

4 Euphemism, censorship, and the vocabularies of silence in Burundi

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“Ce que l’on désignera pudiquement ...”

Burundi’s postcolonial history is often recounted through the dates of great *événements*, the “events”, isolated flashes of political violence that seem to trace out a sequential chain across the decades: 1965, 1969, 1972, 1988, 1991, 1993, and others stand as the pillars of an implied narrative around which, at times, little more needs to be said. The scale of violence indexed by the *événements* varies greatly, encompassing everything from individual political assassination to state massacres and genocide. Several different crimes, tragedies and lingering grievances can all be suggested by mention of the same year. It is possible to tell divergent stories through these isolated dates, choosing which to mention and which to pass over. It is a history implied more than told, a string of silences that may express a very specific account of the past or avoid any specificity whatsoever.

To a greater or lesser extent, such a “bundle of silences”¹ is a universal fact of historical narratives, especially those warped by experiences of violence. Things are left out, by choice or chance or process, from the stories we narrate. Yet in particular terms, Burundi’s history of silences also reflects the society in which it is told. Shades of silence are a common element of everyday sociality and a recurring motif in the imagination and mediation of power. They are part of the art of life, responding to and imposing coercive power dynamics while engendering deep social value. Silence, as both foreign and domestic commentators have noted among the Burundi,² may be the strategic act of a dependent expressing obedience or loyalty to a superior, or the expression of that superior’s innate superiority, or the sensitivity and caution of relative equals avoiding topics of pain, trouble or embarrassment.³ In Burundi, perhaps even more than elsewhere, power seems to function on the operation and perception of secrecy,⁴ while living with power means adopting the words and silences that power permits in public speech. Burundi and the Burundi are therefore often silent, both as part of their experience of violence and apart from it. The meaning, form and effect of a silence derive from the particular institutions and culture in which the silence is performed, as Susan Gal observes,⁵ and no single effect of power can be imputed to such a broad and varied phenomenon.

Built from both quotidian social and political imaginings, and from the particular exigencies of violent crisis and authoritarian rule, the date-list of Burundi's history constitutes the bones of a particular regime of silence around its experience. More than an absolute absence of speech, these are silences "obscured by words",⁶ euphemisms and signs of censorship that leave a shadow behind them. Over the decades, the same words have marked the same absences around experiences of violence, used to deny the act even as it was committed, to extend the effects of violence in its wake, even to contest the power that imposes silence. Euphemisms that express denial can also imply recognition in another time and in another context of power. In place of a history told in silences, then, can a history of such silences be told?

This chapter considers the possibility of a history of silence by following the euphemisms and absences around the most critical and devastating of Burundi's symbolic dates: 1972. Denoting a cataclysmic turning point in the emergence of the postcolonial state, the year saw localised and brutal ethnic violence committed by majority Hutu rebels, followed by a genocidal response from a minority Tutsi-dominated state. Across two subsequent decades of military rule, the 1972 "repression" has been commonly rendered as Burundi's primordial "public secret", a "secret that for all its secretness is not really a secret";⁷ both the act of violence and the severe control over the memory of state persecution against Hutu underpinned the public order for two decades to come. Denial, censorship and imposed speech defined what could and could not be spoken, what should and should not be understood, in references to the inescapable "events".

These "*événements*", among all the others that preceded or followed, acquired their own particular and equally ambivalent name in the national language of Kirundi: "that which we will coyly [*pudivement*] call '*ikiza*', the calamity," as the journalist Antoine Kaburahe wrote.⁸ "But we did not speak of it," he added, reflecting on his childhood in the aftermath. The history of the silences around this calamity, the words used to deny or keep certain aspects of its experience out of public talk, trace the path of Burundi's emergence as a postcolonial state. They continue to mark the disjunctions and uncertainties in its people's desires for speech or silence today.

Silence in the act

In the wake of a crime, "later cover-ups and excuses are more plausible when deception is built into the initial warning, planning and execution," notes Stanley Cohen, whether by "euphemism, ambiguity, secrecy, double-track or coded orders, blurring the chain of command."⁹ The silences that prevailed after Burundi's catastrophes in 1972 were framed by the strategies and nature of state violence undertaken in that year.

The country had reached a nadir a decade after achieving independence in 1962. Much like in neighboring Rwanda, Belgian colonial anthropology and governmental policy had defined a racialised "ethnic" model of society:

a minority Tutsi aristocracy ruling over a majority Hutu peasantry and a small, shunned Twa population. In contrast to Rwanda, which fought a civil conflict in the last colonial years resulting in a Hutu-dominated republic, this caricature of social complexity did not become the basis of political identity for most Burundi before independence, and the kingdom remained comparatively united.¹⁰ In 1961, however, his political enemies assassinated Burundi's beloved prime minister-elect, Prince Louis Rwagasore, in the months before the Belgians departed. Under fear of and influence from Rwanda, across the first independent decade Burundi's elite fell more and more into the same ethnic antagonisms and secretive suspicions.

In this time, the first of the symbolic dates became fixed in public discourse. 1965 saw the first Hutu prime minister killed by a Tutsi refugee from Rwanda, a failed coup attempt by Hutu military officers, Hutu politicians condemned to death by a secret court, and localised violence by rural Hutu against neighboring Tutsi that was crushed by military force.¹¹ Some of the factions of the army that led this repression then deposed the king in a bloodless coup in 1966, with the southern Tutsi officer Michel Micombero seizing power. Over the next few years there were recurrent rumors among the political elite of an impending "repeat of '65", variously intended to mean a Hutu coup or a Tutsi purge. In 1969, the rumors seemed to be made true; accusations of another Hutu-led coup plot, supposedly a "*coup d'état-génocide*" that would be accompanied by a slaughter of Tutsi, triggered another purge of Hutu elites.¹²

1972, however, was unparalleled in the intensity and devastation of its violence. On April 29, a rebellion broke out in the south of the country, led by local Hutu and with a strong presence of Zairean mercenaries.¹³ The rebels attacked Tutsi officials before swiftly moving on to civilians, massacring them with their families and killing many Hutu who refused to join them. In response, Micombero's army moved rapidly into the effected territory, crushing the rebels and firing indiscriminately on the rest of the population. Summons and arrests swept Bujumbura as Tutsi-supremacists around the president accused remaining prominent Hutu (along with a number of their own Tutsi rivals) of treason. Finally, the "repression" moved out into the rest of the country. The army, local authorities and co-opted agents of the ruling party youth league assembled lists of supposed "traitors" in local communities. Primarily targeting educated Hutu, and thus externally characterised as a "selective genocide",¹⁴ the violence persisted well into 1973.

Through this catastrophic moment, silence was entirely part of the process of state violence. First, as soon as the rebels struck, the state immediately shut down all independent news sources (notably encompassing ecclesiastical radio stations), instituted a nationwide curfew and banned all movement across the country.¹⁵ Missionaries reported that they could remember "no other time when news has been so slow to move in the country".¹⁶ This facilitated the second aspect of silence in the act: a sense of awful realisation as the limits and distortions of state information only gradually became clear.¹⁷

Official control of information permitted and weaponised a “denial of knowledge”¹⁸, opening up a space of real or projected ignorance by which individuals came to collaborate with the violence. As news of the rebellion came through official channels, many people of all ethnicities followed state orders to man barricades and protect their local community against the marauders. Away from the limited areas of rebel action, however, the barricades seemed to be more effective at stopping refugees who fled from state persecution, and soon they were used for sorting through the local population. It took days and in some cases weeks for the realisation to spread among those who saw themselves defending their communities. This revelation only came from within the process of violence, as a product of it and therefore subject to it; once one realised what was going on, one could not speak this knowledge without being immediately subjected to arrest and disappearance oneself.

The primary tool of the emerging regime of silence was therefore violence itself, an immediate and absolute sanction on unwanted speech. Yet after state censorship of public media and the self-censorship of an implicated and terrorised population, the third aspect of silence in the act cast an equally long shadow over the years to come: if one must avoid the *wrong* words, one must also know the *right* words to speak, and these words constructed the silences between them. The president, army officers and state media spoke furiously about violence throughout the months of highest bloodshed,¹⁹ but this state speech constructed an “interpretive denial”, in Cohen’s terms, a narrative that “acknowledges that something happened but refuses to accept the category of acts to which it is assigned.”²⁰ In the rapidly normalizing discourse of the region, both accusation and denial hinged on the attribution of genocide. “No, there was no genocide of which the Hutu were victims; only those guilty of the genocide of Tutsi were punished,” President Micombero told the sympathetic Zairean press, the interview reproduced in Burundi’s state newspaper *Ubumwe* (“Unity”).²¹ Such reversals constituted an archetypal denial of the victim;²² the attribution of prior guilt to the victims of state violence negated their victimhood. During the repression, this attribution had already taken on the narrative form invoked by the date-list; recalling language used to speak of the messy crises of 1965 and 1969, the state in 1972 referred to rebel action as another attempted *coup d’état-génocide*,²³ acts of genocide to be associated only with those who attempted to seize power in recurrent crises, and never with those who held it.

“Interpretive denials are not fully-fledged lies,” Cohen observes. “They create an opaque moat between rhetoric and reality.”²⁴ The rebel murders of Tutsi were indeed horrific, but this was a truth turned to foment opacity around the crimes of the state. The most striking demonstration of the occluding nature of state speech came from President Micombero in June, when he acknowledged to a Belgian reporter that perhaps 100,000 people had been killed in the previous six weeks.²⁵ The figure of the dead corresponds with some of the lowest retrospective estimates of the victims of the state alone,²⁶ but Micombero suggested that this was a global figure

of everyone killed during the whole period of complex violence. He spoke of the atrocities of the rebels and the legitimacy of the state's response and claimed that more Hutu had been killed by the former than by the latter. The vague numbers of anonymous dead revealed the peculiarity of permissible speech: one could speak of violence in 1972 on its true, incomparable scale. The terms used to express this truth, however, required the occlusion of other truths, of the far greater responsibility of the state for the numbers of dead, and of the predominantly ethnic logic by which the state identified its victims.

State denials reflected and framed a discourse of evasion among the population at large. "In 1972, death itself was the object of a durable negation," note Chrétien and Dupaquier. "One did not speak of killing. One said 'bamushwabuye', a word with a double sense that means 'to gather', 'to take away.' In the context of the period, one could translate it as 'he has disappeared'".²⁷ The victims of state violence had been arrested *en masse* and in public, by agents of the state and by members of the community, driven away from schools and homes by the lorry-load over the course of a handful of months. Yet despite this public stage of mass violence, Burundi became a country of the disappeared as much as any of its Latin American cousins. Importantly, this was not solely a silence that lay between a Tutsi state and a persecuted Hutu population; through the process of information control and the order of violence, many Hutu who might otherwise have been identified with the target population, or Tutsi who otherwise shared nothing of the ideology that permitted such extraordinary extermination, were involved in the arrest and disappearance of their neighbors. The roots of a dissonant silence lay in the process of violence, the uncertainties of a broken community, and the words used to speak of, and avoid, the truth of what had happened.

Naming the event

After 1972, the act of state violence maintained its presence in society through the continuation of the regime of silence that had achieved it. "A veritable iron curtain suppressed all true expression of this incredible collective trauma," as Chrétien and Dupaquier argue.²⁸ Yet this was indeed an obfuscation of all *true* expression, not an absence of speech. The state did not entirely refrain from talk of what had happened, but the terms by which it would speak kept the experience of hundreds of thousands of its subjects firmly excluded from public talk.

The familiar French term of "*événements*" took a central role in structuring the limits of speech. It was no novelty—previous crises were already glossed as similar "events", and there is nothing inherently remarkable or devious in this quotidian word. In repetition, however, it took on a particular significance, becoming the primary reference point in which the specificity of the act could be diluted and avoided. State representatives routinely spoke of "the sad events of April–May 1972",²⁹ "the events of 1965 and more

recent again in 1972,”³⁰ “the latest events”,³¹ “the unfortunate events of 1972”,³² “the sad events of 1965–1969–1972”³³ or “the events of 1972–1973.”³⁴ In place of anger and defiance, the terminology was regretful, vague, and ambiguous. The “language rules”³⁵ of a state in denial matched precisely the codes of a nation wishing to speak of, and avoid speech of, the same violence today.

As the language of the state, however, such techniques conformed well to the strategies of political censorship. As Jaworski and Galasiński note, censorship may constitute a mechanism of silence in two ways: “silencing by omission” and “silencing by relegating censored material to the ambiguous, anomalous or liminal zones of reality”.³⁶ The latter technique of ambiguity and induced epistemic anxiety constitutes one of the most critical elements of an authoritarian discursive strategy of rule. Euphemistic language can serve “to darken the message with the effect of creating ambiguity and of undercutting all possible reasonable discussion and consequently opposition. If the receiver gets only an incomplete, limited or uninterpretable sign,” Goldschläger suggests, “he will be in no position to argue.”³⁷ The euphemistic reference to past violence held the possibility of argument in suspense. The *événements*, lacking any agent, action or victim, could cast the state in a “state of absence”³⁸ when cited alone or specified only by date; the speaker observed the nameless catastrophe and condemned it, a spectator to the agentless events. There was no need for overt denial that the violence had taken place, nor that the state was responsible for it, only regret that violence had occurred. There was no word with which to argue here, and no necessity for confrontation between individuals who were attempting to navigate an uncertain and fearful world.

There was, however, another face to this evasion. One did not hear a state representative speaking of the “sad events” in isolation. One heard these words as another iteration of the ongoing discourse that began with the ferocious denial of genocide and the legitimisation of righteous “repression”. Correlation with the precursor “*événements*” of 1965 had triangulated the recurrent image of the *coup d'état-génocide* in order to obscure state violence even as it took place. Speaking now of generic “events”, identified only by their connected years of 1965, 1969 and 1972, not only expressed the abiding danger of cyclical violence but intimated the meaning of that violence as an attack on the state, at least when it was the voice of the state that used the universal euphemism. Voice coordinated the latent meaning of the words and the content of their implicit silences because voice carried echoes of other words spoken at other times.

This would become most apparent when, once in a while, the state announced an emphatic, explicit interpretation of these events, and so laid bare the absolute meaning of the vacillating euphemism. In 1974, for example, Micombero attempted a political reset to proclaim the consolidation of his revolution, holding elections in which he was the only candidate. In an article celebrating eight years of revolution, the state newspaper *Ubumwe*

turned to the military to discuss the “events” of the past.³⁹ “The last events that so plunged Burundi into mourning” were proof of the army’s patriotic duty to defend the nation, *Ubumwe* declared. Here the euphemism of “events” permitted no ambiguity; in speaking of them as the object of the army’s “patriotic duty”, one was speaking of the crime of rebel violence alone, and distinguishing it from the legitimate response of the state.

In reference to President Micombero, furthermore, talk of violence turned emphatically to heroism. In the front-page story of the same special issue, *Ubumwe* noted that Micombero was “renowned above all for his intervention in 1965 and 1972 when imperialism and its valets⁴⁰ attempted to sow confusion and hatred, when they even went so far as to try to exterminate a part of the population.”⁴¹ In a parallel story entitled “Who is Micombero?”, the paper revelled in his “brilliant” military and political career, his “great simplicity”, “great sense of realism”, “remarkable intelligence”, and his heroic acts that repeatedly “saved Burundi from the catastrophe”.⁴² The name of Micombero thus rendered state violence speakable, albeit solely in heroic terms.⁴³ The president himself became the means by which the meaning of euphemism became fixed, even if curious ambiguities remained. *Ubumwe* celebrated the president’s action for national development “by the sword and by the plough, as Marshal Bugeaud once said”.⁴⁴ Allusion illustrates, but it also complicates; Bugeaud was the French governor who waged the ferocious *razzia* in nineteenth-century Algeria, and in this citation the “sword” specifically designated violent colonial conquest.⁴⁵ It was a strange choice for a text that otherwise presented the president as a tireless combatant against imperialism, but it conformed well to the artful values of skilful speech in Burundi. “Like the rhetorical technique of strict silence,” noted the anthropologist Ethel Albert, commenting on the voracious observation of hidden meanings behind public speech in Burundi, “the rhetorical technique of not quite telling all has a positive information content of great significance.”⁴⁶ Micombero could be associated with terrible violence, but spoken only in positive terms. Without his name attached, the same violence could become vague, ambivalent, and regrettable, as required.

State violence itself was therefore not entirely silenced. It hung over its absent victims and current subjects as a latent threat, coordinating what was to be heard in more ambivalent words. Between quotidian euphemism and occasional narratives of violent heroism, state speech navigated the ambivalence of “dis-ambiguation”, at once blurring the identity of “people, facts and events in such a way that any meaningful discussion with or about them [was] undesirable or impossible”, and producing a “version of reality” that was clear, simple and absolute.⁴⁷ The certainty of the latter formed the center of gravity to which the ambiguity of the former was drawn.

Ultimately, the words of the state and its francophone organs framed the language of the everyday. State silences transposed to quotidian public discourse even for the great majority who spoke only Kirundi. Both the journalist Antoine Kaburahe and the politician Sylvestre Ntibantunganya

(who later became president in the 1990s) write in their memoirs of the penetration of state words into social life in the form of daily formalities. The standard greeting or opening to a speech, *Tugire amahoro* (broadly “peace be with us”), would now be followed by political acclamation: *na Micombero yayaduhaye*, “And Micombero who gave it to us”.⁴⁸ Whether this was an expression of obedience or (as Ntibantunganya suggests was mostly the case for peasants) of mockery, the president’s “peace” displaced other speech. Micombero was hailed as “*Maza Meza*”, the benefactor, and praise of the president precluded talk of the violence over which he had presided.

“The authoritarian ideological discourse of the ruling power imposes silence,” writes Goldschläger, “by filling up linguistic space with a meaningless, vacuous and undebatable word.”⁴⁹ In francophone state speech, “*événements*” might be undebatable through their ambivalence alone, but in daily speech both “peace” and the president himself became the definition of Goldschläger’s vacuous word, devoid of sense beyond an expression of power. “Power is based on silence, not on dialogue,”⁵⁰ and, ultimately, the words that structured this silence found their total realisation in noise. Ntibantunganya recalls that the population was expected to refer to the president by his military grade, “*le lieutenant-général Micombero*”, despite the immense phonetic difficulty this presented for those who spoke no French.⁵¹ Kirundi does not distinguish “l” from “r”, vowel sounds are fewer and purer than in French, and words typically do not end in consonants. As Ntibantunganya describes, this could leave a hapless kirundophone garbling the president’s title of “*lieutenant-général*” as “*tenetene jerari Micombero*”, a meaningless string that might be heard as French “*tenez, tenez* [an idiomatic expression that might loosely be translated as ‘well, well’; literally ‘hold’], *Gerard Micombero*.”⁵² Those who thus rendered the honorific of the president as insulting gibberish, apparently even replacing his Christian name “Michel” with “Gerard”, risked imprisonment for the suggestion of ridicule. The words, names and absences by which the state could speak of violence tended towards a total social silence in daily life. The name of Micombero, and the “peace” he brought, percussively enforced the power of the state through this alternation of words and noise.

Declaring reconciliation

In 1976, a palace coup by alienated army officers put an end to the First Republic. It seemed like a moment of opportunity, as the new regime under President Jean-Baptiste Bagaza spoke of the need to “recognize the existence of an ethnic fact in our country in order to engage a firm struggle against this scourge.”⁵³ The First and Second Republics differed substantially in attitude and intent. Bagaza’s regime pursued grand ideological projects of development and never acceded to the extraordinary violence of its predecessor, yet the social identity of the state changed little. Power remained an almost exclusively Tutsi reserve, even held largely within the

same social circles from the south of the country that had dominated the First Republic. The “ethnic fact” that was incarnated by the “*événements*” of 1972, and which remained embedded in the discriminatory structure of the state, was a sensitive and dangerous subject for all.

A change in discourse, however, lent substance to this uncertain transition. “Recognizing the ethnic fact” was a striking shift, directly speaking of a matter which the previous regime had avoided in all its talk of the heroic state. To an extent, this was a reflection of a broader transnational mood at the time; Bagaza’s coup was exemplary of a trend noted by Staffan Wiking across Africa, in which half of all illegal seizures of power justified themselves on “ethical” grounds.⁵⁴ Talking about the truth of the past and the ethical need for social change legitimated the transfer of power, casting a new president as the leader of a new age. As Loveman and Lira describe for Chile, “truth and reconciliation” are by no means solely a contemporary novelty in Burundi, but constitute recurrent historical themes of transition.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, no institutional or social reality would follow these words. With heavy irony and a salutary warning, both “truth” and “reconciliation” became new structuring elements in the changing regime of silence over the experiences they were meant to address.

The pervasive euphemism of the date-list retained its validity in this discourse. “The sombre years of 1965, 1969 and particularly that of 1972 engaged our country on the path of hatred and implacable suspicion,” as the Second Republic’s declaration of its “fundamental objectives” acknowledged.⁵⁶ This constituted a new calibration of the meaning behind the dates; the ambivalence of euphemism was now correlated by intimations of mutual hatred and suspicion, not solely a designation of anti-state or anti-Tutsi violence. However, the contrast was far from absolute. Like the First Republic’s alternation of open ambiguity and acute specificity, the implication that ethnic hatred went in more than one direction was no call to speak of what had happened. “Recognizing the ethnic fact” still did not mean specifying agents, victims or disparities of experience, distinguishing or exploring what it meant to remember both the rebel murders of Tutsi and the state eliminations of Hutu. It meant citing the term “ethnicity” to pre-empt such specificity and leaving this acknowledgement of truth as a barrier to further debate.

Explicit limiting discourses exposed the implicit meaning of recognition at moments of heightened political tension. When rumors spread abroad that the Second Republic was committing a renewed spate of violence against Hutu, state representatives turned to the “truth of the past” to deny these rumors and mark out the clearest boundaries of what they permitted the “ethnic fact” to mean. They insisted on a historical narrative of national unity, disrupted by a frustrated colonial power at the point of independence and restored by the accession of the Second Republic; the “ethnic fact” was therefore a recent phenomenon, an alien deception and a solved problem. As such its violence was still a matter instigated by rebels, never by states. The “elements” who “set fire to an entire region in 1965” were “in the pay

of foreigners”, explained the *Chargé d'affaires* at the Nairobi embassy to the Kenyan press. “It was these same elements who returned in 1972 to massacre an innocent population.”⁵⁷ The state newspaper acknowledged that “[c]ertain people remember with anguish the events of 1972, which plunged numerous families into mourning,” finding recourse as ever to ambiguity of actor and action even when speaking of specific violence.⁵⁸ This ambivalent recognition was as far as the state would go: “What must now be sought is reconciliation.”

When it comes to censorship, “*what* is silenced can only be gleaned from the inferential processes of creating (ir)relevance in what is actually said,” note Jaworski and Galasiński.⁵⁹ Even as it seemed to speak of what had been kept silent, such talk of truth and reconciliation functioned as censorship by making Hutu identity irrelevant to the particular meaning of 1972 as a moment of unparalleled state persecution. Intimations of mutuality in the official narrative of the past did not extend to acknowledgements of state responsibility. 1972 was a symbol of a social problem, not a political one, and a symbol of equal suffering across society, not a set of violent acts that formed the basis of continuing discrimination against Hutu in particular.

Remarkably, this language of reconciliation was the blossoming of a minority discourse that had existed under the First Republic. Already in 1973, Micombero’s regime had permitted an open letter by Burundi’s Catholic bishops to be published in the state newspaper, in which they called for international support for Burundi’s “reconciliation”.⁶⁰ The bishops boldly recognised the “infernal mechanism” of ethnic divisionism present in both “the movements of rebellion and of repression which continue to plunge our country into mourning.”⁶¹ Yet in the interest of pursuing reconciliation, the shape of the argument served to equalise the nature of each collective experience of rebellion and repression. The bishops’ call therefore reproduced the ambiguities of the state. “Certain extremists” pursued the exclusion of “one ethnicity”; “an ideological and operational cadre of racial struggle has been created”, but the passive form permitted no detail of agency or identity. Indeed, talk of ethnicity at all was only a functional step towards denying it. “We refuse the alternative: either the Hutu or the Tutsi,” the bishops declared. “We do not defend one against the other,” because talk of ethnicity at all constituted a “decline of civilisation: from the nation, we fall back to the age of the tribe.” The language of reconciliation, even under Micombero, did not necessarily disrupt or break the absences of the state’s selective speech. It served the state’s claim to be the author of peace, and rendered reconciliation as an implicit, partial recognition on which the state could build an explicit silence.

In this precedent, reconciliation was an insistently spiritual and international discourse. The bishops’ 1973 letter, notionally addressed to foreign “artisans of peace” and “Christians of the entire world”, anticipated the forthcoming Catholic jubilee, the “Year of Reconciliation” in 1975.⁶² For the Second Republic, however, reconciliation was a condition innate to its own

establishment. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs argued in 1979, “The policy of reconciliation and national unity inaugurated by the Second Republic under the direction of President Bagaza will be pursued with even more rigour. It is manifested concretely by rigorous management of public affairs, social justice in every domain, equality of opportunity for all citizens without distinction.”⁶³ Reconciliation was simply good governance; it demanded no talk of what had happened. The language of reconciliation resembled propagandistic “pseudocommunication”, the exclusion of dialogue and exchange in the guise of a conversation.⁶⁴ Talk of reconciliation was not an invitation to talk but a word of command *not* to talk. The state, absent in any form from the narrative of past violence, now incarnated reconciliation, an ambition achieved rather than a goal towards which to strive.

This was a wholesale secularisation of the language of reconciliation. The bishops had taken it as a spiritual concept that precluded politics and appealed to international solidarity; the state nationalised it, claimed its apolitical message for itself and at once excluded both the foreign “artisans of peace” and the Church that birthed the ideal. This appropriation was the prelude to an intense anticlerical struggle in the Second Republic, as the state sought to exclude all who could compete with itself in communication with the public.⁶⁵ It banned the ecclesiastical newspaper *Ndongezi*, the sole Kirundi-language organ outside of the state’s control that reached a large public, while expelling missionaries and suppressing ecclesiastical social organizations.⁶⁶ The language of reconciliation constituted a transitional step in a sprouting regime of silence, one that not only maintained an absence around the victims of the previous regime but grew to encompass all who spoke outside of the new state’s reach. “The first characteristic of ideological authoritarian discourse is that it is definitive and all-encompassing and, in that way, reveals its autoreferentiality,” suggests Goldschläger.⁶⁷ Through the premise of reconciliation, the Second Republic weaved an authoritarian discourse of speech and silence, making itself the sole point of reference and excluding all others from the political realm.

Truth and reconciliation, in the end, became the premise for the most explicit act of censorship that would define the Second Republic in many later accounts.⁶⁸ If reconciliation was achieved by the existence of the state, discussion of the “ethnic fact” was not only no longer necessary, it was actively harmful; the state therefore banned ethnic labels themselves from public use. The year that saw the apogee of the state’s talk of “reconciliation”—1979—also saw the declaration of a new “political project: to destroy the concepts and labels of ethnicities and of regions, to replace them by new values born from the scientific analysis of social structures in a fashion to create a solidarity of natural, durable and dynamic alliances.”⁶⁹ This became part of constitutional law. Where the previous constitution under Micombero specified that “all the Burundi are equal in rights and duties, without distinction of sex, origin, race, religion or opinion,”⁷⁰ Bagaza’s 1981 constitution

dropped “race” and replaced it with “color”.⁷¹ Ethnicity in Burundi had been not uncommonly discussed in “racial” terms, derived from colonial myths of separate origins for Hutu and Tutsi,⁷² but “color” could scarcely encompass the same distinctions. Rather than a reversal from Bagaza’s initial recognition of the “ethnic fact”, the abolition of labels was a culmination of this language as a silencing discourse, one that seemed to acknowledge, but in fact censored. For a Tutsi minority government, that which René Lemarchand called “ethnic amnesia”⁷³ seemed the only logical path to maintain power. If the state was not to rule through endless violence, then it would rule through silence, in which neither the violence of the past nor the names of division in the present could be spoken.

Observing the absence

There is a geography to silence, or at least to the regime that shapes it. While 1972 swiftly became a “forgotten genocide” in the world at large,⁷⁴ this forgetting arose from an absence of speech quite different from that which remained framed within the evolving state injunctions and euphemisms. During the “event” itself, there was already little talk of Burundi’s state violence abroad. Partly, this was a function of the forms of violence—the state’s control over information—but for the most part the absence of speech on the world stage seemed to be primarily a function of disinterest.⁷⁵ Some Belgian media denounced state-led “genocide” to little effect, and a handful of American activists critiqued their own government’s silence, which was largely representative of the rest of the world.⁷⁶ Transnational Burundi, by contrast, exemplified the geographic shape of the state regime of silence by their overflow of speech, making 1972 foundational to individual and collective identities in exile.⁷⁷ Their audience was largely constrained to other exiles and a handful of academics, however, and thus made little difference to an indifferent world. Silence within Burundi was largely left to evolve on its own terms, its shape and meaning changing with the political tenor of the moment.

Silence is not oblivion in itself; the form of it may permit the eventual loss of knowledge that constitutes such forgetting,⁷⁸ or it may charge that knowledge with the electric potentiality of the secret.⁷⁹ While silence tended towards oblivion in the rest of the world, therefore, the prohibitions and slanted euphemisms of the First and Second Republics rather formed this secret around the implicit silence of public speech. Within families, some could find ways to share their knowledge and keep it private, “unofficial”.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, even in public, at the right times of heightened tension, memories of violence and knowledge of the ethnic logic of power enunciated themselves in rumors of repetition. Just as elite discourse prior to 1972 had dwelt on fears of a “repeat of ‘65”, popular rumors spread routinely afterwards that the state was planning a “repeat of ‘72”. Military coups especially provoked the expression of this fear; Bagaza’s coup in 1976, like any other, was heralded by secretive military manoeuvrings, sudden breaks in

radio broadcasts and an abrupt moment of official silence until the coup was announced as complete. "Crazy rumors burst out everywhere," remembers Ntibantunganya.⁸¹ "Many Hutu thought that the South of the country was burning once again. The spectre of 1972 remained in the memory of the people." Narratives of 1972 lived in the "twilight between knowing and not-knowing,"⁸² speaking and not-speaking, manifesting the profound division between a public stage controlled by the state and the peripheral stage of more surreptitious communication.

Like the breaking of a secret, therefore, at the end of the 1980s political change was driven by the revelation that people still remembered. A silence that had reigned for two decades did not prevent protest; rather, the preceding silence lent power to protest in the act of revelation. First, another palace coup by another Tutsi officer, Pierre Buyoya, instituted the Third Republic in 1987. Buyoya declared that the reasons for his action could be found, "almost word for word", in the terms used to overthrow Micombero a decade earlier, which Bagaza had singularly failed to realise; no repetition of Bagaza's initial recognition of the "ethnic fact" was forthcoming in his successor's discourse, however, and both ethnicity and the experience of state violence remained entirely absent from public speech. A year later, violence broke out again in the northern communes of Ntega and Marangara, on the border with Rwanda. While anchored in local and even personal resentments, the conflict immediately took on a large-scale ethnic dimension, precisely through expression of the memory of 1972. "In 1972, they took people away, no one said anything," explained a Hutu peasant shortly after the new "events" of 1988.⁸³ "It was as if they separated the goats from the sheep." When a local authority used an ambiguous proverb referring to the stubborn indestructibility of weeds, as several witnesses noted, "Those who had lost people before [in 1972] were sickened, saying to themselves, 'They are going to strike us again!'"⁸⁴

Unspoken memory was the base condition of the community on the eve of the 1988 violence, of its relationship with itself and with power. The date-list, when invoked to interpret the present, did not so much narrate the past as describe the feared, imminent future, when the current year would be added to the others. The terror of repetition brought these memories into public expression as the trigger to riot. Fearing a coming genocide, Hutu across the two communes attacked Tutsi. Sudden talk about 1972 was like the "pounce" of the secret described by Canetti,⁸⁵ the moment of power when the secret knowledge that has been kept in silence is suddenly revealed. This sudden violence against local Tutsi was in turn swiftly drowned by yet more bloodshed, as the army once again swept into the affected areas and killed many thousands of Hutu civilians in "repression".

The first large-scale violence since 1972 splintered the possibilities of speech. President Buyoya largely refrained from talk of history, reproducing elements of his predecessors' vocabularies of concealment in reference to the latest *événements*. He acknowledged the "global" numbers of the dead in the

“sad events” as an estimated 5,000, without specifying who they were or who killed them.⁸⁶ Buyoya permitted the vague possibility that innocents might have been accidentally harmed by the army, but argued that all those who bore wounds from military armaments must be exiled “rebels”.⁸⁷ Once again, suffering state violence became proof of rebel guilt, while victims of the state were elided by talk of rebel crimes. Where the past was mentioned at all, it was a simple repetition of the date-list as anti-state atrocities: “Why must it be today, as in 1972, as in 1969, as in 1965,” asked the ruling party women’s union, “that there are massacres based on conflicts of an ethnic character? These repeated killings are nothing but the work of a small fraction of extremist Hutu who commit themselves wholeheartedly to the techniques of division.”⁸⁸

Amid this familiar regime of interpretive denial, ambiguous narrations and unequivocal designations, however, other voices demonstrated the weakening hegemony of the state vocabularies of silence. Buyoya, under pressure, proved himself willing to allow a certain opening of the political stage. A surprising range of publications and open letters thus appeared in the months after the 1988 violence to address the “latest events”. Some took a stance similar to the state’s position, seeing rebel violence and legitimate repression in each symbolic moment of the date-list. Others spoke rather of silence itself, read by Lemarchand as the ultimate revelation of a Hutu “hidden transcript”.⁸⁹ “We will linger here to raise the contradictions that official information masks,” announced a dramatic open letter of protest, pointing directly to 1972 as a genocide of Hutu and accusing the state of planning another.⁹⁰

In response, Buyoya’s Third Republic sought to silence its critics with competing speech rather than with censorship alone. The president formed a “National Commission for the Study of the Question of National Unity” to put meat on the bones of the “ethnic fact” that the last regime had chosen to forget. While it seemed to speak with more candour (and certainly more detail) than ever before, the Commission’s report reproduced many of the same omissions it claimed to unveil. “That which we coyly [*pudiquement*] name ‘*événements*’ in everyday language constitute in effect only a series of tragedies, some more murderous than others,” it stated—to no greater clarity.⁹¹ The report read in many ways as a long-form exposition of the implicit narratives of the Second and Third Republics. It lamented the “events of 1972” along with the rest of the date-list but attributed fault only to anonymous “divisionists”. The report made some of the most explicit statements of recognition ever heard from an officially sanctioned voice, treating the “reprisals” against the rebels as the “second moment of the tragedy of 1972”, representing “another form of extremism,” a true moment of “horror”. Yet these horrors were merely a “degeneration” from a legitimate defence, one driven by “collective hysteria” and framed by an “absence of authority”, not by the institutions of the state, nor did the report acknowledge the scale of a particularly Hutu experience of violence.

Lemarchand read this report as a cypher for the “official Tutsi position” on a history of Hutu rebellion, noting that “the language is at times so

deliberately euphemistic ... as to raise serious questions about its ultimate purpose.”⁹² This suspicion may be well-founded, but it may equally understate the suppleness of euphemism. Widening the possibilities of what the old euphemisms could now mean, the report was a gesture, weakening the terms of euphemism to leave space for other meanings to be heard, allowing the implication that Hutu might hear their grievances acknowledged so long as they did not overtly speak these grievances.

Simply *hearing* an ambiguous possible meaning was not enough for exiled Hutu militants, however. Benefiting from their transnational freedom from the permissible terms of the regime, exiled campaigners focused ever more on silence as the damnatory symbol of an illegitimate state. One exile in Geneva wrote of Burundi as the land of *le non-dit*, “the unspoken”, framing his own struggle as a “refusal to die in silence”.⁹³ The banned exile movement Palipehutu (*Parti pour la libération du peuple hutu*) in turn made its strongest protest by denouncing the “lacunae” of the state’s *Charte nationale*, the charter that was meant to define the terms of national unity for those within the country. These lacunae might be found behind the *Charte*’s words, in “the anonymity of the language used to refer to criminals, designating in an impersonal manner those responsible for crimes committed by the Tutsi regimes”, in “an expressly false presentation of the history of socio-cultural relations between the ethnicities”, and, most especially, in the absence of the army in the narrative of the date list. Citing the army’s “behaviour in 1965, in 1966, in 1972, in 1973, in 1976, in 1987 and in 1988”, Palipehutu deftly added bloodless military coups to the list of bloody acts of repression, inverting these dates from the state’s narrative of Hutu rebellion to point towards the army as the “stumbling block” that “makes and unmakes regimes”, that “plans and executes all the massacres”.⁹⁴ As Bilmes notes, silence is not only a matter of omission or exclusion, but something that can be created by “arguing plausibly that something is missing”.⁹⁵ Observing silence, as much as breaking it or filling it with words, constituted an act of protest.

It was in this context that perhaps the most remarkable shift in the meanings and forms of silence took place, not among these transnational writers but in domestic action. “All revolutions . . . are based upon paradoxes where accepted words and values are inverted and rejected,” argues Goldschläger.⁹⁶ Within Burundi, it was as if silence itself was paradoxically inverted, its substance maintained while its framing, and therefore its meaning, was transformed. Lemarchand described a silent protest in 1991 that took the form of a mourning ritual, with hundreds of people shaving their heads and marching towards Bujumbura;⁹⁷ held on the anniversary of the beginning of the 1972 massacres, it constituted a “liturgical” silence,⁹⁸ observing and countering the political regime of silence by performing the rites of grief around its omissions. This was not a matter of “breaking the silence”, at least not literally; the power of the protest itself consisted of silence. It did, however, break the *regime* of silence, moving the implied absences into the

foreground, turning them to a different purpose, and making protest out of the things that remained unspoken.

“People become silent when they fear transformation,” argued Canetti. “Silence prevents them responding to occasions for transformation. All men’s movements are played out in speech; silence is motionless.”⁹⁹ Such protests, however, defied this proposition. Silence could be the force of change, and the site of contestation. Under internal and international pressure, Buyoya opened the country to multiparty elections and to new speech, interspersed with new forms of silence. Indeed, for the leading opposition party Frodebu (*Front pour la démocratie au Burundi*), the power and ambivalence of silence was both unity and defiance. Party leaders held minutes of silence during their campaign meetings “for all these victims of state horror or of their social position”.¹⁰⁰ The formal liturgical silence indicted the state and brought its omissions into public view, but it also permitted supporters to find their own meaning, and their own memories, in this act of protest. Whether they remembered a Hutu genocide, decades of ethnic oppression, or the persecution of individuals from any ethnic background, people could share in the silence as a rejection of criminal state power. Even still, Kaburahe describes how, at the same time, opponents of Frodebu could lodge their dissent during the minute of silence simply by refusing to stand in respect of it.¹⁰¹ A war of silence, alongside and within the war of words that defined the electoral campaign, took place over the meaning and significance of things not spoken.

In these contestations, the singular silence of 1972 as a euphemism of state censorship, bound by the geography of state power, was broken. It was not that the “events” of the past could be discussed freely in Buyoya’s democratizing moment, without fear or constraint. Rather, the state’s regime of silence became only one among many silences exerting pressure on public words, or coordinating the implied meaning of their euphemisms and expressive lacunae. Silence persisted, in many voices and structured by many different orders of power, but it was no longer simply *a* silence, defined by state words. This, as much as any of the political transformations of the moment, heralded a new stage in Burundi’s postcolonial history.

An open end

A history of silence must be open-ended. In the gap between today and the disintegration of the singular state regime of silence in the early 1990s, there have been many new forms of, constraints around and uses for the same absences. In 1993, the electoral campaign culminated in a sensational Frodebu victory and the election of Burundi’s first Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye; he announced a general amnesty, a need to “wipe the slate clean” in the face of “the dramatic events our people have known”, preferring legal silence to enforced speech.¹⁰² Yet he was assassinated by elements within the army only a few weeks later, the crime sparking mass violence against

Tutsi that may constitute Burundi's second genocide. Civil war followed, with President Buyoya seizing power again in 1996, and silences sprouted, either observed or maintained; splintering Hutu-dominated rebel groups presented their claims around invocations of 1972,¹⁰³ the crimes of a "falsified history",¹⁰⁴ or the guilty silence that in itself constituted evidence of state criminality.¹⁰⁵ Yet between these citations of 1972, many such protests also omitted or minimised the *événements* of a possible genocide against Tutsi in 1993, and different silences came into conflict. At the same time, surveys of civilians even in the early stages of the war uncovered a strong sentiment of refusal when it came to speaking of earlier dates of violence.¹⁰⁶ Talk of violence can be part of violence, and silence can seem preferable if it is conceived as being chosen or shaped by social imperative, instead of being enforced by political imposition.

This is the contradiction that lies at the heart of such silences. Different forces place restraints around the same object of knowledge, and the power that creates silence may be more resented than the silence itself. The euphemisms that constituted state censorship are also the euphemisms of social sensitivity, the daily arts of careful communication, and so "one" silence can shift between different regimes and mean different things at each moment. Today, nearly fifteen years after the end of the civil war, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission is finally in operation, mandated to find the truths of violence back to 1962.¹⁰⁷ Yet the Commission's president sees its task not only as breaking silence, but as changing the substance of speech. "The Burundi look to talk [*dialoguer*]," Monseigneur Jean-Louis Nahimana has remarked, "while occluding the truth, passing to one side of the real facts".¹⁰⁸ He may be entirely correct, as the euphemisms once encoded as state censorship remain the preferable language of daily life. Without the regime of power that forced these silences, they may indeed be the preferred means of living with knowledge of the past. "We talk about the past when we get together, when we drink," remarked one man in an earlier survey on the prospect of transitional justice; "We do not talk about why it started but of the sorrows we suffered. If possible, we must be silent."¹⁰⁹ Perhaps breaking the state regime of silence is sufficient; other regimes, born from a plethora of social pressures, sensitivities, personal grief and polysemic political interests may prevail, allowing different meanings to be found in the unspoken. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission tests and contributes to this ongoing complex; it does not resolve it.

Burundi's vocabularies of silence trace the paradoxes of the phenomenon. Silences are not opposed by speech, but are formed by words and given meaning by unseen dimensions of power. Viewed not from the substance of what is missing but from the regimes of power and forms of speech that constrain it, a constant silence can denote a path of change. "Silence becomes more prohibitive the longer it lasts," suggests Zerubavel,¹¹⁰ yet the course of public speech in Burundi seems at once to demonstrate and

deny this proposition. Across the First and Second Republics there was a sine wave to the shape of the unspoken; censorship and disambiguated euphemism increasingly robbed public speech of the possibilities of expression as time went on, but loosened in the moments of political transition, before tightening once again as the new power established itself. The transformations in political context since the late 1980s have exposed the multivocality of silence, at once broken and sustained, reinterpreted and repurposed. The terms and euphemisms that denoted oppression in the past may be used to live in something approaching peace in the present, where those euphemisms are shaped by social values and intimate power relations rather than violence and percussive propaganda.

Euphemisms and evasive speech remain dangerous, yet these are the tools that are available to read such a history, the change in words and structures of power that underpin the meaning of a silence. While they suggest that a history of silence can indeed be told, it is not necessarily one defined by the arc of a singular absence, moving from constraint to revelation. The words that mark the silence change, in form or implication, and the force and signification of that silence changes with them. Multivocal silences, giving different meanings to the same unspoken object, contest the form of constraint and the power behind it, while the transformation of that power may give new life to the old silence and its constraining words. Such a history does not prescribe a future, either a need for speech or the value of evasion. Nor does it fill the silence, or entirely reveal the truths that are hidden by it. It only turns the attention to what is done with silence, from domination to liberation, and the ambivalent negotiations or messy matters of daily life in between.

Notes

1. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 27.
2. “Barundi” is used here as the collective noun for people from Burundi, sg. “Murundi”.
3. See, for example, André Makarakiza, *La dialectique des Barundi* (Brussels: Académie royale des sciences coloniales, 1959); Ethel Albert, “‘Rhetoric,’ ‘Logic,’ and ‘Poetics’ in Burundi: Culture Patterning of Speech Behavior,” *American Anthropologist* 66, no. 1 (1964).
4. Simon Turner, “‘The Tutsi Are Afraid We Will Discover Their Secrets’: On Secrecy and Sovereign Power in Burundi,” *Social Identities* 11, no. 1 (2005).
5. Susan Gal, “Between Speech and Silence: The Problematics of Research on Language and Gender,” *IPrA Papers in Pragmatics* 3, no. 1 (1989).
6. Jack Bilmes, “Constituting Silence: Life in the World of Total Meaning,” *Semiotica* 98, no. 1–2 (1994), 82.
7. Michael Taussig, *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 50. For some considered applications of Taussig’s ideas to contemporary Burundi, see Turner, “Tutsi”; Andrea Purdeková, “Displacements of Memory: Struggles Against the Erosion and Dislocation of the Material Record of Violence in Burundi,” *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 11 (2017).”

8. Antoine Kaburahe, *Burundi: La mémoire blessée* (Paris: La Longue Vue, 2002), 26. c.f. Jean-Pierre Chrétien and Jean-François Dupaquier, *Burundi 1972, au bord des génocides* (Paris: Karthala, 2007), 9.
9. Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 80.
10. René Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1970); Christine Deslaurier, “Un monde politique en mutation: le Burundi à la veille de l’indépendance (circa 1956-1961),” (PhD diss., Université Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2002); Aidan Russell, *Politics and Violence in Burundi: The Language of Truth at the End of Empire* (Forthcoming).
11. Lemarchand, *Rwanda*; Augustin Mariro, *Burundi 1965: la 1ère crise ethnique* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2005).
12. René Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 85–87.
13. For extended discussions of 1972, see *ibid.*; Chrétien and Dupaquier, *Burundi 1972*, 75–80; René Lemarchand, “Burundi 1972: Genocide Denied, Revised, and Remembered,” in *Forgotten Genocides: Oblivion, Denial and Memory*, ed. René Lemarchand (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Aidan Russell, “Obedience and Selective Genocide in Burundi,” *Africa* 85, no. 03 (2015); Aidan Russell, “Rebel and Rule in Burundi, 1972,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 48, no. 1 (2015); Augustin Nsanze, *Le Burundi contemporain: L’état-nation en question (1956–2002)* (Paris: Harmattan, 2003).
14. Initially by US diplomatic cables leaked to the *New York Times*, then popularised by René Lemarchand and David Martin, *Selective Genocide in Burundi* (London: Minority Rights Group, 1974). See also Russell, “Obedience.”
15. *ibid.*
16. United Kingdom National Archives, London (UKNA), FCO 31/1099, Thomas Melady, “Telegram from Bujumbura,” May 13, 1972.
17. Russell, “Obedience.”
18. Cohen, *States*, 78.
19. Russell, “Rebel.”
20. Cohen, *States*, 77.
21. “‘La République a utilisé les moyens propres à défendre son indépendance et son intégrité’ déclare le Président de la République à l’envoyé de l’Agence Zaïroise de Presse.” *Ubumwe*, June 16, 1972.
22. Cohen, *States*, 96.
23. *Archives nationales du Burundi* (ANB), BI 6.146, Albin Nyamoya, letter to Governors, July 31, 1972.
24. Cohen, *States*, 108.
25. “Interview que le Président Micombero a accordé à journaliste de la ‘Libre Belgique’.” *Flash-infor*, June 9, 1972.
26. Chrétien and Dupaquier, *Burundi 1972*, 280.
27. *ibid.*, 466.
28. *ibid.*
29. UNHCR Archives, 1.BDI.GEN[1], Embassy of the Republic of Burundi (Dar es Salaam), “Explication du Gouvernement Burundais sur l’incident à sa frontière avec la Tanzanie,” April 4, 1973.
30. UNHCR, 1.BDI.GEN[2], “Déclaration du Bureau politique,” June 9, 1973.
31. ANB, BH 6.44, “Le séminaire des cadres provinciaux du Parti Uprona,” February 5, 1974.
32. *ibid.*
33. *ibid.*
34. *ibid.*

35. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (London: Penguin Classics, 2006), 84–85.
36. Adam Jaworski and Dariusz Galasiński, “Strategies of Silence: Omission and Ambiguity in the Black Book of Polish Censorship,” *Semiotica* 131, no. 1–2 (2000), 186.
37. Alain Goldschläger, “Towards a Semiotics of Authoritarian Discourse,” *Poetics Today* 3, no. 1 (1982), 12.
38. Cohen, *States*, 100.
39. “Où en sommes-nous? Une révolution matérialisée.” *Ubumwe*, October 19, 1974.
40. One of the state’s narratives about the rebels was that they were counter-revolutionaries supporting a restoration of the monarchy, while any ethnic “divisionism” was representative of the legacies of Belgian imperialism.
41. “Micombero élu.” *Ubumwe*, October 19, 1974.
42. “Qui est Micombero?” *Ubumwe*, October 19, 1974.
43. This public discourse within Burundi may be contrasted with the widespread belief, common among political exiles especially, in a premeditated, genocidal “*Plan Simbananiye*”, naming the violence after Micombero’s sometime minister of justice, Arthémon Simbananiye, rather than Micombero himself. See Chrétien and Dupaquier, *Burundi 1972*, 321–42; Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 26–28.
44. “Micombero élu.” *Ubumwe*, October 19, 1974.
45. Thomas Robert Bugeaud, *Par l’épée et par la charrue: écrits et discours* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1948); Charles-Robert Ageron, *Modern Algeria: A History From 1830 to the Present* (London: Hurst, 1991).
46. Albert, ““Rhetoric,”” 50.
47. Jaworski and Galasiński, “Strategies,” 189.
48. Sylvestre Ntibantunganya, *Une démocratie pour tous les Burundais: De l’autonomie à Ndadaye (1956–1993)* (Paris: Harmattan, 1999), 128; Kaburahe, *Burundi*, 26.
49. Goldschläger, “Towards,” 19.
50. *ibid.*, 12.
51. Ntibantunganya, *Démocratie*, 129.
52. *ibid.*
53. “Déclaration sur les objectifs fondamentaux du mouvement du 1er Novembre 1976.” *Flash-Infor* Special Issue, November 1976. It may be no more than coincidence, but the word for “scourge”, *fléau*, used in this French declaration is the most common direct translation of the Kirundi word used to refer to the violence of 1972, *ikiza*.
54. Staffan Wiking, *Military Coups in Sub-Saharan Africa: How to Justify Illegal Assumptions of Power* (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1983), 129.
55. Brian Loveman and Elizabeth Lira, “Truth, Justice, Reconciliation, and Impunity as Historical Themes: Chile, 1814–2006,” *Radical History Review*, no. 97 (2007), 43–76.
56. “Déclaration sur les objectifs fondamentaux du mouvement du 1er novembre 1976.” *Flash-Infor* Special Issue, November 1976.
57. “Le Burundi dans la presse Kenyane.” *Le Renouveau du Burundi*, June 11, 1979.
58. “Est-il possible de cacher une guerre civile?” *Le Renouveau du Burundi*, May 28, 1979.
59. Jaworski and Galasiński, “Strategies,” 186. Emphasis in original.
60. André Makarakiza, *et al.*, “Appel de l’Episcopat du Burundi aux chrétiens du monde entier.” *Ubumwe*, June 29, 1973.

61. *ibid.*
62. "Message of His Holiness Pope Paul VI for the Celebration of the Day of Peace," January 1, 1975.
63. "Mise au point du ministre des Affaires étrangères et de la Coopération." *Le Renouveau du Burundi*, May 28, 1979.
64. Terence P. Moran, "Propaganda as Pseudocommunication," *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* 36, no. 2 (1979), 184.
65. The Church had used the 1975 "Year of Reconciliation" as the basis for an extensive system of local community organizations, directly competing with the later party hegemony of the Second Republic. See Raphaël Ntibazonkiza, *Au royaume des seigneurs de la lance: de l'indépendance à nos jours (1962–1992)* (Brussels: Droits de l'homme, 1993), 218.
66. Filip Reyntjens, *Burundi 1972–1988: continuité et changement* (Brussels: CEDAF, 1989), 25–31.
67. Goldschläger, "Towards," 13.
68. e.g. Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 30–33.
69. Reyntjens, *Burundi*, 18.
70. "Constitution de la République du Burundi," *Bulletin officiel du Burundi* 8, no. 74 (1974).
71. République du Burundi, *Constitution de la République du Burundi* (1981).
72. Jean-Pierre Chrétien, "'Vrais' et 'faux' Nègres. L'idéologie hamitique," in *Burundi, l'histoire retrouvée: 25 ans de métier d'historien en Afrique* (Paris: Karthala, 1993).
73. Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 30.
74. Lemarchand, "Burundi 1972."
75. *ibid.*, 38–39; Chrétien and Dupaquier, *Burundi 1972*, 363–464.
76. Michael Bowen, Gary Freeman and Kay Miller, *Passing By: The United States and Genocide in Burundi, 1972* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1973).
77. Liisa H Malkki, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
78. Marc Augé, *Les formes de l'oubli* (Paris: Payot et Rivages, 1998).
79. c.f. Georg Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1950), 345–51.
80. Purdeková, "Displacements," 343.
81. Ntibantunganya, *Démocratie*, 137.
82. Cohen, *States*, 80.
83. André Guichaoua, Jean-Pierre Chrétien and Gabriel Le Jeune, eds. *La crise d'août 1988 au Burundi*. (Paris: AFERA, 1989), 120.
84. *ibid.*
85. Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power* (New York: Continuum, 1981), 290.
86. "Après les événements de Ntega et Marangara, le Chef de l'État rencontre la Presse Nationale et Internationale." *Le Renouveau du Burundi*, August 27, 1988.
87. *ibid.*
88. "Suite aux événements survenus en communes Ntega et Marangara, déclaration du comité central de l'UFB." *Le Renouveau du Burundi*, August 29, 1988.
89. Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 133; c.f. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).
90. Déo Hakizimana, *Burundi: le non-dit* (Vernier: Ed. Remesha, 1993), 85.
91. République du Burundi, *Rapport de la Commission Nationale* (1989), 87.
92. Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 135. See also Reyntjens, *Burundi*, 65–71.
93. Hakizimana, *Burundi*.

94. Palipehutu, "Pieds de singe dans les urnes du référendum de la Charte de l'Unité au Burundi," March 25, 1991.
95. Bilmès, "Constituting," 85.
96. Goldschläger, "Towards," 13.
97. Lemarchand, *Burundi*, 150.
98. Jay Winter, "Thinking About Silence," in *Shadows of War: A Social History of Silence in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Efrat Ben-Ze'ev, Ruth Ginio and Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 4.
99. Canetti, *Crowds*, 294.
100. Kaburahe, *Burundi*, 34.
101. *ibid.*
102. "Discours de Son Excellence Monsieur Melchior Ndadaye, Président de la République du Burundi à la 48ème Session de l'Assemblée Générale des Nations-Unies", New York: October 4, 1993.
103. Jean-Bosco Sindayigaya, "Mise au point du Palipehutu sur la crise socio-politique du Burundi," Bujumbura: January 1, 1996.
104. CNDD, "Les dix principes du Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie au Burundi (CNDD)," Burundi: January 1998.
105. Frodebu, "Un apartheid qui ne dit pas son nom," Bujumbura: August 1997.
106. Barnabé Ndarishikanye, "La conscience historique des jeunes Burundais," *Cahiers d'études africaines* 38, no. 149 (1998).
107. The TRC was originally agreed as part of the peace negotiations during the civil war. It was planned to operate with hard-coded silences of its own, prevented from classifying genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes. In its current, functional form, by contrast, it is constrained by the pressures of a new political crisis. See Stef Vandeginste, "Transitional Justice for Burundi: A Long and Winding Road," In *Building a Future on Peace and Justice: Transitional Justice, Peace and Development*, ed. K. Ambos, et al. (Berlin: Springer, 2009); Méthode Ndikumasabo, "Quel avenir pour la commission vérité et réconciliation du Burundi?," *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs* 20 (2016).
108. Rénovat Ndabashinze, "Mgr Jean-Louis Nahimana: 'L'administration ne va pas piloter notre travail'." *Iwacu*, April 10, 2017.
109. Ann Nee and Peter Uvin, "Silence and Dialogue: Burundians' Alternatives to Transitional Justice," in *Localizing Transitional Justice: Interventions and Priorities After Mass Violence*, ed. Rosalind Shaw and Lars Waldorf (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 170.
110. Eviatar Zerubavel, "The Social Sound of Silence: Toward a Sociology of Denial," *Shadows of War: A Social History of Silence in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Efrat Ben-Ze'ev, Ruth Ginio and Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 39.

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