to determine the “terrorist” intentions of its citizens at will. Here we see the “quietness” of the state. It did not go after Mihigo for his song, which was widely understood as the “real” reason behind his arrest, but rather did so circuitously, via “terrorism”, recalling Fiston’s comments from Chapter 6. Power in Rwanda, he claimed, operates through “silent terror”, by indirect, excessive, vengeful violence. Mihigo seems to have been caught up in its web.

The Mihigo case reveals as well the dangers of articulating the politically taboo even within popular culture. In his work on AIDS, politics, and music in South Africa, McNeill suggests that by singing about AIDS, female peer educators “sing about what [they] cannot talk about” (2011:155). Yet precisely because these women operate in a context where “open conversation – and the public display of knowledge – about death and illness can have far-reaching and potentially counter-productive consequences” (2011:156), they occupy ambiguous social positions, and the efficacy of their songs in AIDS prevention remains difficult to determine. In fact, as much as their work as peer educators allows women to aspire to “good” jobs in government and thus gain economic stability, they are also considered “vectors of the virus” (2011:180), tainted by their supposed intimate

knowledge of the disease. McNeill concludes that female peer educators ultimately “*cannot* ‘sing about what they cannot talk about’” (2011:240). The realm of the “unofficial”, after all, has its limits. In a tragically similar vein, Mihigo was ultimately unable to sing about what cannot be talked about under the authoritarian gaze of the RPF state. Indeed, in Burnet’s (2012) terms, since Mihigo dared to break the country’s “amplified silence”, he himself was silenced.

In this thesis I have argued that quiet insecurity and temporal dissonance define young peoples’ everyday lives in post-genocide Rwanda. I have suggested that religion and popular culture are important avenues for young people to articulate their frustrations, anxieties, fears, hopes, and dreams in ways that both converge with and contest the policies and practices of the RPF regime. Since they allow young people to imagine the past, present, and future on their own terms, religion and popular culture provide alternative “timescapes” (Otto 2013) to the forward-looking developmentalist “vision” of the state. Against simplistic depictions of Kigali as the playground of the elite and Rwandan public culture as inherently “silent”, I have demonstrated that noisy and contentious debates about Rwandan identity and culture are taking place, if only researchers turn their gaze away from the state and instead focus on everyday practices and relationships, particularly on how they are staged and performed in Kinyarwanda. In this way I have explored the quiet agency of young people, and suggested that they do not passively accept their context of quiet insecurity but rather actively seek ways to transform and resolve it, however modest or temporary their transformations or resolutions prove to be.

Although the genocide was a cataclysmic political event, I have tried to show that it was also a spiritual and cultural one, and that it must be understood in these terms. In the post-genocide period young people are trying desperately to reclaim and reconstitute these grounds in order to make their lives liveable. Pentecostal practice and popular culture allow them to heal their wounds and speak of their sorrow (*agahinda*), thus offering them the means to imagine new futures. The *abarokore* churches and popular music create important affective spaces wherein emotions, particularly pain, can be addressed and worked through. The sharing of these emotions – and, importantly, the *guarding* of secrets – creates communities that are inclusive and in many ways less regulated and policed than other areas of public life. While genocide commemoration, for example, only allows certain kinds of pain and suffering to be publicly expressed and acknowledged, there is more room for emotional manoeuvre within the new *abarokore* churches and popular culture. Reconciliation, after all, is considered a “holistic” process that involves a spiritual, emotional, and cultural retooling. In this way the new churches and popular music provide important sites of hope. Mani Martin’s song, “My Destiny”, makes this clear:

Verse 1

I don’t know where to call home
I don’t even know who my father is
My mother died many years ago
She didn’t talk about my story
And I can see how much I’m lonely
Turn me ahead cause it’s love that I need
I want to respect every person I see
The love is coming home
I live to see the future

Chorus

(Whatever I do
However I want
I want to touch my destiny) x3
My de- my de- my de- my destiny

Whatever it is my destiny
My de- my de- my de- my destiny
I will reach my destiny

Despite a difficult past defined by loss, the speaker declares that he will enact love and respect in the present to secure a future wherein he will be master of his own destiny. These intimate strivings and moments of poignant vulnerability all too often get lost in research that makes broad-stroke assumptions about the all-encompassing nature of the RPF's "social engineering" programme. Indeed, as Bayat has pointed out, power circulates "unevenly – in some places it is far weightier, more concentrated and 'thicker', so to speak than in others" (2000:544).

While *abarokore* practice offers young Rwandans the possibility of healing and actively participating in church life, the fact that these same churches tend to be mono-ethnic severely undermines their ability to contribute to unity and reconciliation. The affective experience of Pentecostal conversion as rupture can be both productive and destructive, generating new emotions and relationships for some, while policing comportment and dissent for others. The *abarokore* police the boundaries of the community of the "saved" and in the process introduce worrying new ethnic dimensions to religious practice. To compare Rwandans to the Israelites, for example, does not create an inclusive Christian community but rather privileges certain kinds of experience. The Tutsi-dominated state relies on the Tutsi-dominated leadership of these new churches – and the country's other mainline Protestant churches, notably the Anglican Church – to spiritually legitimise its rule, much as the *abiru* (royal ritualists) did for the Royal Court and the Catholic Church for the presidencies of Grégoire Kayibanda and Juvénal Habyarimana. By praising the country's rapid development and "successful" programmes, Pentecostal and mainline Protestant pastors suggest that the RPF regime is divinely blessed, making resistance to it

against God's will. This blessing comes not only from local leaders but also from global ones as well, with Rick Warren's PEACE Plan organisation attempting to make inroads in the country. This intervention, however, plays out according to the terms set by the RPF as Warren's "purpose-driven" ideology converges with Kagame's own "purpose-driven" leadership style. The "subversive" (Peterson 2012) history of the early *abarokore* seems to have been forgotten in the current political dispensation.

Despite these very public attempts to assert spiritual authority, however, government officials and religious leaders could ultimately not control how the public interpreted national events. While a crusade like Rwanda Thanksgiving Day attempted to project a united Christian front, the popular imagination was captivated by a spat between two powerful spiritual celebrities. The conflict suggested that the spiritual landscape in the country remains deeply divided, with conflicting understandings of God's mercy and the role of religion in public culture at stake. The new Pentecostal churches may promise miracles and instantaneous healing, but other voices continued to insist upon the importance of silence and suffering in creating compassion for others. In part this distinction mapped onto divergent embodied and affective experiences. Rwandans who had lived through the genocide – the so-called *abasope* – tended to stress the "greyness" and ambiguity of the past; Rwandans who came back after 1994 tended to emphasise simplistic good-evil binaries and moralities. For some genocide-rape survivors the "rupture" that Pentecostal conversion demanded came at too great a cost. Indeed, when one had already lost so many real-world kin, the thought of breaking with spiritual kin seemed yet another form of violence.

Popular music, on the other hand, was more ethnically inclusive. Hip hop identity and community was forged through the shared experience of hardship. Fans did not seem to choose their favourite artist based on ethnicity or region alone. Rappers told the “truth” of “pity” lives and gave hope to marginalised young people. Their political interventions, however, were “quiet” in the sense that they were indirect and required work to decipher. Songs like “Umurashi” and “Bye-bye Nyakatsi” encouraged listeners to compare the “bright future” (*ejo hazaza*) they had been promised through the state’s Vision 2020 development agenda with the “truth” of their everyday struggles. I suggested that these songs enacted a form of critical nostalgia as they engaged with a past that young people were not supposed to want to remember, let alone mine as a source of inspiration. Instead, young artists drew on Rwanda’s history in imaginative and unexpected ways, creating a certain continuity between the pre- and post-genocide periods. By relying on tactics employed by earlier artists to critique the corrupt Habyarimana regime, young rappers suggested that they experienced power in a similar fashion, implicitly challenging the RPF’s claim to have brought a new form of “good” and transparent governance to the country. In this regard, the fact that discourses of corruption dominated the music industry was revealing. It was only in this area, as we saw, that young people claimed “real” journalism could take place.

The country’s most popular music event, the Primus Guma Guma Super Star (PGGSS) competition, ultimately became a space wherein young people could air their grievances about the country’s ongoing socio-political inequalities. Fans, journalists, and musicians themselves decried an unfair voting system and demanded transparency from the competition’s organisers. The country’s political elections have not generated such heated

debate and open criticism. By demanding accountability from popular artists – in the form of the “playback” versus “live” music debate – young people were making certain “claims” on figures of authority and refused to accept “lies” and corruption. In the post-genocide context of quiet insecurity, these “stars” were perhaps the only powerful patrons that young people had access to and, indeed, could demand “truth” from.

Yet popular culture tended to be patriarchal, shaming young women who did not stay on the “right rails” of society. Young women who dreamt of musical success had to navigate social and cultural norms about how “proper” and “respectable” young women were supposed to behave. Young women in the church also had to contend with patriarchal pastors who preached that female leadership was unnatural and un-biblical, and that female personhood could only be completed through relationships with men. Contrary to this, young women relied on the concepts of legacy and *agaciro* to guide their actions in the present and imagine their futures in novel ways. Here the future became a horizon of future pasts, where young women imagined being remembered by (unknown) loved ones.

In many ways, then, we can see young peoples’ spiritual and musical projects and performances as a way to create the kind of world they hoped to inhabit. In this sense they articulated a certain kind of utopian “vision”. Yet the context of quiet insecurity and temporal dissonance made the attainment of this future difficult to achieve. Despite a façade of security, there was a prevailing sense that politics in the country were – and always have been – unstable. Political winds and fortunes changed dramatically and unexpectedly. Becoming too close to power could have disastrous consequences, as Mihigo’s arrest had made painfully clear. Within the *abarokore* churches there was a persistent fear that Christians were not really who they said they were, that one’s brothers

and sisters in Christ were secretly conspiring with Satan. One could not trust one's closest friends or family; one's favourite artist may have been "lying" all along. The only constant seemed to be God, *Imana*, and He was invoked equally within Pentecostal sermons and popular songs. Indeed, after Mihigo's arrest, Ama-G the Black, a popular rapper, released a song called "Niyo izaruca" (God will be the judge). The song was widely understood to be a statement in (indirect) support of Mihigo, although Ama-G the Black vocally denied this interpretation. Despite various forms of injustice and power differentials on earth, the song asserts that justice, meted out by God in heaven, will ultimately prevail. We can see how this would be a particularly appealing message (*umutumwa*) not only to Mihigo's supporters, but to marginalised young people across the country.

When I first arrived in Rwanda in August 2011, I had been initially surprised by the relative license that young people seemed to have within the realm of "entertainment" (*imyidagaduro*). Showbiz journalists did not hesitate to rail against the injustices of musical corruption or aggressively investigate "scoops" into the private lives of artists. Yet Mihigo's arrest suggests that the RPF is no longer content to leave the country's entertainment and music sector to its own devices. A more widespread crack-down on "dissent" seems to be in the works. In August 2014 Brigadier General Frank Rusagara, the former defence advisor at the Rwanda High Commission in London and former head of the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF), was arrested for supposed ties to the exiled opposition. Rusagara had become critical of the government and had proposed entering into dialogue with his former RPF colleagues (Former RDF Boss Rusagara Arrested 2014). While the government may be able to overlook indirect criticism, it cannot ignore outright challenges to its power. This suggests that the quiet insecurity that young people experience in their

everyday lives and relationships will become even quieter in the future, and, indeed, that their responses to it will become quieter – and more creative – in turn. As scholars of Rwanda, we must develop ways to acknowledge and engage with the multiple oral/aural registers operating in the country, complementing a focus on silence with attention to what is, in fact, said, performed, shouted, rapped, prayed for, prophesized, or proclaimed. This must be our task, no matter how cryptic, veiled, or quiet the prayer or performance may be.

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