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GENDER AND GENOCIDE IN RWANDA
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Abstract

The gender dimension of the holocaust in Rwanda is perhaps more intricate and multifaceted than any genocide in history. This article explores the relevance of the gender variable to an understanding of the 1994 events. It argues that gender is vital to understanding the social crisis in Rwanda prior to the genocide; the appeals of the genocide's perpetrators to the Hutu population and their mobilization of that population for mass killing; the prominence of women as planners and perpetrators of the genocide; the evolution of the genocide itself between April and July 1994; the massive demographic disproportion between men and women after the holocaust; and the actions and strategies of the Rwandan Patriotic Front rebels who eventually succeeded in ending the genocide. The final section of the article seeks to place the Rwanda experience in comparative perspective, suggests some lessons for the future, and argues that the study of gender and genocide must be gender-inclusive (addressing the experiences of both women and men) in order to more fully explore the workings of this important variable.

Resumen

La dimensión del género del holocausto en Ruanda es quizás el genocidio más enredado y multifacético que cualquier otro en la historia. Este artículo explora la relevancia de la variable del género en un entendimiento de los sucesos ocurridos en 1994. Éste argumenta que el género es vital para entender la crisis social en Ruanda antes del genocidio; las apelaciones de los perpetradores del genocidio hacia la población Hutu y su movilización para la matanza masiva; la prominencia de mujeres como planeadoras y perpetradores del genocidio; la evolución del genocidio en si entre abril y julio de 1994; la enorme desproporción demográfica entre hombres y mujeres después del holocausto; y las acciones y estrategias de los rebeldes del Frente Patrióticos Ruandés que eventualmente tuvieron éxito al terminar con el genocidio. La última sección del artículo busca situar la experiencia de Ruanda en una perspectiva comparativa, sugerir algunas lecciones para el futuro, y argumentar que el estudio de género y genocidio debe ser género-inclusivo (apuntando las experiencias de mujeres y hombres) con el afán de explorar más a fondo el funcionamiento de esta importante variable.
I. Introduction and Historical Background

The gendering of the Rwandan genocide is perhaps more extraordinarily intricate and multifaceted than any holocaust in history. The claim is a bold one, but it can be sustained by considering the combination of factors specific to the events in Rwanda between April and July 1994:

- the enormous stress that traditional gender roles, especially masculine ones, were under when the genocide erupted;
- the prominence of women in perpetrating the genocide (a historically unprecedented feature, in terms of the scale and directness of the involvement);
- the bluntness of the génocidaires’ appeals to gendered expectations and aspirations, again including women as active agents of the slaughter;
- the complex evolution of the genocide — from a tradition-bound gendercide targeting predominantly adult and adolescent males, as well as young and even infant boys (with many horrifically indiscriminate massacres as well), to a chronologically progressive and culturally transgressive targeting of Tutsi women, elderly, and girl children;
- the massive gender imbalance among those Rwandans who survived the holocaust, and the social, economic, cultural, and epidemiological implications of the gender-selective slaughter of males; and
- the pronounced gendercidal character of reprisals during and after the genocide by RPF forces and their allies and agents (also apparently contributing to the gender disproportion noted above).

Perhaps only the dimension of women’s complicity is truly unique to Rwanda. Many of the other features have been evident in other genocides of the modern and pre-modern world: the Jewish and Armenian holocausts, for example, have also been powerfully “gendered” from the viewpoint of both the tormented and the tormentors. But in its powerful representation of all these characteristics, the Rwandan genocide cries out for a sustained analysis and an attempt, however preliminary, at synthesis.

This paper departs from four basic propositions: 1) that gender is an important, and underexamined, variable in understanding the causes and course of genocide; 2) that the Rwandan genocide is no exception; 3) that gender is especially

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1 I am grateful to the following people for comments on an earlier version of this paper: David Buchanan, R. Charli Carpenter, Øystein Holter, Jo and David Jones, Christopher Taylor, and colleagues in the Division of International Studies at the Center for Research and Teaching in Economics (CIDE) in Mexico City.

significant in understanding the Rwandan holocaust; and 4) that the “gendering” of
this holocaust was closely linked to structural features of Rwandan economy, polity,
and society.

Most of what follows is based on the five most significant human-rights
reports on the Rwanda genocide published thus far in English: Leave None to Tell
the Story: Genocide in Rwanda (1999) and Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence during
the Rwandan Genocide and Its Aftermath (1996) (both by Human Rights Watch);
Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance (revised edition, 1995) and Rwanda — Not
So Innocent: Women As Killers (1995) (both by the UK organization African Rights);
Personalities to Investigate the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda and the Surrounding
Events (July 2000). Until the truth and reconciliation commission established in
1998 by the Organization of African Unity delivers its findings and testimony, these
are likely to be the most extensive accounts on record of what occurred during the
terrible 100-day bloodbath of April-July 1994. All make for agonizing reading. The
1200-page Death, Despair and Defiance, in particular, is relentless in its up-close
depiction of the genocide (the reader who manages to make it through the chapter on
“A Policy of Massacres” — some 300 pages long — is then confronted by yet another
300-page chapter entitled “Genocidal Frenzy”). Ige part because of its detail and
specificity, however, this African Rights report, above all other accounts of the
Rwanda genocide, is foundational to our understanding of the events overall — and
their complex “gendering” in particular.

For readers who are unfamiliar with the background of the Rwandan
-genocide, and the broad outline of events between April and July 1994, I provide a
brief summary.

The roots of Rwanda’s genocide lie in its colonial experience. First occupied
and colonized by the Germans (1894-1916), during World War I the country was
taken over by the Belgians, who ruled until independence in 1962. Utilizing the
classic strategy of “divide and rule”, the Belgians granted preferential status to the
Tutsi minority (constituting somewhere between 8 and 14 percent of the population
at the time of the 1994 genocide). In pre-colonial Rwanda, the Tutsis had dominated
the small Rwandan aristocracy, but ethnic divisions between them and the majority
Hutus (at least 85 percent of the population in 1999) were always fluid, and the two
populations cannot be considered distinct nations or “tribes”. Nor was inter-
communal conflict rife. As Stephen D. Wrage states, “It is often remarked that the

Rights, 1995); African Rights, Rwanda — Not So Innocent: Women As Killers (London: African
Rights, 1995); Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda (New York:
Human Rights Watch, 1999); Human Rights Watch, Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence during the
Panel of Eminent Personalities to Investigate the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda and the Surrounding
violence between Hutus and Tutsis goes back to time immemorial and can never be averted, but Belgian records show that in fact there was a strong sense among Rwandans ... of belonging to a Rwandan nation, and that before around 1960, violence [along] ethnic lines was uncommon and mass murder of the sort seen in 1994 was unheard of". 4

Whatever communal cleavages existed were sharply heightened by Belgian colonial policy. As Gérard Prunier notes, “Using physical characteristics as a guide—the Tutsi were generally tall, thin, and more ‘European’ in their appearance than the shorter, stockier Hutu—the colonizers decided that the Tutsi and the Hutu were two different races. According to the racial theories of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Tutsi, with their more ‘European’ appearance, were deemed the ‘master race’. ... By 1930 Belgium’s Rwandan auxiliaries were almost entirely Tutsi, a status that earned them the durable hatred of the Hutu”. 5 It was also the Belgians who (in 1933) instituted the identity-card system that designated every Rwandan as Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa (the last of these is an aboriginal group that in 1990 comprised about 1 percent of the Rwandan population). The identity cards were retained into the post-independence era, and provided crucial assistance to the architects of genocide as they sought to isolate their Tutsi victims.

As Africa moved towards decolonization after World War II, it was the better-educated and more prosperous Tutsis who led the struggle for independence. Accordingly, the Belgians switched their allegiance to the Hutus. Vengeful Hutu elements murdered about 15,000 Tutsis between 1959 and 1962, and more than 100,000 Tutsis fled to neighbouring countries, notably Uganda and Burundi. Tutsis remaining in Rwanda were stripped of much of their wealth and status under the regime of Juvénal Habyarimana, installed in 1973. An estimated one million Tutsis fled the country (it is in part this massive outflow that makes the proportion of Tutsis in Rwanda in 1994 so difficult to determine). After 1986, Tutsis in Uganda formed a guerrilla organization, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which aimed to invade Rwanda and overthrow the Habyarimana regime.

In 1990, the RPF launched its invasion, occupying zones in the northeast of Rwanda. In August 1993, at the Tanzanian town of Arusha, Habyarimana finally accepted an internationally-mediated peace treaty which granted the RPF a share of political power and a military presence in the capital, Kigali. Some 5,000 U.N. peacekeepers (UNAMIR, the United Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda) were dispatched to bolster the accord. “But Hutu extremists in [Habyarimana’s] government did not accept the peace agreement”, writes Prunier. “Some of these extremists, who were high-level government officials and military personnel, had begun devising their own solution to the ‘Tutsi problem’ as early as 1992. Habyarimana’s controversial decision to make peace with the RPF won others over to

5 Gérard Prunier, “Rwanda’s Struggle to Recover from Genocide”, Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 99.
their side, including opposition leaders. Many of those involved in planning the 1994 genocide saw themselves as patriots, defending their country against outside aggression. Moderate Hutus who supported peace with the RPF also became their targets. This was the so-called “Hutu Power” movement that organized and supervised the holocaust of April-July 1994.

On April 6, 1994, President Habyarimana’s plane was shot down by a surface-to-air missile as it approached Kigali airport. Responsibility for the assassination has never been confirmed, but the speed with which the genocide was subsequently launched strongly suggests that the Hutu extremists had decided to rid themselves of their accommodationist president, and implement a “final solution” to the Tutsi “problem” in Rwanda. Within 24 hours of Habyarimana’s jet being downed, roadblocks sprang up around Kigali, manned by the so-called interahamwe militia (the name means “those who attack together”). Tutsis were separated from Hutus and hacked to death with machetes at roadside (although many taller Hutus were presumed to be Tutsis and were also killed). “Doing murder with a machete is exhausting, so the militias were organized to work in shifts. At the day’s end, the Achilles tendons of unprocessed victims were sometimes cut before the murderers retired to rest, to feast on the victims’ cattle and to drink. Victims who could afford to pay often chose to die from a bullet.” Meanwhile, death-squads working from carefully-prepared lists went from neighbourhood to neighbourhood in Kigali. They murdered not only Tutsis but moderate Hutus, including the prime minister, Agathe Uwilingiyimana. The prime minister was guarded by a detachment of Belgian soldiers; these were arrested, disarmed, tortured, and murdered, prompting Belgium—as intended—to withdraw the remainder of its U.N. troops from Rwanda.

With breathtaking rapidity, the genocide expanded from Kigali to the countryside. Government radio encouraged Tutsis to congregate at churches, schools, and stadiums, pledging that these would serve as places of refuge. Thus concentrated, the helpless civilians could be more easily targeted—although many miraculously managed to resist with only sticks and stones for days or even weeks, until the forces of the Rwandan army and presidential guard were brought in to exterminate them with machine-guns and grenades. By April 21—that is, in just two weeks—perhaps a quarter of a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus had been slaughtered. It was one of the most concentrated acts of genocide in human history: “the dead of Rwanda accumulated at nearly three times the rate of Jewish dead during the Holocaust.” By the end of April, according to Human Rights Watch, “the worst massacres had finished...perhaps half of the Tutsi population of Rwanda”

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6 Prunier, “Rwanda’s Struggle”.
7 Wrage, “Genocide in Rwanda”.
8 Philip Gourevitch, We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), p. 3. Gérard Prunier provides an even higher estimate: “the daily killing rate was at least five times that of the Nazi death camps”. Prunier, The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide (Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 261.
had been murdered. Only the successful war waged by the RPF rebels finally put a halt to the killing frenzy in July.

II. Gender and Crisis in Rwanda

The onset of renewed civil war in the early 1990s, and a prolonged drought, exacerbated Rwanda’s far-reaching economic and social crisis. “Fragile at the start, the Rwandan economy had crumbled under the burden of the costs of war”, writes Human Rights Watch:

In 1990 war-related expenses accounted for 15 percent of the budget, but by 1993, they consumed some 70 percent of the operating expenses of the state. In 1993, agricultural production, the mainstay of the economy, declined 15 percent, partly because hundreds of thousands of displaced persons were no longer able to work their fields, partly because of poor weather conditions. Foreign assistance increased nearly 100 percent from 1989 to 1993, when it amounted to U.S. $334 million, to which was added some U.S. $130 million in direct emergency aid in 1993. The additional support notwithstanding, living conditions worsened dramatically, as per capita income that stood at U.S. $320 in 1989 (nineteenth poorest in the world) fell to U.S. $200 in 1993.

This economic decline combined with a continuing crisis over available land to produce a gender crisis for younger Hutu men. The best appraisal of this phenomenon I have found is in the African Rights report, Death, Despair and Defiance, which points out that “in Rwandese society, there were previously a number of options open to poor young men. These included (1) acquiring land from the older generation of farmers, (2) clearing new farmland on the hills, (3) migration to Uganda or Zaire to find work or land, (4) becoming a client of a wealthier or more powerful man and (5) obtaining formal employment, usually in the civil service”. The authors note that “by 1990, most of these options were rapidly disappearing, or had gone altogether”. The parcelizing of land resulted in smaller and smaller plots, or none at all, being distributed to male offspring; migration onto the agricultural frontier was progressively closed off by the expansion of tea plantations and other cash-crops, which “deprived farmers of potential land for cultivation”; work in the bureaucracy, or for a patron, was increasingly sparse as a result of structural-adjustment programs imposed by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. “In 1991, there was a burst of recruitment into the expanding army, which

9 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 122.
10 These structural-adjustment measures exacerbated the employment problem still further, especially for men: they “not only choked off any possibility of new recruitment into the bureaucratic pyramid, but threatened the jobs of those who were already there. Low-ranking officials in the villages — including administrators, teachers, agricultural extension workers, health workers and policemen — saw their prospects of promotion vanish, and even faced the possibility of losing their jobs altogether. Employees in parastatals who had thought that they were guaranteed a position for
absorbed twenty-five thousand young men, but this represented only a fraction of the unemployed, frustrated young Rwandese looking to the state to fulfill their aspirations for a job, and being disappointed.\textsuperscript{11} It was also a measure that was prone to being rolled back under the terms of the 1993 Arusha peace accords, which would have forced both the Rwandan army and national police “to demobilize at least half their military personnel”\textsuperscript{12}.

I do not wish to suggest that the subsistence crisis generated by these factors and measures was unique to males. Rwanda in 1994 was one of the poorest countries in the world, with some 86 percent of its population living below the poverty line, and this situation affected women (and children, and the elderly) no less than young men. But for younger Rwandan males, the crisis was additionally an existential one: “Without land or employment, young men cannot advance in life, they cannot marry or achieve the social status of their parents.”\textsuperscript{13} When the genocide erupted, the temptation for Hutu men to kill their Tutsi counterparts and seize their land, cattle, money, and belongings must have been irresistible.

One might even argue that the genocide represented, to some extent, an attempt by Rwanda’s extremist rulers to solve the gender crisis of young Hutu men by making available resources (land and other property, positions in higher education, work in the bureaucracy and private industry, etc.) that the government itself could not otherwise provide for them. This would simultaneously bring about a “final solution” to the “problem” of the Tutsi minority in Rwanda, bolster the fragile legitimacy of the governing authorities, and diminish the threat posed to all Third World regimes by disenchanted young men.\textsuperscript{14}

life were similarly overcome by uncertainty”. African Rights, \textit{Death, Despair and Defiance}, pp. 20-21.


\textsuperscript{12} Human Rights Watch, \textit{Leave None to Tell the Story}, p. 125. “Many soldiers were angry that Habyarimana had yielded to foreign pressure [at Arusha] when the army had not been decisively defeated”, write the authors. “... Soldiers disavowed the accords for personal as well as for political reasons. With the planned demobilization, many would lose the chance to live relatively well — from exactions if not from salary” (\textit{ibid}). The organization also notes that talk of “using demobilized soldiers in economic development projects, such as draining marshes to obtain new land for cultivation”, only “incensed the soldiers further; it was just such menial labor that they thought they had left behind in their new military careers” (p. 60).

\textsuperscript{13} African Rights, \textit{Death, Despair and Defiance}, p. 20. Eleanor Richter-Lyonette points out that the “landlessness frequent among young men ... [made] them vulnerable to taking compensatory action. ... The hope for a redistribution of wealth in one’s favour was a distinct incentive for the commitment of acts of genocide, particularly with the landless, unemployed youth ...”. “Women after the Genocide in Rwanda”, in Richter-Lyonette, ed., \textit{In the Aftermath of Rape: Women’s Rights, War Crimes, and Genocide} (Givins: The Coordination of Women’s Advocacy, 1997), p. 106.

\textsuperscript{14} Human Rights Watch hints at such a strategy when it notes that “in a clear effort to divert the resentment otherwise directed towards Hutu from Habyarimana’s region, propagandists argued that it was Tutsi, not other Hutu, who occupied the jobs which southern Hutu wanted and failed to get. They also accused the Tutsi of having taken a disproportionate share of places in secondary school and university and, because of their educational advantages, of having dominated the professions and government”. \textit{Leave None to Tell the Story}, p. 74.
The gender crisis certainly helps to explain the type of propaganda and rhetoric directed towards the Hutu population by the regime and its genocidal allies in the mass media. It is probably no coincidence, for example, that the task of genocide was "sold" to the young men who would be its main implementors by referring to it as "work" —harking back to "the communal work parties of the 1970[s] and '80s", which had perhaps fortified the self-esteem of the men involved even if it did little to line their pockets. "The word 'interahamwe' [the genocidal militia] itself was previously used for communal work parties; 'clearing the brush' originally referred to clearing land for cultivation and has subsequently been used for killing Tutsi; and the word 'work' itself has been used for the work —and often very physically demanding labour it is too— of killing". One is not surprised to learn that the genocidal killers of April-June 1994, according to Human Rights Watch, "included many young men who had hung out on the streets of Kigali or smaller commercial centers, with little prospect of obtaining either the land or the jobs needed to marry and raise families. They included too thousands of the displaced who focused their fear and anger on the RPF [Rwandan Patriotic Front] and defined that group to include all Tutsi—or at least all Tutsi males."

Propaganda was also directed towards heightening the martial sensibilities of young Hutu males. "I know you are men ... who do not let themselves be invaded, who refuse to be shamed", stated the MRND leader Léon Mugesera in his famously vitriolic speech of 1992. A hard-line military officer, "Commandant Mike Tango", followed Mugesera by calling for each commune to establish a battalion of "robust young men" to receive military training. "Hutu Power was to be implemented by [a] 'popular army of strong young men'", especially sought-after were married males "who have something to defend", according to notes written by Théoneste Bagosara, perhaps the leading architect of the genocide, in September 1993.

The organization and strategy underlying the genocide itself similarly played on younger-male aspirations and fears. Men who refused to participate were denounced as cowards: an official visiting one commune that was "negligent" in its genocidal duties asked "if there were no more men there, meaning men who could deal with 'security' problems themselves". Hutu men seeking to flee combat with the RPF were scapegoated little less than ordinary Tutsis: "If you see deserters, arrest them wherever they are, even on roadblocks, and send them back to their barracks".

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15 African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, pp. 55, 76. It is also interesting, in this context, that as numerous survivors reported, the "work" was carried out according to a strict regimen, imitating the clock-time that governed labour in the formal economy: "They came exactly at 7 a.m. each morning, just like government employees. They worked until 5 p.m. and then came back the next morning at 7 again". Witness to the killings at Cyahinda, quoted in Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 390.
16 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 261.
17 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 84.
18 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 139.
19 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, pp. 104-05.
20 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 459.
demanded an announcer on RTLM radio. "What are those sons of dogs fleeing from? ... Let them save their country. They ought not to escape. Beat them up, refuse them food, drinks, take them to the authorities so that they can go back to the battlefield. ... They have to fight and fight the enemy ... To flee is out of the question". 21

The all-consuming emphasis on killing Tutsis presented significant opportunities for upward mobility to those within the armed forces and national police who were willing to serve as diligent génocidaires. Underlings at the prefectural and sub-prefectural levels could similarly rise above their superiors, establishing a primacy that "depended more on commitment to the killing than on formal position in the hierarchy. ... This flexibility encouraged initiative and ambition among those willing to purchase advancement at the cost of human lives". 22 Even the power of bourgmestres (burgomasters) and other senior officials could be "trumped" by the newly-empowered interahamwe militiamen who possessed superior weaponry and were key to the actual perpetration of the genocide. The new opportunities associated with the genocide extended to men at the very bottom of the social and economic chain. Gérard Prunier points out, in a powerful and implicitly-gendered passage, that

[The] social aspect of the killings has often been overlooked. In Kigali the Interahamwe and Impuzamugambi [militia] had tended to recruit mostly among the poor. As soon as they went into action, they drew around them a cloud of even poorer people, a lumpenproletariat of street boys, rag-picker, car-washers and homeless unemployed. For these people the genocide was the best thing that could ever happen to them. They had the blessings of a form of authority to take revenge on socially powerful people as long as these were on the wrong side of the political fence. They could steal, they could kill with minimum justification, they could rape and they could get drunk for free. This was wonderful. The political aims pursued by the masters of this dark carnival were quite beyond their scope. They just went along, knowing it would not last. 23

On many occasions, the mere promise of free beer—with its overtones of male bonding—was sufficient to draw men into the hunt. The organizers of the killing in Musebeya in Gigonkorro prefecture "went around from sector to sector to organize people ... They would buy drinks for everyone who helped them. Other people were told that if they joined in, they could get drinks bought for them as well. They said, ‘You can get free beer. Come with us tomorrow [to kill Tutsis] and then you can join us at the bar’. Every evening there was a meeting there at the bar to expand their group". 24 Human Rights Watch notes that "the need for ‘refreshments’ was so important that the prefect of Kibuye requested a police escort for a boat

21 Quoted in African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, p. 82. Emphasis added.
22 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 222.
23 Prunier, The Rwanda Crisis, pp. 231-32.
24 Survivor's testimony cited in Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 343.
bringing beer from the BRALIRWA brewery in Gisenyi to remedy 'the scarcity of drinks' in his prefecture'.

To summarize, the construction of the genocidal policy can be seen as deeply and intimately influenced by the desire to head off the threat that younger males, above all other demographic groups, pose to Third World regimes worldwide. The fear, moreover, seems to have been solidly grounded, as indicated by the increasing disorganization and indiscriminate violence and venality of the last stages of the genocide, in June-July 1994 (discussed further below).

One final piece of evidence for this thesis can be cited: the choice of weaponry used in the genocide. For most observers, the machete became the very symbol of the Rwandan horror (at least two works—Human Rights Watch's Leave None to Tell the Story and Fergal Keane's Season of Blood—include the image on their front cover). In the 1993-94 prelude to the genocide, more than half a million machetes were imported, "or one for every third adult Hutu male in Rwanda". Why were machetes supplied, rather than more efficiently destructive firearms? One reason was surely expense—but the fear of a well-armed younger-male population was probably even more significant. "The militias had been armed—but crudely", notes Prunier. "It was clear that if their masters had succeeded in their scheme, there would have been a law-and-order problem after the successful conclusion of the genocide and then a disarmament period. Men with machetes are easier to disarm than men with firearms".

III. April-July 1994: Genocide and Gendercide

In a passage from her provocative study of the witch-hunts in early-modern England, Malevolent Nurture—it is in fact the concluding passage of the book—Deborah Willis develops her sophisticated gendering of the hunts with an important digression on "some of the most virulent of the twentieth-century 'witch-hunts'", in which "violence has been directed against symbolic 'fathers' or other figures of authority". The trend is especially prominent "in countries where newly emergent but precarious ruling elites needed 'others' to blame for the serious economic or other problems they faced". The example she chooses is Stalin's purges in the USSR:

... During the 1930s and 1940s in Stalin's Soviet Union, leadership fractured at all levels, not only within Stalin's "inner circle" but also within local and regional party machines (paralleling in some ways the neighborly quarrels and religious

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25 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 244. African Rights also reports that numerous broadcasts of Radio-Télévision des Mille Collines (RTLM) during the genocide "refer to the use of drugs" in an approving way—certainly one of the few instances in the history of broadcasting in which a station has proselytized for the use of narcotics, but another indication of how integral was organized intoxication to the successful perpetration of the genocide. African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, p. 83 (n. 38).

26 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 127.

controversies that divided early modern communities. As power oscillated between different factions, purges were carried out in the name of Stalin, “Father of the Country”, “the Great and Wise Teacher”, “the Friend of Mankind”, against the anti-fathers and betraying sons who had perverted the socialist program, the “enemies with party cards”. Underlying the psychology of the purges may have been, among other things, the magical beliefs of the Russian peasantry, still lively in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, translated after the Revolution into the language of “scientific socialism”. Rather than the female witch, however, it was the male possessed by evil spirits who anticipated the typical target of persecutory violence —the “evil spirits” of foreign, class-alien, or counter-revolutionary ideas. Demystified, secularized, stripped of his supernatural power, the great demonic adversary no longer needed to seduce a weaker [female] vessel but could walk among the elect as one of their own.

Willis’s comments are the only significant treatment I have found of the gendering of modern “witch-hunts”, which in the twentieth century have overwhelmingly targeted adult males. (Indonesia in 1965-66, East Pakistan/Bangladesh in 1971, Punjab/Kashmir, the Kurds in Turkey and Iraq, and the Balkans wars of the 1990s are just a few of the cases that could be added to the list). Willis’s analysis also draws out a number of the key variables (social class, political affiliation) that typically combine with gender to produce gendercidal outcomes.

The demonization of adult Tutsi males, prior to and in the earlier stages of the Rwanda genocide, is precisely comparable. The insurgency of the Rwandan Patriotic Front spawned a climate of fear and vengefulness among both the Hutu Power elite and the Hutu population at large: all Tutsi men, and many Tutsi women, were viewed as a traitorous and counter-revolutionary “fifth-column” (to the extent that Hutu Power saw itself as a “revolutionary” force securing the majority Hutu population against Tutsi attempts to re-establish their pre-1959 hegemony in Rwanda). “Search everywhere in the commune for the enemy”, wrote the sub-prefect of Busoro, “because he is clever and can sneak in like a snake”.

29 For detailed treatments of these case-studies, see the Gendercide Watch website at <http://www.gendercide.org>.
30 Human Rights Watch, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, p. 419. Emphasis added. The report draws out some of this paranoia, with its overtones of deeply-ingrained superstition: “The ‘enemy’ who was everywhere was extraordinarily cruel, according to the [Hutu Power] propagandists. ... [Valérie] Bemeriki [an announcer on RTLM] charged the RPF with cannibalism, saying they killed people by dissecting them and cutting out their hearts, livers, and stomachs. On the air and in public meetings, officials and political leaders also contributed to this sense of a people besieged by a heartless enemy. In an April 15 broadcast, the minister of defense charged the RPF with ‘extreme cruelty’, saying that it had massacred 20,000 people and had burned people with gasoline at Nyamirambo in Kigali”. On 16 May 1994, as a new round of genocidal atrocities was being prepared, an announcer on RTLM “introduced the novel allegation that RPF soldiers ate the hearts of their victims”. (Human Rights Watch, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, pp. 255, 643).
The panic thus engendered—in both senses of the term—was critical not only to drawing the bulk of the Hutu population onto the side of the génocidaires, but to determining how and against whom the genocidal rampage would be directed during its initial and most virulent stages. In short, the extermination of males, both Tutsi and oppositionist Hutu, served as a kind of “vanguard for the genocide as a whole, an initial barrier to be surmounted and ‘threat’ to be removed, before the remainder of the community is consigned to violent death”. I am quoting here from comments I made on the Jewish holocaust as instigated on the eastern front during World War II. In Rwanda as in the Nazi-occupied territories of the East, gendercidal atrocities against males served to acclimatize the killers to the killing: “Authorities first incited attacks on the most obvious targets—men who had acknowledged or could be easily supposed to have ties with the RPF—and only later insisted on the slaughter of women, children, the elderly, and others generally regarded as apolitical”. Implicit in this passage is the fact that all males from groups deemed “oppositionist” were deemed ipso facto to be political, and therefore “fair game” for genocide: the apocalyptic witch-hunt that swept Rwanda in 1994 was, to repeat Deborah Willis’s insight, gendered male. In the Nazi-occupied territories, as Daniel Jonah Goldhagen demonstrates in Hitler’s Willing Executioners, the extension of the genocide from adult men to other population groups was accompanied by significant trauma on the part of the killers, leading eventually to the development of poison-gas technologies to reduce the culturally-induced stress of murdering women, children, and the elderly. I will show later (Section V) that much the same cultural constraints existed in the Rwanda case, resulted in similar stress to some of the killers, and may have played a role in blunting the genocidal impetus in the later stages of the slaughter.

It is certainly the case that when the genocide first erupted, Tutsi males—and many Hutu men of an oppositionist bent—understood immediately that they were at greatest risk. “As soon as I heard that Habyarimana had been assassinated, I knew they would go for all Tutsis, especially Tutsi men”, one survivor, Emmanuel Ngezahayo, told African Rights. Particularly vivid in the memory of Rwanda’s Tutsi men was the pogrom of October 1990, which began—as did the 1994 genocide—with the imposition of a curfew. “I got scared as soon as I heard the word curfew” on the first day of the slaughter, recalled one young man, a student at the University of Butare who was in Murabi, Kibungo prefecture, at the time. “The curfew in October 1990 had been a disaster for Tutsi men. Thousands of them were arrested and thrown into prison. Some died. I feared the same thing would happen...”

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32 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 11.
33 African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, p. 587.
again”. “It was simply not safe for a Tutsi man to be visible”, another survivor, William Rutarema, recalled.

To enter into a discussion of the gendering of the holocaust’s victims is both a painful and a difficult exercise. The pain and difficulty alike arise from the widespread accounts of massacres in April 1994 that were both gargantuan in scale and largely indiscriminate in targeting Tutsi men, children, and women. One of these massacres, in fact, may qualify as the worst of the twentieth century, with another not far behind. “On 20 April, at the Parish of Karama in Butare, between thirty-five and forty-three thousand people died in less than six hours” — a higher casualty toll than the Nazis’ two-day slaughter of some 33,000 Jews at Babi Yar in September 1941, and higher than the highest single-day extermination spree in the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau. An even greater toll was exacted, though over a much longer period, in the weeks-long slaughter on Bisesero mountain in southwestern Rwanda, where “more than fifty thousand people ... lost their lives” amidst heroic scenes of resistance. A number of other massacres, particularly in Cyahinda prefecture, claimed “ten thousand or more at one time”. In nearly all cases, the carnage seems to have been utterly indiscriminate, save, of course, for the overriding ethnic variable. (“They encircled the whole hill”, recalled one survivor of Bisesero. “They shot and shot and shot. There was no distinction. Everyone died — adult men and women, young men and women and children”). And yet, the general thrust of the human-rights reportage suggests that on the whole, males were overwhelmingly targeted in the genocide’s earliest and most virulent stages. African Rights’ report, Death, Despair and Defiance, makes it clear that the early and most exterminatory weeks of the holocaust included both mass killings of the type described above, which left thousands or even tens of thousands of dead men, children, women, and the elderly strewn about the terrain; and a more selective and gender-selective targeting of males, notably those with wealth and education:

The primary target of the hunt [for survivors of the opening massacres] were Tutsi men, particularly what extremist propaganda portrayed as the “ultimate” enemy

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34 African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, p. 385.
35 African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, p. 646.
37 “The highest ‘output’ attained by Auschwitz was 34,000 bodies, in one continuous day and night shift”. Eugen Kogon, The Theory and Practice of Hell (Berkley, 1980), p. 241.
38 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 488.
39 African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, pp. 662-64. “The very first massacre of the genocide” was similarly indiscriminate, at least from a gender perspective: it occurred at the Centre Christus, Kigali, at 7 a.m. on April 7, an hour after the official announcement of President Habyarimana’s death. “The victims were priests, seminarians, visitors and staff”. Of the seventeen people killed, eight were “young women belonging to the order Vita and Pax who were on retreat; four diocesan priests who had been meeting there; a visiting social worker; three Jesuit priests and the cook”. African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, p. 863.
—rich men, men between their twenties and forties, especially if they were well-educated professionals or students. Most hated of all were well-educated Tutsi men who had studied in Uganda (and to a lesser extent Tanzania and Kenya) who were immediately suspected of being members or supporters of the RPF.

Within days, entire communities were without their men; tens of thousands of women were widowed, tens of thousands of children were orphaned.  

Many of these men and boys were killed in classic gendercidal massacres, such as the one in the parish of Mibilizi, Cyangugu prefecture, beginning on 20 April.  

African Rights describes hundreds of interahamwe militia arriving at the church, where they “began the macabre ‘favourite’ game of the killers, selecting Tutsi men and boys for the slaughterhouse”. Catherine Kanyundo, a sixty-year-old Tutsi woman, described what followed:

They took all the men and boys, everyone masculine from about the age of two. Any boy who could walk was taken. They put them on one side. They were particularly interested in men who looked like students, civil servants, in short any man who looked as if he had education or money. They left only very poor men, those who were already wounded and tiny babies. Not even the very old were spared. They were all killed with machetes, spears and swords. They were killed nearby.

Kanyundo related the testimony of a peasant observer of the killings, who “told Catherine and the other female survivors that boys of thirteen to fifteen were killed by boys of their own age. The others were killed by groups. The first group beat them with sticks and clubs, the second group undressed them, the third group continued to torture them and the fourth group finished them off. The victims numbered about two thousand men and boys”.

At Sovu, Butare prefecture, at the local health center, some seven thousand refugees were assaulted on 23 April. In the words of one survivor, Domatile Mukabanza,

At about 8:00 a.m., there was the final attack of the genocidal killers. ... They shot and threw grenades until about 5:00 p.m. We saw that above all, the criminals were looking for men. The gendarmes arrived [around 5:00 p.m.] and stopped the killing. They grouped us together, saying that they were going to assure our security. But when we arrived on the Butare-Gikongoro road, they forced us to sit down on the grass. Some of them wanted to finish us off. There was not a single man amongst

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41 One of the most detailed and disturbing account of gendercidal atrocities against Tutsi males was provided by Liberata Mukasakindi, a resident of Musambira commune in Gitarama prefecture; it is too long to quote here. See African Rights, *Death, Despair and Defiance*, pp. 625-26.
us. I don’t think a single Tutsi man had escaped. They obliged us to go back to Sovu Health Centre where we spent the night in the middle of the corpses.43

At the Collège St. André in Kigali, “a string of massacres” occurred from 9-13 April, also ruthlessly gendercidal in their targeting of adolescent and elderly males, along with those of “battle age”.44 Likewise, refugees who arrived in early and mid-June at St. Paul’s church in Kigali found that it “was not a safe haven for Tutsi men ... On 14 June, a large group of militiamen arrived in search of Tutsi men -to kill, particularly businessmen, professionals, students and any able-bodied male who they thought would join the RPF. They did not look at ID cards but took anyone who ‘looked Tutsi,’ in the process killing three young Hutu men who were tall. They killed fifty-nine Tutsi men”.45 At Kamarampaka Stadium in Cyangugu prefecture, “the killers would periodically come with a list of refugees who were taken and killed nearby. The victims that were sought after were men, particularly educated or wealthy men”.46 A survivor of the killings at the Kabgayi detention camp, where some 30,000 terrified Tutsis congregated, described “the interahamwe [who] came and took people away to be killed, especially young men”.47 “Men and young boys were killed regularly just behind the toilets”, one survivor remembered. “... After they had killed nearly all the young Tutsi men and boys, they started looking for young Tutsi women to rape. Four other young men and I survived because we were working with the Red Cross and others in the kitchen. But altogether, few able-bodied Tutsi men were left ... No young women were killed”.48

In the case of children, males were again at particular risk: “The extremists were determined to seek out and murder Tutsi boys in particular. They examined very young infants, even new-borns, to see if they were boys or girls. Little boys were executed on the spot. Sometimes they ordered mothers to kill their children. ... In what can only have been a horrific unending nightmare, older boys were relentlessly hunted down. Many mothers dressed their little boys as girls in the hope —too often a vain hope— of deceiving the killers. The terrified boys knew exactly what was happening”.49 The boys were particularly targeted, according to African Rights, “on the basis that they will be tomorrow’s RPF soldiers. ‘Paul Kagame [then-RPF rebel leader, now Rwandan president] was also three when he left the country’ is the phrase that preceded the cold-blooded murder of thousands of little Tutsi boys.

43 African Rights, Not So Innocent, p. 165. The attack was supervised by Sister Julienne Kizito of the Sovu monastery (see Section VII).
44 Eyewitness testimony of Hamidou Omar, cited in African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, p. 561. Another survivor, Eugène Byusa, said: “Looking at the bodies, we understood that they decided to kill the men only. There were male bodies everywhere —bayoneted, macheted, speared and knifed to death” (p. 564).
45 African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, p. 587.
46 African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, p. 603.
47 African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, p. 455.
49 African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, p. 815.
Little Tutsi girls were spared with the comment that “they can be married off to our boys”.50 Indeed, the opening blast of the genocide was accompanied by an injunction not to repeat the “mistake” of the 1959 revolution, when male children had been spared only to return as guerrilla fighters.51

One of the best indicators of the special vulnerability of men and boys is the frequency with which relatives and friends sought to disguise them in women’s clothing. The African Rights report, Death, Despair and Defiance, cites a number of examples of such procedures, which are reminiscent of similar practices followed in the Bosnian and Kosovan conflicts of the 1990s. One such account comes from Kamarampaka Stadium, where, as at all the “death camps, the favourite occupation of the soldiers and militia guarding the stadium was to select Tutsi men to be killed”. On 12 May, a group of army officers and gendarmes arrived at the stadium “with a list indicating the men that were to be taken away that day. No one answered to the names”. One occupant, Théodore Nyilinkwaya, recalled a typical gendercidual massacre at the stadium:

Since they did not know the faces of the people they wanted, people were able to hide. Women concealed men by lending them their clothes. Absolutely no one responded to the names they called out. They became furious. They called for all men to come out and form lines. So the men had no choice. They asked them to show their identity cards. This was just theatrics since there were only Tutsis in the stadium. They looked closely at the faces, seeking out educated men and those who “looked” wealthy. They asked between twenty and thirty men to step aside. No one could refuse because the orders were given at gun point. They were taken to Gatandara, about one kilometre away, and killed by the militia with machetes.52

The gender-selective tradition of corvée labour in Rwanda assisted the génocidares in targeting Tutsi males. It allowed them, first of all, to round up Hutu men for “work” at the infamous barricades that sprang up everywhere in the first hours and days of the genocide. “All men worked at the barriers”, noted a resident of Musebeya, Gikongoro prefecture. “This was required. It was organized by the councilor of the sector who compiled a list of those who would work. He would go to the families and write down the name of the head of the family and all those boys over eight years old. ... Anyone ... who did not do patrols was an enemy”.53 Anyone displaying non-compliance “will have shown that he is an enemy and he will be prosecuted by the authorities”, noted a bourgmestre in Butare.54

Tutsi males were also instructed to turn out to “man” the barricades. This was nothing more than an “effort to lure Tutsi men to their deaths ... Many Tutsi men who were not warned in time were murdered at the very checkpoints where

50 African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, p. 798.
51 African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, p. 39.
52 African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, pp. 725, 729. See also pp. 613, 625, 738.
53 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, pp. 324, 528.
54 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 508. Emphasis added.
they had been assuring the security of their communities’. “From the evening of the 7th [of April], interahamwe would come to your home and say, ‘Let’s go. You are going to man the roadblock’”, recalled Angelo Nkurunziza, an employee with the Kigali office of USAID. “A few steps away from your house, they would kill you”.

Likewise, gendered role expectations dictated the behaviour of Tutsis who sought safety in numbers on hilltops, or at churches and other centers (or who were channelled there by those who would later annihilate them). Numerous eyewitness testimonies record the sieges of such communities, in which younger males were thrust to the forefront of the fighting and died en masse. Often —perhaps usually— this was merely the prelude to a root-and-branch extermination of all the occupants of the facility in question. On some occasions, the killers may have been satisfied with slaughtering the male defenders, at least for the time being. In any case, the men were nearly always attacked first.

A subject that deserves closer investigation is the possibility that men were over-represented among the populations that gathered on strategic hilltops, where many of the worst genocidal massacres took place. The evidence for this is extremely sparse, but there are interesting fragments of testimony from Sovu in Butare prefecture, where one of the largest gendercidal massacres took place at the local health center on 23 April (see above). The men targeted in that assault had not originally sought sanctuary in the health center. Rather, as the genocide erupted, “adult males and young men decided to stay on the hill and obliged us, the women, girls and children, to go and take refuge towards the Health Centre of Sovu”. As noted, the gendercidal slaughter in this case took place at the health center, not on the hilltop. But, again given gendered role expectations, it is perhaps intuitively likely that other such scenes occurred in Rwanda, as Tutsi menfolk (recognizing themselves to be the prime targets of the génocidaires) placed themselves in the firing line, while seeking to ensure that other members of the population found at least temporary shelter. We must set against this the extensive testimony from Bisesero and other sites, which certainly suggests a sizable representation of children, women, and elderly among the hilltop populations. But if the decisions taken at Sovu were, in fact, taken elsewhere, they may help to account for the some of the gendercidal atrocities against men, and the resulting disparities in the death-toll.

Women were also far more likely than men to receive “mercy” from the killers, though often at the price of surrendering themselves sexually to their captors.

55 African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, pp. 603-04.
56 Sample testimony to this effect in Death, Despair and Defiance includes the following: “The men who had put up the resistance were the first to be exterminated. Women and children sat on the ground. All they could do was to pray”. (Nyamasheke parish, Cyangugu, p. 466).
57 Survivor’s testimony cited in African Rights, Not So Innocent, p. 158. Two other survivors provide identical accounts (pp. 170-71, 173). See also Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 537: “On April 17 and 18, women in the area had taken refuge in the Sovu health center, while men had stayed on the hills to fight off attackers".
Marie Leimalda Munyakazi described a house-to-house search during the killing campaign in Kigali. "One of the Presidential Guards ... said I had to die. He took me and other women hiding in the house outside. A soldier from Butare who I knew happened to pass by. He asked what the fuss was about. The Presidential Guard replied 'These women are rebels and must be killed'. The soldier looked at him and asked 'How can these women be a threat to you? If you want rebels, go and fight the RPF. They are in Gikondo and Rebero [districts in Kigali]'.

Reflecting the patrilineal character of Rwandan society, Tutsi women were frequently viewed as "less" Tutsi than their men—or capable of being "liberated" from their ethnicity by rape and forced concubinage. At the St. Famille church, scene of repeated gendercida massacre, interahamwe told the duplicitous Abbé Wenceslas "to separate the Tutsis from the Hutus. They also told him that next time it would be the women's turn. Wenceslas told them that the women were not a problem as they did not have an ethnicity. He said the bad ones were the men".

In Gikongoro prefecture, meanwhile, "killers ... told a woman that she was safe because 'sex has no ethnic group'".

I conclude this section with a brief polemic. The clear evidence of a gendercida targeting of males makes a mockery of subsequent attempts to rewrite the history of the genocide to depict women as the principal targets. Leading the way in this regard was the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Rwanda, René Degni-Ségui, who stated in January 1996 that women "may even be regarded as the main victims of the massacres, with good reason, since they were raped and massacred and subjected to other brutalities". Here the "good reason" for passing an untenable comparative judgment is the fact that women suffered enormously; there is no serious attempt to evaluate the scale of their suffering by comparison with men.

Christopher Taylor, in his important work *Sacrifice As Terror*, goes so far as to claim that "Tutsi women were killed during the 1994 genocide in numbers equal to, if not exceeding, those of men". Aloysia Inyumba, in her analysis of "Women and Genocide in Rwanda", offers up a truly spectacular self-contradiction, in consecutive sentences no less: she claims that "The genocide in Rwanda is a far-reaching tragedy that has taken a particularly hard toll on women. They now

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60 Human Rights Watch, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, p. 296. See also the testimony from Gashora refugee camp, where the genocide began relatively late: "The first targets were rich Tutsis, but also able-bodied young men. Initially they were not interested in women[,] saying that women did not have an ethnic group". African Rights, *Death, Despair and Defiance*, p. 648. Likewise, at the monastery in Sovu, one woman who watched her husband and children hacked to death in front of her was told by one of the killers "that it was man who gave birth and not woman, to confirm that my children were Tutsi". African Rights, *Not So Innocent*, p. 181.
61 Quoted in Richter-Lyone, "Women after the Genocide in Rwanda", p. 106.
comprise 70 percent of the population, since the genocide chiefly exterminated the male population." Such comments typify the general trend in discussions of "gender" and human rights, which tend to take women's disproportionate victimization as a guiding assumption, indeed almost as an article of faith.

IV. Men: Willing and Unwilling Executioners

As noted earlier, the reporting on the Rwandan genocide is full of vignettes of men who saw the holocaust — as they had been encouraged to — as an unprecedented opportunity to claim power and property. Their preening swagger rapidly came to terrify even the Hutu general population and the extremist leadership. It typified the pathological machismo that is usually central to the perpetration of genocide, and that the authorities, well aware of its murderous potential, had hoped to channel and control:

A failed student turned killer, Shalom [Ntahobari] became a big man in Butare once the slaughter began. He swaggered around town with grenades hanging from his belt, often armed with a gun which he once aimed in insolent jest at a local burgomaster. One witness asserted that even military officers saluted Shalom. He controlled his own barrier in front of the family house near the university campus where he bullied his militia subordinates as well as passersby. One witness who had known Shalom as a fellow student witnessed him killing a man in order to rob him of his cattle. This was only one of numerous murders Shalom was said to have committed.18

Other men seem to have been motivated by a genuine fear that the RPF/Tutsis were about to seize control in Rwanda and implement a genocide of their own — a

63 Inyumba, “Women and Genocide in Rwanda”, p. 49. Emphasis added. Considering the post-genocide situation of women, Swiss researcher Elenor Richter-Lyonette conjures a similarly dramatic absurdity: “After the genocide, the vast number of women and girls reaching marriage age have no legal chance to marry. The tremendous number of widows of all ages compounds the problem. It is not the women who are the problem, the problem lies with the promiscuity of men” — not with the extermination of men, apparently. Richter-Lyonette, “Women after the Genocide in Rwanda”, p. 108. Jeanne Kadalika Uwonkunda recognises that “the [Rwandan] massacres specially targeted men”, but nonetheless alleges that “it is women in particular in Africa who feel the terrible consequences of genocide, massacres, and war. They are largely unprepared to assume all the new responsibilities that fall on their backs” — again, as a result of the disproportionate extermination of males, a point which might lead one to conclude that it is men in particular “who feel the terrible consequences”. (In John A. Berry and Carol Pott Berry, eds., Genocide in Rwanda: A Collective Memory [Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1999], pp. 159-60). For another example, in a different context, of such “thinking”, see the comments by then-U.S. First Lady Hillary Clinton: “Women have always been the primary victims of war. Women lose their husbands, their fathers, their sons in combat”. “First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, First Ladies’ Conference on Domestic Violence, San Salvador, El Salvador, November 17, 1998 (As Delivered)”, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/EOP/First_Lady/html/generalspeeches/1998/19981117.html>.

64 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 508.
fear bolstered by the massive slaughter of Hutus (overwhelmingly males) in Burundi in 1972, and the new round of killings there at the hands of the Tutsi-dominated army in 1993. In Butare, “the authorities had no difficulty recruiting men for the self-defense training. According to one participant, people [men] fought for the opportunity to participate. Some no doubt were motivated by real fear and desire to protect their homes from the threat so dramatically depicted by the government”.65

In numerous other cases, men participated only reluctantly, as numerous accounts from the barricades make clear. Adolescent boys—sometimes even younger ones—were also coerced into killing. A ten-year-old named Ndayambaje described being ordered by a local councillor to murder another young boy: “The councillor was holding a machete and a masu [nail-studded club]. He beat a boy with the flat part of the machete. Then he said to me ‘Either you kill him or you will fuck your mother’. Still, I did not understand what I would have to do. The person he was beating was a boy slightly older than me. He had already clobbered him and wanted me to finish him off. He gave me a masu and told me to kill him after insulting me”.66 Ndayambaje complied, later confessed, and was interviewed in the central prison of Butare.

As younger men were the vanguard of the victims, acclimatizing the killers to the task of genocide, they were also—perhaps uniquely—the vanguard for other population groups, including women, to join in the genocidal spree. “Soldiers taught hesitant young people to kill on the streets of Kigali”, notes Human Rights Watch; “When the young people balked at striking Tutsi, soldiers stoned the victims until the novices were ready to attack”.67 “In the commune of Shyanda on April 22, as the burgomaster and councilors were holding a meeting in one place to persuade people to remain clam, soldiers were passing over the next hill ordering others to burn, pillage, and kill. ... Several returned to Shyanda a few days later to threaten men at a barrier for not having killed enough Tutsi. The civilians responded to the intimidation by seizing several Tutsi for execution”.68

I argued earlier that, in both its aims and its logistics, the genocide against Tutsis and moderate Hutus displayed an overriding fear of the threat posed by younger Hutu males to the autocratic and, eventually, extremist-dominated government. That this danger was not chimerical was shown in the final stages of the genocide, when “the more stable and established citizens withdrew” from their assigned duties, and “the militia and young men from the ‘civilian self-defense’ program increasingly dominated the barriers and the patrols”:

They sometimes were armed with guns and grenades and had received enough training in military skills to intimidate others. With far fewer Tutsi to be caught, they spent more time harassing, robbing, and killing Hutu passersby. The minister

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65 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 519.
66 African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, p. 852.
67 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 224.
68 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 503.
of [the] interior asked those at the barriers and on patrols to “use better judgment and not confuse the guilty with the innocent”. Several days later, the prefect of Kibuye reported to him that young people [men?] at a barrier tried to help themselves to the beer and tobacco from passing trucks that belonged to an important government official. The prefect had intervened to protect the goods, but, he commented, the incident showed “that there are people [men?] who still do not understand the role of the barriers”. Burgomasters and members of the councils of several communes expressed their anger at the abusive young men who controlled the roads and paths of their communities. One critic remarked later, “It is a good thing that the RPF arrived when it did. The thugs were beginning to take over”. 66

Clearly, the gendered gamble of the génocidaires—that they could discipline and exploit younger men’s frustrations and aspirations as long as was necessary to perpetrate the slaughter, then rein them in—was proving a losing one as the genocidal impetus petered out. It is possible that, had the RPF not succeeded in taking power when it did, Hutu rule in Rwanda might have degenerated into the situation familiar to us from images of life and death in Somalia, Sierra Leone, and Liberia: armed gangs of young men taking direction only from local or regional “warlords”, and inflicting violence and intimidation indiscriminately on the civilian population.

V. Women As Victims

All authorities who address the matter agree that one of the defining features of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda was the removal of previous restrictions on killings or severe abuse of Tutsi women. There is thus a strong consensus that “in the past Rwandans had not usually killed women in conflicts”, as Human Rights Watch phrased it, though they were by no means invulnerable to slaughter on these earlier occasions. 70

66 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, pp. 297-98. In Nyakizu commune, Butare prefecture, “the young people at the barriers ‘attacked anyone if he looked like he had money’. The young people took identity cards from those whom they assaulted, tore them up and then killed the victims. Older members of the community complained that young men who had been trained in the use of arms were ‘so undisciplined that they have become completely ungovernable’. Even when not working at the barriers or on patrol, they hung about on the roads, playing cards and looking for someone to victimize. At a meeting of the security committee in early June, participants complained that at Nyagisozi these men ‘profit from the situation to create disorder, above all by stopping passersby and taking from them whatever they have on them’. ... The young men also pillaged crops in the fields left by the Tutsi and sometimes vandalized crops that were not yet ripe” (pp. 426-27; see also pp. 572-73).

70 Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 296. See also Taylor, Sacrifice As Terror, pp. 154, 176. René Lemarchand notes, however, that on March 26 and 27, 1964, “In the prefecture of Gikongoro, an estimated 5,000 Tutsis were massacred. ... In one locality more than one hundred Tutsi women and children were reported to have voluntarily (?) drowned themselves in the Nyaborongo river in a suicidal attempt to escape the clutches of attacking mobs of Hutu”. Lemarchand, Rwanda and
The genocidal atrocities meted out to Tutsi women during the holocaust reflected the intricate gendering of these targets in the period prior to 1994. As with male victims, a class variable was prominent here. Tutsi women had long been depicted, both by Hutus and Tutsis, as a female “elite” on the grounds of their average greater stature, education, and alleged physical beauty. At the same time, they were depicted as a population of potential Mata Haris, ready to use their supposed sexual advantage to subvert the nation. Christopher Taylor argues in *Sacrifice As Terror* that “Hutu extremists harboured enormous psychological ambivalence toward Tutsi women. On one hand Tutsi women were despised for their potential subversive capacity to undermine the categorical boundary between Tutsi and Hutu. On the other hand, many Hutu extremist men were unable to completely shed feelings of attraction toward Tutsi women. Of colonial origin, the representation of Tutsi women as superior in intelligence and in beauty to Hutu women appears to have plagued the psyches of Hutu extremists. Envy and resentment are perhaps the most social of emotions. When these emotions concern traits like intelligence and physical beauty, they are not easily expunged”.

Tutsi women’s vulnerability was heightened by the claimed linkage between their sexual charms and the desires of the foreign, notably Belgian, troops stationed in Rwanda under the terms of the Arusha Accords. Hutu Power propaganda cartoons, for example, regularly depicted Tutsi women embracing UNAMIR commander Roméo Dallaire (“General Dallaire and his army have fallen into the trap of fatal women”), or sexually servicing Belgian paratroopers (often in culturally transgressive ways).

As Taylor has also pointed out, something of a “gender crisis” existed in male-female relations at the time of the genocide, mirroring on a lesser scale the crisis of younger Hutu males. “To many Rwandans gender relations in the 1980s and 1990s were falling into a state of decadence as more women attained positions of prominence in economic and public life, and as more of them exercised their personal preferences in their private lives. Complex sexual politics preceded the genocide and were manifest in it”. This may help to account not only for the

*Burundi* (New York: Praeger, 1970). Much more research needs to be done on the “gendering” of the violence in these previous genocidal outbreaks; available sources in English are extremely sparse.

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^1^ Taylor, *Sacrifice As Terror*, p. 177. As Taylor also points out (pp. 174-75), the first three of the infamous Hutu “Ten Commandments”, promulgated in 1990, addressed themselves to the lure of Tutsi women and the dangers they posed to Hutu men: “1. Every Muhutu [Hutu male] should know that wherever he finds Umututsikazi [a female Tutsi], she is working for her Tutsi ethnic group. As a result every Muhutu who marries a Mututsikazi, or who takes a Mututsikazi for a mistress, or employs her as a secretary or a protégéé [sic] is a traitor. 2. Every Muhutu should know that our Bahutukazi [female Hutu] are more worthy of, and conscious of their roles as woman, spouse, and mother. Are they not pretty, good secretaries, and more honest! 3. Bahutukazi [Hutu women], be vigilant and bring your husbands, brothers, and sons back to the path of reason”.

^2^ See the examples reproduced in Taylor, *Sacrifice As Terror*, pp. 172-73.

^3^ Taylor, *Sacrifice As Terror*, p. 157; see also the discussion at p. 161, describing “a wave of repression against young urban Rwandan women who either dressed too stylishly or had European boyfriends”.
lifting of “taboos” against the mass murder of women, but for Hutu women’s conscription and (frequently) ready participation in the slaughter—a reflection, in its macabre way, of women’s greater independent agency in the Rwandan social equation. The added element of Hutu women’s “subordination” to Tutsi women was doubtless a powerful motivation for the atrocities these Hutu women would inflict on other women, a point addressed further in Section VII.

Most of the women (and girl children) who perished in the genocide appear to have been killed in four major contexts: 1) they were family members of Tutsi or Hutu men targeted from lists, especially during the opening wave of “eUtocide”; 2) they were swept up in the “root-and-branch” genocidal massacres that swept Rwanda in the first weeks of the genocide; 3) they had separated themselves from, or been separated by, male members of the community in the tragically mistaken belief that they would be spared; or 4) they were annihilated, along with girls and the elderly, as the only remaining Tutsis after the gendercide against males had been largely completed (and after they themselves had experienced protracted rape and sexual servitude as the “price” of their temporary survival; see “Genocidal Rape”, below). Of these different contexts, by far the largest number of women and child victims perished in “root-and-branch” slaughters. But large numbers were also murdered in locales where they had sought sanctuary while men fled to the hills, or heroically faced their attackers. A young housewife, Claudine Mutetyiimana, described one such slaughter to African Rights investigators in May 1994, as the

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74 In some cases women were considered “significant” targets in their own right, and were killed at the same time as oppositionist males and their families. The best-known case is that of Rwanda’s prime minister, Agathe Uwilingiyimana, who was viewed as “having morally and materially demobilized” the Rwandan armed forces in their struggle against the RPF (in the words of the leading architect of the genocide, Col. Théoneste Bagosora). She was killed in the first hours of the genocide, and the ten Belgian peacekeepers who had been dispatched to protect her were disarmed, tortured, and murdered shortly afterward. See Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, pp. 187-92.

75 At the Adventist Church in Ngoma, “the men’s plan to save women and children by placing them in the church” failed; the attackers killed them all. At the parish of Nyundo, “The women and the children stayed in the chapel”, according to a male survivor. “The men stayed outside ... But then the bandits attacked us unexpectedly and we dispersed. They did not pursue us but went directly to the chapel. Without any hesitation, and in a cowardly fashion, they killed all our women and children”. (African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, pp. 446, 550). It appears also to have been true that males thrust to the forefront of the fight against attackers, in general a position that exposed them to disproportionate risk, could sometimes more easily escape from confined areas than the women, children, and elderly moved to the rear; or that males, being fleeter of foot, had a better chance in general to evade the killers. See, e.g., the description of the mass killing at the church of Cyahinda, where one male survivor reported: “It was easier for us at the front who had been fighting to escape because we could see better what was happening. The overwhelming [number of] victims were those at the back – elderly people, women and children. They had no chance of escape”. At the commune office in Gishari, “Most of the victims were women and children. They could not run as well as the men and were not able to avoid the grenades so well either”. Quoted in African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, pp. 341, 380.
genocide was still raging. Muteteyimana had taken refuge at the St. Joseph’s School in Rwamagana, Kibungo prefecture:

I was in a room with many other women and children. They [the interahamwe] shattered the windows and walked in. They started firing at us. I was immediately hit by a bullet in my right leg. Dozens of women fell down dead around me. They dragged the survivors through [sic] the floor, beating them as they did so with masus. Others they did not even bother to drag. They just hacked them to death. This was done right in front of us. While some interahamwe were busy with the killings, others were looting everything in sight. After this scene of butchery, they went to the private residences of the religious people who run the school[,] some of whom had already fled. There were two other women who had been badly wounded but were still alive, though in agony. They came back and finished them off with machetes. That left me.76

An important unanswered question is if, and when, an official decision was made to target women, along with the elderly and children. The Human Rights Watch report, Leave None to Tell the Story, claims that beginning “in many communities, women and children who had survived the first weeks of the genocide were slain in mid-May. ... The number of attacks against women, all at about the same time, indicates that a decision to kill women had been made at the national level and was being implemented in local communities”.77

It is certainly true that in the early stages of the genocide, a degree of official exemption was frequently granted to women. “The law for killing Tutsi women has not yet been passed”, one interahamwe told a female survivor, Patricia Musabyemariya, in April. “But the law for killing Tutsi men and boys has been passed”.78 Moreover, the vast number of gender-selective killings of males in the early stages of the genocide attests to centralized and localized policies aimed at consigning Tutsi males to mass slaughter, and at exempting other community members for the time being. But there are difficulties with the idea of a mid-May campaign against women. The most obvious is that, whatever the “official” policy might have been, a blanket exemption was hardly granted to females in the first five or six weeks of the genocide. In fact, they were killed by the tens of thousands. Moreover, the Human Rights Watch researchers acknowledge that the evidence for a mid-May order is only “indicat[ive]”. African Rights, meanwhile, records the testimony of one female survivor that the bourgmestre of Gikongoro prefecture “in

76 African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, p. 388.
77 Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 296.
78 Quoted in African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, p. 641. See also the account of “Catherine”, a Tutsi woman who survived rape and incarceration. She describes a “law” being passed by a bourgmestre, apparently as early as mid-April (the timeline of her testimony is not fully clear), “that men who had ‘married’ Tutsi women since the recent events should hand them over to be killed. ... This law was passed because there were no more Tutsis to be killed except the Tutsi women who were being kept”. Death, Despair and Defiance, p. 773.
May ... declared that there was no longer a need to kill women.” Three accounts cited by African Rights suggest, significantly, that July 4-5—the date of the scheduled burial of President Habyarimana, killed when his plane was shot down outside Kigali airport on April 6—was actually designated as the day when the genocide would be extended to groups that had so far, in substantial part, been spared.

It is at least possible that the evolution of the genocide depicted in Leave None to Tell the Story, and several other sources, is mistaken: that in terms of centralized policy, the opening blast of the genocide—which all accounts suggest was overwhelmingly targeted at Tutsi and Hutu males—was in fact followed by a stage in which attempts at “root-and-branch” extermination of Tutsis were pursued, although authorities at the prefecture, commune, and cell levels may have inhibited or countermanded this program to some extent. This second stage, in which tens of thousands of women, the elderly, and girl children were killed along with a disproportionate number of men and boys, may then have given way to a “lull” in which gendercidal strategies against remaining males were hotly pursued. This, in turn, may have been followed by a fourth stage, the renewed killing campaign of May-June, in which Tutsi survivors—who by this time included very few adult and adolescent males—were targeted.

There are intriguing indications that attempts to exterminate women, girls, and the elderly eventually encountered significant popular opposition—that, in fact, it was this element of the campaign that largely gave rise to increasing disorganization and disorientation among the forces of genocide. “In the later part of May and in June”, notes Human Rights Watch, “administrators found ordinary people were deserting the barriers and refusing to do the patrols. ... In permitting or directing the slaughter of the weak, the elderly, women, and infants, who posed no threat to anyone, authorities discredited the justification that killing was an act of self-defense. Prefects pressed burgomasters who pressed councilors who pressed the citizens to carry out their assigned duties, but with shrinking success”. In Butare, “the decision by the interim government to push the genocide ever deeper into the

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80 “We women and girls remained” after men were slaughtered at Nyabimbo in Cyangugu prefecture, according to one survivor; “The interahamwe told us that they would kill us the day Habyarimana was buried”. At the commune office in nearby Kamembe, “all the men and boys were killed that day [19 April]. The assassins then left. They said that the women and girls who remained would be sacrificed the day Habyarimana was buried”. African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, pp. 491, 508. See also African Rights, Rwanda—Not So Innocent, p. 141.
81 See, e.g., the account of the massacre at the Nyakanyinya primary school: “On Friday the 15th, the interahamwe of the sector of Cyato came, looking for women and girls of their sector. They said that in their area, there was a decision to spare females”. African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, p. 487.
82 The statement appears to accept the rationale of the génocidaires that unarmed Tutsi males did pose a threat.
83 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 297.
community undermined its authority. People found it hard to believe that women, children, and the elderly and infirm posed the same threat as armed soldiers [sic: unarmed men]. ... The authorities found that the legitimacy which they had used at the start to cover the genocide had been consumed during the course of the killing campaign and that they no longer had the authority to control the assassins whom they had armed.84

VI. Genocidal Rape

In recent years, the phenomenon of the mass rape of women in ethnic and other conflicts has attracted a flood of attention from feminist scholars. The inquiry, which arguably began with Susan Brownmiller’s discussion of mass rapes in East Pakistan/Bangladesh during the genocide of 1971,85 was substantially deepened with the onset of the wars in the former Yugoslavia and the rape of tens of thousands of women, mostly Bosnian Muslims assaulted by Serbian regular and irregular forces.86

The rapes of Rwandan Tutsi women were on a vastly greater scale than in the former Yugoslavia. Both in their murderous dimension—with rape frequently followed by killing, either immediately or after a period of forced sexual servitude—and in the element of savage mutilation, they bear comparison only with the genocidal rampage of the Japanese army in Nanjing in 1937-38.87 The U.N. Special Rapporteur on Rwanda, René Degni-Ségui, noted that in atrocities against Tutsi women, “rape was the rule and its absence the exception”; he offered the staggering estimate of 250,000 to 500,000 rapes committed during the twelve weeks of the genocide.88 “Again and again, rape is reported as an act of extreme brutality”, notes Elenor Richter-Lyonette. “Objects are said to have been used to cause extra pain, and rapes with objects are said to include among others rapes with stones, with branches from trees of bushes, with weapons. Rape accompanied by mutilation is reported to include: the pouring of boiling water onto the genital parts and into the vagina in order to create pain and ordeal, the opening of the womb to cut out the unborn child before the killing of the mother, the cutting off of breast(s) and the

84 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 555. Emphasis added.
mutilation of other parts of the female body". Even rapes of female cadavers were not unknown.

In many cases, rape and forced sexual servitude were accepted, or desperately sought, as the price of evading slaughter. The male (and sometimes female) perpetrators of this sexual slavery generally fed off stereotypes of Tutsi women as uniquely seductive and desirable. There was clearly an element of "class revenge" involved for the "uneducated thugs [who] had moved into villas surrounded by televisions, videos and nice furniture", and who now "wanted a beautiful woman to complete their victory". "It is terrible to see highly educated girls, some of them university graduates or at university, being forced to go with such specimens of the human race", lamented a Hutu man in Kigali who had helped Tutsis attempting to escape the genocide. One Tutsi woman who survived, Juliana, related the accounts given by a Hutu family that had witnessed women being "taken to the roadside and forced to watch the killing of Tutsi men, after which they would be given lectures by one of the key killers, one Karaguye":

They said he told them, "You Tutsi women, you have no respect for Hutu men. So now, choose between death and marriage to a Hutu interahamwe". ... Then they went looking for the most filthy-looking vagabonds, jigger-infested and God knows what else. They looked for the kind of man who was least likely to get a woman under normal conditions. There were so many women that they could not find enough of these dirty men. But so intense was the fear of being killed that the women would plead and ask these men to take them."

As feminist scholarship has increasingly grappled with rape as a tool of "ethnic cleansing", the term "genocidal rape" has achieved considerable currency. The justification offered is that, even if rape does not lead or is not intended to lead to death, it aims to undermine the security and cohesion of the targeted community (in part by shattering the self-confidence of community males who are unable to protect "their" women from the atrocities). This, in turn, terrorizes entire communities into leaving their homes; and the bonds among community members may be further undermined when women bear the ethnically-mixed offspring of rape at the hands of men from other ethnic communities.

Some have bridled at this direct equation of rape with genocide. Rape, it may be contended, must involve killing (as at Nanjing) in order to qualify as

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90 Testimony of Emmanuel Sagahutu, cited in African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, p. 750; the preceding quotes in this passage are also from Sagahutu's account.
91 African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, pp. 753-54.
92 See, e.g., Rhonda Copelon, "Surfacing Gender: Reconceptualizing Crimes against Women in Time of War", in Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin, eds., The Women & War Reader (London and New York: New York University Press, 1998), p. 64: "The elision of genocide and rape in the focus on 'genocidal rape' ... [is] dangerous. Rape and genocide are separate atrocities. Genocide —the effort to destroy a people— [sic] based on its identity as a people evokes the deepest horror and warrants the severest condemnation. Rape is sexualized violence that seeks to humiliate,
“genocidal”. Against such an argument, it can be proposed that the prevailing usage is fully in line with the United Nations Convention on Genocide (1948), which does not require deaths among members of the targeted community: genocide can involve “causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group”, “deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part”, and “imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group”. All of these may be facilitated or implemented by the rape of community women.93

In the Rwandan context, moreover, rape frequently was followed by killing, or was the means of bringing it about. Here we must attend to a regularly-overlooked aspect of the mass rapes: the threat of AIDS associated with them. “It appears that at least some 35% of Rwandese soldiers were HIV-positive before the genocide of 1994”, a figure that “seems to be very much in line with...other African armies”, and which may have held true for the interahamwe killers and other men who participated in genocidal atrocities.95 The testimony of women survivors is replete with expressions of concern about the possibility of having contracted AIDS from the rape and sexual servitude to which they were exposed.96

Acts of genocidal rape may thus bring about the death of victims many years after the genocide itself has “ended”. I have argued elsewhere that this phenomenon is likely to become ever more prominent in cases of mass killing and genocide, given that “most of the current cases of largescale rape in conflicts are in sub-Saharan Africa (Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola), in areas that also lie at the heart of the ‘AIDS belt’”.97 In the Rwandan case, the risk is compounded by the apparent massive underrepresentation of males in the country after the 1994 events. I return to this issue later (Section VIII) in discussing the aftermath of genocide and gendercide in Rwanda.


95 Since the Rwandan army did not fight outside its borders, there is no reason to assume that its members were more likely to be exposed to the HIV virus than other Rwandan men.
96 See African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, pp. 761, 781, 795.
VII. Genocidal Women

I had seen war before, but I had never seen a woman carrying a baby on her back kill another woman with a baby on her back.

—UNAMIR officer, interviewed in 1996.

As noted in the introduction to this paper, the Rwandan holocaust is unique in the annals of genocide for the prominent role that women played as organizers, instigators, and followers. The major source on this phenomenon is the African Rights report, Rwanda — Not So Innocent: When Women Become Killers, published in August 1995. The organization —bravely, it must be said— countered the standard trend of portraying women as inherently or automatically the “main” victims of the genocide. This stereotype, it claimed, had contributed to “obscuring the role of women as aggressors”.

It is clear that many women were coerced into participating in the genocide by the “wide array of policies [developed by the extremists] with which to cajole and frighten the population into a killing frenzy”. But as the African Rights investigators noted, “when it came to mass murder, there were a lot of women who needed no encouragement”. Indeed, one can speculate that a greater proportion of women than men participated voluntarily in the killings, since it was men, almost exclusively, who were forcibly conscripted into the “work” of the roadblock killings, and who were exposed to suspicion or violent retribution if they did not take part. Evading direct participation was probably much easier for Hutu women (and children) than for Hutu men.

Perhaps the most notorious case of a female génocidaire is Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, who, in a grotesque twist, served as minister for women and family affairs in the Hutu Power regime. Nyiramasuhuko “regularly visited places where refugees had been congregated and personally supervised the selection of hundreds of Tutsi men for the slaughterhouse”. Among the other female architects of the genocide were:

Rose Karushara, a councillor in Kigali, who “took an extremely active role in the genocide, wearing military uniform throughout. A tall and physically strong woman, she used to beat up the refugees herself before handing them over to her

98 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 261.
99 African Rights, Rwanda — Not So Innocent, p. 4.
100 African Rights, Rwanda — Not So Innocent, p. 27.
interahamwe for the final kill. ... At least five thousand people were killed, all thrown into the Nyabarongo river under orders from Karushara”.

Odette Nyirabagenzi, “the terror of Rugenge” (a sector of Kigali): “As soon as the genocide began, Odette sent her militia in pursuit of the Tutsi men of Rugenge. Her thugs hunted for Tutsi men in St. Famille and St. Paul’s [parishes], as well as the missionary language centre of CELA. She was physically present on every occasion when men were taken out of these churches and CELA and massacred. She took an active part in selecting the men who were to die”.

Athanasie Mukabatana, “a teacher at the School of Nursing of Kadaha [Gikongoro prefecture] ... When this girl saw the attack arrive near the hospital, she quickly jumped over the gate of the hospital to get into the compound. She didn’t even wait for the gate to be opened. You [could] see the enthusiasm this girl had for finishing off these sick Tutsis. She had a machete and went into the hospital with the other assassins. She made all the sick Tutsis go out, often dragging them out. And once outside, she killed them with a strike from the machete. She made several trips and all the dead were on the hospital grass”.

Sister Julienne Kizito, one of a number of nuns who played key roles in genocidal atrocities. She was “accused of working directly with the killers [in Butare], standing in their midst while they massacred refugees, handing out jerrycans of petrol which were used in her presence to burn people alive”.102

These cases of female leaders represent only a small part of the story of women’s participation in the genocide. At the grassroots, “very often, groups of women ululated their men into the ‘action’ that would result in the death of thousands of innocent men, women and children, many of them their own neighbours”.103 Their role was dominant in the post-massacre looting and stripping of bodies, which often involved climbing over corpses (and those still alive and moaning in agony) piled thigh-high in the confined spaces in which many Tutsis met their end. Frequently these women assisted in administering the coup de grâce to those clinging to life.104 Women (especially, it seems, prostitutes) were also prominent as spies, denouncing Tutsis and moderate Hutus in hiding to the interahamwe; according to African Rights, Hutu women were no more likely than men to grant refuge to those seeking to flee the holocaust.105 They participated in

102 African Rights, Rwanda — Not So Innocent, pp. 11, 50-51, 117-18 (the passage following the ellipses is a survivor’s testimony), 126, 157.
103 African Rights, Rwanda — Not So Innocent, p. 72.
104 African Rights, Rwanda — Not So Innocent, p. 81.
105 “There is no evidence that women were more willing to give refuge to the hunted than men. ... Scores of Tutsi women and young girls ... were rescued or assisted in their hiding places by men who had been family friends, neighbours or acquaintances. Many of them were turned out of Hutu homes by women who often threatened to inform the interahamwe if their husbands continued to shelter these women or took any additional steps to assist them”. African Rights, Rwanda — Not So Innocent, pp. 2, 73.
the street-level gauntlets that terrified Tutsis had to run: “Anyone who felt like hitting me, hit me with whatever they had in their hand”, recalled one male survivor, François Régis Jobo Bugwiza. “I was even beaten by women on their way to fetch food”. And they helped to keep interahamwe and government forces suitably drunk for their genocidal activities, as at the Kabgayi death camp, where “there was a woman permanently outside the camp who sold beer and other things to the soldiers”, in the words of one survivor.

Women additionally played an important role in pressuring younger Tutsi women to accept their designated fate as sex-slaves and concubines for Hutu militia members and other men. Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, for example, kept “the daughters of Bihira, a Tutsi businessman from Butare, ... at her house for [her son] Chalôme to rape”. One woman survivor, “Juliana”, described her capture by a young man named Marcel, after which she faced a “court of women” in which “all his female relatives became involved”. Marcel’s mother “brought some elderly women to the house to insult and intimidate me. These women accused me of being childish. One of them said ‘Many women of your kind have been taken by dog-like vagabonds. And here you are, rejecting this nice young man. ... What are you waiting for?’”

It is far from clear whether these genocidal women directed the majority of their atrocities against Tutsi women; but to the extent that they did, there appears to have been a kind of gendered jubilation at the “comeuppance” of Tutsi females, who had for so long been depicted in Hutu propaganda as Rwanda’s sexual elite. Otherwise, the motivations for women’s involvement as genocidal killers frequently paralleled those of Hutu men: bonds of ethnic solidarity (“it was as if all the men, women and children had come to kill us”, recalled one Tutsi survivor from Sovu); suasion and coercion by those in authority (including other women); the lure of material gain; and the intoxicating pleasure of untrammelled sadism, “liberated” from the normal constraints of one of the most tightly-managed and micro-administered societies on earth.

106 African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, p. 713.
109 African Rights investigators provided pseudonyms to all women who recounted their testimonies of rape and forced concubinage.
110 African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, pp. 754-55.
112 “When one looks at Rwanda, one should forget about images of easygoing tropical confusion. ... Administrative control was probably the tightest in the world among non-communist countries”. Prunier, The Rwanda Crisis, p. 77.
VIII. Aftermath of Gendercide

"Rwanda has become a country of women", Human Rights Watch contended in its 1996 report *Shattered Lives: The Aftermath of Sexual Violence in Rwanda*. "It is currently estimated that 70 percent of the population is female and that 50 percent of all households are headed by women".113

There are three important points to note about this claim that the genocide resulted in a staggering demographic disproportion of men versus women. First, the statistic has usually been presented as evidence of female disadvantage — i.e., to call attention to the fact that the overwhelming majority of survivors are females. This would appear to require that some attention be devoted to the gendercidal atrocities against Rwandan males; but the focus of the Human Rights Watch report is violence against women, and the targeting of males is skated over in a vague and rather shameful fashion: "As a result of the genocide, many women lost the male relatives on whom they previously relied on for economic support and are now destitute".

Second, it is intriguing to note that in some commentary, the claim of that the Rwandan population is 70-percent-female statistic has been subtly transformed into the assertion that it is 70-percent-women — clearly a demographic impossibility, but not one that has troubled certain authors.114 Lastly, no commentator citing these estimates115 apparently bothered to ask an obvious question: how could such a skewed demographic pattern possibly be explained by genocidal atrocities against Tutsi males, when the Tutsi minority constituted between 8 and 12 percent of the total population in 1994? Even a total extermination of Tutsi males, and the corresponding survival of the entire Tutsi female population, could not produce a post-genocidal society that was 70 percent female, or anywhere close.

The explanation appears to be fairly straightforward: the estimate was exaggerated, and a substantial proportion of the males presumed dead were, in fact, only temporarily absent from the country. According to Heather Hamilton, "Shortly after the genocide it was estimated that 70 per cent of the Rwandan population was female, reflecting the greater number of men killed in the genocide and the large number of ex-FAR [Rwandese Armed Forces] and militia men who had fled the country. That figure is still sometimes quoted today, although it is quite out of date. Thanks to the return of millions of refugees and those living in the diaspora, the figure today is closer to 54 per cent. If we focus on economically active women (by subtracting the young and old) the telling figure is that more than 57 per cent of the

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115 Here I must regretfully include myself, since I cited the *Shattered Lives* estimate without critical comment in my article "Gendercide and Genocide" (p. 189).
population is female. But even this figure does not tell the complete story, since some 150,000 men are in the army or in jail awaiting trial.”

This depiction is more in keeping with a genocide that predominantly targeted Tutsi males. It also suggests a substantial underrepresentation of Hutu men. This is a point that cannot be addressed in detail here, but is worth considering briefly, since it attests to the RPF’s apparent duplication of gendercide strategies both during its invasion of Rwanda and in the immediate aftermath of the 1994 holocaust. The atrocities inflicted by the vengeful, predominantly Tutsi forces of the RPF included a number of indiscriminate slaughters, such as the mid-April attack on a “mixed group of hundreds of civilians and militia at the hill Kanazi [which] killed all except three persons”, and neighbourhood sweeps at Murambi (Byumba prefecture) where the RPF “killed seventy-eight persons, of whom forty-six were listed as children”.

But gender-selective massacres of adult males (including prisoners-of-war) appear to have predominated. And the gendercide component, if anything, seems to have become more prominent during the subsequent period in which the RPF sought to consolidate its newly-won national power: “The RPF wanted to establish its supremacy”, recalled ex-RPF Minister of the Interior Seth Sendashonga, “and to do so they had to eliminate any potential rival. In many cases the Army came for men, ages 18 to 55, and took them away by night, never to be seen again. Their families search for them in vain, in the prisons of Rwanda, but they all died at the hands of the Rwandan Patriotic Army.”

Whatever the precise extent and underlying causes of the demographic disparity in post-1994 Rwanda, however, it is clear that it is enormous. According to the important “Panel of Eminent Personalities” report issued in 2000 by the Organization of African Unity,

By 1999, 34 per cent of households were still headed by women or minors (usually female), an increase of 50 per cent over the pre-genocide period. The great majority of those women had been widowed by the war or the genocide. ... Soon after the genocide ended, more than 250,000 widowed victims registered with the Ministry of Family and Women in Development. Most had lost not only their husbands, but also their property. By 1996, the government was faced with about 400,000 widows who needed help to become self-supporting. Since the new regulations of post-genocide Rwanda made it impermissible for government operations to ask about ethnic


\[117\] Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 704.

\[118\] See, e.g., Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, pp. 705, 707, 715, 717-18, 720-2.

identities, it is not known how many of these women were Tutsi and how many Hutu.\textsuperscript{120}

The yawning gender gulf will have a longterm social, cultural, and epidemiological impact. Two specific effects can be noted: transformations in patterns of marriage and cohabitation, and the further exacerbation of the AIDS crisis in the country. On the first score, Judy El-Bushra states that “A major issue of concern to women in Rwanda is the impact of the demographic imbalance on marriages. Polygamy, which is not legally permitted in Rwanda, is often suggested as a means of solving the problem of the large number of widows and younger women whose prospects of marriage have become drastically reduced. Rivalry between women over potential husbands has become common, and an issue which sparks off heated debate”.\textsuperscript{121} And David Gough of the UK Guardian, reporting from Gitarama prefecture (“scene of some of the worst excesses in 1994”), points out that the demographic deficit of males in Rwanda —like the genocidal rape of women— has important implications for the spread of AIDS. “With so many men killed during the genocide, or later imprisoned for their part in it ... the practice of sharing men, known as kwinjara, has become so widespread ... that health officials say that it represents the greatest challenge to their efforts to combat the spread of AIDS. ‘If a woman has land and maybe some money then she can attract the services of young men’, said Jerome Ndabagariya of CARE. ‘He does some work for her in the field and then some more work in the bedroom’. A more affluent woman will give a man some food, maybe some beer or, in rare cases, money. In return he may well give her the AIDS virus”\textsuperscript{122}


\textsuperscript{121} El-Bushra, “Transforming Conflict”, p. 74.

IX. Conclusion: Rwanda in Comparative Perspective

Focusing solely on ethnicity has tended to obscure sex and gender. In examining Rwandan attitudes and representations of gender, it becomes clear that gender psychology, gender politics, and gender symbolism played a more important role in preparing the terrain and in shaping the violence than has heretofore been suspected.

Christopher Taylor\textsuperscript{123}

The Rwandan holocaust offers important evidence that "gendering" genocide can provide powerful insights into the outbreak, evolution, and defining character of genocidal killing. For this approach to bear full fruit, however, the "gendering" must be both careful and inclusive. In particular, any investigation that implicitly equates "gender" with "women" is likely to leave a vast analytical terrain untouched or poorly explored. This is not to say that specific inquiries into women's plight and experience are to be abandoned. They may provide a wealth of useful information and policy recommendations, especially given that women/females are likely to constitute the majority or large majority of a genocide's survivors.\textsuperscript{124} But if such analyses are not accompanied by others that consider gender-specific and gender-selective aspects of the male experience, they can tell us at best half of the story. Moreover, such commentary as exists on gender and genocide has tended to actively suppress the male experience, with the aim, in most cases, of increasing the sympathy and policy attention extended to female victims. Such an approach should be seen as a betrayal of the spirit of human-rights work, which is based on the fundamentally equal worth of all those targeted for abuses and atrocities.

The gendering of genocide in Rwanda bears comparison with many of the worst atrocities of the twentieth century. In the Armenian and Jewish holocausts; the annihilation of Soviet prisoners-of-war during World War II; the massive slaughters in East Pakistan/Bangladesh and Indonesia; and the gendercides in Bosnia and Kosovo, a pattern of initial targeting of males is inescapably evident. The role of anti-male gendercide as a "tripwire" or "onset phase" of genocide should be one of the most powerful analytical weapons of anyone seeking to predict, confront, and end genocides. However, the Rwandan genocide, as we have seen, cannot be integrated into this framework without qualification: the elderly, children, and

\textsuperscript{123} Taylor, \textit{Sacrifice As Terror}, p. 184.

\textsuperscript{124} There are notable exceptions, most prominently the Jewish holocaust. See the discussion in Jones, "Gendercide and Genocide", and the Gendercide Watch case-study at <http://www.gendercide.org/case_jews.html>.
women were all swept up in the slaughter from its very first hours, though much less systematically than adult and adolescent males.

If the pronounced “gendering” of the Rwandan slaughter is nonetheless to be surveyed for the analytical and policy-relevant insights it may offer, so too should the gendering of the killers be considered. We have seen that the period leading up to the genocide was characterized by government policies aimed both at mobilizing younger males to become genocidal killers, and at defusing the potential threat to the regime from this same demographic group. Scholars of genocide should be extraordinarily sensitive to the kind of gendered propaganda, rhetoric, and public policies that emanated from the Rwandan regime between late 1990 and early 1994. Both the fear of younger-male “volatility” in the face of such a crisis, and the attempt to harness this volatility for genocidal ends, may have broad comparative relevance.

The extensive role of women in perpetrating the Rwandan genocide is apparently unique in recorded history, which makes it difficult to derive many comparative insights from the phenomenon. Nonetheless, the prominence of genocidal women may have a certain predictive value, one that is profoundly relevant to the current debate over women, peace, and conflict. The evidence presented here suggests that when women are provided with positive and negative incentives similar to those of men, their degree of participation in genocide, and the violence and cruelty they exhibit, will run closely parallel to their male counterparts. One must ask, in fact, whether “the Rwanda test” does not substantially refute the equation of women and peace that has dominated much of the aforementioned debate. If women anywhere can participate in genocide on such a scale, and with such evident enthusiasm and savagery, then it seems a valid *prima facie* assumption that they are capable of such participation everywhere. The search then becomes one not for some essential “difference” in women’s approach to war and peace, but for the range of cultural and policy mechanisms that either allow or, more frequently, inhibit the expression of women’s aggressive and genocidal tendencies. Useful additional evidence for this inquiry may be sought in cases where women have participated significantly in genocidal or proto-genocidal activities—as in the Armenian and Jewish holocausts, and the Hindu extremist movement in India.

If males tend to be disproportionately targeted in genocide, then women tend to be disproportionately the survivors, and this opens up a host of important questions and subject-areas in the fields of humanitarian intervention and

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126 I am thinking here of the prominent role played by Kurdish tribeswomen in attacking and looting the caravans of dispossessed Armenians.

international human-rights policies. Feminist and human-rights scholarship has
done much to draw our attention to the gender-specific needs and concerns of
women survivors, but it has standardly ignored or skated over the genocides
against males that produce such situations.128 Systematic attention to the male
experience is clearly called for, and seems no less policy-relevant. Humanitarian
interventions, for example, must supplement their attention to the special
vulnerabilities of women and girls with a recognition of the particular vulnerabilities
of men and boys. Memories are still fairly fresh of the U.N. debacle at Srebrenica,
when U.N. soldiers actively colluded with Serb forces to evacuate children and
women to safe havens in Muslim-controlled territory, leaving thousands of Bosnian
men to be rounded up and executed en masse.129 The Rwandan case offers a glaring
example of the failure to incorporate an inclusive gender analysis in such
interventions. At the St. Famille Church in Kigali, refugees ostensibly under the
protection of UNAMIR (the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda) were
systematically harassed and decimated by interahamwe raids. Finally, in early June,
the U.N. organized an evacuation, but as a female refugee, Gorette Uwimana,
reported, the UNAMIR forces “put the names [of the refugees] in alphabetical order
and when they came to evacuate they did so in this alphabetical order”. This
approach failed to take into account the fact that “there were some refugees who
were more at risk than others, particularly Tutsi men and boys who should have been
evacuated first”, something that “was out of the question for UNAMIR”. On 17 June,
after the first evacuation convoy had left, “more than one hundred Tutsis”, nearly all
male, were selected out of the crowd and executed nearby. Thereafter, “almost all
the Tutsi men were finished”.130

It is my hope that this paper has contributed to a more balanced appraisal of
the gendering of the Rwandan holocaust than has predominated so far. There seems
a great deal to be learned not only by applying the gender variable in the Rwandan
case, but by applying it inclusively—that is, by extending the framing to males as
well as females. This judgment would seem to hold, as well, for most other
genocides in history. Only when a gender-inclusive approach is adopted, it seems,
can this important variable in mass killings worldwide be properly understood, and
integrated into an overarching analysis of one of humanity’s greatest and most
enduring blights.

128 In the Rwandan context, the most detailed treatment is the Human Rights Watch report
Shattered Lives.
129 The definitive account of the Srebrenica massacre is David Rhode, Endgame: The
Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1997).
130 African Rights, Death, Despair and Defiance, pp. 694, 701. Earlier, on 15 April,
“interahamwe accompanied by members of the Presidential Guard entered the church. They selected
a hundred and twenty Tutsi men and boys, one by one, took them outside, and promptly executed
them by shooting them. They were clearly working from a prepared list—most of the victims were
political activists, businessmen, students and young men who ‘looked Tutsi’. Only one man is said to
have survived this massacre” (p. 689). “Sixty Tutsi men and boys” were also “snatched from the
neighbouring church of St. Paul’s on 14 June” (p. 698).
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