

<b>Institution:</b> King's College London		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 27 English Language and Literature		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Foregrounding Rwandan Voices: Supporting Artists and Survivors to Change Public Perceptions of Past and Present		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2012–2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Dr Zoe Norridge	Senior Lecturer, English & Comparative Literature	From 2012
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2013–2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		

### 1. Summary of the impact

Current Rwandan government figures state that over a million people died during the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. The country's infrastructure was destroyed, family memory ruptured, Rwandan society left severely wounded. Given the sensitive political context, KCL research shows artistic testimony plays a key role in opening up new ways to remember genocide victims and explore post-conflict identities. However, in the first decade after genocide, too often stories were told by outsiders with little understanding of Rwanda's cultural and historical complexity.

Zoe Norridge's work addresses this bias, building on eight years of research into Rwandan agency and artistic practice, to foreground Rwandan voices and assist Rwandan photographers, writers and survivors in reaching new audiences. Her projects focus on photography (the most underdeveloped post-genocide art) and survivor testimonies (where there were significant gaps in circulation). All are grounded in collaborations with institutions in Rwanda (Kigali Center for Photography, Huza Press) and the UK (Autograph ABP, Ishami Foundation). As a result:

- Rwandan artists developed new skills and networks and accessed new global audiences.
- Survivor voices reached wider publics through translation and inclusion in educational fora.
- Exhibition visitors, radio listeners and schools increased their understanding of Rwanda.

### 2. Underpinning research

The 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda is too often remembered through the eyes of outsiders in sensationalist terms with a focus on the infliction of extreme violence. Peer-reviewed KCL research shows that foregrounding Rwandan voices through the arts can enrich understandings of life during and after genocide, change reductive assumptions about violence in the region and reveal areas of resistance and resilience. This is substantiated by four key findings.

#### **International media focus on violence may miss nuance of ongoing suffering.**

KCL research, drawing on close readings of key imagery, shows how visiting journalists have instrumentalised survivor experiences to retrospectively witness violence not covered in 1994 by Western media [1]. Photographers have shown wounded survivors amongst the dead so as to render visible the brutal killings not captured on film. Such images have a testimonial role. But asking survivors to stand in for the dead denies their agency and difficulties in the present [1]. For Rwanda to rebuild, attention must be drawn not only to past violence but to its legacies today.

#### **Artists can communicate the particularity of painful experiences.**

Literary theorists writing about previous genocides have often stressed the ways in which the enormity of such violence renders survivors' experiences 'unrepresentable'. KCL research identifies the innovative ways in which African writers can and do represent pain and generate empathy and/or activism in their readers [2]. This is achieved through formal and poetic innovation, exploration of chronic as well as acute pain, unpicking the range of meanings attached to pain and explorations of strategies for living with pain. Such aesthetic work, across a range of genres, complements and extends legal transitional justice processes and more factual witnessing [3,4].

### **Rwandan accounts convey humanity, complicate timescales and add new perspectives.**

Accounts of genocide by Rwandans and visitors present in the country in 1994 and immediately after are united in writing against genocide. However, the most compelling explorations of the antecedents to genocide, cultural understandings of the violence and personal human cost of genocide come from Rwandans themselves: from encounters with survivors related by visitors or directly through Rwandan storytelling [3]. Rwandan accounts tend to stress violence from 1959 onwards, intergenerational memory and the variety of responses from ordinary people, including areas of moral ambivalence [4]. Aesthetically complex, these representations show the quirks and particularities of experience that foreground humanity in resistance to genocidal ideology [1,2,4,5].

### **Understandings of the past are extended through ethical international collaboration.**

KCL's collaborative, practice-based research with Rwandan artists reveals how international collaboration can support the aesthetic development of testimonial art forms. Dialogical translation with Yolande Mukagasana uncovered ways in which her writing was shaped by outside forces and could be reworked with greater agency and cultural particularity for new audiences through, for example, inclusion of more Kinyarwanda phrases and replacement of French with Rwandan metaphors [5]. Similarly, collaborative work between Rwandan and Argentine photographers demonstrated that cross-cultural conversations can potentially enrich creative practice [6].

### **3. References to the research**

1. Norridge, Z. (2019). Photography, film and visibly wounded genocide survivors in Rwanda. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 21:1, pp. 47-70. DOI: 10.1080/14623528.2018.1522818.
2. Norridge, Z. (2013). *Perceiving Pain in African Literature*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. (Included as output in REF 2014).
3. Norridge, Z. (2013). Professional Witnessing in Rwanda: Human Rights and Creative Responses to Genocide. In A. Rowland & J. Kilby (eds), *The Future of Testimony: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Witnessing*. London: Routledge, pp. 129-143. (Requested by respected editors).
4. Norridge, Z. (2019). "Papaoutai?" Family memory, parental loss and Rwandan artists today. *Memory Studies*, advance online publication. (Blind peer reviewed).
5. Mukagasana, Y. (2019). *Not My Time to Die*. Z. Norridge (trans.). Kigali: Huza Press. (Included as output in REF 2021).
6. Norridge, Z. (2020) Photographing Loss: Drawing on Argentine Photography in Rwanda. *Wasafiri*, Special Issue, 35/4, 104, December, pp.35-46. (Blind peer reviewed).

### **4. Details of the impact**

Drawing on research findings about gaps in representations of Rwanda and the need for more Rwandan-authored narratives to deepen understandings of the country's difficult past and complex present, KCL-initiated collaborative projects have supported Rwandan voices and changed local and international perceptions of Rwanda's past through the Arts.

#### **Photography: capacity building with photographers, enriching audience perceptions.**

KCL research shows there is a lack of internationally circulating Rwandan-authored photography and that this curtails understanding of the genocide and its legacies today [1,6]. To address this, between 2014 and 2019 KCL engaged in a range of collaborations with photographers and cultural institutions to identify the reasons why this is the case and design interventions to address these underlying needs. These interventions facilitated photographers acquiring technical knowledge and new conceptual frameworks alongside access to international networks and new audiences. As a result, audiences have engaged with more complex representations of Rwanda and their perceptions of previously dehumanised groups became 'more human'. These projects supported the professionalisation of the Arts in Rwanda, leading to the longer-term viability and visibility of Rwandan-authored images. There have been 10 projects in this area, the following are highlights.

#### A full cycle of change: Kigali workshop and London exhibition (2013–14)

In November 2013, in response to the identification of limited technical skills and networks as key needs driving the lack of internationally-circulating Rwandan photography, Norridge convened a workshop in Kigali in collaboration with UK-based human rights and photography organisation Autograph ABP. The 10 participants reported increased technical proficiency and a newfound sense of artistic community: "I spent over seven years struggling with aperture, shutter speed and ISO. Now I understand how they work together to give me what I want"; "This was a rare

*opportunity [for photographers] to meet, share experiences and learn*". The photographers maintain this network, sharing knowledge, contacts and feedback. One, Jean Bizimana, decided to become a professional photographer as a result of the workshop: *"Dr Zoe's work made me who I am: from being an orphan who doesn't matter to being a well-respected photographer"* [A].

Images from this workshop and two further KCL initiatives were shown at an AHRC-funded exhibition in the Inigo Rooms, Somerset House, curated by Zoe Norridge (KCL) and Mark Sealy MBE (Autograph ABP). This exhibition addressed perceptions of Rwandans as less than human, generated by reductive press coverage during the genocide and enduringly problematic representational tropes afterwards, offering little understanding of Rwandan culture and agency [1]. *Rwanda in Photographs: Death Then, Life Now* challenged these prejudices by showcasing Rwandan creativity. Seen by 5,000 visitors and gaining international media coverage, it was the only group show of Rwandan-authored photography for the 20th anniversary of the genocide. Press comments included: *"Too often the country is reduced to images of violence and death, as seen through the eyes of outsiders. For this exhibition, Rwandans have challenged this gaze and now show us their country through their own eyes"* (*The British Blacklist*); *"Three cheers for an exhibition that is ordinary. Applause is deserved because it's about an African country but it's not about starvation, malnutrition, refugees, conflict, famine or environmental catastrophe"* (*Oneworld*); *"Each photographer offers their own unique insight into Rwanda"* (*Londonist*) [B]. Quantitative data was collected from exhibition visitors in collaboration with social psychologist Keon West (Goldsmiths). Drawing on inhumanisation measures developed by Leyens et al (2001), researchers measured the extent to which visitors perceived Rwandans as less than human before and after viewing the photographs. The results showed that after visiting the exhibition, participants saw Rwandans as statistically significantly 'more human' [C].

The accompanying event series extended this impact. KCL engaged with the Rwandan diaspora and High Commission through a commemoration ceremony and reception that brought the community into King's. Speaker events in the exhibition space connected artists across disciplines and provided a means for participants, who included three Rwanda-based photographers, to extend their networks. In addition, a workshop with photo editors from international NGOs, photo agencies and media outlets addressed the question of why international organisations consistently commissioned foreign photographers to work in Rwanda. Mark Sealy MBE explains: *"This workshop brought together key cultural gatekeepers who went on to shape a significant shift in working practices for NGOs and media outlets who now increasingly commission local photographers from African countries. The workshop provided a space for conversations that contributed to NGOs making policy changes to support this transformation in the sector"* [D].

This set of interventions demonstrated how research insights combined with needs identification led to collaborative interventions (workshop and exhibition) that generated change for specific groups (Rwandan photographers, UK exhibition visitors, commissioning editors), addressing the original research insight (lack of Rwandan imagery). Subsequent interventions have focused on early phases of this cycle, using research to address artistic needs.

#### Extending impact through specific training programmes and supportive partnerships (2015–19)

Two workshops in 2015 and 2019 addressed Rwandan photographers' collaboratively-identified need to expand their aesthetic languages to explore loss [2,6] and human rights, in order to extend their artistic practice and access fields where they had previously been absent [1, 6].

Material produced for the *Rwanda in Photographs* exhibition focused on changing perceptions of the present rather than on revisiting history, but King's research also shows that creative explorations of the past help with processing and humanising the ongoing cost of genocide [2,3]. In interviews, artists explained they were still seeking new visual languages to explore their personal stories, a finding confirmed in King's research on use of symbolism in Rwandan photography [1]. To address this, King's participated in the AHRC network Children of Political Violence, connecting artists in Rwanda and Argentina, a country with an internationally-recognised arts scene. In 2015, Norridge convened a workshop in Gisenyi (Rwanda) with mentoring from Lucila Quieto (Argentina) for four Rwandan photographers who lost their parents as children. South-South dialogue about symbolic languages of loss enabled photographers to explore their personal stories for the first time. All participants reported a paradigm shift in their conception of photography's potential. Gadi Habumugisha commented: *"I used to take pictures that other people and NGOs wanted me to take. But this time it was different. I had to create things in my mind and then take the photographs. When I saw Lucila's images I learnt that I can create something in me*

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*and then show it. I took pictures about absence, what I felt growing up in the orphanage, what the orphanage was like and the community there” [E].* These impacts endure in their practice today.

With increasing numbers of Rwandan photographers working professionally, KCL’s later collaborative workshop in Kigali in 2019 addressed a specific need for more literacy in human rights cultures, the focus of many international funding calls in the region. Facilitated by Billy Kahora (Kenya), Sarah Waiswa (Uganda) and Liz Hingley (UK), this brought together 8 photographers and 6 writers. Participants reported: increased understanding of international conceptions of human rights, greater confidence when conceptualising projects and applying for funding and realisation of the potential for the arts to open up new conversations in Rwanda’s relatively restricted political sphere. One commented: *“I had paid little attention to how pictures can convey powerful messages in terms of human rights cultures. This workshop opened my eyes and made me look at pictures differently” [F].* Since the workshop, 4 photographers obtained human rights related grants. One writer, Alain-Jules Hirwa, published two related pieces, finished a poetry collection on human rights and founded *Tea House*, a new literary magazine, saying: *“I realized that, if we want to tell our own stories, we should have platforms that understand us” [F].*

The 2014 exhibition professional stakeholder workshop underlined that for photography to develop as a sustainable sector in Rwanda (ensuring wider circulation of Rwandan-authored images) regional and international appreciation for Rwandan photography needed building. Since 2018, King’s has collaborated with Jacques Nkinzingabo’s Kigali Center for Photography. Norridge programmed 7 multi-partner events and designed the website for the Center’s first Kigali Photo Fest in 2019 [G], which connected local and international audiences with photography from Rwanda and the rest of Africa. Artists and public attendees deepened their understanding of photography in the region. *FOCUS* magazine commented: *“After the controversy over the absence of African artists at the 50th anniversary of the Rencontres d’Arles [the world’s most prestigious photography festival], the Kigali Photo Fest throws down the gauntlet to those curators and European experts who claimed last June that they ‘were unable to identify new networks and seemed to always be talking to the same esoteric set of people on the continent’” [G].*

### **Testimony: extending circulation of Rwandan survivor voices through translation.**

In 2019, KCL, in collaboration with Rwandan publisher Huza Press, brought a key Rwandan survivor testimony to new audiences for the first time through translation – increasing Rwandan and international understandings of the personal cost of genocide. King’s research established the importance of survivor voices for conveying compelling and nuanced narratives about Rwanda’s complex past [1,3,4]. However, many early survivor testimonies were published in French and Rwanda has changed languages to favour English. Rwandans who grew up in exile in Anglophone countries, and the new generation of young people educated in English, are unable to access key texts about their past. Lack of testimonies in translation also meant that students in Anglophone countries were encountering Rwanda through accounts by visiting outsiders.

Norridge changed this by translating Mukagasana’s *La mort ne veut pas de moi* (1997), the first survivor testimony to be published after the genocide, as *Not My Time to Die* (2019). This translation project had a significant impact on Mukagasana herself who clarified how and why she wrote the French edition two decades earlier and collaborated on updates including a new Afterword [H]. Publisher Huza Press commented: *“[This] translation has been our most successful publication to date in terms of distribution reach, publicity and sales (with close to 2000 copies sold so far world-wide). The new networks that publishing this book has built for us are important not just for reaching audiences with this particular title, but in enabling us to build a wider platform for Rwandan voices more broadly” [H].* Artists who participated in the production (Burundian photographer Chris Schwagga, Ugandan writer Doreen Baingana and Kenyan copyeditor Otieno Owino) and dissemination (Ishyo Arts Director Carole Karemera), also benefited from strengthening regional artistic networks. As a result, Anglophone Rwandans were able to read a key literary testimony for the first time and audiences were able to encounter Mukagasana and her testimony through events and media coverage in Rwanda, the UK, Nigeria (Aké Festival), Kenya and South Africa [H]. Anglophone educators are also now able to teach this foundational Rwandan-authored testimony [H].

### **Education: extending reach of Rwandan survivor testimony into schools.**

KCL’s ongoing collaboration with the Ishami Foundation has facilitated the use of survivor testimony in materials and events, providing new ways for educators to share Rwanda’s history

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through local perspectives and enriching teacher and student understandings of the past and its relevance. In 2017 Norridge was elected Chair of the majority-Rwandan trustee board and works closely with Rwandan survivor-founder and CEO Eric Murangwa Eugene MBE. Intertwined with her research into the importance of Rwandan survivor accounts, the organisation's mission is to "draw on genocide survivor experience to connect us all to our common humanity". KCL and Ishami Foundation have:

- Written, designed and circulated educational materials about the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi for teachers and students across the UK, foregrounding Rwandan survivor testimony collected as part of Ishami trustee Jo Ingabire's 100 Stories project [I].
- Increased personal engagement with genocide for teachers and students from 25 London schools participating in Ishami's 25 Schools for Kwibuka 25 campaign, which included a workshop and commemoration with survivors and the Mayor of London at City Hall in 2019 [I].

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan wrote to commend the organisation on this "vital and moving event", asserting that: "Remembering the lives lost by genocide and standing in solidarity with survivors is hugely important, not only in honouring the memory of those who died and acknowledging the experience of their surviving relatives, but also teaching future generations about the past and inspiring them to pursue unity in the present day" [I]. Evaluation forms and pupil pledges show this work helped schools understand the contemporary relevance of genocide and motivated students and teachers to commit to taking action to tackle prejudice [I].

### **Radio: building international understanding between Rwandans and BBC Radio listeners.**

Public perceptions of Rwanda are beset by forgetting and obfuscation. 53% of the UK population cannot name a genocide since the Holocaust and there is a long history of Western attitudes towards Rwanda being shaped by media simplifications, mis-information, prejudice and genocide denial (Thompson, 2007). By contrast King's research has explored the complexity of memory practices and of the multiple groups involved in rebuilding Rwanda after genocide [3,4]. Named a BBC AHRC New Generation Thinker in 2012, Norridge has bridged gaps between public and academic knowledge, fostering intercultural understanding between the UK and Rwanda [J]. Highlights include a discussion about the Tate exhibition *Conflict, Time, Photography* (2014) where she stressed the need for local photography, and a debate with Phil Clark about the strengths and shortcomings of the BBC's *Black Earth Rising* (2018) (both Radio 3 *Free Thinking*). In 2013–14, Norridge wrote and presented a 45-minute Radio 3 Sunday feature *Living with Memory in Rwanda*. This research-based documentary addressed the contribution of survivor testimonies, commemoration practices, memorials, legal processes and artistic interventions to the creation of collective memory in Rwanda. Named *The Spectator's "most heart-stopping moment on air"* for 2014, it won a Gold Award at the New York Radio Festival. In 2019, Norridge presented *Rwanda's Returnees*, a 30-minute, AiB Award Shortlisted, Radio 4 documentary based on her research about the significant contributions made by artists returning from the diaspora to shape contemporary Rwandan culture [4]. These programmes enabled a rebuilding of trust between the BBC and Rwanda after the broadcast of *Rwanda: The Untold Story*, widely criticised for genocide denial (Melvern, 2020), as shown by the granting of a media permit to Norridge in 2019 when the BBC Kinyarwanda service had been shut down and reporters refused access. The Rwandan High Commission commented: "Such a programme, drawing on careful long-term research and Rwandan experiences, resonated with both Rwandans in the diaspora and at home, and went some way towards restoring trust between Rwandans and the BBC" [J].

### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

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- A. Testimonial from Jean Bizimana and abbreviated workshop participant interviews.
  - B. Selected media coverage and videos of Rwanda in Photographs.
  - C. Rwanda in Photographs summary of exhibition evaluation forms (quantitative).
  - D. Testimonial from Mark Sealy MBE.
  - E. Transcript of interview with Gadi Habumugisha.
  - F. Human Rights Cultures bundle: evaluation forms, Alain Hirwa's testimonial and *Wasafiri* story.
  - G. Kigali Photo Fest bundle: media coverage and event details from website.
  - H. *Not My Time To Die* bundle: media coverage and blog posts by University of Bristol students.
  - I. Ishami bundle: educational materials, 25 Schools evaluation forms, letter from Sadiq Khan.
  - J. Testimonial letter from Rwandan High Commission.