

Genocidal Language Games¹

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The road to genocide in Rwanda was paved with hate speech.

—William Schabas²

Words have killed my country.

—Naasson Munyandamutsa³

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression.

—Michel Foucault⁴

1. Introduction

The power of language to shape social being is clearly displayed in the workings of derogatory terms for human beings. The normative power of derogatory terms is most obvious in their negative force, but they also exert positive power, giving social and material strength to those who wield them. Using such terms helps to construct a strengthened 'us' for the

¹ I would like to thank Catherine Z. Elgin, Ishani Maitra, and Mary Kate McGowan for their insightful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter. I am deeply indebted to Robert Gakwaya for his invaluable research assistance, and strength of heart.

² Schabas, William 2000, p. 144.

³ Naasson Munyandamutsa, speaking at "The Language of Genocide" symposium, Harvard University, March 27, 2007.

⁴ Foucault 1980, p. 119.

speakers and a weakened 'them' for the targets, thus reinforcing or even realigning social relations.⁵ As we shall see, such speech acts establish and reinforce a system of permissions and prohibitions that fuel social hierarchy. The changing linguistic landscape of Rwanda in the early 1990s illustrates how linguistic practices eroded protective norms, and thus opened the door to previously prohibited actions. In this and other twentieth-century genocides, the majority population was made ready to kill their minority neighbors, first by getting them talking amongst themselves as if these neighbors were not really people at all, using derogatory terms for these others that spread fear and disgust. Then the derogatory terms were used openly and publicly, increasingly targeting individuals. As people get used to this new disregard, non-linguistic disregarding actions become more widely accepted. It is not a short route from derogating speech acts to murder, but it is crucial to understand the power of speech to facilitate the growth of both linguistic and broader social norms that make murder and mayhem come to be accepted.

The use of derogatory terms played a significant role in laying the social groundwork for the 1994 genocide of the Tutsi in Rwanda. Linguistic practices and the norms that govern them do not operate alone; they shape and are shaped by collateral social practices and norms. These norms and practices produce social possibilities, granting power to some participants while denying it to others. In Rwanda, the genocide was preceded by an increase in the use of anti-Tutsi derogatory terms, at first primarily amongst Hutu, who used these terms not as epithets hurled directly at Tutsi, but as in-group ways of referring to Tutsi. Use of these derogatory terms marked the Hutu as 'us' and the Tutsi as 'them,' during "animation sessions" which drummed up anti-Tutsi fervor.⁶ As these linguistic practices took hold amongst the Hutu, the terms became more openly and directly aimed at Tutsi. Then, during the 100 days of the genocide, derogatory terms and coded euphemisms were used to direct killers to their victims, urging them to "finish the work," "clear the tall trees," that is, to kill. Understanding these speech acts helps to illuminate important ways that power is enacted through discourse, how speech acts can prepare the way for physical and material acts, and how speech generates permissions for actions hitherto uncountenanced. Studying the role of speech acts and linguistic practices in laying the groundwork of the genocide illuminates how patterns of speech acts become linguistic practices that constitute permissibility conditions for non-linguistic behaviors. Understanding

⁵ See Jacques Semelin (2003), "Toward a Vocabulary of Massacre and Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research* (2003), 5(2): pp. 193–210, especially p. 201.

⁶ Des Forges 1999, p. 39, 45.

this action-engendering force can make sense of thinking that words can destroy a people and a nation.

Linguistic violence is violence enacted or delivered through discursive behaviors, that is, through speech acts that would ordinarily constitute social or psychological damage to the targeted person, as well as through speech acts that generate permissions for physical damage, including assault and death. Like physical violence, linguistic violence uses its force to injure or abuse, and the varieties of harms it can cause are as multiplicitous as the functions of speech. Just as violations come in degrees, so too do the damages of linguistic violence. In Rwanda, as in any society marked by civic struggle, people often disregarded the power of linguistic violence; avoiding physical violence, torture, and death were higher priorities. Nevertheless, linguistic violence, itself constituting psychosocial and cultural harm to its targets, also created permissions for the very acts of physical violence they sought to avoid. If we take seriously Wittgenstein's view that a language is a way of life, then we must examine the broader Rwandan social context in understanding how linguistic practices contributed to the genocide.

This paper offers a philosophical analysis of genocidal language games, with a focus on the role that language played in setting the social conditions for the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. By analyzing the role that derogatory terms played in Rwanda, we can see that these derogatory terms are action-engendering—that is, they license non-linguistic behaviors. The most commonly used derogatory terms included *'inyenzi'* (Kinyarwanda for 'cockroach'), and *'inzoka'* (Kinyarwanda for 'snake'). In addition to altering beliefs and licensing inferences about those against whom the terms are used, the use of such terms can also make actions like assault and even murder seem legitimate. Few cultures like snakes, but in Rwanda, boys are proud when they are trusted to cut the heads off snakes. There are significant actions associated with *'inzoka'*, so it is not trivial to use this term for the Tutsi. I shall argue that the widespread use of such terms played a significant role in bringing about the Rwandan genocide. Because of the action-engendering force of derogatory terms, actions hitherto unthinkable (i.e. the extermination of a people) came to be regarded as socially appropriate and even required. In short, I will be supporting Schabas's claim that "the road to genocide in Rwanda was paved by hate speech."⁷

⁷ Schabas 2000. Neither Schabas nor I maintain the absurd view that speech alone *caused* the genocide. Speech acts were a key mechanism for reshaping social norms, and it was the confluence of linguistic and non-linguistic behaviors that promulgated genocide.

The paper proceeds as follows. In § 2, I offer some historical background about Rwanda, to aid unfamiliar readers in sorting out the key events and processes at work, focusing on the late twentieth-century changes leading up to the genocide. The distinction between horizontal and vertical ethnic systems is used here to help frame questions about the changing social landscape in Rwanda. Then, in § 3, I introduce key elements of my analysis of derogatory terms, focusing on deeply derogatory terms like *'inyenzi'* and *'inzoka'*. I set out five features of deeply derogatory terms, and offer an apparently derogatory case that is in fact an illustrative near-miss. In § 4, I further develop this theoretical framework, showing how *'inyenzi'* meets the criteria set out in § 3, and argue that the widespread linguistic practice of using *'inyenzi'* and similar derogatory terms to refer to Tutsi individuals played a crucial role in licensing the 1994 genocide. This section includes a brief exposition of the inferential role of *'inyenzi'* (cockroach) and a sketch of relevant aspects of the inferential role of *'inzoka'* (snake). Then, in § 5, I return to the concept of genocidal language games, arguing for the important action-engendering aspect of the inferential roles of deeply derogatory terms as used in Rwanda. In closing, I consider some reflections, offered after the genocide, about the role that language played in laying the genocidal groundwork.

2. Rwanda Before the Genocide: Some Basic Background

Imagine a society of multiple ethnicities all living in peace and relative equality. Ethnic groups are fluid, members intermarry, and children are not shunned. Ethnic identities, while often recognized, are not a determining force in one's life prospects. Pascasie, a Tutsi woman born in 1959, who suffered many horrors of the genocide, says that growing up in Nyanza, "Ethnicity didn't seem to matter to the ordinary Rwandan; it seemed to matter only to the people who wielded power."⁸ Within Rwanda, there is one language, one cuisine, shared songs and dances, common marriage rituals, shared customs of all sorts. Thus, ethnic boundaries are vague and do not fit anthropological categories.⁹ In fact, for a long

⁸ Pascasie Mukasakindi, in deBrouwer and Hon Chu, 2009, p. 74. See also Gourevitch 1998, pp. 54–5 for early Belgian observations of Rwandan unity.

⁹ See Mamdani 2004, chapters 2 and 3, for a thoughtful critique of assimilating 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi' to ethnicities at all. Instead, Mamdani urges us to think of these as state-enforced "bipolar" political identities (p. 73). Rwanda also includes a people called the 'Twa,' whose presence in Rwanda is said to pre-date the arrival of both the Hutu and the Tutsi. The Twa are a tiny minority, left out of this bipolar power play.

time, people could move from one ethnicity to another, simply by having more or fewer cows. Applying Charles Mills' distinction between horizontal and vertical racial systems, we might call this a *horizontal ethnic system*.¹⁰ There are many who would describe pre-genocide Rwanda this way, more or less.¹¹ A *vertical ethnic system*, in contrast, makes identity features relevant to one's life prospects, marking amongst ethnic groups a clear hierarchy determining access to power, resources, and opportunities.

The *Horizontalist* view describes Hutu and Tutsi living in harmony, playing soccer, sharing a drink of banana wine or Primus at the end of the day, intermarrying, and generally looking after each other.¹² Neighbors might bring neighbors soup, but not lend each other money. Some Tutsi survivors, and Hutu *génocidaires* as well, suggest a relatively horizontal society that erupted into violence to create hierarchy. Even before colonization in the late nineteenth century, Joseph Sebarenzi says, "Rwandans spoke one language—Kinyarwanda—worshipped one God, and answered to one King."¹³ Sebarenzi argues that although Tutsi had more "power, social status, and influence" than Hutu, for centuries under Tutsi monarchies, and then under colonial rule after the 1880s, nevertheless, the people lived peacefully together following an ancient Rwandan saying, "*Turi bene mugabo umwe*," meaning "we are all sons and daughters of the same father."¹⁴ This Horizontalist view emphasizes a general social unity and fluid social categories. Evidence of shared social customs is strong, as is evidence of intermarriage, and ethnic boundary crossing, which supports the Horizontalist thesis, but is not conclusive.

There is also, however, ongoing evidence of ethnicity shaping life prospects, which supports the Verticalist thesis. The *Verticalist* view holds that there was always hierarchy between the groups, with Tutsi ruling

¹⁰ Mills 1998, p. 43.

¹¹ Jean Hatzfeld describes it thus: "Black Africa is a formidable medley of willingly assumed ethnic identities of a diversity equaled only by the spirit of tolerance that keeps them in equilibrium. And when a seemingly ethnic disturbance breaks out, the conflict is usually in fact chiefly regional (north versus south; interior plateau versus the coast), religious (Christians against Muslims), economic (about the appropriation of mines), or social (residential neighborhoods against the business district); *the ethnic group is not the true source of violence and misunderstanding but only a mode of defensive assembly*. So we must emphasize both the normality in Rwanda of identifying oneself as Hutu or Tutsi and the anomaly, the deviation represented by the anti-Tutsi propaganda during the regime of president Habyarimana." Hatzfeld 2005, pp. 209–10, italics added. See also Sebarenzi 2009, pp. 6–9; Sebarenzi carefully illustrates the mixture of what I am calling horizontal and vertical dimensions of life in Rwanda before 1994. See Gourevitch 1998, pp. 232–6 who argues that Hutu power created a bipolar 'us'/'them' world, but that great complexity of identities lay just below the surface.

¹² Prunier 1995, pp. 5–9; Gourevitch 1998, p. 47.

¹³ Sebarenzi 2009, p. 11.

¹⁴ Sebarenzi 2009, p. 11. But see Prunier (1995), pp. 1–40, for more detailed analysis.

harshly over Hutu for millennia, and then being favored by European colonizers, who saw in the Tutsi more European physical features.¹⁵ Hutu still had some opportunities under Tutsi rule, the Verticalist says, but they were never really equal. Then, when Hutu came to power, the situation flipped. Still vertical.

Whether one supports the Horizontalist or Verticalist view, everyone agrees that once Belgian colonizers instituted mandatory ethnic identity cards in 1933, ethnic categories became rigid. This rigidity made entrenched hierarchy possible. Sebarenzi echoes a common Rwandan view that with these ethnic identity cards “the seeds of discrimination and resentment were sown, and Rwanda’s strong national identity began to erode.”¹⁶ When the last King of Rwanda died in 1959, power struggles between Hutu and Tutsi under Belgian colonialism culminated in a Hutu uprising, forcing 150,000 Tutsi to flee to neighboring countries. This “1959 Revolution” marks the start of the most serious rupture between Hutu and Tutsi in Rwandan history. Gourevitch reports that before 1959 “there had never been systematic political violence recorded between Hutus and Tutsis—anywhere.”¹⁷ Berry and Berry share this Horizontalist overview of Rwandan history; their analysis of Hutu extremist propaganda during the 1959 Revolution suggests that a new Verticalism was called forth as a politically useful myth.

Hutu extremists propagated a revisionist history of relations between the Hutus and the Tutsis that were not based on cohabitation and exchange but rather on segregation and violence. This myth was so successful that on the eve of independence [from Belgium, 1962], Hutu politicians rallied the people to throw out the “feudal colonists,” referring not to the Belgians who had ruled Rwanda for 40 years, but to the Tutsis with whom the Hutus had lived side by side for 400 years.¹⁸

Colonialism may not have caused the differences between Hutu and Tutsi, but it changed their significances. The Verticalist interpretation of history

¹⁵ Prunier 1995, quotes from Belgian colonial reports, which say things like this: “The Mutusi of good race has nothing of the negro, apart from his color. . . . His features are very fine: a high brow, thin nose and fine lips framing beautiful shining teeth. . . . Gifted with a vivacious intelligence, the Tutsi displays a refinement of feelings which is rare among primitive people. He is a natural-born leader, capable of extreme self-control and of calculated good will.” (Prunier, p.6, from *Ministère des Colonies, Rapport sur l’administration belge du Ruanda-Urundi* (1925), p.34. Quoted in Jean-Paul Harroy, *Le Rwanda, de la féodalité à la démocratie* (1955–1962) Brussels: Hayez, 1984, p. 28.) This is not an isolated comment, as Prunier shows in Chapter 1, with sources dating not only from the early colonial period, but also as late as 1970.

¹⁶ Sebarenzi 2009, p. 13.

¹⁷ Gourevitch 1998, p. 59.

¹⁸ Berry and Berry 1999, p. 3.

became a springboard for the violence that would erupt across the next several decades.

Once Hutu took power after the 1959 Revolution, Tutsi had fewer educational opportunities and more limited means of employment. One genocide survivor, Françoise, born in 1962, explains her childhood as socially horizontal but institutionally vertical. She says,

I lived in a community where Tutsi were a minority, but this situation didn't seem to influence our relationships. We had friends among Hutu as well as Tutsi, though the discrimination was more visible in our schools. Tutsi students did not have the right to perform better than Hutu students did. For example, our teachers would switch the names of Tutsi who received better marks with the names of Hutu who had not performed as well.¹⁹

Educational discrimination could be more extreme. Odette Nyiramilimo tells a harrowing tale of being chased from school for being Tutsi in 1973. Fleeing to relatives in Kibuye, Odette expected to be welcomed there, but instead, her Hutu brother-in-law said, "I don't give shelter to cock-roaches."²⁰ Stories like this are not rare.

Upon gaining independence from Belgium in 1962, Rwanda elected a Hutu president, Gregoire Kayibanda. By the middle of the 1960s, almost half of the Tutsi population lived outside Rwanda. The Tutsi were (and still are) a numerical minority, approximately 10 percent of the population.²¹ The children born to "the Fifty-niners" were growing up in refugee camps in Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zaire (Congo), caught between nations, neither allowed to assimilate to their 'adoptive' land nor allowed to return to their homeland. Rwanda's Hutu government perceived the potential return of these exiled Tutsi as a threat, despite its own grip on power and despite a Hutu-majority population. Significantly, many who had fled had been leaders, and would likely seek leadership again. Also, others had taken the property of the exiles, and would not

¹⁹ Françoise Kayitesi, in deBrouwer and Hon Chu, p.113. See also Gourevitch 1998, pp. 63–9.

²⁰ Gourevitch 1998, p. 68.

²¹ The Rwandan government kept close count of its citizens, with nationwide bi-annual census-taking. Des Forges reports that Tutsi were reported as 17.5 percent of the population in 1952, but declined to only 8.4 percent in 1991. Des Forges 1999, p. 40. See also Chrétien, 2003. Chrétien says that for the colonists "an equation was established between Tutsi and 'chief' (in its general meaning) to the point where the ordinary Batutsi who lived on the hills (who constituted at least 90 percent of all Batutsi) were invisible." Into the early 1950s, Belgian authorities thought the Tutsi comprised only about 5 percent of the population, when in fact, in 1956, they were "13 to 18 percent" depending on the region. Chrétien 2003, p. 285.

yield it without a fight.²² Rwandan official resistance to accepting the 1959 returnees, decade after decade, ultimately led to the development of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), in the late 1980s, a militia trained as soldiers within the Ugandan resistance and later in the Ugandan army.²³ The RPF focused on gaining the right to return to Rwanda. One of the RPF leaders was Paul Kagame, the current president of Rwanda, now serving his second term.

In 1990 the RPF began a military campaign to force the Rwandan government to let the diaspora return. The campaign became a war, which resulted in the signing of the Arusha Accords (July 1992), winning the right to return and also power-sharing for the RPF.²⁴ While the RPF put pressure on the Hutu extremist government by attacking the country's borders, and moving inward, Hutu extremists within the government developed the 'Zero-Network', a death squad comprising both civilians and members of the Rwandan army.²⁵ They began to distribute machetes and train civilian Hutu in how to use those machetes to kill Tutsi. At the same time, they also began to invoke a mythology pre-dating colonialism to protect their own interests and to whip up anti-Tutsi fervor. This was particularly explicit in Léon Mugesera's 1992 speech, which was so virulently anti-Tutsi that the minister of justice issued an arrest warrant and Mugesera fled to Canada.²⁶

This brief and selective overview of a complex period of Rwandan history might leave one thinking that neither Horizontalism nor Verticalism can possibly be true. We find a view combining aspects of each articulated by the late André Sibomana, a moderate Hutu journalist and Catholic priest, who spoke out against the genocide. Sibomana argued that, "The differences had always been there. The whites conceptualized and froze them. The extremists turned them into a political program. This was the fatal mechanism in which our country had embarked."²⁷ Sibomana thus suggests that horizontality lost out to verticality when Belgians instituted identity cards, rigidifying categories. At least from thence onward, verticality ruled, and extremists used ethnic divisions to promote their own power.²⁸

²² Sibomana 1999, p. 95.

²³ Kinzer 2008, pp. 42–69. See also Prunier 1995, pp. 67–74, 90–96.

²⁴ See Prunier 1995, pp. 159–212 for a detailed account of the complex negotiations that became the Arusha Accords.

²⁵ Malvern 2004, pp. 29–33; Prunier 1995, pp. 168–70.

²⁶ See Des Forges 1999, pp. 76–86 for an analysis of the Mugesera speech.

²⁷ Sibomana 1999, p. 92.

²⁸ Gourevitch reports that in early 1991, the US Ambassador pressured the Rwandan government to eliminate identity cards, to stop official recognition of ethnic divisions. The French Ambassador "quashed" this. Gourevitch 1998, pp. 89–90.

The 1994 genocide emerged within the context of a war waged from the outside by the RPF, the now-grown children of Tutsi who fled for their lives in 1959. While the RPF fought for the right to return from 1990 to 1993, the Hutu extremist government engaged in mass killings in villages known to be predominantly Tutsi. Human Rights Watch reported that, all through 1992 and 1993, small-scale massacres were launched by the Habyarimana government to test the waters, saying that these “small scale sporadic killings of Tutsi” in predominantly Hutu areas “established patterns for the genocide of 1994.”²⁹

Rwanda has always been a highly organized society. Under Habyirimana’s presidency, going back at least to 1975, each village held mandatory weekly civic animation sessions to promote patriotism. It was only in the early 1990s, as the RPF grew stronger, that the messages of these turned to fear-mongering and ethnic division. Hyacintha Nirere, a survivor from near Butare who was 13 in 1994, reports that despite general congeniality amongst her neighbors, trust was declining after 1990. “For example, Hutu stopped their conversations whenever a Tutsi passed by.”³⁰ These sudden silences may have been due to the topics of conversation. During this same period, the weekly animation meetings were cultivating ordinary Hutu men for the ‘*Interahamwe*’, seasoning them to participate in civilian militia that carried out the genocide, killing neighbors and hunting down any Tutsi who fled.³¹ ‘*Interahamwe*’ literally means ‘we who work together’ or ‘the united.’

RPF fighters called themselves the ‘*Inkotanyi*’, which is Kinyarwanda for ‘the Invincibles.’ The Hutu government called them ‘*inyenzi*’, because they were fighting a guerilla war; like cockroaches they appeared primarily at night and were hard to find during the day. This language was commonly applied to the RPF from 1990 to 1993; the big change came when the vocabulary that had previously been reserved for the militia was extended to all Tutsi. This was a major step in the broad and explicit polarization of the society.³²

An ideological war was also being waged. Through their control of the media, President Habyirimana’s inner circle, called the ‘*akuza*’ (little house), was busy preparing the general Hutu population (beyond the *Interahamwe*) to participate in the genocide.³³ In December 1990 the

²⁹ Des Forges 1999, p. 87.

³⁰ Hyacintha Nirere, in deBrouwer and Hon Chu 2009, p. 118.

³¹ Chrétien 2003, pp. 323–4.

³² See Mushikiwabo and Kramer 2006, especially pp. 41–3.

³³ See Schabas 2000, 145–9; Des Forges 1999, pp. 9, 40, 176–207. For a comparison of *Kangura* to the Nazi propaganda vehicle *Der Stürmer*, see Charity Kagwi-Ndungu, in Thompson 2005, esp. pp. 332–5.

extremist newspaper *Kangura* (*Wake Them Up!*) published the notorious “Hutu Ten Commandments,” which set out rules for being a proper Hutu, declaring any Hutu who disagreed with these rules to be a traitor.³⁴ These ten rules demanded separating from Tutsi in relationships (family, sexual, business), denying the Tutsi educational access and work opportunities, expelling Tutsi from the military, and more. Perhaps most ominous is rule number 8: “The Hutu should stop having mercy on the Tutsi.”³⁵ In 1993 *Kangura* presented its infamous article denouncing all Tutsi, coining the phrase ‘a cockroach cannot give birth to a butterfly.’ *Kangura* was also noted for its vile political cartoons, which especially vilified Tutsi women, recasting their oft-touted beauty as a mark of their dangerousness. The cartoons were an important way to influence illiterate and semi-literate Rwandans, who would not need to read the text to get the message. Also, *Kangura* increased its accessibility by publishing in Kinyarwanda. *Kangura* published up until April 1994, with a circulation that maxed at about 10,000, but with a much broader readership than that, since people tended to pass each issue from friend to friend.³⁶

Even broader reach was to be found through the radio. In July 1992 the *akuza* founded RTLM, *Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines* (or “Free Radio and Television of the Thousand Hills”) to bring the Hutu-power message to the airwaves of Rwanda. The only widely available radio station at the time was the government’s Radio Rwanda, playing European classical music and reporting government-approved news.³⁷ As part of a propaganda strategy, RTLM “combined entertaining music, notably Zairian, with ‘hot news’ delivered with virulent commentary: an ‘interactive’ style, happy, even humorous, that conditioned the Hutu public to the most venomous kind of extremist thinking.”³⁸ It quickly gained a wide audience. As time went on, its broadcasts became more and more explicitly racist and political, directly calling for attacks against the Tutsi. There is clearly evidence of incitement to genocide, but the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in fact convicted Ferdinand Nahimana,

³⁴ For the content and an analysis of this issue, see ICTR 2003, pp. 45–53.

³⁵ Berry and Berry 1999, pp. 113–15. The back cover of this issue featured a photograph of French President Francois Mitterand, with the caption “It is in hard times that you know your real friends.” Des Forges 1999, p. 92.

³⁶ Chrétien 2003, p. 326.

³⁷ Starting in 1991, the RPF broadcast Radio Muhabera from Uganda, but this propaganda station (advocating the right of return for exiled Rwandans as well as armed protest against the Hutu extremist government) never gained a wide audience. It was broadcast in English, not in Kinyarwanda, the primary language of the people, so despite its broad geographical reach, it gained little traction. <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/publications/rwanda-broadcasting-genocide.pdf>. See also Des Forges 1999, p. 59.

³⁸ Chrétien 2003, p. 327.

who founded RTLM, of *genocide, not only incitement*, for his work with RTLM. At the same trial, Hassan Ngeze was convicted of genocide for his work as the founder, owner, and Editor-in-Chief of *Kangura*. This gets us ahead of the analysis, but sets the stage for our study of specific speech acts.

Responding to the pressure brought on by the RPF offensives, the Habyarimana government began to negotiate peace talks that resulted in a temporary cease-fire agreement in August 1992. This agreement, which eventually worked out shared power between Hutu and Tutsi, came to be known as the 'Arusha Accords.' The prospect of increased Tutsi inclusion in matters of state was more than Hutu extremists could accept. While President Habyirimana publicly signed the Arusha Accords, the *akuza* were secretly executing plans for Rwanda's own 'final solution.' The context of economic distress, war, and political corruption and competition all contributed to the urgency with which the *akuza* developed their strategy to mobilize ordinary citizens to remove a minority of the population. Hutu extremists saw exterminating this minority as promising to relieve these stresses, and allow a unified Rwanda to emerge. As Andre Sibomana says, "The risk of a genocide gradually increased as the [Hutu] elite in power strengthened its domination by brandishing the ethnic threat, against a backdrop of economic crisis."³⁹

Testimony from Rwandan genocide survivors raises questions about how the cultural climate changed for Tutsis from 1989 to 1994. In the US, the concept of 'chilly climate,' first introduced in sexual harassment research, brought attention to the ways that the behavior of others creates a social climate which makes personal identity factors into a liability, undermining a person's ability to function at school or work.⁴⁰ One part of creating a chilly climate is to increase the salience of identity differences, making them function in new ways. At first, the targeted person becomes aware of difference, chilling the development not only of relations but also slowing her own participation and skill development. Eventually, the chill may become more, and turn into a real threat. Applying this concept, we ask how Rwanda became, first, a chilly climate for Tutsi, and then a hot and dangerous one. Thinking of the question this way enables us to see that although the standard accounts of Rwandan colonial history may explain how the people came to be marked as 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi', this alone does not explain how these categories became toxic. In particular, how did the rigidity of the ethnic categories start to engender violent actions, in word and deed?

³⁹ Sibomana 1999, p. 92. The economic crisis began with the collapse of the coffee markets in 1989.

⁴⁰ Introduced by Bernice Sandler in 1982.

The toxic element was a widespread anti-Tutsi propaganda campaign, not only by leaders of the media but also orally transmitted, from person to person, in prefecture meetings and social gatherings. Broadcast speech acts are easy to trace, because they are part of the public record, so histories and analyses of the use of hate media to develop a climate of fear and distrust are already emerging.⁴¹ These tend to emphasize the actions of RTLM, *Kangura*, *Umurava*, and other print media.⁴² The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) trial of media leaders, Ferdinand Nahimana, Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza, and Hassan Ngeze, raised serious concerns about both the freedom and the responsibility of the press.⁴³ As Jacques Semelin warns, however, “it is possible to overemphasize the role of hate propaganda because there is nothing to prove that this, on its own, leads to the unleashing of massacre.”⁴⁴ The causal question worried the ICTR as well, but ultimately they decided that the speech of these three men *constituted* genocidal acts, not only serving as incitements to genocide. Semelin holds that hate propaganda, “certainly contributes to the creation of a sort of *semantic matrix* that gives meaning to the increased force of a dynamic of violence that then works as a ‘launching pad’ for massacre.”⁴⁵ A semantic matrix might seem like a stationary background graph upon which action is plotted, but I see this semantic matrix as multi-dimensional, organic, and interactive, allowing for little differentiation between background and foreground because of this organic interaction. So construed, I would argue, linguistic violence, of which hate speech and propaganda are major forms, becomes part of the broader dynamic of violence. Understanding the power of public speech acts by the media requires understanding this “semantic matrix,” a dynamic arena of meaning, which should disclose what it took for such speech acts to get uptake, to be heard and acted upon, for their vision to be enacted. As Africa Rights concluded in 1995, “For the most part these journalists did not wield machetes or fire guns. Some of them did not even directly incite people to kill. But they all assisted in creating a climate of extremism and hysteria in

⁴¹ Mary Kimani’s analysis of RTLM programming shows that most of the invective came from the regular announcers and not from on-air guests, news, or government officials. See Kimani, in Thompson 2007.

⁴² See Chrétien 1995, Chalk 1999, and Thompson 2007.

⁴³ See *Prosecutor v. Ferdinand Nahimana, Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza and Hassan Ngeze*, Case No. ICTR-99-52-T. All three were found guilty of genocide. All three were sentenced to life in prison, although Barayagwiza’s lawyers appealed, arguing that his rights had been violated, and the court reduced his sentence to 35 years with time served further reducing it to 27 years. See also MacKinnon 2004, Temple-Raston 2005.

⁴⁴ Semelin 2007, p. 199.

⁴⁵ Semelin 2007, p. 199.

which ordinary people could be influenced to become killers.”⁴⁶ Getting ordinary people to participate in practices of linguistic violence seasoned them to the structures of power that rendered collateral forms of non-linguistic violence conceivable and doable within the context.

Verticalism was gaining ground through this ideological campaign. RTLM and *Kangura* were key agencies in generating permissibility for genocidal behaviors through speech acts that further rigidified social acceptance of a sense of essential separation and justified hierarchy between Hutu and Tutsi. Power was the issue. Further, these official speech acts granted linguistic licenses to other speakers to use derogatory terms for Tutsi, making the status of being Tutsi more dangerous than most Tutsi knew.⁴⁷ The ICTR “Media Trial” emphasized the use of the radio to direct the genocide, focusing on directions given on-air to kill specific individuals, disclosing locations of hiding Tutsis, etc.⁴⁸ The radio also played a role in giving non-elite Hutu permission to kill, giving them a sense that patriotism demanded it and that Rwanda would be better when the Tutsi are gone, never to return.

The semantic matrix within which genocide can be conceived and engendered cannot arise simply from basic repetitions of hollow speech acts. Something more must generate the normative force that engenders non-linguistic action. To understand one dimension of meaning change, consider how ordinary slang tends to gain or lose its force from frequency of use. Before Bart Simpson, for example, “That sucks!” was rarely uttered on American broadcast television, but it has since become more common. The conventions governing its use changed, and the inferences one could draw from it changed. When more taboo, it was also more vulgar, making a clear but elliptical sexual reference; today many people tend to reject that inference. Meanings change as practices governing the conditions of use change. Inferences gain and lose sanction. Frequency of use and patterns of use at least partially constitute the inferential role of the expression, giving it whatever meaning and power it has. Through overuse, “That sucks” has become almost as empty as “Have a nice day”; in each we see the frequency of use draining meaning rather than building it. Hate speech seems to take a different trajectory. Initial accommodation to the linguistic

⁴⁶ African Rights 1995, 60. Also Carver 2000, p. 189.

⁴⁷ Françoise Mukeshimana reports that “Between 1990 and 1992, the *Interahamwe* killed Tutsi boys from Bugesera after the boys were accused of hiding suspected RPF spies. Many of the boys didn’t even know that the term cockroach referred to people.” DeBrouwer and Hon Chu 2009, p. 100.

⁴⁸ See MacKinnon 2004, pp. 325–30. See also Temple–Raston 2005.

violence takes it as ‘just talk’, ignoring the action-engendering features of such discourse. As these violent linguistic practices become more socially embedded, intertwined with discriminatory and exclusionary practices, a synergy takes hold, giving greater meaning to each. ‘*Inyenzi*’ began as an epithet for the RPF militia raiding the borders from neighboring countries, but by 1992 and 1993 grew to include all Tutsis; this transition from a narrow to a wider scope of application was key to generating the semantic matrix within which genocide was engendered.

3. Theoretical Framework

Before turning to the main argument for the surprising action-engendering force of speech, I first present the framework in which I am working. This framework employs an inferential role theory of meaning, the notion of language games introduced by Wittgenstein, as well as sensitivity to a variety of sorts of speech acts that may occur as moves within language games. Once this framework is made clear, I present my theory of derogatory terms, which I will use in § 4 to analyze the role and social function of the use of the term ‘*inyenzi*’ in pre-genocide Rwanda.

3.1. *Inferential Roles*

Some theorists understand language primarily in terms of the communication of intentions. When Sally says, “Peter is tall,” for example, they think the best way to understand what is happening is to think of her utterance as a means to enable the hearer to figure out what Sally’s (communicative) intention is. It is because of her intention to get across a certain proposition (that Peter is tall) that she says what she says. The words help the hearer get at what is important, namely, Sally’s communicative intention. On this view, language use is primarily a communicative tool between speaker and hearer. What matters most is the recognition of the speaker’s communicative intention.

This framework, which treats speaker’s intentions as primary for understanding what a particular speech act does, is too centered on individuals, as if we each could control the meanings of what we say. Surely we do try, but often the meanings and actions associated with what we say extend far beyond our own awareness and control. In contrast, I focus on linguistic *practices*, which are non-individualistic and communal. On my view, the focus is on the (inferential) role that an utterance within a speech act plays in the linguistic practice in question. If Pio calls Albert ‘*inyenzi*’, he may be setting in motion much more than he intends. What we do with our speech acts often outstrips our own mastery, and in cases in which the social functions of speech have been co-opted, we can see that participants

might not see the full scope of the games that they are playing. Although communication of intentions is often an important part of what is happening when we use language, as we shall see, it need not be.

To understand what is done when one person hurls a racist epithet at another person, one must, of course, understand what the word means. To do that, on the inferentialist view, one must understand the term as part of a network of inferences, and one must see the hurling of the epithet as an undertaking of a commitment to justify the use of the term, which includes supplying its reference and defending its role in any assertion (or other speech act) that has been made.⁴⁹ My work also develops the idea of expressive commitments, that is, a commitment to the viability and value of a particular way of talking.⁵⁰ So if Pio hurls “*inyenzi*” at Albert, Pio becomes committed not only to explaining which inferences about Pio are licensed by that word (what can the hearer say next?), but also is committed to the viability and value of using cockroach-talk to talk about (at least some) people. Often speakers pick up practices of speech from others, without giving much thought to the inferences they are licensing or the practices they are supporting. The speaker might think only about saying something nasty about this one person, and not about the broader practices that make that speech act possible and which the speech act then further supports. An ability to play a language game does not show that a speaker has a meta-level analysis of their operations. We speak within them, and rarely speak about them.

To better understand how our linguistic behaviors work, we should begin with some basics about language games. To illustrate some of these points, I will introduce a word-game, invented and played by real children, which, on the surface, looks like a game of using a derogatory term as an epithet. We will see that there are important differences between this case and the more serious Rwandan linguistic practices. Later, we will further develop the concept of language game to more clearly elucidate the relation between speech acts and other sorts of actions.

3.2. A Children’s Game

On a typical New England summer day, as I drove a carpool of children to day-camp, our daily route took us past several new homes under construction. One day, the six year olds, delighted with their own cleverness, started calling these as-yet-unsided houses “naked houses,” since they did not yet wear their clapboard “clothes.” Recognizing this as a basic

⁴⁹ The groundwork of the inferentialist approach is Brandom 1998. More recently, Kukla and Lance 2009 take inferentialism beyond asserting.

⁵⁰ See Tirrell 1999.

language-entry move, a move like setting chess pieces on a board, I still could not figure out their game. A few days later, one of the children called, “Hey, sausage-face!” out the open car window as we passed such a house. Peals of laughter followed. We passed another “naked house” a mile later; no “sausage-face.” Passing another, again the call elicited many giggles. Wanting to learn what this expression meant, to identify the conditions of application, and to see what could be so funny, I kept quiet. The term seemed neither effective, nor acceptable, nor funny; I just didn’t ‘get it.’

After a few days of observing, I finally asked, “What does ‘sausage-face’ mean? Is there somebody out there with really bad skin? A lumpy nose?” My questions seemed incomprehensible to the children. Why would I think those things? They couldn’t even *see* the faces they seemed to be labeling. (My questions arose from trying to apply the inferential role of ‘sausage’ to faces.) “Sausage-face,” they explained, is (obviously) something you yell out the window at a man with no shirt on who is working on a naked house. If that epithet had been hurled at me, my interpretation would have led me to take it to be an insult about my face—it contains a direct reference to the face, after all, and sausages are not pretty. The inventors of this particular game, on the other hand, saw the compositional meaning as irrelevant, disposable. They just liked the sound of the words together. Conditions of use—their use—ruled.

Although apparently a game about insulting people through negative labeling, this game turned out to have somewhat different functions for those involved. The children were not actually *communicating* with the men, who were at such a distance from the road that they could not have heard the children’s soft voices anyway. This was an in-group identification game, much like ‘punch-buggy,’ and the fun was getting to (legitimately) say the phrase first. Their pleasure came from their mastery of the rules of use, the sonic pleasure of the term they made up, and the competition to be the first to use that term. The camaraderie of the game was an incentive to keep the game going. It was their own invention, turning them into an ‘us.’ Although present in the car, I was nevertheless not in the game. I was neither a player nor a target, just an irrelevant bystander.⁵¹

One feature of this usage that might worry some philosophers of language is that the ordinary meanings of ‘sausage’ and ‘face’ don’t seem

⁵¹ Not all bystanders are irrelevant. Often communication with them is part of the function of a speech act. At a wedding, the parties being married are taking vows, but the witnesses are part of the process as well, and the rules of engagement with the parties shift once they are married.

to have any role here. In most inferentialist analyses of real speech acts that occur within real practices, the typical inferential roles would indeed have force, unless they were somehow altered by context. Here, the practice itself renders the everyday meanings (explained by inferential roles) irrelevant. The children are playing a game with language, but they are not embedding it within a host of other language games. ‘Sausage-face’ might almost have been any sounds at all.

As one can see, uttering a certain expression (e.g. ‘sausage-face’) can serve multiple functions and communication need not be one of them. This example also nicely illustrates an inferentialist view of language, without making commitments to a compositional approach to meaning. Elsewhere I have argued that the use of any term undertakes what I call an *expressive commitment* to the viability and value of the term, and the speech acts in which it gains force.⁵² By saying “sausage-face,” child A undertakes a commitment to the viability and value of that term, as well as undertaking commitments to identifying which item (X) in the world A is referring to as a sausage-face, and showing that the criteria of being a sausage-face are indeed met by X. (If challenged, A must prove that X is indeed a man, shirtless, working on an un-sided house.) Further, A now licenses child B to say things like, “Yes, there was a sausage-face back there,” to count that instance in the daily tally, and so on. If sausage-faces get some kind of special treatment, and if B accepts A’s assertion or exclamation, then A’s utterance will engender subsequent verbal and non-verbal actions from B, each of which is grounded in B’s legitimate reliance on A’s utterance. In this way, we see that by using a term or expression, one thereby commits oneself to the various functions of that use, which include at least expressive and referential functions, plus any inferences one can draw from the imposition of the category.

Having presented and motivated some basics of this inferentialist view of language, I turn now to a brief account of derogatory terms.

3.3. *Key Features of Deeply Derogatory Terms*

My focus here is on deeply derogatory terms, rather than mere slurs or casual derogations, for deep derogations are tied to systems of oppression. “Jerk” might be a slur, and it might hurt or insult, but it does not have the power that deeply derogatory terms do. Deeply derogatory terms serve many functions. First, they express *the insider/outsider function*, which is multi-directional: the terms serve to mark members of an out-group (as out), and in so doing, they also mark the in-group as un-marked by the

⁵² Tirrell 1999.

term. When speaker *A* uses a racial epithet to tell her friend *B* to stay away from a particular racial group of people, *A* sets up an insider/outsider relation, whereby *A* and *B* are not members of that group. They are insiders in their own presumed-to-be-better world, and they are outsiders to the badness of that racial group. Racist epithets of many sorts fit this pattern. ‘Nigger’, ‘spic’, ‘kike’, ‘mick’, ‘Jew’, ‘*inyenzi*’, ‘*inzoka*’, and many others seem to fit and are used accordingly.⁵³ Some do not fit—those that convey insider/outsider ‘lifestyle’ choices, without an assumption of inescapability. ‘Snob’ or ‘jerk’ might count as slurs, but they are not deeply derogatory in the sense I am developing here. Someone who is a snob can cease to be so, thus the term is a critique, not an assignment of a basic ontological status. Slurs, like ‘snob’ or ‘jerk’, might have significant social force, even if they are not deeply derogatory.⁵⁴

Second, to be deeply derogatory, the term must meet *the essentialism condition*; deeply derogatory terms must communicate a negative message presumed to convey an essential aspect of the target to the target and the audience, and in so doing, must create and enforce hierarchy. Usually that negative message is tied to the meaning of the term, and is seen as capturing something of the object’s essence. Verticalism meets essentialism here. The racial category sticks because it presumes biological differences, and these biological differences are presumed to shape inevitable social and moral differences. Derogatory terms used in propaganda usually both presuppose and convey that there is an essential difference between the groups in question. Essentialism fuels fear, generates hate, and purports to justify differential treatment. This condition does not require that essentialism be true, only that it be presumed.

⁵³ Sometimes a member of a derogated group might use the same derogatory terms that the power-group uses, even in the same way. This often reflects an internal class division, in which the speaker presumes that the term applies to the other but not to herself (except erroneously applied by ignorant members of the dominating class), but it can even be used by a speaker against herself. Such usage reflects an acceptance of the insider/outsider division. Other times, the member of the subordinated group might use the term in a *reclaimed* way, shifting the meaning. This also depends on an insider/outsider function, because typically only members of the subordinated group are allowed to use the term in the reclaimed way. For more about these sorts of cases, see Tirrell 1999.

⁵⁴ Homophobic epithets are a troublesome case, because the politics and the metaphysical assumptions are a mess. Calling someone ‘fag’ might not presuppose that sexual orientation is an essential trait, so that would lead my view to count it as a slur rather than a deeply derogatory term. Surely that is unacceptable. On the other hand, on my view, deeply derogatory terms are tied to systems of oppression, and homophobic practices certainly count. For designation as deeply derogatory, being tied to systems of oppression is more important than the assumption of essentialism.

Third, derogatory terms are most effective when they are connected to networks of oppression and discrimination, with the weight of history and social censure behind it. This is what most clearly marks deeply derogatory terms from other sorts of slurs. Let's call this *the social embeddedness condition*. Social context, with embedded practices and conventions, is the major source of the power of derogatory terms that are used to dominate, demean, or dehumanize people. Certainly the worst harms of derogatory terms come from those that are embedded in socially, economically, and politically oppressive practices, and not from isolated, idiosyncratic, and apparently negative expressions, like 'sausage-face.' The mere word is not the issue; at work is the derogatory term, as used in a speech act (within a hurled epithet, a report of whereabouts, an order to kill, etc.) combined with both social embeddedness and essentialism. Within a speech act, and then within a broader social context, the derogatory term takes on a force that transcends the word alone.

Fourth is *the functional variation feature*. The insider/outsider function is certainly one of the main functions that using derogatory terms can serve, but it is important to see that it can serve other functions as well. Sometimes, for example, a third-person derogation is used by a member of the dominant group to a hearer who is a member of the subordinate group as a way of labeling the third person with a label that boomerangs from the target back to the hearer. For example, Fred and Ethel see Lucy do something silly, and while Ethel laughs, Fred scornfully says, "Lucy is such a bimbo." 'Bimbo' is a gendered term, and its use here sets boundaries on acceptable and unacceptable female behavior. Whatever Lucy was doing, Ethel now knows not to do that in front of Fred. His use of the derogatory term sets gender boundaries for Ethel even though he was hurling the term at Lucy. There are many things we can see the derogatory term doing, and what it does varies with the particulars of the context of use. We can also see that communicating intentions is at best only one of the things it may do. Fred may not be intending to set behavioral boundaries (enforcing norms) on Ethel, but he does this whether or not he intends it. Used in speech acts, derogatory terms also serve many other functions: for example, they regularly enact power, incite crimes, and rationalize cruelty. The functional variation feature is a way of capturing Wittgenstein's tool box metaphor, which suggests that understanding language requires us to see the multitude of uses to which we put our words and to resist reducing these functions to one (or even a few).⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Wittgenstein 1958. Especially § 7, 11,14, 23, but see also § 6, 304.

Fifth, derogatory terms used in speech acts are action-engendering within a context. To see how this works, we again return to the inferential role of such terms to see that subsequent inferences often delineate what kinds of treatments are permissible with respect to those who are so classified. Sometimes the action engendered is to assign a status-function.⁵⁶ Calling a grown woman ‘girl’ assigns a status-function that denies her adulthood and rationalizes male paternalistic behaviors. ‘Girl’ by itself is not an epithet, when applied to female children, but its inappropriate use for an adult woman serves a purpose, to rationalize paying her less for her work, treating her as incapable of making serious decisions, and similar sorts of behaviors that undercut the full expression of her autonomy. Similarly, in the long-time practice of calling African-American men ‘boy’ we see clearly the denial of adult status as a foundation for autonomy-undercutting behaviors. Boys don’t have the same rights as men. Neither do girls. Assign the status, and the treatments follow.

Careful analysis of this set of philosophical concepts, together with an exploration of the key features of language games, will help us to understand how speech acts contribute to the preparation for and execution of a genocide, and more generally, why words are not *only* words.⁵⁷

3.4. *Why ‘Sausage-Face’ is Not Derogatory*

To further illustrate these features of derogatory terms, it is worthwhile to see how the apparently derogatory expression ‘sausage-face’ fares with respect to the five conditions of my account. We can make explicit some basics of derogating speech acts by looking at this idiosyncratic children’s language game.

First, we must ask whether the use of ‘sausage-face’ serves the insider/outsider function by marking an in-group and an out-group. It seems to do so in a very minimal way. The children felt free to laugh at the use and sound of the label, because they saw no weight to it, no social function beyond the game, and because it could not boomerang back to label them. Further, there are those who are players, doing the calling out, and certain people outside the car who are possible targets. No one inside the car could be a target, by virtue of the rules of the game, but improper calling might get someone who seemed to be part of the game kicked out. Usage makes each of these boundaries clear. Targets were undamaged by the label, for a variety of reasons that will become obvious. So the game was all

⁵⁶ Searle 1995, pp. 28, 40, and following.

⁵⁷ The phrase ‘only words’ has been around for a long time, but it has gained special traction since Catharine MacKinnon’s book *Only Words* developed the argument that neither pornography nor the law are *only words*. See MacKinnon 1993.

about the sounds, the quickness of the call-out, and the creation of a minimal 'us,' we-who-play.

'Sausage-face' clearly fails to satisfy the second condition of derogatory terms: the essentialism condition. The conditions of application for 'sausage-face' are entirely circumstantial; the expression does not apply in virtue of some alleged essential feature. All a builder needs is a shirt, and he is targeted no more. Further, in this game, any negativity is detached from the compositional interpretation of the terms, so the potential derogation gets lost.⁵⁸

The third condition for derogatory terms, social embeddedness, is also unmet in the 'sausage-face' example. There is no social context of oppression or discrimination connected to the use of 'sausage-face,' so any derogation that might ensue would be idiosyncratic at best. It would not have the weight of social censure behind it. Genuinely derogatory terms must be connected to other social practices. As a game develops, it may gain a force of its own, becoming embedded in practices and events that lock it into the lives of those who play. In the case of 'sausage-face,' its idiosyncratic utterances have no power, no point, except to show the quickness and cleverness of the person who attaches the label first to a newly encountered object. (It's about 'us,' not about 'them.')

Disconnected from other social practices, apparently derogatory terms end up being like 'sausage-face'; their idiosyncrasy undermines their derogatory force.

So far, 'sausage-face,' which at first seemed very much like hurling a derogatory term, is failing miserably on its tests. The fourth condition, functional variability, would require 'sausage-face' to serve multiple functions. This condition should be easy to meet, because most speech act types can serve various functions, so it also is a weak delineator of derogatoriness. We saw that the children were more intent on playing with each other than on communicating with the men at whom they shout. The utterance was not about hurling an insult to be received by the target. This game could be seen as setting up insiders and outsiders, dividing into who gets called 'sausage-face' and who does the calling. It also serves to change the score between those who hurl the term, some going up in score, some going down, depending on the perceived appropriateness of the use. So it serves at least these two functions, but probably many others on particular occasions of use.

⁵⁸ This remains an open question for me; the children constructed it independent of any derogation, but why assume that they can control meaning this way?

Fifth and finally, the use of 'sausage-face' would be action-engendering if it were a deeply derogatory term. Again, this game is divorced from the rest of life, so there are no broader action consequences. There is no 'way that one treats a sausage-face'; the game has no extension into social reality. No one loses educational or job opportunities. No one is cast into poverty. No one's liberty and autonomy are undermined.

The apparent pointlessness of the children's game sheds light on what is missing. These five features of derogatory terms also illustrate Wittgenstein's tenet that a language is a way of life, and that a language game is "the whole consisting of the language and the actions into which it is woven." Even Wittgenstein's initial very primitive language game, introduced in § 2 of *Philosophical Investigations*, emphasizes the action-engendering aspect of the speech acts within the game.⁵⁹ If the builder were only playing a naming game, then 'Slab' might simply name an object, without engendering any action, but in the § 2 game, 'slab' very clearly engenders the assistant's action. 'Sausage-face,' said by the children, engenders no action against the target, but 'She's Tutsi' said in Rwanda in May 1994 was neither a mere label nor simply an insider/outsider designation. In that place, at that time, it was an action-engendering speech act. Of course, it was not only in the case of the extreme actions within the genocide that use of this word was action-engendering. All across Rwanda, during the early 1990s, identifying a student as Tutsi was a way to remove her from the meritocracy of the classroom; high scores would not advance her.

Derogatory terms, in use, engender actions creating and enforcing hierarchy. Thinking of real-life language uses as occurring within games emphasizes the action-engendering aspect of speech. Language games are not fully distinct from their purposes, the practices they support, and those by which they are supported. Action is built into the idea that meaning is a function of both intra- and extra-linguistic use.

In sum, we have seen that the use of derogatory terms involves an expressive commitment to the value and viability of that use. With respect to derogatory terms, in particular, we have learned that (1) the insider/outsider function is a key function of speech acts containing such terms; (2) they tend to make a negative essentialist claim about their targets; (3) they must be embedded in a social context, particularly within networks of

⁵⁹ Wittgenstein 1958. § 2: "Let us imagine a language . . . The language is meant to serve for communication between a builder A and an assistant B. A is building with building-stones; there are blocks, pillars, slabs and beams. B has to pass the stones, and that in the order in which A needs them. For this purpose they use a language consisting of the words 'block', 'pillar', 'slab', 'beam'. A calls them out;—B brings the stone which he has learnt to bring at such-and-such a call.—Conceive this as a complete primitive language."

oppression and discrimination, to gain their derogatory force, and they gain this social embeddedness through use; (4) speech acts involving derogatory terms exhibit functional variation, particularly with respect to the different parties involved in the speech act itself; and, (5) like other speech acts, those involving derogatory terms are action-engendering. These five features work together. They are not met by the ‘sausage-face’ example, despite the compositional meaning of the label, with all its negative inferential consequences.

While we are clearing the ground, before turning to some deadly cases of derogatory terms, there is one more caveat. It is important not to think of derogations as mere insults, although there are some common features. Insults are about hurting the other person, inflicting a sudden (and perhaps lasting) sting. Derogations, in contrast, inflict long-lasting *harm*, which may or may not inflict immediate hurt. Derogations may be received without much notice, and still do the job of realigning the target’s place in the world. Again we see that intention alone cannot carry all this weight.

The derogations with which we are concerned in Rwanda are not mere insults; they harm their targets through their functions within the speech acts in which they occur and the actions they engender. Calling someone ‘*inyenzi*’ in Rwanda in 1994 was a reductive classification that licensed differential treatment. Its functions might include identifying a person who is a threat, stripping that person of his or her humanity, depriving the person of basic human rights, and even identifying someone to kill. Such a speech act is socially embedded in a history of using ‘*inyenzi*’ to refer to RPF soldiers who made nightly incursions into Rwanda from Uganda and neighboring countries. From 1990 to 1994, the term was extended to all Tutsi, spreading fear across their future. We will see that such deeply derogatory terms matter, for they engender actions that others may take against the person, which in 1994 included brutal murder.

4. The Use of ‘*Inyenzi*’ in Rwanda: Genocidal Language Games

In this section, I argue that the widespread use of the term ‘*inyenzi*’ to refer to the Tutsi people played a crucial role in licensing the genocide that took place there. I begin by arguing that ‘*inyenzi*,’ as used in that context, satisfied the five conditions of derogatory terms outlined above. Next, I explore the inferential role of this term in order to identify the particular actions licensed by it. Since precisely these actions took place, I conclude that there is good reason to believe that the action-engendering force of

the term '*inyenzi*' played a significant role in bringing about the Rwandan genocide.

4.1. *An Actual Derogatory Use of 'Inyenzi'*

The following ten sentences, broadcast on the Hutu extremist RTLM radio on June 28, 1994, during the genocide, illustrate this use of '*inyenzi*' to damn all Tutsi, extending it beyond the initial guerilla groups, which were called the '*Inkotanyi*', the invincibles. The passage also illustrates several of the core features of derogatory speech acts. As we shall see, this passage is a complex set of speech acts with one major function: to justify all harm and destruction done to Tutsi. On RTLM, Valérie Bemeriki rapidly exclaimed:

I have always told you. All the people who joined the part controlled by the *Inyenzi Inkotanyi* are *Inyenzi* themselves. They approve the killings perpetrated by *Inyenzi*. They are criminals like the *Inyenzi Inkotanyi*. They are all *Inyenzi*. When our armed forces will get there, they will get what they deserve. They will not spare anyone since everybody turned *Inyenzi*. All those who stayed there are all *Inyenzi* since those who were against *Inyenzi* have been killed by *Inyenzi*. Those who succeeded to escape ran away to Ngara, Burundi and to the western part of our country. Those who stayed are accomplices and acolytes of the *Inyenzi*.

In ten sentences, there are ten instances of '*inyenzi*', some further emphasized through the use of '*Inkotanyi*'. The insider/outsider function that characterizes the use of derogatory terms is accomplished by the emphatic demarcation of the Tutsi as '*inyenzi*' combined with an almost incantatory repetition of 'they.' The use of 'they' exclusively for the Tutsi is so emphatic that it is a shock when the seventh sentence switches the antecedent of 'they' to 'the army'. Roger Bromley's analysis of this short speech emphasizes what we have been calling the insider/outsider function, noting its

use of polarization and dichotomization based upon pronominal distribution [I, you, our, but predominantly they], speed of delivery, and repetition of a term of abuse to produce a mesmeric, hypnotic effect. 'We' are articulated as human, the '*Inyenzi*' as sub-human, committed to 'social death,' beyond the universe of moral obligation.⁶⁰

Polarization is an emphatic means to achieve the insider/outsider function, suggesting that you are either *inyenzi* or not, and there is no middle ground. (It may presuppose essentialism.) Bemeriki's speed of delivery stops the audience from critical distancing; there is no time to question

⁶⁰ Bromley, p. 5.

the implicit assumptions. The ‘argument’ presupposes an audience familiar with a history of Tutsi flight to neighboring countries, and government propaganda (aired frequently on this same radio station) claiming that RPF killers are ‘out to get all Hutu.’ The use of fear to grow anger is clear.

This insider/outsider function also constructs social power, and often combines forces with the essentialism condition. Foucault develops a distinction between juridical or negative exercises of power, on the one hand, and technical or positive exercises of power, on the other. Looking at derogatory terms from a juridical perspective brings into focus cases of hurling epithets, face to face uses designed to demean; these are hierarchical enactments of power by members of one group over members of another. Through this (limited) lens, hate speech emerges as enforcing a negative repressive power of a dominating class over those dominated, but this view obscures the fact that such uses *positively construct* both dominator and dominated. In short, we see the insider/outsider function in play here, and at the same time, we see that multiple functions are achieved. Dominating speech acts construct those dominated as lesser beings, limiting their aspirations, capabilities, potentialities, powers; such uses systematically create an underclass. Speech acts using derogatory terms also help to create the power of those who use them, those who are not targets of the terms, uniting them into a self-identifying group.⁶¹ In Rwanda, the use of derogatory terms for Tutsi had this double effect, for at the same time that the uses of these terms were undermining the power and the humanity of the Tutsi, they were building the confidence and power of the Hutu extremists. The power of discourse, the aggregate patterns of what we may and may not say, what we do and do not say, the language games we play and the productive capacities of those games, “needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body” (as Foucault says) because it produces the very contours of that body.

Next, missing from Bemeriki’s rant, but present elsewhere, is the essentialism condition. It is absent because Bemeriki makes *inyenzi* status a *choice* for Tutsi, dependent upon their politics. Of course as soon as the passage presents the status as a political choice—a choice shown by supporting the *Inkotanyi*—it takes it away in practice, for all Tutsi left in Rwanda were deemed *ipso facto* collaborators and therefore worthy of destruction. Perhaps he smuggles essentialism back in. (This rant was

⁶¹ Of course the terms can be used by those who generally are their targets; sometimes such uses may be a way to reclaim the term, making it an in-group term of affection, for example, but sometimes the use is unreclaimed and reveals the speaker’s accommodation to the injustice carried by the term as generally used. For more on reclamation, see Tirrell 1999.

delivered a year after *Kangura's* 'a cockroach cannot give birth to a butterfly' became a catch-phrase amongst Hutu.)

Elsewhere, the use of '*inyenzi*' clearly satisfies the essentialism condition. In fact, part of the point in calling non-military and non-militant Tutsi '*inyenzi*' was to imply that they shared a dangerous essence with the RPF soldiers. Derogatory terms used in propaganda generally convey that there is an essential difference between the groups in question; essentialism fuels fear, and purports to justify differential treatment. Justification of differential treatment is built into the inferential role, but essentialism closes off other actions too. There is no rehabilitation of a cockroach. A snake is a snake and must be destroyed on sight.

Third, this use of '*inyenzi*' also satisfies the social embeddedness condition. The passage quoted above relies on the social embeddedness of both '*inyenzi*' and '*Inkotanyi*' as terms of threat, posing no danger to those who are not so classified and justifying death to those who are. Calling an apolitical Tutsi '*inyenzi*' was invoking a connection to the RPF militia, and thus making the person so labeled into an object of fear. On the micro-level, when a speaker, S, hurls '*inyenzi*' as an epithet at a hearer, H, S's speech act gains force from the social and political context of exiled Tutsis trying to fight their way back into Rwanda. On the macro-level, S's epithet-hurling speech act is part of a network of similar speech acts that served the political and economic ends of Hutu extremists. As DesForges points out, "Both on the radio and through public meetings, authorities worked to make the long-decried threat of RPF infiltration concrete and immediate."⁶² Authorities disseminated false information, offered tangible economic incentives for participation in fighting the RPF and eliminating all Tutsi, and gave destitute young men hope for a future with more security and prosperity. They seasoned reluctant participants by drawing them into action, "first by encouraging them to pillage, then to destroy homes, then to kill the occupants of the homes."⁶³ Propaganda was a key element of the implementation of the genocide, but propaganda did not act alone outside of other social forces. As Claudine Kayitesi has said, "A genocide is a poisonous bush that grows not from two or three roots, but from a whole tangle that has moldered underground without anyone noticing."⁶⁴ In Rwanda, the planners were noticing, and to achieve their own social and political goals, they were cultivating that poisonous bush with language, music, rewards, and punishments. Ordinary Rwandans noticed some changes, but did not see the big picture.

⁶² Des Forges 1999, p. 10.

⁶³ Des Forges 1999, p. 11

⁶⁴ Hatzfeld 2007, p. 206.

Language did not do the whole job, but the infusion of linguistic violence into the social body engendered a breadth and depth of physical violence that went beyond war and into genocide.

Fifth and finally, as we shall see in detail in the following section, this use of ‘*inyenzi*’ is also action-engendering. Calling someone ‘*inyenzi*’ was signaling that they were to be killed. Calling them ‘*inzoka*’ (snake) often brought about a dismemberment of the person’s limbs, and death by exsanguination. This is tied to long-standing norms of how to treat snakes, as we shall see next.

To understand how speech acts involving deeply derogatory terms can do more than license other discursive actions and instead move into broader social and physical actions, we need a more detailed understanding of the framework we have developed so far. In the next section, I will develop a richer account of the structural components of certain sorts of language games, with an emphasis on testimony from Rwandans—survivors and perpetrators alike—about the role of speech in the preparation for and execution of the genocide.

4.2. *The Inferential Role of ‘Inyenzi’*

Imagine that in January 1994, during the preparatory phase, prior to the genocide, speaker S says to hearer H: “A is an *inyenzi*.” Unlike a hurled epithet, this involves three parties, and the target need not even know about the speech act. At the very least, S has undertaken an expressive commitment to the viability and value of using insect terms to speak about A. S undertakes a commitment to showing that cockroach-talk is viable (can be extended, further inferences can be drawn) and valuable (serves the purposes of the speech act and broader language game). What are some of the inferences we can make about calling A “cockroach”? Common inferences include that cockroaches are pests, dirty, ubiquitous, multiply rapidly, are hard to kill, *ought* to be killed, show emergent tendencies when in groups, are resilient, carry diseases, can go long periods without food or water, tend to only emerge at night when they are hard to see. Each of these inferences might be justified by S’s claim that A is a cockroach, although of course we can see that the use is metaphorical. If H says, “But I have seen A during the day,” this would not undermine S’s assertion. One can imagine S replying something like, “Yes, but it is at night that A does the work of the *Inkotanyi*”, thus solidifying the reference. Further, with this utterance, S has accepted and endorsed this particular language game, which I call *reductive classification*, here applied to the Tutsi.

During the preparatory phase, what S was doing was as much about S and H as it was about A. S was cultivating a shared understanding with H that A was a kind of being that should be eliminated, and that S and H

were on the same side, the side to do that job. The expressive commitment in this kind of case is a political litmus test; if H takes up the expressive commitment by using the same vocabulary, then S is reassured, at least mildly, that they are part of a united group. If H challenges S, perhaps saying, "I don't like it when you talk about my neighbor that way," then H is now marked as *ibytso*, a traitor or "accomplice of the enemy," and soon will be at risk.⁶⁵ Expressive commitments thus play a significant role in enacting the insider/outsider function.

In addition to undertaking expressive commitments, when S asserts "A is an *inyenzi*," S also licenses H to make specific assertions about A. Think of '*inyenzi*' as having a network of possible inferential next-steps; these are inferences one is licensed to draw. H is now allowed to assert other elements of the inferential role of 'cockroach' in speaking about A, based on S's having issued those licenses in asserting the initial claim.⁶⁶ Such employment of the inferential role of '*inyenzi*/'cockroach' would allow H to go on to say that (in some sense) A is nocturnal, a domestic pest, likely to multiply rapidly, hard to completely eliminate, spreads disease, shows emergent tendencies when in groups, and so on. These would each be asserted 'in some sense,' because the epithet is actually metaphorical, so the extensions are best interpreted with some flexibility. When '*inyenzi*' only applied to RPF soldiers, then 'nocturnal' as an inferential consequence may well have been best interpreted both literally and metaphorically, but when '*inyenzi*' was later spread to all Tutsi, 'nocturnal' was better interpreted metaphorically, indicating covert activities. Attention to the metaphors used on RTLM and in *Kangura* shows that the metaphor within this epithet was indeed extended in applying it to Tutsi. Notice also that S does not say that A is a Tutsi. In the context of early 1990s Rwanda, however, both S and H would know that in practice, in their local language games, this term was restricted to Tutsi. Practice rules the scope of the term. By the time of the genocide, the extension 'should be eliminated' came to be a rather immediate extension. This increased immediacy of the extermination-inference helped prepare the perpetrators for genocidal actions. This epithet, and its many uses in many kinds of speech acts, was only one way that changing discursive practices were used to change behavioral norms and expectations.

"She's a Tutsi" is an only apparently more benign case; within the perpetration phase of the genocide, it could engender diverse actions ranging from protection to murder depending upon who is speaking to

⁶⁵ Des Forges 1999, p. 3.

⁶⁶ Brandom 1998. *Making it Explicit*, Harvard University Press.

whom, when, and where. As André Sibomana said, “Woe betide those whose identity cards bore the word ‘Tutsi’: those five letters amounted to a death sentence, with immediate execution.”⁶⁷ What seemed at first to be a mere classification, part of a name-game, became socially embedded in a variety of aspects of Rwandan life, and the action-engendering aspects of the mere classification became unmistakable.

In understanding the inferential roles of particular derogatory terms, we must also pay attention to the changing social and political contexts within which the terms are used, because these contexts shape the inferential roles. This is why we needed to think about Rwandan history in § 2. It is also why intentions just do not get us far enough in understanding the power of these terms and the speech acts that deliver them. As Léopold Twagirayezu, a convicted *génocidaire* from the Bugasera region, says, “It is awkward to talk about hatred between Hutus and Tutsis, because *words changed meaning after the killings*.”⁶⁸ He adds,

Before, we could fool around among ourselves and say we were going to kill them all, and the next moment we would join them to share some work or a bottle. Jokes and threats were mixed together. We no longer paid heed to what we said. We could toss around awful words without awful thoughts. The Tutsis did not even get very upset. I mean, they didn’t draw apart because of those unfortunate discussions. Since then we have seen: *those words brought on grave consequences*.⁶⁹

If Léopold is right, then even without a specific intention to harm, these initially thoughtless anti-Tutsi speech acts did cause harm. At the time, the words raised no red flags, generating little attention to the broader implications of their speech acts. Further, speakers using the terms might not have been particularly authoritative (compared to the speeches on the radio, for example), and the contexts of utterance might have diffused any sense of danger. Nevertheless, we can see that the casualness of bantering about murder and the increasing use of derogations created openings for speech acts that enacted licenses for these very actions. A radio announcer saying, “Clean the Nyamata church of its cockroaches” would have institutional authority, but as social organization fell apart, authority became diffused. Anyone could utter that sentence and get results.

These speech acts occurred within dynamic language games, which changed from the preparatory phase, through the perpetration, and yet again in the aftermath. Speech acts that, during the preparatory phase, seemed like mere words to the ordinary Rwandans later became

⁶⁷ Sibomana 1999, p. 87.

⁶⁸ Hatzfeld 2005, p. 218, Léopold speaking, emphasis added.

⁶⁹ Hatzfeld 2005, p. 218, emphasis added.

incitements to action, even when not in imperatives. By June 1994 the pragmatic force of both *inyenzi* (cockroach) and *ibiyitso* (collaborator/ traitor) made them death sentences.

Any epithet carries with it an expressive commitment to the viability and value of that term and its use in particular sorts of context. Those who introduce derogatory terms as propaganda know what they are doing: it is no accident that such terms tend to depict the target as insects, snakes, any creature humans would be quick to kill. The value of the terms lies in this combination of vilification and its inferential and material connection to extermination. Americans were taught to view the Japanese as insects in WWII, Germans were taught to view Jews as vermin, and ordinary Rwandan Hutu were taught, through the influx of hate speech from media sources and civil authorities, to speak about, think of, and treat Tutsi as cockroaches. The viability of '*inyenzi*' may be established without speakers having a thorough grasp of the political value of the term. The value can grow on them, and in doing so, will reshape the social body, preparing it for greater violence.

In a rationalization that is typical of derogation-users across many contexts, Léopold offers Tutsi non-response as proof of the apparent innocuousness of the anti-Tutsi speech at the time.⁷⁰ Instead, we should see the apparent thoughtlessness of Hutu usage and the non-response of Tutsi as signs of practices in transition. Neither speakers nor audiences were fully in command of these speech acts, and so reactions were spotty, conclusions not drawn, actions not forthcoming. If indeed some Tutsi did see the linguistic violence for what it was, and still they did not respond, this non-response may be a measure of their own insecurity in the situation. A Tutsi aware of the threat posed by linguistic violence might feel caught in a double bind: speak up now and be punished now, or stay silent now and risk greater harm later.⁷¹ Challenging such speech would neither feel nor be safe. Angélique Mukamanzi, a Tutsi survivor, recalls that as a schoolgirl she had both Tutsi and Hutu friends, and that the Hutu "never said bad things." She says: "I felt the first fears when people began leaving the Bugasera after the clashes in 1992. Our paths then grew loud with more and more evil words."⁷²

⁷⁰ Surely this is not the only interpretation, but non-response from targeted groups is often cited as acceptance.

⁷¹ Andrew Altman considers a similar situation regarding speaking out against anti-semitic speech in his, "Freedom of Expression and Human Rights Law: The Case of Holocaust Denial," this volume.

⁷² Hatzfeld 2007, p. 81.

During the preparatory phase, social embeddedness is incomplete. We see this in Léopold's statement, which presents linguistic practices as dissociated from social behavior: nasty comments and friendly behavior could coexist peacefully (working together, sharing a beer). Such peaceful coexistence was perhaps made possible by not yet realizing the power of the language games they were playing and the role of these language games in the broader political struggle for power. The conventions associated with the anti-Tutsi speech acts were not yet fixed and so did not yet attach to anti-Tutsi behavior. In hindsight, however, he attributes causal power to these speech acts: "*those words brought on grave consequences.*" In hindsight, he could see them as action-engendering, engendering actions that were not obvious in advance.

The testimony of both survivors and perpetrators shows marked concern for the power of discourse to shape social and material reality, giving people permission to behave in ways that previously were untenable. Some of the speech acts cited include an increased use of derogatory terms for Tutsi, increasingly frequent associations of all Tutsi as RPF '*inyenzi*,' calling Hutu who were friendly with Tutsi '*ibiyitso*,' as well as increasing propaganda inciting fear of Tutsis and demanding specific exclusionary behaviors by Hutu.⁷³ Weakly construed, these linguistic behaviors were generating permission for exclusionary behaviors, thereby licensing entrenchment of a perceived or desired hierarchy. Strongly construed, these speech acts were part of a pattern that ended in genocide. We see this stronger view in the observations of Pio Mitungirehe, a *génocidaire* from Kibungo, who says,

Maybe we did not hate all the Tutsis, especially our neighbors, and maybe we did not see them as wicked enemies. But among ourselves we said we no longer wanted to live together. We even said we did not want them anywhere around us anymore, and that we had to clear them from our land. It's serious, saying that—it's already sharpening the machete.⁷⁴

Pio's denying initial attitudes of hate suggests that the speech acts were stronger than and did not arise from speakers' intentions, suggesting instead that the speech acts conditioned attitudes over time. Even ordinary Hutu were talking about "clearing" the Tutsi from the land, a euphemism for murder that was heard repeatedly in directives issued over RTLM during the genocide. Saying such a thing is "already sharpening the

⁷³ See Kimani, in Thompson, for an analysis of many speech acts issued on RTLM. Kimani argues that the level of inflammatory content rose dramatically beginning in January 1994. pp. 110–24.

⁷⁴ Hatzfeld 2005, p. 218.

machete” because it generates licenses or permissions within the group to say similar things, which may become entrenched practices, which then sanction non-linguistic actions to back up the speech acts.⁷⁵

Sometimes action-engendering permissions are built into an inferential role before the term is applied in a new way, so the power of specific speech acts to license material actions can sometimes be traced through the practices in which the concepts have the most play. In explaining the viciousness of the assaults on Tutsi, and why their bodies were mutilated, even posthumously, André Sibomana explains,

The extremist propaganda described Tutsi as cockroaches or snakes. For many uneducated peasants, if the official authorities state that Tutsi are snakes, it can't be wrong. If the local official of the commune orders people to kill snakes, it makes sense. When you kill a snake, you smash its head, then you cut it up in different places to make sure it's really dead. These very same forms of torture were inflicted on many Tutsi.⁷⁶

The direct and literal application of the whole network of snake-destroying behaviors to the Tutsi is really quite remarkable. The long-standing practice of killing snakes set a model of what is to be done with snakes, and these everyday behaviors in rural Rwanda set a conceptual framework for ‘snake.’ The application of ‘snake’ to Tutsi licensed the application of a host of other terms that are part of the inferential role of ‘snake.’ This cultivated anti-Tutsi attitudes and licensed inferences about what should be done, granting permissions for action. When told to kill the snakes, the question ‘how?’ would not arise. Rwandans already knew how to kill snakes, and knew that it was mandatory. The derogatory terms used in the propaganda were well chosen, meshing everyday linguistic and non-linguistic practices, to engender genocidal actions.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ We see the licenses or permissions more clearly if a speech act is repeated, rearranged, and used in a variety of contexts. The permission exists from the moment of utterance, even without follow-through. It can be undermined, though, by making it explicit, and then challenging it.

⁷⁶ Sibomana 1999. p. 71. See also Semelin p. 301 for a discussion of inscription of culture onto particular acts of violence. See also *Kangura* No. 40 (February 1993).

⁷⁷ Although ‘inyenzi’ is more commonly discussed in the English-language scholarship on the genocide, ‘inzoka’ was a very powerful and widespread term, reportedly even used by teachers to mock Tutsi children. The snake as a symbol of evil is basic to many cultures, including Rwanda. The extermination imperative is even stronger for snakes than for cockroaches, so of course the question arises about the relative power of the corresponding terms, speech acts, and the language games in which they appear. See Thomas Kamilindi’s discussion of his young daughter’s experience of being called a ‘snake’ during the genocide, at <http://www.rwandainitiative.ca/symposium/transcript/panel2/kamilindi.html>, Fergal Keene’s “The Rwandan Girl who Refused to Die.”

At this point, it is worth addressing a possible concern. Just how much work is being done by the social context? Do the words themselves, within the speech acts, matter much at all? If the words are just signals for action, any old word can be used (and many have been, during wars), without this elaborate apparatus of words carrying inferential roles, used in speech acts, and embedded in social and material practices. Sure, that works for codes. These derogatory terms are richer than code words, however, and their force is enacted across the population. People may use them casually, participating in a practice without being fully aware of the details of the practice. When a ten-year-old boy in the USA calls one of his classmates ‘fag,’ he is unlikely to fully understand the entire inferential role of that term, nor is he likely to think about, much less have mastery of, the broader social context of homophobia and hate crimes against homosexuals. Just the same, that child uses a term that brings a heavy social history and oppressive apparatus to bear on his classmate. The child probably knows that the term has negative power, and may even sense that it fulfills the insider/outsider function and may take it to meet the essentialism condition. I doubt the child has mastery of the full inferential role and its action outcomes. Although this speaker is a child, many adults speak with similar epistemic limitations, day in and day out. Few of our words lead to genocide, but we must consider our own diction and ask what apparatuses of power we invoke to control or harm others.

Asking how linguistic permissions are generated and then how those permissions grant behavioral licenses seems natural enough, but the question must not presuppose an untenable distinction between language and behavior. Speech acts *are* behavior. Using snake vocabulary to refer to humans in order to undermine their status is *doing* something—it is dehumanizing them. This expressive commitment—that using snake-talk to speak about Tutsi is viable and valuable—needs defense. In 1990s Rwanda, making this expressive commitment to the viability and value of using snake language to refer to Tutsi became one among many membership badges for the *interahamwe* and its supporters. Licensing or granting permission to derogatory speech acts is permitting action. The ultimate issue is the connection between verbal action and more macro-level physical action. To Naassan Munyandamutsa’s comment that words killed his country, we can imagine the cynical advertising-soaked American saying, “*words don’t kill people, people kill people.*”⁷⁸ In light of what has

⁷⁸ Drawing on the NRA slogan that guns don’t kill people, people kill people. Power reports that such a line was used by a Pentagon official chiding Prudence Bushnell for advocating radio jamming. Power, 2003, p. 372.

been argued here, this is too glib a response. Particular kinds of speech acts made it possible for some Rwandans to consider killing their neighbors and particular kinds of speech acts incited and sanctioned those murders. These were language games of a most serious kind.

5. Genocidal Language Games

Philosophers use Wittgenstein's concept of a language game to capture the idea that language is a human activity, with various goals—or sometimes apparently none—with various structures—ranging from minimal to complex—and with different degrees of inclusion. Some games involve a large percentage of a community; some seem to delimit community membership to “we who do this.” Language games include speech acts of many kinds, and utterances that might look syntactically like the same bit of speech might constitute quite different speech acts depending upon the games in which it occurs.⁷⁹ In everyday life, we tend to think of games as non-serious, frivolous, and unimportant. Nothing could be further from the truth. Games train us in ways of being, modes of agency, patterns of effectiveness. In developing the idea of genocidal language games, I do not seek to trivialize linguistic practices that were an important part of the cultivation of the *génocidaires*, but rather to emphasize the power of language in play, in practice, in action. A language game is language in use, and it gets its power from its embeddedness in human life. One language game might be mere silliness, another might be a power play; a language game might be all seriousness in its action, and it might even be a genocidal language game that is part of a process that destroys a people.

5.1. *Major Moves*

Asking about how speech acts sanction other speech acts and make permissible non-linguistic actions leads to questions about word/world relations, particularly the territory marked out as pragmatics in the late twentieth century. Over half a century ago, in “Some Reflections on Language Games,” Wilfrid Sellars posited that a language game would have three general categories of moves.⁸⁰ *Language entry transitions* take a speaker from a physical and social context *into* a language game. This would seem to fit initial naming of things and persons. Internal transitions within the language game, *language-language moves*, enable participants to make inferences based upon other moves that have already been made in

⁷⁹ The hierarchy of the model is this: linguistic practices are constituted by language games, and language games are constituted by speech acts.

⁸⁰ Sellars 1954, pp. 204–28.

the game. A can talk about B's dog, based only on what B has said about the dog, even if A never encountered B's dog. *Language exit transitions* take the player from inside the game to a position outside the game.⁸¹ These moves carry the action-engendering force of the game into the world.

§ 5.1.a. Language Entry Moves

Language *entry* transitions are the ways that "one comes to occupy a position in the game"; the movement is from world to word.⁸² Observation sentences, such as "This is red," were what Sellars had in mind. These utterances take a speaker from a perception to a position in a language game; notice that, pragmatically speaking, these are pretty basic speech acts. (They do not seem, on the surface, to engender any action.) Sellars calls these 'transitions' instead of 'moves,' perhaps to respect Wittgenstein's denial that naming something is actually even a move in a language game. Wittgenstein says,

For naming and describing do not stand on the same level: naming is a preparation for description. Naming is so far not a move in the language-game—any more than putting a piece in its place on the board is a move in chess. We may say: nothing has so far been done, when a thing has been named. It has not even got a name except in the language-game. (*Philosophical Investigations* § 49)

Wittgenstein is right about setting up the chess board, with its two players each equally outfitted from the start. Looking at other games, though, we can see that not all entry transitions are equal. If you enter soccer as the goalie, that is quite a different thing than entering as a wing. Each entrance carries with it different powers and responsibilities from the outset. Any game that has positions will work the same way. So we can see that each entry will shape a range of permissible internal moves, and probably also shape the permissible exit transitions. How much this is settled from the very start will vary with the game.

It is possible that the Belgians who instituted Rwandan identity cards may have thought that they were simply labeling observable properties that mark different kinds of persons, "This one is Tutsi. That one is Hutu." Even so, many Rwandans today deny that such direct observation would ever have been possible.⁸³ It would be a mistake to think of the

⁸¹ Sellars distinguishes between *moves*, which are transitions internal to the game, and *transitions*, which involve "a situation which is not a position in the game and a situation which is a position in the game" (Sellars 1954, p. 210).

⁸² Sellars 1954, p. 210.

⁸³ See Sibomana 1999, pp. 82–7. Prior to the 1931 institution of identity cards, Sibomana says, ethnic identity was somewhat fluid: "a cattle-owning Hutu could enter the Tutsi group, while an impoverished Tutsi could become a Hutu" (87). See also Chretien's history, and Lyons and Straus, p. 81.

world-to-word relation as emerging because the world prompts the word, even in the case of something as simple as “This is red,” given the variety of words that something red in the world can prompt: ‘*rouge*,’ ‘*rojo*,’ ‘*rosso*,’ ‘*rot*,’ ‘*rood*,’ to name a few. Further, increased Hutu use of ‘*inyenzi*’ and ‘*inzoka*’ was not a response to a brute fact of nature about the Tutsi. To believe so would be to blame the victim, and to overlook the ontological slip from word to world. It would be to miss the power play that produces the discourse that shapes the social body. Rwandan journalist Thomas Kamilindi recalls that his young daughter was disturbed by ‘*inzoka*’:

One day somebody said, “That one is a snake. They have to kill her.” She still wasn’t even three years of age at the time. She said to me, “Daddy, am I a snake? Am I really a snake? . . .”⁸⁴

Even a child can tell when the application of a name or label is an entrance into a hostile game.

The world-to-word relationship centers on people attaching words to the world. The metaphysics of this is quite subtle, although most of the time we would simply say that a person sees the thing and names it. But what makes it possible for a person to see a thing? Speaking several years after the genocide, innocent Rwililiza says, “Here in Rwanda, it’s a big deal to be Hutu or Tutsi. In a marketplace, a Hutu can spot a Tutsi at fifty yards, and vice-versa, but admitting that there is a difference is taboo, even among ourselves.”⁸⁵ Take typical Americans to that marketplace and we will not observe this difference that is so basic to Rwandan social ontology, because we do not have the language games ready to hand to enable us to perform this task. The micro-level issues involved in carving the world up into nameable units are complex and well discussed by Sellars and many others since.

Name games are various but share some basic structures. There is a first use. That first use, say of a newborn child’s name, puts the child’s name into use, into the game, as it were, and forges a connection between the child and what is said about her. The use of a name, by a non-baptizing speaker for the first time, may work to get a speaker into a game as well. In classes, it is much easier for students who did not previously know each other to cross-refer during discussion (“I’d like to return to Mary’s point”) if everyone in the group has already *used* each other’s name. In doing so, they have entered the name-game, and then the use of any one particular name is not an awkward announcement of undue attention. Of course, these students already had names long before entering the class, but unless

⁸⁴ <http://www.rwandainitiative.ca/symposium/transcript/panel2/kamilindi.html>

⁸⁵ Hatzfeld 2007, p. 108.

they are all named within the context of this classroom, we see the all-too-familiar phenomenon of just a few people in the class having names familiar to and used by all. This example captures the specificity of what can be permissible or impermissible within a given language game, and also illustrates the nesting and overlapping of language games. Most of the time, we join ongoing games. If speaker A calls person B a racist name while speaking with person C, A signals that he is participating in an ongoing racist practice. If C then uses the term, C gets into the game. If C challenges A's use of the term, then not only does C not get into that game, but C attacks the game. Silence leaves the game intact, and leaves open the question whether C will play.⁸⁶

§ 5.1.b. Language–Language Moves

Once one is within the language game, other moves become permissible from that position. These internal moves within the language game, *language–language moves*, are transitions from one speech act to another; the anchors of these transitions (positions) are often inferences based on approved patterns. S says that A is a member of the RPF, so then H is permitted to apply the epithet ‘*inyenzi*’ to A because the practice of calling RPF soldiers ‘*inyenzi*’ was already established as a simple inference within Hutu circles in the early ‘90s. When I say, “JJ is a dog,” you may ask what breed JJ is, whether he needs a lot of exercise, whether he is friendly or scares the neighbors. There are, of course, limits to automatic inferential licenses in any language game; mastery of the game requires mastery of these limits. If you already knew, for example, that JJ is human, and so inferred that I was using ‘dog’ metaphorically, then the language–language moves would change accordingly. In Rwanda, Hutu extremists had a lot at stake in making unjustified inferences (from ‘Tutsi’ to ‘*inyenzi*’) stick. Without them, ordinary Hutu would have feared Tutsi less, and would have been unlikely to participate in the genocide. To keep and expand political power and to gain control of more land and resources, Hutu extremists needed ordinary Hutu to believe that ordinary Tutsi were a threat to their own lives and well-being. Sliding from the *Inkotanyi* being *inyenzi* to all Tutsi being *inyenzi* is a strong start.

§ 5.1.c. Language Exit Moves

As we have seen from the social embeddedness condition as applied to deeply derogatory terms, real-life language games are integrated into ways of life, and so actions within the game result in changed permissions governing behaviors beyond the game. For example, when a patient sees

⁸⁶ Simple silence lets things be, but of course there are game–stopping silences, and silences that can change the course of a game.

a doctor, she typically explains her symptoms, and the doctor makes a diagnosis and offers a prescription. So far we are still talking about speech. When the doctor says, “Take two of these pills and stay home from work,” the patient is now authorized to move beyond the give-and-take of discourse by actually ingesting the pills and taking the time to rest. The doctor’s prescribing speech act is a *language exit transition*, moving from a location within the language game to a behavior that is not a position in the game. It is an exit-move.

Imperatives are obvious language exit moves, which is to say that they are action-engendering discourse. J.L. Austin’s categories of verdictives, exercitives, and commissives would generally count as language departures. Trying to explain why he participated in the massacre of Tutsis, Pancrace Hakizamungili says:

When you receive a new order, you hesitate but you obey, or else you’re taking a risk. When you have been prepared in the right way by the radios and the official advice, you obey more easily, even if the order is to kill your neighbors. The mission of a good organizer is to stifle your hesitations when he gives you instructions. For example, when he shows you that the act will be total and have no grave consequences for anyone left alive, you obey more easily, you don’t worry about anything. You forget your misgivings and fears of punishment. You obey freely.⁸⁷

Hesitation is stifled through the cultivation of perceptions of inevitability and impunity. Organizers create a climate of acceptance through specific kinds of speech acts: (a) preparatory speech acts—such as using epithets—that train potential participants to dehumanize their targets, (b) clear and official commands, (c) clear targets, (d) threats against those who resist, and (e) promises of rewards to those who participate. Authority is key here, the authority of the speaker who issues the threats and promises makes a difference to how easily misgivings can be set aside. In early stages in Rwanda, authority set the everyday derogations into motion, but once the genocide was underway, nearly any identification of Tutsi had sufficient authority. Here we see Foucault’s point about the productivity of power; authority, once concentrated, became spread throughout the Hutu social body.

The use of an epithet—a naming game—can involve all three types of moves. A transition from world-to-word can be seen in the application of ‘*inyenzi*’ to the RPF *inkotanyi* (invincibles/warriors), who struck at night, seemed to come out of nowhere, and could not be stopped. Analogical observation underlies initial uses of that particular term to that particular

⁸⁷ Hatzfeld 2005, p. 71. See also Prunier 1995, pp. 141–2.

group. The application of ‘*inyenzi*’ spread beyond the invading militia by an extension of the term to all who share their ethnicity. This is a simple, but common, logical error: “All *inyenzi inkotanyi* are Tutsi, therefore all Tutsi are *inyenzi*.” This language-language move has significant implications for those to whom the term is newly applied. A speaker who then uses the term in this new way, in referring to a particular person, would be making a language exit move. While still in the game, the speaker has now also done something beyond the game; he/she is bringing the weight of anti-Tutsi social and political policy to bear upon this individual. *Language exit moves are the site of action-engenderment.*

5.2. *Exit Moves and Status-Functions*

We began by rejecting the conception of deeply derogatory terms as being best understood primarily as insulting slurs designed to communicate one person’s dislike, displeasure, or disapproval of another. We rejected the view that the use of a derogatory term is best understood as the communication of the speaker’s intention (mental state) to the hearer. As we have seen, words can be used, and have power, without the speaker having the intention that such a theory implies. Pio might not be in command of ‘*inyenzi*’ when he uses it, just as the American schoolboy might not really understand ‘fag,’ but each does damage with these terms just the same. Without denying the potential utility of intentions for some explanations, we instead understand deeply derogatory terms as operating within social practices that sanction certain inferences to go with each term, giving it a role in our patterns of sanctioned speech acts. These terms, used in speech, enact the power of one group over another.

Understanding certain aspects of the exit moves present in racist speech—understood as a social practice—is clarified by the concept of status-functions. John Searle originally introduced status-functions to explain institutional realities such as how certain pieces of paper can be money. Searle argues that we move from brute facts and merely physical objects (atoms, wood, paper) to social or institutional objects by way of collective consciousness and through collective assigning of status-functions to objects. These pieces of paper are money because *we say* they count as money; this *saying* involves both the speech act and its supporting behaviors. We *treat* that paper and those metal bits as money by trading with them, and so they come to *be* money. Status-functions, of the form ‘X counts as Y in C,’ where X is an object, an event, or even a human being, and Y is something more complex, crucially depend on collective acceptance of treating X as a Y within C by members of that community. Citizenship is a Y function, but so is slavery. Neither is a brute fact, and each is possible only within contexts that can make sense of the heightened

or diminished powers of these statuses. Searle highlights the positive powers often associated with the imposition of a new status: “in general, the creation of a status-function is a matter of conferring some new power.”⁸⁸

In most language games that use racist derogations, the derogation is a *function* attached to a person, whose status changes because of the imposition of the function.⁸⁹ Racist derogations are status-functions, for they tell the target, “You count as a so-and-so here.” With exponential growth from 1990 to 1994, ‘*inyenzi*’ became a social-kind word, delimiting a group of people who are slated for certain sorts of treatment by others.⁹⁰ Today, the government of Rwanda wants all use of ‘Tutsi’ and ‘Hutu’ stopped, so that Rwandans can unite *as* Rwandans instead of living out divisive ethnicities.⁹¹ The imposition of racist status-functions diminishes the power of the target and increases the power of others who are not members of that socially constituted kind. The language exit moves are built right into the inferential roles of the terms, because these terms are what they are because of the subsequent treatment they purport to justify. Status-functions are action-engendering exit moves.

The action-engendering power of speech acts containing derogatory terms arises from an interaction between the status-function and the inferential role of the derogatory term applied. Status functions carry with them inferential roles that have treatment-consequents. If X counts as money in C, then A is rational to work for it, save it, spend it, etc. In general, A is not rational to burn it, waste it, or simply throw it away. Couching these action-consequents in terms of rationality makes sense because rationality is largely about making justified inferences. This raises the question: which treatments are purportedly justified by a particular status-function? This question cannot be answered in the abstract, because the answer will always be anchored by a particular social and historical context. In the case of Rwandan Tutsi, we saw that the status-function

⁸⁸ Searle 2007, p. 95.

⁸⁹ Although Searle does not apply his theory directly to racist and ethnic and sexist derogatory terms, he does express concern about shifting institutional identifications around the world, citing Bosnia, for example, and asserting that although it may seem like brute force prevails over institutional facts, the opposite is the case. “The guns are ineffectual except to those prepared to use them in cooperation with others and in structures, however informal, with recognized lines of authority and command. And all of that requires collective intentionality and institutional facts.” (117).

⁹⁰ One *génocidaire* says that before 1990, there was no ‘Hutu’ or ‘Tutsi,’ and blames the RPF for the reemergence of emphasis on these categories. See Lyons and Straus, *Intimate Enemy*, p. 81. This apparently self-serving claim nevertheless reveals the need for further empirical study of the history of these terms and their correlates.

⁹¹ See Republic of Rwanda 2001, and Lacey 2004.

'inyenzi' led to vilification and then genocide. As the Bikindi case (below) will show, the *inyenzi* status-function became so entrenched that, during the genocide, the action-engendering force of the derogatory term came to be applied *even without explicit use of the derogatory term*.

Action-engendering speech acts come in many grammatical guises. In Wittgenstein's iconic complete—albeit primitive—language game, which we discussed earlier, a builder calls out a word, "Slab!," "Block!," etc., and an assistant brings a particular object in each case. In everyday speech, imperatives wear their status as action-engendering on their sleeves, but many other grammatical forms and many kinds of speech acts engender action in more subtle ways. A simple question or a straightforward indicative declaration can, within a particular context, prompt immediate action from others. "Why was this room not cleaned?" asks the hotel manager, or perhaps she says, "That floor is still dirty." Each of these would be action-engendering if said to someone whose responsibility included cleaning that room or that floor.

The story of Simon Bikindi's visit to Gisenyi prison unfolds like a horrible parody of the "Slab!" language game. One of the most famous songwriters and performers in Rwanda, Simon Bikindi became a leading propagandist for the Hutu power movement. On the occasion described below, he visited the prison with Hassan Ngeze, the editor of *Kangura*. These visitors were not only media celebrities, but also people of very high rank in the Hutu-Power structure. Notice the patterns of speech and action revealed in the following summary of real events, taken from the transcript of Bikindi's trial before the ICTR.

25. In June 1994, SIMON BIKINDI went to Gisenyi prison in the company of Hassan Ngeze, Major Kabera, the prison Director Gasirabo and more than ten body guards. The prison guard Rukara called out the names of 12 prisoners who came out of their cells and were told to stand beside the prison latrine pit. Simon BIKINDI then asked the prison director Gasirabo why the 12 prisoners were still alive whilst in Kigali all Tutsis had been killed. The prison director Gasirabo responded that he had been given these prisoners to keep them and he did not know if they were to be killed. Ngeze then asked all the Tutsis prisoners to raise their hands in the air, and 10 of the prisoners who were Tutsi did. Reading from a list of twelve prisoners, Simon BIKINDI then called out the names of Tutsi prisoners, starting with Matabaro and Kayibanda. Matabaro came forward to stand near to where Simon BIKINDI stood, and he was hit in the back of the head with the back of an axe by one of the bodyguards. Simon BIKINDI then called out the name of Kayibanda who was also hit on the back of the head with the back of an axe by BIKINDI's body guard. Matabaro and Kayibanda both died as a result of the blows. Eight of the other persons whose names were on the list, all Tutsis, were killed by BIKINDI's bodyguards, using bayonets. *By reading out from a*

*list of Tutsi prisoners, by asking why they had not yet been killed, Simon BIKINDI instigated, and aided and abetted the immediate killings of two of the prisoners, namely Matabaro and Kayibanda. In respect of the other eight Tutsi prisoners who were killed immediately afterwards by Simon BIKINDI's bodyguards, by his initial question as to why all the Tutsi prisoners had been not been killed before his arrival at the prison, he instigated, and aided and abetted their subsequent killings by his bodyguards. (Italics added.)*⁹²

The court's judgment, marked here by italics, indicates that they see the action-engendering work of Bikindi's speech acts. Bikindi simply calls out the name of a prisoner, the prisoner comes forward, and a guard deals him a fatal blow on the head. Clearly André Sibomana was not exaggerating when he said, as quoted earlier, "Woe betide those whose identity cards bore the word 'Tutsi': those five letters amounted to a death sentence, with immediate execution."⁹³ Calling out the prisoners' names, directing them to the side of the latrine pit (often a prelude to death), and telling the Tutsi to raise their hands—these are all language-exit moves, engendering actions from either the Tutsis or the guards.

When is a question not a question? When it is an indirect speech act. Simon Bikindi's question about "why the 12 prisoners were still alive whilst in Kigali all Tutsis had been killed," is an indirect speech act, directly parallel to the hotel manager saying, "Why is this room not clean?" to the housekeeper. Bikindi does not *assert* that they should already be dead, nor does he utter the imperative "Kill them!" Just the same, Bikindi's question—in the context of the identify-and-destroy practices of the genocide—made the requisite action clear enough to all the parties involved.⁹⁴

Indirect speech acts are socially embedded in many practices. They communicate more than they literally say because the speaker relies on a mutually shared set of background beliefs, goals, assumptions, and mutually shared rational strategies for interpreting linguistic and non-linguistic behavior.⁹⁵ With an indirect speech act, there is room for interpretation, but context usually limits the possibilities. Searle comments, "For a sentence like 'Can you reach the salt?' or 'I would appreciate it if you would get off my foot', it takes some ingenuity to imagine a situation in which their utterances would not be requests."⁹⁶ When Bikindi asks why the

⁹² ICTR 2005. The Prosecutor v. Simon Bikindi, Case No. ICTR-01-72-T, paragraph 25, p. 8, as transcribed: <http://www.unictr.org/Portals/0/Case/English/Bikindi/indictment/bikindi05.pdf>

⁹³ Sibomana 1999, p. 87.

⁹⁴ Tutsi lack of resistance does not prove indeterminacy of the speech act; testimony from perpetrators and survivors indicates that Tutsi rarely begged for their lives when confronted by their killers.

⁹⁵ Searle 1979, pp. 31–2.

⁹⁶ Searle 1979, p. 31.

Tutsi prisoners are not dead, and then calls them forward by name, the actions of the warden and the guards make the contextually required interpretation of Bikindi's speech acts clear. Everyone understood what to do; the actions engendered and the exit positions indicate the internal inferential moves that were made. The ICTR conclusion that Bikindi's speech acts prove that "he instigated, and aided and abetted their subsequent killings by his bodyguards" further underscores the way in which these simple utterances, used in a complex context, played multiple roles in this deadly language game.

The Rwandan linguistic practices that developed in the early 1990s involve a variety of kinds of speech acts, many of them indirect, so we must note the entry moves of getting into the anti-Tutsi rhetoric game or practices, the moves within the practices, and the exit to non-linguistic behaviors, including rape, murder, and ultimately genocide. We must be sensitive to the role of extra-linguistic context in settling the question of what was done through an utterance. These very broad categories of moves within language games help to track the linguistic practices that generated a sense of permissibility amongst many Hutu for the genocide.

6. Conclusion

At the outset of this analysis, we considered Foucault's remark that power "needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression."⁹⁷ Particular kinds of linguistic practices conveyed through language games produce a social body capable of enacting genocide. We have been working with a simplified model of genocide, as the complete extermination of a people. Now it is time to note that genocide encompasses more than physical death, it includes the destruction of a culture, extreme psychological damage that allows people to live but feel as if they died, and more. The constant, deep, and widespread derogation of a group should be seen as part and parcel of genocide, not only as an antecedent to it.

The practice of derogation is made up of many kinds of language games, which comprise many kinds of speech acts. These derogatory acts, games, and practices are repressive *prima facie* but even more, they produce a positive set of licenses and permissions which foster behaviors that both construct the positive identities of all parties to the games, and permit destructive actions which undermine the very logic of the game and

⁹⁷ Foucault 1980, p. 119.

practice. What's the harm if we give someone a new label, like 'sausage-face'? Perhaps none, if the term stays isolated, a mere child's identification game, unembedded in social practices and systems of power. In real life, derogatory terms act as status-functions, which shape a person's life prospects in significant ways. It is through the language-exit dimension of these status functions that we can see their action-engendering power.

The philosophical analysis of genocidal language games presented here argues that the derogatory terms used against Tutsi during the Rwandan genocide were action-engendering. I argued that the widespread use of such terms played a significant role in bringing about the Rwandan genocide. The first step was the entrance of the derogatory terms to the linguistic practices—the language games—of the people. Naming the Tutsi as '*inyenzi*' was the start of the game. Next, the inferential roles of the terms and the full character of their status-functions developed through use. As these language-language moves developed, the kinds of inferences people became licensed to make expanded and became more entrenched. Finally, and most emphatically, we saw that the power of the terms was brought beyond discourse into material action through the exit moves that were licensed. At first these exit moves were forms of discrimination at school and at work, perhaps extending to the social world of the neighborhood soccer match, but often limited to institutional settings where individuals could beg off their own responsibility. Ultimately, because of the action-engendering force of derogatory terms like '*inyenzi*' and '*inzoka*,' morally prohibited actions like murder, rape, mayhem, and mutilation came to be regarded as socially appropriate and even required.

To understand the full force of these deeply derogatory terms, we must remember how they exemplify the five features set out in this analysis. Functional variability is important, but evidence suggests that the development of the insider/outsider function is key to dividing a society and keeping it divided. If the inferential roles of the derogations map onto divisions that are perceived as essential kinds, the division becomes further entrenched. In Rwanda we saw that the road to genocide included taking Hutu and Tutsi to be essential traits, and '*inyenzi*' to mark the evil of the Tutsi, even when she or he might seem just fine on the surface. Genocidal language games require the essentialism condition, because if a cockroach can give birth to a butterfly, death is not the only solution.

This suggests that the harms of speech acts using derogatory terms are significantly weakened to the degree that the essentialism condition is weakened. If true, this could help explain why in some contexts, some individuals escape the harms of speech acts involving derogatory terms that deeply plague others. The escapees deny the essentialism, seeing the term used as a political action on the part of the user, and so escape the

naturalizing force of that speech act. Understanding the saying to be an action, they take it to represent someone else's view of the world and of them. By resisting taking what is said to depict reality, the escapees demystify it. Alertness to the normative import is key.

The social embeddedness of some derogatory terms gives them their breath and their depth. If derogatory terms are idiosyncratic, like 'sausage-face,' they might reveal something about the speaker or the few people who play the game. Deeply derogatory terms are not idiosyncratic, but become embedded in their own inferential networks, as well as in social practices that include how people are treated. Deeply derogatory terms are nested within practices of injustice. They empower some people, and weaken others. The social embeddedness condition was key to the entrenchment of *'inyenzi'* and its spread in frequency of use. Genocidal language games need broad engagement to do their work.

"She's an *inyenzi*," while grammatically akin to "She's a child," is a speech act of a very different order when appropriately embedded in a climate of fear and a culture of distrust. Social embeddedness and essentialism work together to create a coherent order of social practices, norms, and related concepts. Their partnership is crucial: essentialism naturalizes and reifies the categories, while social embeddedness obscures the political context that these categories construct and maintain. This stops questions before they start. Switching from calling the RPF guerilla fighters *'Inkotanyi'* (invincible), to calling them *'inyenzi'* (cockroach) as a descriptive derogation, is a fairly straightforward speech act typical of wartime propaganda. Spreading this epithet across the entire Tutsi population fostered essentialism, opening the door to genocide.

Once we are aware of the different kinds of moves within language games, we can be more sensitive to entries, internal language-language moves, and language-departure or exit moves. In genocide, the exit moves are so dramatic, the consequences of these actions so overwhelming, that we see the power of the conceptual framework in stark relief. In relatively peaceful political systems, our naming practices, our patterns of deep derogation (tied to systems of oppression), and the inferences that these terms sanction, also do damage to the individuals upon whom they most obviously work. Less obvious, but also important, is the damage this set of practices does to the society as a whole and to the individuals who live and work within these practices.

Gandhi is said to have held that "a language is an exact reflection of the character and growth of its speakers." If so, then perhaps an analysis of the derogatory terms and other forms of linguistic violence prevalent in a society is an important diagnostic of the level of material violence already present or potentially developing. We must understand linguistic violence,

and find ways to fix the problems it reveals. Saying is a kind of doing, generalizing out to other kinds of action through the inferential content of what we say and through the permissions and licenses we thereby grant. Linguistic violence is the canary in the mine. We ignore it at our peril.

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