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WHERE AND WHEN THINGS FALL APART: RELATING NARRATIVES OF
POST-ELECTION VIOLENCE FROM NAIROBI

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Joseph Hamer

December 2013

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Joseph Hamer

2013

WHERE AND WHEN THINGS FALL APART: RELATING NARRATIVES OF
POST-ELECTION VIOLENCE FROM NAIROBI

By

Joseph Hamer

Approved September 30, 2013

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ABSTRACT

WHERE AND WHEN THINGS FALL APART: RELATING NARRATIVES OF POST-ELECTION VIOLENCE FROM NAIROBI

By

Joseph Hamer

December 2013

Dissertation supervised by Leswin Laubscher, Ph.D.

The violence that followed the 2007 elections in Kenya caught many people by surprise, including me. Given some familiarity with, and personal connections to, Kenya, this dissertation began first with shock and concern, and later with suspicion of the way the post election violence was presented in the Western media as yet another example of sudden, prolific, and nonsensical outbreaks of violence in Africa. It seemed notable that the violence occurred around political elections and important to explore the stakes therein. A review of available literature on the topic revealed that historical injustices and ethnic inequality seemed to be contributing factors in the post-election violence. A review of the psychological literature pertaining to collective violence raised questions about identity and power, obedience and conformity, and the breakdown of law and order. To the extent to which these factors and principles shed some light on what

happened in Kenya, the question remained: what might all of this mean, concretely, in people's lives? Beyond the stories of Western journalists and behavioral scientists, I wanted to know how Kenyans narrated the post-election violence.

I turn to multisited ethnography, a method of research and writing that affords the procedural flexibility to follow the traces of such a complex phenomenon and to reflexively document the process of "finding" and understanding. If what both the Western press and conventional psychology provide tend to be general, abstract, ahistorical explanations of violence, I present a situated account involving a diversity of descriptions and explanations given by Kenyans from various tribes, classes, and political affiliations about the post-election violence and prospects of sustained peace. This includes detailed first person accounts of how things unfolded, or, fell apart. The Kenyans I spoke with narrate the post- election violence by both contextualizing it in (post)colonial history and by personalizing it in a manner that shows ethnicity in Kenya to be highly nuanced and complex. What results from this dissertation is a rearticulation of the post-election violence through revealing relations that have been obscured by the dominant discourse.

Finally, with regard to studying violence and peace, it is assumed that total understanding is impossible; I have been attendant to the challenges associated with understanding and writing about others as subjects of violence. To my project it has been essential to show the places and ways in which discourse on violence necessarily breaks down.

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Chapter I - Introduction: Where and when things fall apart

People create stories create people; or rather stories create people create stories.

~Chinua Achebe~

Beautiful petals: beautiful flowers: tomorrow would indeed be the beginning of a harvest.

~Ngugi wa Thiong'o~

The Violence that Followed

On December the 28th, 2007, incumbent President of Kenya, Mwai Kibaki, seemed likely to lose the opportunity of a second term in office. The vote count showed him at only 39 percent, compared with the 57 percent accorded to his challenger, Raila Odinga. Moreover, Odinga's party, the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), was making huge gains in parliament. After the initial vote count, however, formal announcements and counting procedures were delayed and over a day later, on Sunday, January 30th, an official presidential vote count was announced, declaring Mwai Kibaki the winner by a two percent margin. Violence ensued.

Voting seemingly occurred along ethnic lines. "According to results broadcast during the elections on KTN, a Kenyan television station, Kibaki was winning 98 percent of the vote in the Kikuyu highlands, whereas Mr. Odinga had 90 percent of the vote in a predominantly Luo province in Western Kenya" (Gettleman, December 29, 2007). The ensuing violence also followed an ethnic pattern, starkly exemplified by the targeting of minorities in Nairobi's two largest slums.

An influential report, produced by the Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence (CIPEV, 2008), characterized the violence that gripped Kenya as "the most deadly and the most destructive violence in the history of independent Kenya" (CIPEV,

2008, p. vii). The *Waki Report*, as it is known more colloquially, continues: “Looting, destruction of property, and arson became rampant, forcing people to move to the ‘ethnic enclaves’ they perceived as safe as tribally aligned gangs took over and exercised total control” (p. 198). More than 100 people were killed in the day following the announcement of the election results. This increased to 250 the following day, which included the event that received the most press: that up to 50 people were burned to death inside the church in which they sought refuge. The death toll sporadically rose over the course of two months. All told, approximately 1,200 people were killed and 300,000 displaced (CIPEV, 2008).

Critical Entry (or, an initial motivation for the research)

The Kenyan elections were reported on by the Western media, as was the violence that followed in its wake. Indeed, for most of the North American populace, an understanding of the violence in Kenya was through the lens, and by the word of this media reportage. My attention was drawn, back then, to a portrayal of “yet another” outbreak of “tribal violence”, seemingly endemic to Africa. The first report in the *New York Times* of the election results and the violence that followed was on December 31st, 2007 by Jeffrey Gettleman. Entitled “*Disputed Vote Plunges Kenya into Bloodshed*,” Gettleman noted that “It took all of about 15 minutes on Sunday, after Kenya’s president was declared the winner of a deeply controversial election, for the country to explode.” And a few lines down in a free standing sentence, “‘It’s war,’ said Hudson Chate, a mechanic here. ‘Tribal war.’” At this point in time, 15 people were reported dead. Although the man’s sentiments are unquestionable, I found myself deeply suspicious of

the *New York Times*' representation of the unfolding events in Kenya. It would seem that Kenyans are only quoted when their words reinforce Western discourse of sudden, prolific, and nonsensical outbreaks of violence in Africa.

This questioning, and growing unease about the ways in which violence in Kenya was presented, continued. Throughout the reporting, and especially in the first week of violence, many graphic phrases seemed to jump off the pages for me, evoking a critical and skeptical sense of whether these representations were “really” what the violence was about, or whether the “full story” was being told. I am copying a few of these phrases and meaning-making sentences here from reports in the week following the elections (December 31st – January 7th): *In Nairobi, the capital, tribal militias squared off against each other in several slums, with gunshots ringing out and clouds of black smoke wafting over the shanties; Dozens of stores have been looted, torched and smashed by rioters and then picked clean by an army of glue-sniffing street children searching for whatever was left.; Every day brings more roadblocks of blazing tires soaked in gasoline. Vigilante groups, wielding knives and automatic weapons, are constantly on patrol.; ...are said to take an oath in which they drink human blood; It reminds me of Rwanda.; Tribal militias are roaming the countryside with rusty machetes.; Luos began hunting down the outnumbered Kikuyus.; Bloodletting...; Bloodbath; ...was hacked to death; Beheaded...; hunted down with bows and arrows.; most of the clashes have been fought with clubs, knives and stones.; 'We hate these people'.*

The last statement above -“We hate these people”- was the *New York Times*' January 7th “quote of the day.” It struck me that both in the report, and as free standing “quote of the day”, there was no context or understanding ground at all, save perhaps an

assumed signifier that indexes the eternal presence of tribal conflict in Africa. Moreover, the phrases and reports gave such a clear-cut and simplistic sense of an “us and them”, which I had to question, not only by my academic training that privileges the complexity of human life and relation, but also by my own experience of life and living as more than a simple binary.

I read the reports more and more critically; the reference to Rwanda was at a time when the death toll was at 250, and the suggestion of a barbarism that “loots” and “riots”, or that permits “bloodletting” and “bloodbaths” with machetes seemed to suggest an unspoken script of a stone age, primitive, murderous Africa. It was all the more salient to me that the news reporting occurred alongside US operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and that the terms to describe or situate that violence was decidedly different. Whereas 250 people died in Kenya at the time, and permitted a reference to Rwanda, the number of people killed in Afghanistan and Iraq actually did approach the horrific numbers of Rwanda, but that comparison was never to be made there. Or did it matter, I asked myself, that the techniques of killing allowed and disallowed such a reference? Fire, knives, and stones as opposed to cruise missiles, drones, and RPG’s – but then it is perhaps also circular evidence for the closeness of Africa to the stone age, even for one of its most advanced and (hitherto) peaceful nations. Indeed, this sense of a closeness to tribal primitivism even came to be named, as Jeffrey Gettleman, a reporter for *The Times*, wrote that “the election seems to have tapped into an atavistic vein of tribal tension that always lay beneath the surface in Kenya” (December 31, 2007). I looked up atavistic in the dictionary again, to confirm my understanding thereof: “relating to or characterized by reversion to something ancient or ancestral.”

Hence the problematic beginnings of this project. It was not the violence itself that spawned my research interest, but the violence as made present to me through media sources such as the *New York Times*. Put differently, and in an academic register, I started from a hermeneutic and critical perspective, as opposed to a natural scientific orientation, not in a “fresh and unbiased” fashion, but right in, and from, powerful discursive formations that obscure as much as they reveal.

To Kenya Itself (or, an/other motivation for the current study)

I was in Kenya for two months the year leading up to the election, doing volunteer work in one of the slums of Nairobi, and established some close relations there. So I was obviously deeply troubled to hear, when I was back in the U.S., about the violence that followed the elections. I was concerned for the people I knew. I received an e-mail from a friend announcing simultaneously the birth of his first child and that he and his family had managed to escape the violence and relocate to a safer part of town. I thought of the children in the school I’d worked at and feared for their safety. I also felt guilty...not exactly for having left, but for having been free to come and go as I pleased. Compassion and privilege is a dangerous combination. Add to that the academic compulsion for truth/knowledge. What followed was the sentiment that, “I must do something.” Perhaps the theoretical frustration and desire, or senses of understanding distance from the “real” were all parts of a headlong decision to return to Kenya in the summer of 2009.

I wondered about the possibility of doing research on the consequences of post-election violence in Kenya, but I wasn’t sure how feasible that would be. What were people saying and doing in the aftermath? Would they want to talk to me about it? “You

came here to feel the pulse of the situation,” was the way a close friend rephrased my intention for that trip on my first night back in Kenya. I certainly was not naïve enough to expect an answer to the questions about the Post Election Violence (PEV), but at the very least I hoped to learn whether the topic was even feasible for further study.

In Kenya I immersed myself several hours a day learning Kiswahili as I had the first time I was there. Additionally, through friendships, and their graciousness, I got to experience a sense of daily life in Kenya, further familiarizing myself with some of the cultural codes and expectations, and some of the everyday practicalities of life in Nairobi. The time spent in Kenya pressed home the sense of a much, much more complex and nuanced picture to the PEV. Without fail, people told me that one could not even begin to understand the violence without a sense of the history of tribal identification, or the politics of tribalism and the everyday.

More than anything, though, I came away from the experience with a powerful sense not only that this study was “feasible”, in some practical sense, but that this study is demanded, in some ethical sense. Local support for the project was also salient for the concern I had (and which I return to in the research method section that follows) about how a white American, asking about violence in Kenya, would be received. An outsider’s perspective would be valued, I heard, even as it would rightly be subject to criticism. Moreover, my intent to hear and represent the stories of people as opposed to the dominant discourse of politicians was very much welcomed. Now, more than a personal evaluation about the motivation of the study – whether it was “doable”, “feasible”, or “practical” – and more than a sense of satisfying a personal or academic curiosity about “understanding” violence in Kenya or bringing it to bear on western discourses thereof,

there emerged a sense of the study's motivation for the other, a sense of its motivation and need as being the demand and call of the other – to facilitate *their* voices, *their* stories, and *their* experiences.

Outline of this Dissertation

As for the structure of this dissertation, I begin with a critical assessment of the PEV reporting by US journalists (Ch. 1), which became a motivation to get the story on the ground from Kenyans themselves. The research question was: how do Kenyans narrate the post-election violence of 2007/8?

To help orient the research it is essential to review the findings from the report produced by the Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence (CIPEV), which I do in Chapter 2, Section 1. It also seems pertinent to the study, based as it is in a Psychology department and program, to survey the prominent literature and research within the field of psychology pertaining to collective violence (Chapter 2, Section 2).

But the research methods employed in those studies tended to exclude social, cultural, historical, economic, and political context. It was my contention that it is precisely these interrelated contexts that needed to be understood to even begin to approach understanding the post-election violence of 2007/8. Therefore, an alternative methodology was in order. The methods section (Chapter 3) serves to specify the ethnographic approach taken in this project. It is an explication of the multi-sited and narrative methods I employed in research and writing.

The findings are then presented in narrative form and constitute the heart of this work (Chapter 4). There I recount descriptions and explanations of the post-election

violence given me by Kenyans of various ethnicities, classes, political affiliations, genders, etc. The voices especially represented here are of those commonly marginalized in Kenya: women and impoverished youth.

The discussion section (Chapter 5) returns to issues and questions raised in the introduction and literature review and consists of a more general, theoretical commentary on contemporary “ethnic violence” in light of my research findings. Finally, some limitations of the current study are emphasized in the conclusion, and potential directions for further research indicated.

Chapter II - Review of the Literature

Indeed, mass killings rarely appear on the scene unbidden. They evolve.

~Nancy Scheper-Hughes & Philippe Bourgois~

While some may have seen the possibility of political violence on the horizon of the 2007 elections in Kenya, most were surprised by what transpired. How is one to understand such “ethnic violence”, erupting as it seemingly did so quickly and among people who, by an earlier and other narrative, got along well, and peacefully with each other in a “model” of African stability? These questions clearly are not particular to Kenya – the notion of periods of peaceful coexistence among ethnic, tribal, and racial groups, seemingly turning into violent animosity in the blink of an eye undergirds the narratives of places and horrors as separated in time and space as Rwanda and Nazi Germany, Cambodia and the former Yugoslavia. Could such horror have been anticipated? What can be done to prevent such violence in the future? These questions, asked by many, are at the heart of the present work.

I begin this literature review by summarizing research particular and specific to the violence in Kenya. Then, I proceed to more general psychological and academic theories and research on collective and interethnic violence. Limitations of such theories and approaches are discussed, revealing yet another motivation for the current research.

Literature Specific to Post-Election Violence in Kenya

It became apparent to me quite quickly that there was very little literature specific to the Kenyan post-election violence (PEV). Perhaps the academic lag time between research and publication offers a partial explanation for a tremendous paucity of

academic research and theory that references the Kenyan situation particularly – another oblique motivation for this research’s significance. I suspect, though, as with so many issues pertinent to Africa in general, and Kenya in particular, academic attention will continue to be predictably scant. After media reportage and analysis, the legal investigation was the quickest to produce knowledge of PEV, knowledge that has had powerful social and political effects.

The Waki Report, produced by the Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence (CIPEV, 2008) is a rather important document. Funded by the Kenyan Government and the United Nations, comprised of locals and international commissioners, and headed by appellate judge Phillip Wako, the Commission produced a report from its charge to “investigate the facts and circumstances surrounding the violence, the conduct of state security agencies in their handling of it, and to make recommendations concerning these and other matters” (p. vii). From reading the report, the first thing to note, perhaps, is that this was not the first incident of violence surrounding an election in Kenya. “Sadly, violence has been a part of Kenya’s electoral processes since the restoration of multiparty politics in 1991” (p. vii). The difference was in scale, and much of the work of CIPEV was in documenting the extent of the violence throughout the country.

In Chapter 2 of the report, the commission poses the question, “How deep are the roots” of the post-election violence of 2007? In attempting to answer this question, the commission emphasizes the significance of Kenya’s large population of unemployed youth, ethno-regional inequalities in the country, and the concentration of power in the executive branch of government. Each of these socio-political factors has a history that

needs to be kept in view, the commission acknowledges, even as the report provides quite a condensed account of that history¹.

First is the concentration of presidential power. The commission notes the implementation, under the rule of both Kenyatta and Moi, of a number of amendments to the constitution “to increase executive authority” (CIPEV, 2008, p. 28). In tandem with the strengthening of the executive is a history of political patronage of supporters. There is a “perception on the part of the public that given the power of the President and the political class everything flows not from laws but from the President’s power and personal decisions. This also has led the public to believe a person from their tribe must be in power, both to secure for them benefits and as a defensive strategy to keep other ethnic groups, should these take over power, from taking jobs, land, and entitlements” (p. 29). The corruption scandal referred to as Anglo-Leasing², in which President Kibaki was complicit, only strengthened such perceptions (p. 28). “One result of this in the 2007 election was the perception by sections of the public that government institutions, and officials, including the judiciary, were not independent of the presidency, were not impartial and lacked integrity. Hence, they were perceived as not able to conduct the election fairly” (p. 28). Moreover, attempts by some, in 2006, including then MP Raila Odinga, to impose new restrictions on presidential power, led to a split in the coalition government, initiating the beginning of what would be a heated election race (p. 30).

In addition, however, the Waki report makes it clear that questions about the effectiveness of democratic institutions in Kenya must go further than an interrogation of the post-independence state, or the foibles and failures of individual politicians. Indeed,

¹ See Appendix A for a historical timeline of major political events in Kenya.

² The Anglo Leasing scandal refers to a multimillion dollar contract for new passport equipment and forensic laboratories that Kibaki’s government had with a non-existent company by that name.

the colonial strategy of divide and rule was institutionalized through a provincial system that has been in place until very recently. “Many areas outside the major cities and towns are relatively homogenous ethnically. Problems of inequality and marginalization thus are often viewed in ethnogeographical terms even though inequalities between individuals of the same ethnic group are sometimes more pronounced than those between different ethnic groups and geographic areas” (CIPEV, 2008, p. 30). Politicians are said to “articulate grievances about historical injustices which resonate with certain sections of the public,” thereby stirring ethnic tension in attempts to secure ethnic voting blocks.³

In addition, the Waki report links violence and relations of inequality to British colonialism: “Violence was part and parcel of the colonial state, which used it to ensure control” (p. 24). The government of independent Kenya seems to have retained this legacy and the Waki Report makes reference to the mysterious assassinations of Kenyatta’s major political opponents as well as Moi’s “draconian” techniques of repression to highlight this point (p. 24). Multiparty politics ushered in a new order of political violence, with gangs being mobilized to intimidate and displace voters in various provinces in order to ensure Moi’s (re)election (p. 25). “Armed militias, most of whom developed as a result of the 1990s ethnic clashes, were never demobilized” (p. viii).

Added to this history of political violence are two million unemployed youth, which CIPEV sees as constituting another major factor in the post-election violence (2008). A significant portion of the youth, many of whom have grown up on the street, are susceptible to joining gangs, and CIPEV points out that “The combination of being

³ Some have highlighted the key role played by the Kenyan media (especially vernacular radio) in broadcasting the ethnically divisive discourse of politicians. Given lack of access to tapes and/or transcripts of radio stations accused of fomenting violence, however, CIPEV didn’t designate the media as a central contributor to the post-election violence.

rootless, having survived amidst violence, plus a need for an identity and a livelihood makes them ready recruits for violent gangs” (CIPEV, 2008, p. 33). These gangs themselves are susceptible to being recruited by politicians to do their dirty work. “As extrastate violent gangs began to proliferate and continued to be used by politicians, the political terrain was transformed. Violence trickled down into daily life and the State no longer commanded the monopoly of force it once had in a previous era. As such diffused extrastate violence existed all over the country, where it could be called up and tapped at any time, including being used to arbitrate over elections as it has been doing since the early 1990s” (p. 27). To make matters worse, the “provincial administration and the police also understood that it was sometimes in the interest of their personal survival to follow what they understood to be the directives or inclinations of either the president or MPs in their areas rather than to uphold the laws” (p. 29).

According to the WAKI Report, “all of the above factors have dovetailed to make violence the method of choice to resolve a range of political differences and to obtain political power” (p. 35). But they also open up a range of questions. How, for example, do inequalities within ethnic groups fade into the background, while those between ethnic groups are placed in the foreground of public discourse? What are the specific historical injustices that politicians draw from to stir the passions of the electorate? And what do they mean concretely in people’s lives? Moreover, whereas the report lists “economic reasons” as spur for gang activity, it also – in the same sentence – notes that youth were “rootless” and “in need of identity”, decidedly psychological processes and dynamics that are nonetheless never explored in the report to any great extent. In determining the factors thought to be at the root of the post-election violence, CIPEV loses the concrete

details of the conflict, on the one hand, and instantiates ontological presumptions that we might be wise to question, on the other. After all, the notion that violence is an extension of politics is an old and rather entrenched notion. It seems important then to explore further “the range of political differences”, the nature of “political power” and what it means to be “rootless” in specific detail and with reference to particular people on the ground.

“One of the main findings of the Commission’s investigations is that the post election violence was spontaneous in some geographic areas and a result of planning and organization in other areas, often with the involvement of politicians and business leaders” (CIPEV, 2008, p. xiii). Much has been made of the organization of the post-election violence and the failure, complicity really, of the security forces. Reforming the latter and prosecuting those most responsible for the post-election violence make up the recommendations of the Waki Report. It is imperative to end “the cycle of impunity, which is at the heart of the post-election violence” (p. ix). But an orientation toward discipline of the polity and punishment of the organizers of political violence, while important, seems to leave aside some of “the roots” of the problem, notably a history of ethnic inequality.

Another shortcoming of CIPEV’s findings, also resulting from a very reasonable concern with discerning and addressing the institutional causes of post-election violence, is that the “ethnic” character of the violence isn’t problematized as much as I think it should be. “Guilt by association was the guiding force behind deadly ‘revenge’ attacks, with victims being identified not for what they did but for their ethnic association to other perpetrators” (p. viii). This, it seems to me, is no other than the horrifying spirit of

genocide. The explanation provided by the Waki report, in its effort (and mandate) to assign blame, that “this free-for all was made possible by the lawlessness stemming from an apparent collapse of state institutions and security forces,” misses a more subtle, we might say “psychological,” process whereby everyone, including victims and bystanders, is drawn into ethnic tensions and conflict. What is indicated in “guilt by association” is the very (re)constitution of ethnicity through the post-election violence, the articulation of whole ethnic groups as threat and enemy.

In short, the Waki Report seemed to focus on structural and institutional “causes”, “factors”, or “mediating conditions” of the violence, and as a student of psychology, I felt unsatisfied, and still not quite convinced as to a sense of the violence, let alone an understanding thereof. While the report provides a complexity lacking in the media, it subordinates voices or stories of the subjective to determining factors. This sort of limitation in explaining violence, as we will see in the following section, is not uncommon. There is, consequently, an enormous gap of understanding and integration, and of a more holistic and comprehensive academics to be fleshed out.

Literature on the Psychology of Collective Violence

If the academic literature referencing the specific Kenyan PEV is scarce, it is nonexistent with respect to psychology. However, psychology does have general theories of violence and aggression, does theorize mob and political violence to some degree, and does claim a general explanatory anvil for conflict and intergroup relations. Whereas some of the psychological literature is of a motivational and grand theoretical sort (for example, Freudian theory and psychoanalysis), most are of an experimental nature, with

some of the most famous experiments from social psychology offering constructs and dynamics with which to explain collective violence, or aspects thereof.

On the theoretical side, psychoanalytic theory has played a significant role, even if, as I will argue, that role has often been subtle, and it's assumptions implicit in various explanations provided both within and beyond the field of psychology. Although not exclusively, the Holocaust and the aftermath of World War II stimulated much concern among psychologists in the direction of a new sensitivity to collective violence, and the social psychology of groups and nations. These references should be considered, for the time being, less in comparison to the post-election violence in Kenya, and more (in the spirit of conventional psychology) for what generalizations we can draw from them. This review of the psychological literature pertaining to collective violence will proceed from general theses on the origin of aggression to an examination of the specific factors said to mediate its manifestations.

Civilization and its Discontents; Sigmund Freud

Freud referenced violence in several early publications, and at different points throughout his life, one notable example being *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), one of his celebrated later texts. Paying particular attention to collective violence, the text documents the evolution of Freud's thinking on aggression, and given how influential this work has been, it is important to summarize it in some detail. Involving love and death, pleasure and violence, morality and malaise, the purview of his work is indeed impressive, and Freud's vision grand. "Civilization," said Freud, "is a process in the service of Eros, whose purpose is to combine single individuals, and after that families, then races, peoples and nations, into one great unity, the unity of mankind" (p.

81). However, Freud would have been the last person to characterize this process as either easy or inevitable.

Psychoanalytic theory begins with what appeared to Freud to be the central motivation of human life: aversion to pain and the pursuit of pleasure. While the “pleasure principle” is the dominant force within the human organism, “its programme is at loggerheads with the whole world (Freud, 1930, p. 25). Thus begins both inter- and intra psychic conflict. Aggression in Freud’s early theorizing can be summarized succinctly as “the direct derivation of the conflict between the need for the authority’s love and the urge toward instinctual satisfaction, whose inhibition produces the inclination to aggression” (p. 100). Freud’s invocation of “the need for the authority’s love” already alerts us to both the inhibiting role of authority and the pressure to internalize this inhibitory function. The superego (that self-monitoring and disciplining aspect of the psyche) is created through the thwarting of pleasure. Instinctual satisfaction is exchanged for safety and order through the internalization of social norms. In the course of childhood development direct award and punishment for (dis)obedience are “exchanged for a *permanent internal unhappiness*, for the tension of the sense of guilt” (p. 89, my emphasis). Put differently, the anger felt toward the authority and its prohibitions is necessarily redirected due to one’s dependence on that same authority; it is internalized, turned against the ego as conscience. This is the natural course of human development according to psychoanalytic theory. Thus, direct conflict between people is to a large extent circumvented through civilized norms of behavior.

Freud’s move from an individual psychology, or the natural and normal dynamics of pleasure and pain, love and aggression, to the group poses particular challenges. It is

possible, for example, to wonder when the willingness to aggress or do violence to others remains, whether this could indicate the breakdown of a collective moral order – the application to Kenya being clear. And of the actual perpetrators would it be said that they were not “thwarted” enough? Or is it the opposite: that an excess of external suppression leads people not to internalize it? Neglect? Abuse? Either/or? What goes awry in the developmental or civilizing process? Readers and commentators who take such a direct route from individual to group psychology could point to Freud’s most direct statement on this topic in a footnote, a reference to Aichhorn’s book *Verwahrloste Jugend* (1925), translated as *Wayward Youth*. Here, Freud explains: “In delinquent children who were brought up without love, the tension between ego and superego is lacking, and the whole of their aggressiveness can be directed outward” (Freud, 1930, p. 93). We could keep this in mind: the absence and/or harshness, perhaps, of Kenyan parents and other authority figures in the lives of the perpetrators of PEV. Such hypotheses, however, will quickly prove problematic in a number of ways.

There is a tendency in psychoanalysis not to consider the social context in which parenting styles are embedded, except in the broadest and most abstract context of “civilization”, and even when the social is considered, it is as substitute father, the focus of psychoanalytic theory remaining on the individual and the intrapsychic, which intuitively, already, militates against the “mob” and “group” character of political violence and frenzy.

Nonetheless, one could argue that the frenzy of the mob is perfectly explainable in the breakdown of the inhibitory structures and constraints of society, which permits the unfettered expression of the instinctual. But this does not quite address the

internalization of the structures into the superego without the very short leap to the characterization of certain peoples (in this case Kenyans or “Africans”) as having poor ego functioning in general – in the end it still comes down to a mediating ego, whether in the bulwark to the id, or in a poor superego that does not pressure the ego enough in conscience and morality. Moreover, and even if one were to accept all of this – it still does not tell us how, or why, sublimatory structures break down, why this particular form of violence and not that, and why here and not there, and why of this sort here and that sort there, for example.

Instead, Freud leaves us rather blunt intellectual instruments of analysis:

“In consequence of this primary mutual hostility of human beings, civilized society is perpetually threatened with disintegration” (1930, p. 69). His theory of human nature, with the added enthusiasm that accompanies his postulation of the death drive, might trouble us, though not because we are in denial, as Freud assumes of those who question his theory. There is at least one passage that must be quoted at length:

men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are on the contrary creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness. As a result, their neighbor is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity to work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture, and to kill him... As a rule this cruel aggressiveness waits for some provocation or puts itself at the service of some other purpose, whose goal might also have been reached by milder measures. In circumstances that are favorable to it, when the mental counter-forces which ordinarily inhibit it are out of action, it also manifests itself spontaneously and reveals man as a savage beast to whom consideration toward his own kind is alien. Anyone who calls to mind the atrocities committed during the racial migrations or the invasions of the Huns, or the people known as Mongols under Jenghiz Khan and Tamerlane, or at the capture of Jerusalem by the pious Crusaders, or even indeed the horrors of the recent World War—anyone

who calls these things to mind will have to bow humbly before the truth of this view (p. 69).

And if we add to this list the genocides and civil wars that have occurred since the publication of *Civilization and its Discontents*, if we detail the whole horrifying history of exploitation of human labor which continues through today, if we paint pictures of rape as an instrument of war, are we overcome yet even more with the brilliance of Freud's explanation? For some, the answer is yes.

Into the Heart and Mind of Darkness; Freud's Followers

The winner of the 2012 Graduate Student Essay Contest of the American Psychological Association, Division of Psychoanalysis (39), Section V, argued that, "This is who we are. Ugly, violent, primitive, driven creatures who have evolved the ability to use our intellect and our opposable thumbs to defend against that." (Johnson, 2012, para. 17). Emily Johnson's essay is a tale told in the first person: "Having come face to face with it, literally, I can say [with some authority] that the sexual and the aggressive drives still exist. They are, in the end, what motivate and capture human existence." What exactly was it that she came face to face with? The title of her essay hints at it: "Returning to The Heart of Darkness: The Global Politics of Starvation, Psychoanalysis, and the Starvation of Psychoanalysis" (Johnson, 2012). Whatever intrigue the title may stir, the essay itself quickly dispels any hope of complex political-historical analysis.

"Mr. Kurtz," she begins, "was long-since dead. So was Joseph Conrad. Beyond that, Congo was still Congo". Congo was still Congo? What did she mean by that? The answer, I believe, could lead us to dismiss her essay outright, but as an award-winning piece, which implies the recognition by and perhaps a shared understanding amongst a

community of scholars, it demands a more thorough critique. For the purposes of this literature review, I can do no more than highlight some of the problematic tropes the author employs in her psychoanalytic theorization of collective violence. For example, what is so essential or unchanged about the Congo from her perspective? And what are the rhetorical and ideological functions of such an assertion?

Miss Johnson's story begins in 2009. The very same summer that I went to Kenya to assess the feasibility of my proposed research, she flew to the Democratic Republic of Congo, "ostensibly to 'do-good' and 'develop communities' while using [her] burgeoning therapy skills-- to counsel women who had been gang-raped and children who had been abandoned. Ostensibly," she emphasized. "Really, I was there to see the hardness that was in the world, all that I had been shielded from growing up as a white girl in Middle America. I did not know it yet, but I was there to see the hardness that was in me, as well" (para. 4).

She presents herself as a kind of modern day Marlow in search of her Kurtz. Just as in *The Heart of Darkness* where readers follow a story being recounted by one sailor to other sailors, we'll review Miss Johnson's account as told to a group of psychoanalysts. We should picture them seated in a circle on a dock in a harbor under starry skies, or rather, in rows in a conference room flooded with artificial light.

"I recently returned from a country that currently lacks much of a functional civilization or government, [...] a country where sex and violence are the only truths," she stated (para. 18). Never having been to a country like that I was suspicious, but continued to read. "I cannot forget the looks of hunger I elicited from every man I passed as a 26-year-old white woman walking through Lubumbashi. Far beyond being ogled in a

bar, it was complete, unchecked sexual and aggressive desire, the need to have me and to destroy me” (para. 24). “To have me and destroy me.” I pondered the phrase.

The question at this point would seem to be, if these men in this lawless land without culture or inhibition, as she sees it, were filled with such sexual and aggressive desire for her why, then, did they not act on that desire? Interestingly, Conrad’s Marlow ponders such a question of the “natives” in his crew who were deprived of food: “Why in the name of all the gnawing devils of hunger they didn’t go for us—they were thirty to five—and have a good tuck-in for once, amazes me now when I think of it” (Conrad, 1902, p. 42). “Was it superstition, disgust, patience, fear—or some kind of primitive honour?” he asks, and after considering each in turn and rejecting them all as impossible he is left without explanation. What he does offer is a kind of psychoanalytic reflexivity lacking, ironically, in the student and proponent of psychoanalysis. Says Marlow, “... it occurred to me I might be eaten by them before long, though I own to you that just then I perceived—in a new light, as it were, how unwholesome the pilgrims looked, and I hoped, yes, positively hoped, that my aspect was not so—what shall I say?—so—unappetizing” (p. 43). That we often fear and desire the same thing is a tenet of psychoanalysis that is, perhaps, relevant here. The epistemological point is to become aware when our description of “them” is as objects of *our* desires and *our* fears, and not reflection of reality as such.

Returning to Johnson’s journey into darkness: “As I heard the somewhat-broken story about everyone in this village being conscribed to commit violent acts, and as I sat before the war-lord watching the growing crowd around him, seeing the hardness of the dozens of pairs of glittering stones watching me, the realization hit me: more than likely,

everyone here standing before me who is older than about the age of 15, has killed someone. Because if they hadn't, they wouldn't be standing here looking at me. That realization is deeply humbling, surreal, and even, yes, a bit alarming. [...] As I thought about the killing, I thought, it's so strange that Westerners so often conceive of killing in this type of context as a choice [...] but if the choice is kill or be killed, what would you have done? What would I have done?" (para. 13).

The answer to this question seemed to come through her meeting a "warlord" and his niece. She and the woman were the same age and both were graduate students. Johnson was transfixed by her eyes, and later by the revelation that she had killed people. What was Middle America to make of this play of similarity and difference? "There's really no difference between her and I," she wrote "except that fate cast me forth on a different continent, and I received all the relevant benefits" (para. 14). For "I still remember being struck with the realization that if I were in her place, I would have killed people as well. I would have done exactly the same thing" (para. 14). Through imaginative identification Johnson attempts to establish common ground with those who mystify her.

In the DRC, according to Johnson, "sex and aggression are often the two obviously discernable driving forces that literally contribute to the survival of individuals and villages. But, on the other hand, I would argue that that is what we all are, when culture and civilization are stripped away" (para. 18). In case her own account is not sufficiently persuasive she turns to a higher authority on the matter. Johnson says without irony, given the nature of her subject, that Freud's drive theory "remains, in [her] opinion, one of the most significant and bravest cultural contributions in human history"

(para. 18).

I suppose I'm not sure who or what is served by the invocation of "drives" in a narrative that is wholly dependent on images of the horrors of war - in the Congo. But it certainly doesn't seem to be the Congolese. With a sense of desperation Johnson writes, "I can't help but think, how can this be? How has it come to this?" (para. 23). She is referring not to the atrocities people have suffered and continue to suffer but to her impression, of all things, that "psychoanalysis is starving to death." And what of "the global politics of starvation"? Johnson doesn't get around to addressing this part of the subtitle of her essay.

Alienation and an Appetite for Destruction; Erich Fromm

Reading *Civilization and Its Discontents* along with "the horror" of a particular, and apparently respected, psychoanalytic interpretation of the war in the DRC, leads to the conclusion that Freudian theory is not only limited in its ability to explain collective violence, but that its application in an African context can itself be a form of violence. But psychoanalysis has been adapted in various ways over the years and integrated with other theories in critically progressive efforts such as those of the Frankfurt School, which could yet shine some light on the problem of collective violence.

Although generally considered within a philosophical and sociological lineage, the Frankfurt School included psychologists such as Erich Fromm (1941) who, in addition to psychoanalysis, was influenced by existentialism and Marxism. From Freud he took the idea that "irrational and unconscious forces" influence the character and behavior of people, and that this resulted from confrontation between human nature and social constraints (Fromm, 1941, p. 10). However, he strongly differed with Freud in his

understanding of human nature. Whereas Freud was concerned with the frustration of instinctual needs, Fromm was concerned with the existential, thus seeing “that the key problem of psychology is that of the specific kind of relatedness of the individual toward the world” (p. 10). By examining different psychosocial relations between political leaders and their subjects, Fromm’s theorizing had broad applications.

The history of humanity for Fromm is one of the “emergence of the individual from his original ties” to the world—both natural and cultural, (1941, p. 24) or the attainment of freedom *from* instinct and tradition. The tradition with which Fromm begins his analysis in *Escape From Freedom* is that of the middle ages, which sets the stage for the enlightenment and modernity, and the social problems that came with them. He describes the cultural transformation undergone in Europe with the reformation and the inception of capitalism.

Medieval man, Fromm claims, is immobile geographically and socially, “chained to his role in the social order” (1941, p. 40). Indeed, he *was* his role in that order (p. 41). Individualism, which requires a choice between numerous ways of life, did not exist in the middle ages (p. 41). This pre-individuated subject was both confined by and secure in its “primary bonds.” What happens in the transition from the medieval to the modern world? According to Fromm, on the one hand man “becomes free from a world that gave it security and assurance...is more independent, self-reliant, and critical, *and* he becomes more isolated, alone, and afraid” (p. 104, my emphasis). “Freedom” then becomes pervaded by an anxiety from which we seek to escape.

Fromm attempts “to analyze those dynamic factors in the character structure of modern man, which made him want to give up freedom,” and the various forms this

“giving up” has taken (p. 4). According to Fromm, this tendency is just as manifest in liberal democratic societies as it is in those under fascism. It is this, perhaps controversial, position that makes this work so important. While in liberal democracy and capitalism, freedom *from* primary bonds is pronounced, one’s possibilities (freedom *to*) can be quite limited (Fromm, 1941, p. 123). Modern capitalism is seen as releasing people from the constraints of tradition but not necessarily providing the opportunities for people to find security and solidarity in a new way.

From this understanding of the contemporary human condition we can begin to examine the psychosocial problems that we’ve been witness to as “mechanisms of escape,” which seem to manifest not simply in individual pathologies but in the most horrific forms of organized violence and social suffering, such as the Holocaust. Fromm examines, for example, sadism and masochism, or the “longing for submission” and the “lust for power,” finding each of them to be a response to alienation (1941, p. 4). In masochism one has an awareness of being small and helpless, and is perhaps overwhelmed by pain (p. 141). In such a position one wants to dissolve, and attempts to do so through intoxicants and even suicide. But this state of masochism also makes one highly susceptible to being further controlled by others.

Sadism, its correlate, refers to the “lust for power.” By dominating others one gains a false sense of power. This compensation for one’s insecurity, while qualitatively different from masochism, is similar in that it too is a state of dependency. One cannot be a perpetrator without having a victim. For both the sadist and the masochist, the effort is toward merger. The latter tries to dissolve or dissipate while the former is intent on incorporating and expanding.

Fromm distinguishes another form of escape, which at a glance would seem to fall in the domain of sadism, and which he calls “destructiveness.” The fundamental difference he explains is in its relation to the object. Whereas sadism and masochism form a symbiosis, it is elimination that is the basis of relationship for destructiveness. It arises from a sense of powerlessness, and seeks to destroy the world so as “to avoid being crushed by it” (Fromm, 1941, p. 177). Fromm contends that destructiveness exists in equal proportion to the “thwarting of life;” the appetite for destruction grows under suppressive conditions (pp. 181-182).

The last, but certainly not least escape mechanism Fromm analyzes is “automaton conformity.” The automaton comes to identify what he *has* to do as what he *wants* to do. This is the equivalent in capitalist society of masochism in totalitarian contexts. In both cases a person is a means to an end. The difference between the two is that the latter requires coercion, whereas in capitalist “democracy” the automaton believes he is making his own decisions. “Anonymous authority” and “common sense” have come to replace traditional and coercive forms of regulation (p. 166). This is supported by discourses of freedom, which work as doublespeak in a context of highly limited possibilities.

All of these mechanisms of escape arise from the “inability to bear the isolation and weakness of one’s own self” (p. 150, 156) in an alien, hostile world. The inclinations to conform or to destroy are the most relevant to capitalism and its political correlate: liberal democracy. While it must be noted that Fromm’s interpretive framework is likely too categorical, we will keep these dynamic mechanisms in mind when exploring what took place in Kenya. For now, we turn to another representative of the Frankfurt School, Theodor Adorno, for a final example of a critical psychoanalytic approach to collective

violence.

Submission to Authoritarianism; Theodor Adorno

In what is considered the “single most well-known work in political psychology” (Jost & Sidanius, 2004, p. 33), Theodor Adorno and colleagues sought to determine the psychodynamic constitution of the *Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson & Sanford, 1950), or what might be more clearly termed the personality of “authoritarian submission,” focused, as it is, “on the many people in our society who seem ready to submit to a Hitler” (Altemeyer, 2004, p. 85). His concern was thus similar to Fromm’s, but his analysis is distinct. By attempting to discern a personality type, Adorno placed more theoretical emphasis on psychoanalysis than existentialism. Adorno saw Fromm as having, so to speak, thrown the baby out with the bath water in regard to Freud’s theory of personality and reincorporated it in a renewed effort to explain the submissiveness of the German people to the directives of the Third Reich.

The “authoritarian personality” is one defined by a number of traits, including ethnocentrism, idealization of leaders, conservatism and conformity, and “aggression towards deviants” (Altemeyer, 2004, p. 86; Jost & Sidanius, 2004, p. 34). It is also marked by an “inability to admit one’s own fears or weaknesses” (Altemeyer, 2004, p. 86). What are the psychodynamics that generate such a personality? What familial conditions produce such people? This kind of questioning required a novel research design that combined empirical survey research with clinical interviewing, and included projective (psychoanalytic) tests. The findings were interesting. Adorno explained that the resentment directed toward Jews could be seen as a transference of rage derived

“from oppressive, overly punitive and restrictive socialization practices within the family arising from economic and other frustrations” (Jost & Sidanius, 2004, p. 34). These economic frustrations in turn were the result of Germany having been defeated in World War I and the territorial concessions and reparation payments imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles, which impacted the nature of the German family and the severity of the paternal function.

Adorno’s genius was to consider socio-political tensions at the level of the family and the psychodynamics of the individuals who collectively participated in genocide. Compared to the work of Freud and Fromm, Adorno’s research on the authoritarian personality had greater scientific character and authority. Nevertheless, it has been criticized precisely on these grounds: that vast conclusions were drawn from non-representative samples, the structure of the surveys permitted too much variability of response, and ultimately that the evidence presented doesn’t prove that such personalities were caused by German parenting styles (Brown, 1965). In this way Adorno’s work serves, for us, as a bridge between psychoanalytic and experimental approaches to the study of collective violence. It is to the latter that we now turn.

The Science of Violence: Experimental Psychology in a Nutshell

Proof of causation is the goal of much research in the field of (social) psychology today, as it is for research in most fields. But to achieve this requires going beyond surveys and observations (which are said to produce only correlational findings) to implementing controlled experiments. Experimental research seeks to determine the effect that one variable has on another. This requires defining variables in measurable ways (operationalizing) and manipulating them, such that comparisons can be made.

Randomization of subjects to control and experimental groups is thought to equalize all other potentially influential variables, and therefore to isolate those to be measured. The results are analyzed statistically to determine whether or not the differences found could have resulted from chance. If not, the researchers are said to have discovered a cause of some condition.

Roles, Obedience, and Conformity: Three Major Experiments in Social Psychology

The better-known experiments from social psychology seem to all have some bearing on the problem of collective violence. In contrast to Adorno's work, much of contemporary social psychology attempts to reveal *the power of the (immediate) situation* over personality in determining behavior. Not long after the publication of the *Authoritarian Personality*, psychologist Solomon Asch conducted a series of experiments, now known as his conformity experiments, that examined the effect of social influence on individuals' judgment (1951). Are people's abilities to perceive accurately and reason clearly impacted by group consensus? The experiment was rather simple: research subjects were asked to make visual discriminations of lines of varying length (e.g., "The one on the left is shorter." Or "they are the same length. "). The independent/manipulated variable was the other people in the room who were all making obviously incorrect assessments. How did this affect the answers given by research participants? They actually went along with the group and against their better judgment 37 percent of the time (Aronson, 1999). This propensity toward conformity revealed by Asch's experiment is interesting when considering an infinite variety of real world scenarios in which discernment seems to dissipate in favor of irrational mass activity, including collective violence.

Solomon Asch's study dealt with peer influence. But collective violence, such as that carried out by the Nazis, was conducted through a hierarchical system. How does authority influence people? This is a major area of concern for social psychology. One of the most famous experiments in the field is that of Stanley Milgram (1974) on obedience. Research subjects were told by a scientist/expert that they were participating in a study on learning and were to administer, in increasing voltage, electric shocks to other participants when they gave incorrect responses to the questions asked. The results, which revealed that a high percentage of people were willing to administer painful doses of electricity to their fellow citizens if commanded to do so by the research scientist, was considered to lend explanatory power to why so many apparently normal Germans participated in the genocide. Answer: It is a human tendency to obey authority figures. To the extent that an incidence of mass violence includes the compliance of people who are neither zealots nor direct perpetrators, this experiment and what it suggests has broad relevance.

Yet another classic experiment in social psychology that may have something to contribute to our understanding of the factors at work in collective violence is Philip Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment (1972). Wanting to test the power that roles have in influencing behavior, Zimbardo designated one group of research participants prison guards and the other inmates. The experiment was so "successful" that it had to be terminated prematurely. The 'guards' had become incredibly punitive and the 'prisoners' desperate. The participants played their roles so fully as to pose a risk of serious harm to themselves.

These experiments and those like them seem to provide us with knowledge of

human tendencies: the tendency to carry out the expectations of given roles, the tendency to surrender good judgment to the consensus of the group, and the tendency to obey authority figures. The relevance of Milgram's study to collective violence regards those who follow immoral orders. Similarly, Zimbardo's implications are for those roles which encourage active violence or indifference. And Asch's research leads us to think about the influence popular consensus may have had upon the decisions of various actors in outbreaks of violence.

Social identity, Prejudice, and Scapegoating

At this point it should be noted that none of these experiments, however relevant they may be, speak directly to the ethnic character that collective violence often assumes. Conformity and obedience take us away from the hatred that dominates our everyday understanding of genocide or mass violence. Perhaps that's the point. But if social psychology is to provide a comprehensive explanatory framework, it must attend to the fire as well as the ice. That brings us to prejudice and scapegoating.

Scapegoating happens as "individuals tend to displace aggression onto groups that are disliked, that are visible, and that are relatively powerless. Moreover, the form that aggression takes depends on what is allowed or approved by the in-group in question" (Aronson, 1999, p. 339). Why do we approve at all to aggressing others? From where comes this other human tendency to objectify, "otherize", and demonize people? "Social identity theory," developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979), is an attempt to provide some answers. Tajfel and Turner worked to show that identity is always in part social and that self-esteem is gained through group identification. Threats to self-esteem increase what the authors call "in-group favoritism." Put differently, prejudice, from this

perspective, seems to function as a way of building or restoring self-esteem.

Elliot Aronson (1999) notes, in addition, that “Discrimination, prejudice, and negative stereotyping increase sharply as competition for scarce jobs increases” (p. 354). He suggests “that competition and conflict breed prejudice” (p. 355), a position that harkens back to ‘Realistic conflict theory’ (Levine and Campbell, 1972). Put simply, ‘Conflicting interests develop, through competition, into overt conflict’ (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 34). Tajfel and Turner say about realistic group conflict theory (R.C.T.) that it “is deceptively simple, intuitively convincing, and has received strong empirical support” (1979, p. 33) and that their own work with social identity “is intended not to replace R.C.T., but to supplement it” (p. 34).

Finally, some have emphasized the significance of a sense of ‘relative deprivation’ (Olson, Herman, & Zanna, 1986). From this perspective, “People may become resentful of other groups not because of their conviction that their own security and resources are threatened by these groups but because of their sense of relative deprivation—the belief that they fare poorly compared with others” (Brehm, Kassin, & Fein, 2002).

To summarize, prejudice appears to be motivated by low self-esteem, fear, resentment, as well as a need to justify dominance within contexts of economic inequality. Perhaps in combination all of the findings from experimental psychology that have been mentioned here could add up to something like an explanation for ethnic violence, but it is also perhaps already clear that such research is too reductionistic and simplistically variable-driven to provide the context I seek, or to hold the complexity from which I suspect violence to ensue.

Limitations of the Literature (or, the academic motivation for this study)

While these scientific findings certainly have some truth to them, to use existentialist psychologist Rollo May's (1983) dichotomy, they are not *real*. In the *Crisis of the European Sciences*, Edmund Husserl (1954) persistently circles back to this fundamental point: that all abstract knowledge is derived from the life-world or the world as we live in it, and that we mistakenly take our scientific abstractions as a foundation for what we presume to be reality. Theorists following in the tradition of Husserl recognize that all knowledge is mediated by our consciousness, that it is our inescapable conscious immersion in the world that is the real epistemological foundation of truth. Gadamer's hermeneutics, for example, is based on the understanding that "Knower and known are both historic" (1975, p. 252). The consequences of this are immense, even if largely ignored by conventional psychology.

"Controlling" for extraneous variables, experimental research attempts to strip human beings of all socio-economic, political, and historical context in its efforts to deduce universal explanatory principles. Prominent social psychologist Elliot Aronson has expressed this as his "cherished bias," one seemingly shared by the majority of research psychologists; simply stated, "the experimental method is the best way to understand a complex phenomenon" (Aronson, 1999, p. viii). To be fair, Aronson also says that "the only way to be certain that the causal relations uncovered in experiments are valid is to bring them out of the laboratory and into the real world." (p. viii). While this may sound good, in application it is no different than the psychoanalyst's ability to see pent-up instinctual aggression in virtually all human gestures. If the abstractions of these psychologies "fit" real world experience this may say more about the interpretive

flexibility of human reality than it does about the validity of laboratory findings.

As if social psychologists are well aware of this, it has become standard practice to note as one of the limitations of their research projects the problem of “external validity.” To put it simply, they seem to be saying, “We’re not very sure that what we learned actually pertains to the real world” - a footnote of sorts, and one that allows scientific psychologists to avoid questioning their methods and the epistemological and ontological assumptions therein.

The other common limitation noted by social psychologists who concern themselves with problems of violence is that of ethics. Researchers cannot actually reproduce violence in the laboratories and therefore have to devise ways of studying it indirectly. This comes across sometimes as a sort of lament: we will forsake our search for the truth by upholding ethical standards. That violence and ethics may constitute far more than mere variables and requirements in the lives of human beings is apparently a concern for philosophy, not science.

As for psychoanalysis, it does offer a complex conception of human nature and aggression (Freud, 1930). Proceeding from a view of the human subject as divided within itself, where the ego is said to develop in order to mediate the inherent conflict between the instincts, the internalization of social norms, and the demands of life with others, complex and interesting possibilities emerge within which to understand and interpret aggression and violence. However, it is important to note that the student of psychoanalysis and the Western reporters employ similar problematic tropes in attempting to make sense of violence in Africa. Nevertheless, while psychoanalysis does tend to collude with (neo)colonialism, it is amenable, like its subject matter, to multiple

interpretations.

My main concern regarding psychoanalysis is that for researchers to assume that aggression is a “natural” instinct is to foreclose upon the question that has appeared in many forms throughout the history of thought. I am partial to the way Emmanuel Levinas states it:

It is extremely important to know if society in the current sense of the term is the result of a limitation of the principal that men are predators of one another, or if to the contrary it results from the limitation of the principal that men are for one another. Does the social, with its institutions, universal forms and laws, result from limiting the consequences of the war between men, or from limiting the infinity which opens in the ethical relationship of man to man? (1985, p. 80).

In light of this question, the Waki report, focused as it is on a specific instance of collective violence, proves far more helpful than the psychological literature. It provides concrete detail of social institutions (in Kenya) and how they have developed. But what remains to be explored are the numerous ways the political, in the broadest sense of the term, is lived, and whether in the lives of people and the stories they tell of violence we can better understand ethical relations within contexts of power and difference.

What I hope this literature review shows is the need to rethink the assumptions laden in standard psychological methodology, especially when researching such phenomena as ethnic violence. Indeed, for all its claims to predictive experimentalism, psychology’s explanations of violence seem to have contributed very little to the prevention of genocide, or large-scale violence in general. Perhaps it is time for psychologists to relinquish the control the laboratory affords (or the comfort of the armchair) and enter the world in which reality is constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed through complex everyday activity. I venture we will find a much more complex picture, irreducible to simple variables and reductionistic processes; and as such,

will find a need for an-other way to think research and the “truth” about violence.

Chapter III - Methodology and Procedures

How do we understand so vast a phenomenon while retaining the vibrancy of the lives that constitute it?

~Carolyn Nordstrom, from *Shadows of War*~

This research does not endeavor to uncover a supposedly essential meaning to the post-election violence or even to presume an explanation behind it, but proceeds, first and foremost, to report and explore what people have to say as they look both back at the violence in recall, and ahead in expectation or hope. Because my method is descriptive and interpretive, seeking to provide, organize, understand, and analyze narratives, I don't have a hypothesis to prove or disprove. My method, rather, emphasizes social-psychological process. As indicated by the title, my research attempts to relate and convey Kenyans' narratives of the post-election violence. The interviews that I conducted were motivated precisely by a certain ignorance and resultant desire to be taught. Using the metaphor of "text," I wanted the research participants to "read" the post-election violence to me. The way in which they narrated it is to be understood less as a representation of their (true) experience and more as structuration of what I've come to understand and write about peace and violence, democracy and tribe, history and agency. As Martin Packer puts it, "a way of saying invites a way of seeing," a way of seeing reality in a new light, or more precisely, "to see another way of being in the world, and see our own way of being in a new way" (2011, p. 118).

Multi-sited, Narrative Ethnography: The Development of a Method

In my research I sought to enter the relational world in which the post-election

violence in Kenya occurred and to provide, first, a microphone through which subjugated knowledge could be recorded and “broadcast.” In doing so, I emphasize narrative and multisited approaches to method within a broad field of postmodern ethnography. Ethnography itself, of course, has a long and rich history, a comprehensive accounting of which falls outside the scope of this dissertation; broad characterizing brush strokes, and narrow canonical references will have to suffice. It is true that ethnography left anthropology, its putative disciplinary home, in the 1930s to be utilized by the Chicago school of urban sociology (Robben & Sluka, 2006), but it was the postmodern trends that swept across the disciplines from around the mid 1960’s that rapidly escalated the dispersal of ethnographic methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Ethnographic fieldwork has long been considered a process of participant observation, the paradoxical stance of both proximity and distance, empathy and analysis. Its goal, after Malinowski, was to articulate “the natives point of view” (Malinowski, 1922). Ethnography was thus considered an objective study of intersubjectivity (Packer, 2011). The structural anthropology of Levi Strauss (1963) and even the romanticist hermeneutics of Geertz (1973) assumed a symbolic order of fixed meanings common to the anthropology of their day (Fabian, 2002). Classical ethnography was, in the words of Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, in “pursuit of the exotic other with literary, philosophical, and prescriptive precision, recording the symbol systems, kinship structures, and salvaged remnants in the vacuum of a fictitious ethnographic present” (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2003, p. 6).

If psychologists’ mistake is to seek the causes of collective violence in the laboratory, anthropologists (at least those of earlier times) can be faulted for leaving out

significant dimensions of the life-worlds they studied and their own relation to them. Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois point out that Geertz avoided the violent periods in Java and Morocco, “moving back and forth between his respective field sites during relative periods of calm,” (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2003, p. 6) to study symbolic cultural systems. “And so there is nothing in Geertz’s ethnographic writings hinting at the ‘killing fields’ that were beginning to engulf Indonesia soon after he had departed from the field” (p. 6). Thus in regard to Geertz’s fieldwork, we might ask, how was it that he participated and what did that (not) allow him to observe?

Pierre Bourdieu (2003) has shown participant-observation to be an impossibility. The researcher, always in some way, remains an outsider. Bourdieu doesn’t see this as a problem, but explains that what ethnographers do is actually participant *objectification*. Bourdieu seems to follow Ricoeur (1981), who wrote that “meaningful action is an object for science only under the condition of the kind of objectification” (p. 203). “Participant objectification undertakes to explore not the lived experience of the knowing subject but the social conditions of possibility - and therefore the effects and limits – of that experience and, more precisely of the act of objectivation itself.” (Bourdieu, 2003, p. 282). In other words, the researcher must understand the social field in which the work takes place and the impact the work has on it. Reflexivity for Bourdieu is less about one’s subjectivity and more about understanding one’s objective position in the field of research, which is also the political field of the world (Packer, 2011). The two fields merge in the constitutional practice of research, which is a matter of work/profession of the researcher (his subjectivation) and the objectivation of the others about and from whom it is one’s project to learn and write.

“Work and life come to be entangled in the embodied, situational, relational practice that constitutes long-term ethnographic fieldwork. Fieldwork is always already a critical theoretical practice; a deeply inescapable empirical practice; and a necessarily improvisational practice” (Cerwonka and Malkki, 2007, p. 6).

Barbara Tedlock flipped the term participant observation around to articulate narrative ethnography as the observation of participation: “The world in narrative ethnography is re-presented as perceived by a situated narrator, who is also presented as a character in the story that reveals his own personality. This enables the reader to identify the consciousness which has selected and shaped the experiences within the text. [...] Narrative ethnographies focus not on the ethnographer herself, but rather on the character and process of the ethnographic dialogue or encounter” (1991, pp. 77-78).

Tedlock sees this trend toward narrative ethnography emerging as early as the seventies. The more recent accounts of research that Cerwonka and Malkki provide demonstrate “how knowledge is produced hermeneutically and shows how ethnographic interpretation works in real time and in relation to various pragmatic, social, and ethical issues” (2007, p. 3).

The importance of not just ethnography, but narrative ethnography, is to situate what people say in the context they say it. Language is not merely a conduit of experience but a productive activity. Form and content are inseparable and thus in writing I provide the content with the form such that when, where, and to whom someone is speaking comes into play to help the reader interpret what is said. In the writing of my research I seek to situate what I observed or heard within the context of their disclosure as a kind of inscription of the very process through which Kenyans expand my horizon

such that the readers are brought into the field and vicariously moved through learning processes themselves.

One of the foci of postmodern ethnographic research today is identity in deconstructive human conditions (Marcus, 1998). George Marcus notes that people traditionally studied by anthropologists are “becoming more self-consciously deconstructive about their own forms of life” (p. 239). And reconstructive. Marcus seems to be in alignment with ethnomethodology when he says “both they and we are engaged in some variant or other of the business of trying to talk about the hard-to-grasp world” (p. 241)...where and when things fall apart. It is these last few words, in reference to Chinua Achebe’s writing on the African colonial period, that I would take up, in the context of Kenya, to talk about dispersed identity: “how distinctive identities are created from turbulence, fragments, intercultural reference, and localized intensification of global possibilities and associations” (Marcus, 1998, p. 62). This talk of dispersion is sometimes dismissed as postmodern intellectual abstraction when it actually has profound relevance to human psychology today.

I’m very interested in what Marcus says in the following passage:

Yet identities do seem to stabilize, do resist the [post]modernist conditions of migration and dissemination in situations of both great tragedy (racial violence) and liberation (nationalism out of colonialism). To document the stabilizations of identity in any domain or across them in an essentially deconstructive world is the primary task of all ethnography (1998, p. 74).

In this dissertation I look at how different people variously identified themselves and were interpellated by others leading up to the election and in its violent aftermath.

There is another way in which post-modernism becomes relevant to this project. “Any contemporary fieldwork project is deeply implicated in organizations of cultural

production that are indeed writing processes” (Marcus, 1999, p. 22). Further emphasizing the point, Marcus declares that “There is virtually no space or scene of contemporary fieldwork that has not already been thoroughly mediated by other projects of representation” (p. 23). He terms this aspect of the fieldwork context, a la Deleuze, the “writing-machine.” From the point of view of traditional ethnography, researchers today are dealing with a “much expanded field wherein ethnographic positions are always implicated with others that are both like it and unlike it” (p. 18). Affinities within my research are journalism, history, creative non-fiction, and so forth. But Marcus’ point in *Critical Anthropology Now* is that concrete writing projects overlap and influence one another. Law and media are especially emphasized in the volume as pervasive “producers of powerful and sometimes authoritative representations [that] intrude into the contexts of research” (1999, p. 24). Hence, it is no joke when I say that a good portion of my research involved writing upon writing.

I also had to think about various narrative strategies, lest I employ them unconsciously. Marcus & Fischer (1986), drawing on Hayden White’s (1973) study of writing techniques in the field of History, highlights four strategies of emplotment: Romance, Tragedy, Comedy, and Irony. “Tragedy is the heightening of the sense of conflicting social forces, in which the individual or the event is merely an unhappy locus, one, however, in which there can be a gain in consciousness and understanding through experiencing the power of social conflicts (Marcus & Fischer, 1986, p. 13). In large part the stories that form the heart of this dissertation are told as tragedies - at least by this definition. But they are also, or at least in part, comedic in that they “cultivate the sense in which there can be temporary triumphs and reconciliations” (p. 13).

As for how I weave these stories into one report or metanarrative, the problematic of romanticizing emerges. “Romance” according to Marcus and Fischer, “is the empathetic identification by the writer with quests that transcend different periods of world history” (1986, p. 13). With the post-election violence in mind, I’m aware of my own humanist and/or socialist identifications with ideals of real democracy, peace, and unity, and the continued struggles for liberation in the postcolonial era. In research on political violence, to dis-identify oneself entirely from such aspirations would take scientism to extreme and absurd ends. And to the extent that some Kenyans have those aspirations themselves, the romantic spirit must be represented in and as text. The crucial hermeneutic issue is parsing out their transcendent quests from my own.

The ironic mode of writing arises from the recognition that there are “a number of equally comprehensible and plausible, yet apparently mutually exclusive conceptions of the same events” (Marcus & Fischer, 1986, p. 14). We recognize this as the postmodern condition and thus find irony to be a most appropriate form of writing. Writing ironically entails being more reflective and explicit about choices made in the course of research and writing, and how my biases structure the text. “Irony,” say Marcus and Fischer,

is unsettling: it is a self-conscious mode that senses the failure of all sophisticated conceptualizations; stylistically, it employs rhetorical devices that signal real or feigned disbelief on the part of the author toward the truth of his own statements; it often centers on the recognition of the problematic nature of language, the potential foolishness of all linguistic characterizations of reality; and so revels—or wallows—in satirical techniques (Marcus & Fischer, 1986, p. 13).

While writing solely in this mode, if it is even possible, is undesirable in work that is meant to be taken seriously, it is indispensable for exactly the same reason. “The task, particularly now,” argue Marcus and Fischer, “is not to escape the deeply suspicious and critical nature of the ironic mode of writing, but to embrace and utilize it in combination

with other strategies for producing realist descriptions of society (Marcus & Fischer, 1986, p. 14).

One of the dangers researchers face, given the parameters of our projects, is the urge to impose coherence where there may be none, that is, to explain more than we are able to. Usually this entails invoking causes that lie underneath the surface. Conversely, “Ethnography provides interpretation and explanation by contextualizing phenomena” (Marcus, 1998, p. 72). What change is signified by the prefixes multi-sited or multi-locale? “Multi-sited fieldwork is not the same as fieldwork at multiple sites. [...] Instead, translocal ethnographers go where their research takes them to create an emergent field and study object. The emphasis is on multiple connections rather than multiple sites” (Robben & Sluka, 2006, p. 331).

Marcus and Fischer argue that multi-locale ethnography is based on “the idea...that any cultural identity or activity is constructed by multiple agents in varying contexts or places, and that ethnography must be strategically conceived to represent this sort of multiplicity, and to specify intended and unintended consequences in the network of complex connections within a system of places” (Marcus, 1998, p. 52). “Single projects must traverse and work through systems and life worlds in the very same frame” (p. 240). Or as Carolyn Nordstrom puts it, “Ethnography must be able to bring a people and a place to live in the eyes and hearts of those who have not been there. But it must also be able to follow not a place, but placelessness, the flow of a good, an idea, an international military culture, a shadow; of the way these place-less realities intersect and are shaped by associations with other places and other place-less forces” (Nordstrom, 2004, p. 15). In short, the research must “move over discontinuous realms of social space

in order to describe and interpret cultural formations that can only be understood in this way” (Marcus, 1998, p. 240).

Whereas traditional ethnography set out to describe a particular culture in relative isolation, “multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography” (Marcus, 1998, p.90). In other words, our understanding of “context,” which provides the basis of interpretation, has changed as the world has changed. Context, now, is understood less as a structure and more as a complex network of processes. Our job is to trace them. “Strategies of quite literally following connections, associations, and putative relationships are thus at the very heart of designing multi-sited ethnographic research” (Marcus, 1998, p. 81).

Data Collection & Procedure

The stories and material for the dissertation - the data, in another register - was gathered from interviews, as well as general and everyday observation and casual conversation. That is, I counted as data not only those interviews I solicited from people formally, but also interactions I observed in the public sphere, and observations I made of public life, which were brought into discussions and this dissertation in order to clarify their potential meanings, and complicate other seemingly settled ones. Crucial to my immersion in the field were casual conversations at a local grocery store, or on a bus, or observing an interview on a television. To the extent that these interactions responded to the research question, shed some light on it, or otherwise interacted with it – even as I

had not asked for it, or solicited it – they entered the data pool, so to speak.

That said, however, the interviews I conducted were the richest and most comprehensive data source. The first few were recruited from personal networks and evolving references from colleagues at the University of Nairobi, where I was situated. These participants, then, in a snowballing or spiraling manner, referred me to others. For this dissertation I conducted a total of eight interviews. The demographic constellation was as follows. By ethnicity: four identified as Luo, three identified as Kikuyu, and one identified as Kamba. By class the interviewees could be roughly categorized as: Five professionals and three working poor. By gender: there were four females and four males. Of other interviews I solicited, one declined and two more did not follow through. Their reasons in each case were not clear to me.

The interviews lasted anywhere from 30 minutes to two hours, and on average around 45 minutes. There were no follow-up interviews. The interviews I conducted generally proceeded from a simple question, to share with me their thoughts, impressions, and experiences of the Kenyan PEV. From this initial question, I utilized empathic reflection, not unlike those of the therapy room, to encourage the story's unfolding and elaboration. That is, I didn't ask a series of questions, nor did I "work through" a structured interview list – at least not explicitly. I had in the back of my mind a set of broad interview areas I wanted to cover, at the minimum. These included that the interviewee tell me about the violence; about how it affected him or her; about where he or she was at the time; about how it affected others; about how they understood or explained the violence; about what impact they believe it had on contemporary Kenya; and what sense they had of Kenya's future; about their understanding of ethnicity, class,

or regionalism in the violence. However, I did not necessarily ask the interviewees these questions directly. That is, the guide, to the extent that it was that, was for me, rather than to ask the interviewee. I was aware, by virtue of my clinical experience, that the empathic, almost client centered, listening and reflection of the therapy room could be more than sufficient to spur coverage of these areas without having to ask the participants directly. At base then, and ideally, the only substantive question I needed to ask the participants was: "Please share with me your views, impressions, and experiences of the violence that took place in the wake of the 2007 electoral campaign." Generally, for the story to unfold hereafter, I only needed to respond with empathic reflection, restatement, and summary.

It should also be mentioned, again, that I was sensitive not only to what people said, but also to the context in which they said it. The importance of narrative ethnography is not just, or primarily, that language is a conduit of experience, but that it is a productive activity. Knowing that I would be writing what people were speaking to me, I listened as well for what was problematic in their narratives, that is, what could easily be contested from other positions. Throughout the research process, by speaking with a diversity of people, I became more and more aware of these points of contestation. I saw it as my responsibility to accentuate them in the interviews so as to allow people to respond in advance to what could otherwise be considered "vulnerabilities" in their narratives. In other words, I played the "devil's advocate" at times in order to make it more difficult to objectify and/or demonize anyone or any group whose words appear in this text.

Further, in regard to the politics of representation, and quite practically, every

interview began by reviewing the purpose of the research and highlighting confidentiality agreements (See Appendix C). Only after gaining people's voluntary consent did the interviews begin. The interviews took place in a variety of settings. I had an institutional affiliation at the University of Nairobi, and some of the interviews took place there. Others, however, took place in more public settings like restaurants and neighborhood "hangouts." Most interviews were conducted predominantly in English, many Kenyans, by their British colonial history being quite fluent and comfortable in English. I am, however, also somewhat versed in Kiswahili, and was able to follow some rudimentary or everyday conversational references – even respond in kind.

Data Analysis

Given that interviews were one of my primary sources of data, my first priority with regard to analysis was getting people's stories straight. This meant, very practically, that I checked-in with them as to what I heard them say, and invited them to correct or otherwise respond to what I heard them say. The interviews were audio-recorded. Replaying and listening to the narratives, I was attentive to tropes (e.g., metaphors and metonyms) and explanatory strategies (e.g., argument, plot, and evaluation/implications) (Packer, 2011, p. 111), the explication of which guides my analysis.

My priority has been to present Kenyan's stories as uninterrupted as possible. Thus, where my questions encouraged elaboration or simple clarification they have been largely omitted from the text. They have been retained in the text where they served more as interventions, clearly steering the conversation. This distinction follows somewhat naturally from the content and form of the interviews, which began with stories of post-

election violence, largely descriptive, and moved into discussion of the causes and consequences of the violence.

As for explanations for post-election violence, they seemed to derive more from our dialogue. Thus, in this part of the text I attempted to retain my questions insofar as they didn't become cumbersome to the reader or overly fragmented the stories. At times it proved more useful to substitute the question with a framing sentence or paragraph. This principle also applied to the re-organization of the interview narratives. For example, while in the interviews I asked people to circle back to previous points or topics, when writing I found it to be more effective to insert follow-up conversation into the topical areas in which my questions were spawned in the first place. Additionally, there was one account that was so comprehensive that I split it into sections, punctuated by others' accounts, to avoid the feeling of redundancy. Amidst this reorganization, the audio record remains as a check and resource.

Throughout the findings sections, my commentary and analysis are set off in italics, except where conventional methods for distinguishing changes in voice are sufficient and aesthetically preferable, such as when there is much back and forth (e.g., he said,...I then asked...he responded..., etc.), or when a section begins with and is primarily devoted to my analysis. In most cases, though, my voice is marked by italics.

A final detail about the format of the writing: It happens that, in the course of conversation, interviews included, people make parenthetical statements. Logically, I mark them with parentheses. On the other hand, when I seek to clarify for the reader an ambiguous statement made by someone, I use hard brackets.

The nature of ethnographic data is such that one cannot determine in advance

exactly how it will be analyzed. As previously stated, explanation in ethnography proceeds by way of contextualizing that data. There are multiple levels to this. In this case, the first had to do with how I wrote about the process of data gathering. The conditions (situational, interpersonal, political) in which interviews were conducted and observations made were given/written with the content of what was said and done.

Furthermore, the content itself, in order to be made intelligible to the reader, required providing the historical, cultural, and political context indicated by what people said. I relied heavily, though not exclusively, on Kenyan scholars for this. What was indexed or directly referenced in people's speech led me to other data points. So, rather than have a particular and predetermined analytical frame with which to interpret the data, other data points were drawn into the research such that showing the relation between them is what constitutes the argument of this ethnography.

In addition to showing connections between sites that have been unarticulated or severed in dominant discourses, and highlighting narrative tropes and strategies in the speech of variously located Kenyans, there are other analytical tactics I applied to the data. Notably, I looked for absences in narratives, particularly who or what was left out of stories. Let me offer here a key example. "Good governance," or lack thereof, emerged as a common explanatory strategy, not only in interviews I conducted but in public commentaries of the ICC trials and in everyday conversation on various social problems. But in further researching the topic of good governance in Africa an enormous erasure became apparent. The concept derives from development discourse (Abrahamsen, 2000), and more specifically from a World Bank Report that signified the transition at the end of the Cold War from Western support of dictators in Africa toward their promotion of

“democracy.” A portion of the dissertation is thus dedicated to fleshing out the international political context of “good governance in Africa.”

If what both the Western press and conventional psychology provide tend to be general, abstract, ahistorical explanations of violence, I present a situated account involving a diversity of descriptions and explanations given by Kenyans from various tribes, classes, and political affiliations about the post-election violence and prospects of sustained peace. Though I did seek out members of the Kenyan elite for “a view from above,” the voices especially present in this research are of those commonly marginalized: women and impoverished youth. Through these narratives history is made present: the legacies of colonialism, its divide and rule tactics, and how they have shaped the way ethnicity is lived. Economic conditions (e.g., the lack of essential-public services: water, sewage, and uncontrolled rents in the slums, as well as land disputes in rural areas) are given much explanatory weight in the narratives and reveal what is at stake in elections in Kenya.

The Findings are broken up into three chapters: the first is mainly descriptive of the period of the post-election violence. The two chapters that follow it are more analytical. While I was primarily interested in *their* analysis, even that lends itself to further interpretation on my part as researcher. Rather than assuming the authority to make definitive analyses of what was said to me, I found it exceedingly important to bring such commentary into dialogue with people (as I did with local divergences of opinion), thus giving research participants the opportunity to respond to it. Hence the importance of a narrative approach that shows the reader, not data filtered through some interpretive “lens,” but the coalescence of theory and data in representations of

interactions that can and will be read in multiple ways.

The ordering of the narrative(s) proceeded by way of both logical and aesthetic choices. Following the interwoven descriptions of how the post-election violence unfolded from different vantage points, is an account that deals with the immediate political context of the post-election violence, and which ends by setting a plotline present in other narratives: the possibility that violence will recur in the next election. That account is followed by another that provides deeper historical context, which is itself followed by a contrasting account of Kenyan history and land disputes. The narrative then shifts to the present, via ethnographic observations of political and economic processes, so that by the end of Chapter VI it is clear that the associations and implications of the post-election violence that occurred in Kenya in 2007/8 extend vastly in time and space.

Chapter VII deals much more with how people were impacted by the post-election violence. These accounts highlight the complexity of ethnic identity and relationship. Whereas the structure of the dissertation as a whole moves between tragedy, romance, and irony, this chapter is structured largely as “comedy” in that the text, by bringing together the voices of people who don’t know each other and who, by another register, are at odds with each other, functions like those “festivals and rituals that bring competitors together and temporarily still conflict” (Marcus & Fischer, 1986, p. 13). Moreover, within individual accounts there is revealed “the sense in which there can be temporary triumphs and reconciliations” (p. 13).

Having been involved in this project for some years now, I’ve come to believe that there are no specific procedures that could ensure that I have done justice to what

Kenyan's have spoken to me. I continuously struggled with my position in the field, constantly looking at my insertion into, and authorship of, the story. I found it important to discuss my entry into this research, as that question is commonly raised, and also because talking about how I got involved in the topic reveals my limitations – personal, political, and methodological. That is the content of the next chapter.

Analyzing how Kenyan's narrate the post-election violence of 2008 also implies a readership. Potential readers have been acknowledged as a part of the research, given the fact that the “reference” of the text, i.e., “the mode of being unfolded in front of the text” (Ricoeur, 1981, p. 93), depends in part upon the social position and concerns of the various readers. This encouraged me as writer to take into consideration the common “sense” of the specified audiences when creating the text’s “internal organization” with particular readers in mind. This has a number of implications, 1) Where read by psychologists the analysis should open up the possibility of a socially engaged form of research 2) By disclosing the process through which I gathered and connected data to form an argument or arguments, I simultaneously allow for alternative readings 3) The thematic structure emphasizes essential categories of western discourse: democracy, ethnicity/tribe, violence-peace and then shows the ways these terms deconstruct when listening to Kenyan’s talk about post-election violence.

The goal with respect to analysis is to produce “a story which switches from one point of view to another without prioritizing any one, yet unsettles in the mind of anyone who reads or hears the story not only his certainties, but his belief in the possibility of certainty” (Jackson, 2002, p. 265). This is the final dimension of my approach to data analysis: With regard to studying violence and peace, it is assumed that total

understanding is impossible; I have been attendant to the challenges associated with understanding and writing about others as subjects of violence (Butler, 2004; Dodd, 2009). It has been important to show the places and ways in which discourse on violence breaks down. One concrete form this took was writing about the problems encountered in research that seemed to call into question doing research on post-election violence at all. Through the process of research I myself was called into question. For example, and at the start, why have Kenyans been “thrown” into having to deal with and respond to election-related violence? What is the difference between my efforts to make meaning of it and theirs? Why was I studying responses to post-election violence while they were living them?

I describe in some detail the beginnings of my research in Kenya in order to orient the reader to the pragmatic, political, and ethical concerns that were at play in my fieldwork. I’ve done my best to be a “vulnerable observer” (Behar, 1996) and thus to offer what I deem to be an ethical hermeneutics of affective writing. Throughout the dissertation, by recounting the stories told to me and by showing the ways in which I myself have been undone, moved and/or changed through this research, I hope to inspire an ethical response from the reader. As such, the dissertation does more than offer a more complex and locally grounded alternative to Western discourse; it also serves to sensitize readers to a dangerous state of affairs. Yet the discursive remains essential precisely because the imperative to act is coupled with or embedded in the complicated field of history and politics. Ultimately the writing of this dissertation follows the guidance given me by an informant and friend at the end of an emotional and very illuminating interview: “Tell the complicated story.”

Chapter IV - Entries: Locating the interpreter

*I make no effort to do the impossible: to become invisible, apolitical, decontextual,
to speak from nowhere.*

~George Yancy~

*Still he felt that by telling his story, so frivolous, so childish, he had surrendered a part of
himself to others and this he felt gave them power over him.*

~Ngugi wa Thiong'o~

Flying-there

Ethnographic research requires reflexivity. It requires thinking about the ways in which my subjectivity (and the discursive forms through which it is constituted) influence the kind of observations that I (don't) make, the kind of people and knowledge that I have access to, how I analyze the "data" I gathered, and what is deemed worthy of, or necessitating, further interpretation. The following section describes my entry into researching post-election violence in Kenya.

In the summer of 2009 I went to Kenya to see whether or not this research project was going to be feasible. I arrived in Nairobi after a 50+ hour plane trip, an interesting twist of events given that I had been scheduled on one of the first direct flights from the US. It was but to stop briefly in Ghana to refuel. I was excited to get to fly across the width of the great continent, to look out upon the Congo.

Ah, the fantasies of 'Africa'! They made me recall the first time I went to East Africa in 2006, on a flight from London to Dar es Salaam. It departed in the evening. Flying through the dark night amidst the stars, I awoke and looked down, out the window, to behold Africa. I saw, not the lights I was used to from flights in the US, but fires burning on the dark earth. I looked up at the screen in front of me and the GPS flight path. We were flying above Greece! I slept for the rest of the flight, trading fantasies for

dreams. Nor would I get to fly from West to East Africa. The American government decided that a direct flight to/from Nairobi was a threat to “homeland security.” So I was rebooked on a trip through Dubai, with a 20-hour layover and other such bourgeois inconveniences.

At the airport I located a cab driver to take me into the city. We drove mostly in silence. The temperature was warmer than I expected, but still cool. The air brought back memories of my first trip to Africa: the scent of plants mixed with diesel exhaust. I felt nostalgic and excited to be back.

I arrived at the new home of my old friends, Nigel and Julia. I met their young one and caught up on their lives and work. I inquired about the status of people I’d met the last time. Over dinner I described to them the purpose of my trip, which Nigel summarized as “feeling the pulse” of the situation in Kenya. I also wanted to know whether Kenyans would care to discuss the post-election violence with me. Julia and Nigel had, some time back, made introductions for some foreigners who wanted to interview people in the Kibera slums about post-election violence. Perhaps considering the unasked question as to whether they would do the same for me, Julia said that people might wonder or think it strange: all these white people coming to ask questions about violence. They were, I think, among those who wondered what the attraction was for (people like) me. What is the point, after all, of people talking to strangers about the violence they suffered, witnessed, or managed to avoid? What good can come of talking or writing about the post-election violence? I’m not sure whether these questions were theirs or mine. They were never voiced, but always present with me.

Nigel and Julia knew me as a volunteer and activist, but not as a researcher. I first

met Nigel in 2007 at the World Social Forum, which was held in Nairobi. I mentioned to him that I was interested in doing volunteer work, so we sat down and discussed what I might have to offer to the organization he worked for and to people in Kibera. “I’m willing to do whatever needs doing,” I offered. “No. What are your talents? What are your skills? What would you like to organize or do?” Nigel pressed. He left me to think about it.

I was enthralled with Kenyan literature (and still am). The first book I ever read on Kenya - in fact, my first exposure to Kenya - was Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s *River Between* (1965), which I read in a college class on non-western world literature and post-colonial theory. At that time Kenya was still under the rule of Daniel Arap Moi, president for over twenty years, famous for among other things amassing a tremendous amount of wealth, and harshly cracking down upon dissenters. In fact, Ngugi wa Thiong’o himself, along with a number of academics and activists, were detained for long periods of time. He continued to write. His brilliance and courage inspired me.

Years later I was elated to find in a Nairobi bookstore a host of books written by Kenyan authors, including Ngugi wa Thiong’o, that were difficult to find in the US. I greedily bought them up. As I read my latest discovery (*Going Down River Road* by Meja Mwangi) the night after that conversation with Nigel, an idea occurred to me: “What about running a reading group on Africa literature with youth in the slum?” That would seem to reconcile the contradiction in my desire to help people I didn’t know. I wouldn’t teach; I would rather make available the teachings of great Kenyan writers to some youth of Kibera and through discussion begin to learn about life in a slum within a city within a country that I had wandered into quite ignorantly.

I'll always remember the first time I walked through Kibera with Nigel and some other visitors from the World Social Forum. How to describe what I felt emerging atop the railroad tracks? The crowded rusty-roof tenements suddenly spread out before the eyes into the distance. I was told that one million people lived within the equivalent of the square mile that this old river valley constituted. I was also told that the name Kibera came from the word Kibra, which referred to the forest that existed when the decommissioned Nubian soldiers first settled there.

I was captivated by the commerce and movement along the railroad tracks, tracks that were laid by Indian immigrants in the late 19th century and run from Mombasa across the Rift Valley all the way to Uganda. Crossing the tracks and walking down into the slums proper is where description eludes me, though I will make an attempt. The shops and homes packed in together along dirt roads that wind up, down, and around like a maze. Produce vendors selling tomatoes, kale, and herbs; a butcher sharpens knives on his pedal-controlled grinder; and far more activity than I am able to take in at the time. Kids gather outside a shop to watch a movie playing on a television set back behind security bars. Seeing an *mzungu* (white foreigner) they turn and excitedly chant the question, "how are you?" Although feeling somehow intoxicated I say, "fine." They laugh.

Continuing on we see a small shack painted with the words "Constant Gardener," the title of the recently released political thriller that was partially shot in Kibera. Nigel explains that the producers had built and donated some latrines to a women's group as a way of generating income. One of the guys we were with was outraged that people had to

pay to use the toilet. Kibera lacks a public sewage system. To make matters worse, there is open sewage that runs through the slum from adjacent wealthier neighborhoods. The stench of shit is a part of the ambiance. This is the kind of thing that North American and European tourists who visit the slum make note of (And there is such a thing unfortunately as slum tours, which some people do while in Nairobi before or after going on luxury safari in the Serengeti). And although the last people I want to be identified with are these tourists, I admit that no matter how much time I've spent in Kibera, I'm always a tourist.

It's ironic that as I stayed on the edge of the largest slum in East Africa in early 2007, each evening I would settle into reading Mwangi's novels about life in the slums of Nairobi. But the fact of the matter is that as I walk through Kibera I cannot entirely *see* what it is like to live there no matter how much I look around. Even my increased proficiency in Kiswahili only permits me to hear so much. Again, with Pierre Bourdieu (2003) I believe participant-observation to be an impossibility. As a researcher I always remain an outsider. My presence in the field as a white guy influences interactions; I can't be a fly on the wall. An elephant in the room is more like it. More often there is an explicit acknowledgement by people that I'm there/involved but that doesn't at all mean that I am a participant in the same sense as my hosts. The novel, then, allowed me to hear and observe things that I otherwise could not, things that never happened and are always happening in life on the margins of modern Kenya.

Nigel organized the reading group. Around ten young people from Kibera attended regularly. We met weekly over the course of a month and a half, reading and discussing short stories. Meanwhile I volunteered in a school for partial orphans. In both

cases I felt highly indulged by students and teachers alike. And as I traversed the paths through the slums of Kibera, passing by the doorways of the homes of some of the most materially impoverished people in the world, I wondered what could I do to *really* help? The answer of those I worked with: “Raise funds to support our work.”

Re-searching

When I returned to Nairobi in 2009, I saw my research task quickly dissipate in our shared memories of my role as a volunteer. Day two I found myself recruited into some administrative work. I was asked to analyze a half-dozen websites for ideas on how Nigel and his co-workers might redesign theirs. I also transferred a host of files from one computer to another. Amidst these tasks I continued to try to establish my orientation as a researcher.

Enters another friend from my previous trip. After catching up a bit, the conversation turned to my research. She let me know that she didn't involve herself in politics. She said that she hoped the conversation we were having wouldn't turn into an interview. She disliked interviews. I responded that at that point in time I was just talking with different people to begin to gain perspective. “I hope I am not one of those with whom you are talking,” she said. I laughed nervously at her assertion of boundaries. Around that time Nigel returned to the room and added to the conversation that their organization is “bipartisan.” I got the point and dropped the topic. They were at work after all. Moreover, as an organization dependent on multiple sources of funding, taking sides was not in their interest. As to her reticence in particular, I'm not entirely sure what it was about. When I returned in 2011 I reminded her of that interaction. She laughed and

expressed some embarrassment at having been so guarded. But then two more years had gone by and the topic was perhaps less sensitive.

So despite being somewhat connected in Kenya, having some friends there, there were still things they were not going to open up to me about. The topic of post-election violence appeared to evoke a range of feelings which manifested in their hesitation or reluctance to speak – to me. I learned that I would have to tread lightly in trying to understand what had happened. Though as much as some would not talk with me much about the post-election violence (paradoxically, some of those I was closest to), others were all too willing to do so. For example, when reuniting with a friend that I'd traveled through rural Kenya with in 2008, he immediately recounted in great detail how he and his family avoided the violence, before updating me on the developments in his life.

So while I felt like an outsider at times, there were moments where I felt very much a part of things. For example, in the warm welcome I received from a friend when I returned to Kibera. In the course of the conversation, he asked about my educational progress. "Ph.D.," he smiled, "I heard that stands for permanent head damage." Later that day, walking down the street we bumped into a young Rasta I met but for two hours two years ago, "Joseph Hamer, of course I remember you. We planted a tree together," he exclaimed. "How are you?"

Similarly, and toward the end of my trip in 2009, I went to the Story Moja Hay Festival. I especially recall listening to Al Kags read from the *Living Memories* he had gathered from elders from around Kenya. He signed the copy I bought and wrote: "Joseph, Thanks for stopping by and picking up the tales. I hope they make you happy and knowledgeable and maybe Kenyan at heart." That evening I was invited to the home

of a friend of a friend for a get together that would leave me feeling that this project could really go somewhere. People of various ethnicities were present. My research topic seemed to prompt a dynamic conversation:

“No, we will not see anything as bad as what happened [in 2007/8],” one woman said adamantly, though it was taken as her just being “optimistic.” “Why I believe that,” she continued, “because it’s being talked about, unlike in Rwanda.”

The rest of my memory of the conversation permits but fragments:

That politicians allowed the violence to prove their points about the other side; that they’ll use violence to gain or maintain power; the sense of betrayal that people felt as Raila and Kibaki patted one another on the back after signing the power-sharing agreement when they had so recently been on television bad-mouthing the other side, and thus, perhaps, encouraging people to kill one another; The U.S. and the U.K. paying off both sides to encourage a peace deal; people locked up inside, a boost in commerce.

One woman described watching from her window people marching from Kibera, chanting “No Raila, No Peace” and those from another slum coming from the opposite direction, dragging their pangas on the pavement to mark a roadblock. Another talked about the *askaris* (guards of large apartment complexes, typically poor) providing water for demonstrators. And yet another was questioned for the role of the *Kisii* in the election. Because of where they are located geographically, she said, they’ve learned to protect themselves from all directions.

For lack of following all that was said I was left with the realization of how much context I lacked, how much I didn’t know about the history of politics and ethnicity in

⁴ The *Kisii*, by population, are one of the smaller ethnic groups in Kenya.

Kenya. I bought more books.

Of law and leadership: Public observations

One major occurrence during my visit to Kenya in 2009 was that the Chairman of the Waki Commission handed over a sealed envelope of names to Luis Moreno-Ocampo, prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, of major figures implicated in the post-election violence, the threat being that if the government was not able or willing to set up mechanisms to prosecute those named and involved, the ICC would begin investigations. At the time, the back and forth, at least as it played out in the news, seemed to involve a parsing out of who were more or less to blame, with government officials, including Raila Odinga, saying that those who “stole the election” should be tried first and foremost as the most culpable ones.

I was privy to a number of other important events in that period of time. I had the extraordinary opportunity to attend a “ground-breaking ceremony” for a new hospital that was being built in Nyanza (or, “Luoland”). President Kibaki was there to offer his blessing on this public-private partnership. It was the first time he had been to Nyanza since the post-election violence occurred. It was a significant moment. But the ceremony was delayed for hours by the politicians, including Kibaki, who all eventually and dramatically arrived in helicopters and hummers. Most of the speeches were given in either Kiswahili and Duluo. I later asked someone to clarify what Kibaki had said. He just kept telling the crowd what “hardworking” people they were, my interlocutor said, seeming disappointed.

What I remember most from where I was sitting in the VIP tent (I was friends with one of the donors), were the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of local people who came

to see the president. While I sat in a chair among the Kenyan elite, the people that lived in the area stood crowded in the grass and were kept back by the police who periodically permitted them to inch a bit closer to the stage. By the time the festivities got underway, the rain began to fall. That threw the crowd into a bit of a panic. They charged “our” already full tent to seek shelter, showing once again that there is always room for more and how precarious these privileged perches are.

Right around that same time another President, Barack Obama, visited Ghana on his first trip to Sub Saharan Africa since being elected. I was in Kenya when he announced he would run for president. It was an exciting moment for Kenyans and American tourists alike. At this point in 2009, Barack Obama had won the election and given his famous speech in Cairo, which indicated that a certain imperialism and xenophobia, at least by the opinion of large swathes of peoples outside the United States, may no longer be the hallmark of US foreign policy. Throughout the world hopes were high. In Ghana, President Obama intended to both challenge and inspire:

I believe that this moment is just as promising for Ghana and for Africa as the moment when my father came of age and new nations were being born. This is a new moment of great promise. Only this time, we’ve learned that it will not be giants like Nkrumah and Kenyatta who will determine Africa’s future. Instead, it will be you -- the men and women in Ghana’s parliament -- (applause) -- the people you represent. It will be the young people brimming with talent and energy and hope who can claim the future that so many in previous generations never realized (2009).

We will return to the role of the youth in determining the future and highlight other elements in that speech as they relate to the situation in Kenya. But it’s important to note that many Kenyans were offended that Obama chose Ghana over Kenya for his first visit as president to Sub-Saharan Africa. It was seen as punitive. He was thought to be

speaking to them when he said things such as “It is still far too easy for those without conscience to manipulate whole communities into fighting among faiths and tribes,” and “No person wants to live in a society where the rule of law gives way to the rule of brutality and bribery. That is not democracy, that is tyranny, even if occasionally you sprinkle an election in there” (Obama, 2009).

Meanwhile Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton, was in Kenya to convey Obama’s message that the US will “increase assistance for responsible individuals and responsible institutions” (Obama, 2009). From what I understood she emphasized the other side of this coin. The politicians took her message as a threat. As for the people, outside of a lecture she gave at the University of Nairobi I overheard someone say, “She has all the answers for questions she does not even understand.”

What are those questions? And would I be able to understand them if they were addressed to me?

Blood or ketchup? An encounter on the bus

One day, I was on my way home from city center, having managed to finally board a bus at rush hour. I don’t know if he was sitting there when I took my seat, the man with dark glasses. Enthusiastically he greets me. “Deutch?,” he asks. “No. US.” He pauses, and then asks me which state, naming a number of them. “Pennsylvania,” I say. He asks for the capital. “Philadelphia,” I say mistakenly. He repeats it, as though it sounds familiar, then checks his knowledge. “Pennsylvania is the state and Philadelphia the city?” “Yes,” I say, and consider asking him where he’s from, but choose not to because I feel uncomfortable talking with him, particularly on the bus where no one else is talking.

“How do you see Obama?” he asks. I smile and say that I like him. He turns away not seeming to share my enthusiasm. “What do you think about Obama?” I ask. “I don’t know because I am not in the U.S.,” he says and then makes a comment about sharing tribal roots. But then “Obama is not fully Luo...but he is Luo,” he says.

“Where are you from, North or South” he asks me. I say North. “That explains it” (my support for Obama). “People in the South don’t like black people. It’s a fact, isn’t it?” “Some,” I reply. “Where was King killed, Alabama?” “Tennessee,” I say. He repeats it. “Yes, Tennessee is in the South,” I confirm.

He bluntly asks, “Who are you?” He inquires about my European ancestry. “I don’t know so much of my family history,” I reply. “Are you a Heinz 58?” He seems to be uncertain as to whether or not he got the number right but continues speaking, “I am also a Heinz 58.” “Really?” I say. “At heart,” he replies, “but by blood I’m Luo.” He then says something about babies and ethnic purity and begins to make derogatory comments about Kikuyus. I start feeling incredibly uncomfortable. Did the book I was looking at, open to a page with a graphic photo of PEV entitled “Rift Valley” invite this?

He pointed out that the guy who was walking down the aisle selling religious stickers was Kikuyu, and said something about Kikuyus being the best thieves, but that he could steal from them too. He shouted in *Sheng*, “Bei Gani for numba two?” and repeated his question until the guy eventually came over and let him look at the stickers. He chose one that said, “No weapon can defeat he who believes in the Lord.” It was “vain” he said, indeed “weapons can defeat you.”

This young man with the dark glasses told me his name and asked for mine; “Joseph,” I replied. “Joseph what?” I paused, and feeling distrustful gave the creative

pseudonym “Smith.” He said something absurd about ‘S’ being associated with Kikuyu. “S--sweet...One ‘S’ is fine. Two combined makes for bitter.” Seeing me getting agitated, he speculated that I must have some of the racist south in me, my parents were from there, perhaps. “No,” I said, which he dismissed: “Probably racist.” “How is it that you look both Irish and Italian?” he mused. “Heinz 58, Kikuyu.”

As I responded with silence he noted my facial expression: “Wow, what a smirk!” Feeling pinned-up against a wall I defaulted to psychotherapeutic technique. “What do you make of it?” I asked. He said something in English that made no sense to me so I asked him to clarify. He said, “You’re a Kikuyu, an American Kikuyu.” “Luos speak what we feel; Kikuyus, like you, are quiet.” He continued, “I know a lot about you even without you talking.” I acknowledged aloud that he probably did. He said that I must also know something about him since he’s been talking a lot. “I’m a high Luo,” he said. “And that’s like Mike Tyson on coke.” Dangerous, I thought. But he explained that Tyson loses his lisp when high on cocaine, becoming eloquent.

In some drugged poetics of free association he referred to the Kikuyu as wolves. Have I seen *Dances With Wolves*? “They dance with wolves. But to dance with the same wolves all the time, how horrible. I want to dance with an angel, who is but a wolf from abroad, a different kind of wolf, who doesn’t seem dangerous at first.” The man with the dark glasses challenges me to say what I am feeling. What can I say? I’m scared, fascinated, and ashamed at the same time. I think, “what better metaphor than ‘wolves in sheep’s clothing’ for the white skinned (neo)colonialists.”

To move across the dance floor of the English language with an angel of death and destruction...From whence comes the danger here? Who are the wolves? In a

whisper meant to be heard, he says to me “They are killing us. They are killing us.” And with more affect and a little louder he speaks of the threat of their pangas and proclaims that “They are not good for Kenya. Take them with you when you go back. Take them with you and leave them in the red light district.” He forms the shape of a gun with his fingers. “Let them be beat,” he says.

I’m feeling horrible by this point. I think about apologizing to the whole bus for apparently inciting all of this ethnic bashing. The passengers behind me make no noticeable sounds of acknowledgement of this conversation. But one woman does turn around and look at me a couple of times, though I don’t know what to make of it. We near the shopping mall, where I thought it would be best to get off so as to avoid disclosing the area I stay in. I wait until the bus stops and suddenly jump up and say goodbye. The interaction preoccupied me for days thereafter.

I was subject, more or less, to the kind of unstructured interviews I intended to conduct. He seemed to wonder about the similarities between race relations in the US and ethnic tension in Kenya? White is to Black as Kikuyu is to Luo, he implied. He wanted to know, am I a racist? That’s a fair question. I’ll try here to respond to it. A couple of phrases come to mind: “You can’t be neutral on a moving train” and “You’re either part of the solution or part of the problem.” The former is the title of a book by historian and white civil rights activist Howard Zinn (1994). The latter was famously stated by Eldridge Cleaver, public intellectual and Black Panther. They make the same point: if I’m not actively fighting against racism in a racist society I’m complicit.

Howard Zinn was from “the North,” Brooklyn to be precise; he went to the South to participate in the Civil Rights Movement. What I’ve done to fight racism in my time?

Although I feel outraged (when I think about it) by the disproportionate number of African American men in prison, I've done nothing to fight against it. I referred to Eldridge Cleaver to accentuate this difference between sentiment and action. And, I'm inspired by the works of Franz Fanon. So what? I am a "race-traitor" in fantasy only. The reality is that I readily accept the advances given to me based on the country of my passport and color of my skin in a world still spinning from the great crimes against humanity, namely the slave trade and colonization.

A common response to having one's differences highlighted, especially when they connote certain unearned privileges, is to take recourse to our shared "humanity," but as we know, this "humanity" is often but a projection of bourgeois sentiments on "everyone" else. Just as often, exclusions are made and people are de-humanized in order to justify killing them.

"The question that preoccupies me in light of recent global violence," wrote Judith Butler (2004), and a question that is pertinent to this project, "is, Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives? And finally, What *makes for a grievable life?*" (p. 20, italicized in original). Grief, Butler shows, discloses "the fundamental sociality of embodied life, the ways in which we are, from the start and by virtue of being a bodily being, already given over, beyond ourselves, implicated in lives that are not our own" (p. 28). And, "Violence is, always, an exploitation of that primary tie, that primary way in which we are, as bodies, outside ourselves and for one another" (p. 27). What we have in common, then, is our "corporeal vulnerability" (p.42). "Is this not another way of imagining community, one in which we are alike only in having this condition separately and so have in common a condition that cannot be thought without difference?", Butler

asks (p. 27).

For me what resulted from my encounter on the bus was *fear*. “Pangas,” “killing,” “weapons can defeat you.” I felt threatened, and I had to recognize how quickly I’d drop this project if my safety were at risk - and what that meant in terms of my ability to understand the violence that took place in Kenya. “There are ways of distributing vulnerability, differential forms of allocation that make some populations more subject to arbitrary violence than others. [...] To be injured means that one has the chance to reflect upon injury, to find out the mechanisms of its distribution, to find out who else suffers from permeable borders, unexpected violence, dispossession, and fear, and in what ways” (Butler, 2004, XII). I had my work cut out for me.

Construction Sites: Returning to Kenya for fieldwork in 2011

Another two years went by before I found my way back to Kenya. Front-page news as I prepared for the trip was a massacre in Norway carried out by a right-wing zealot, and riots among the poor in London. The one, an example of the xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment rising in Europe and the US, this time targeted not at the innocent bi-standers of economic geography but at a youth meeting of the political left. The riots in London meanwhile were marked by a sort of apolitical agenda which left Marxists and Anarchists debating its meaning (Hardt & Negri, 2012; Zizek, 2011). Thirdly, there was Greece threatening to destabilize the European Union. Perhaps my mistaking it for Africa during my flight a few years back was meaningful in another way, as now, Greece was the first nation in the West to be subject to such radical structural adjustment policies long familiar to nations in the Global South, or at least the first to

have a loud public opposition. What, if any, relationship do these events have to one another? And more importantly in this dissertation, do they have anything in common with the ethnic violence that surrounded the 2007 elections in Kenya? On the surface, it would seem, not much. But time would tell.

By then familiar with Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, after departing the plane I perused the bookstore for the latest titles on ‘African crises,’ quickly changed some currency (finding a better exchange rate than I expected), picked up my luggage, and bought a local sim card and credit for my mobile phone. I grabbed a cab and was on my way into the city.

Going down Mombasa road I was struck by the massive amount of construction happening. There were tall buildings being built in all directions. “Traffic jam on this road is unavoidable nowadays,” the cab driver explained, “especially with all of the industries on this side.” The evening, of course, is the worst. And it wasn’t just Mombasa Road. Many of the paths I would take in the course of the next four months of research would be on roads that were being created or expanded, and paved. As we sat there amidst lanes of vehicles, from Mercedes’s to lorries, I observed the vendors walking up and down the highway selling everything from coca cola to a painting of what seemed to be the golden gate bridge of San Francisco.

I actually didn’t know where I was going to stay in Nairobi until the last minute, a slight oversight for a project that had been in the works for nearly three years. It was less an oversight really, than the result of my ambivalence about various potential places to stay and people to stay with. My mind kept returning to a conversation I once had with a community organizer in Kibera, who said to foreigners who wanted to help solve

problems there that we should live, eat, and sleep in the slum just as the residents did. Although enticing to the part of me that believed I was somehow different than other white people, I didn't pursue it.

A friend that I knew from the US, who had been working in Kenya the last time I was there, put me in contact with some people he knew, who just so happened to have a room to rent. They were all foreigners involved in humanitarian work of one form or another. The apartment building we stayed in I'll call the "white cloud apartments," and although whites were a minority there, the name fits well my living situation with the pale people from the other side of the world living largely removed from local life of Nairobi. That said, I was quite happy to get a room in this big, comfortable, secure place with tap water, warm showers, and a refrigerator. Although they didn't agree to participate in my research, their presence in that period of fieldwork, and friendship really, forced me to think a lot about my privileged status in relation to many Kenyans.

It can be easy to allow reflexivity to devolve into narcissism and autobiography, where the fieldwork site and research relations become the backdrop to one's personal development. Considering the politics of representation this type of narrative is particularly problematic for research that takes place on the African continent⁵.

My hope is that the preceding self-observations and disclosures will paradoxically allow me to recede into the background, so that the voices of the Kenyans I spoke with, and whose stories will follow shortly, can resound with full force. The point of going to

Kenya, after all, was to hear from Kenyans themselves.

⁵ On this point Chinua Achebe writes, "Students of the heart of darkness will often tell you that Conrad is concerned not so much with Africa as with the deterioration of one European mind caused by solitude and sickness. [...] Which is partly the point. Africa as setting and backdrop which eliminates the African as human factor. [...] Can nobody see the preposterous and perverse arrogance in thus reducing Africa to the role of props for the break-up of one petty European mind?" (1988, pp. 343-344).

Chapter V - Relating narratives of post-election violence from Nairobi

This section begins with a chronological account of the period of the post-election violence, depicted from different vantage points; it is an interweaving of tales, each told in the first person. The people who described their experiences then return for the remainder of this findings section as experts, providing explanations and detailing the consequences of the post-election violence. Their commentary is put in relation to observations I made in the course of fieldwork. To provide some initial orientation to place and person I offer a potent summary by Parselelo Kanta (2011) of the formation of Nairobi, followed by very brief sketches of the people whose accounts will follow and who will define themselves in their own ways in the course of their narratives.

The Setting: Nairobi

“Slightly over a century old, Nairobi is as new as its people. It is a city of immigrants, of outsiders - people who claim the city by right of temporary occupation and money. Nobody was from Nairobi; people came in to make it - and often didn’t. Nairobi was the first apartheid city in Africa [...] Africans were temporary guests in the town and lived here at the mercy of their employers and the colonial administration. If they remained in town, it was as illegal immigrants and always under the threat of eviction. As a result the largest chunk of town life occurred in the dark - in the negative spaces that were constantly being formed and unformed outside the baleful gaze of the authorities. Nairobi grew as a work almost continually in progress, always being reshaped, extended and reinvented by outsiders” (Kanta, 2011, p. 17).

The Insiders, Or, The Nairobians who provided the following accounts⁶

Zain has, for the last ten years, lived in Kibera, commonly known as the largest slum in

⁶ For the sake of their anonymity the names of people who spoke with me about the post-election violence have been replaced with pseudonyms.

East Africa. I met him the first time that I was in Kenya while doing volunteer work. He was working as an election observer in late December 2007.

Winnie, a young professional Kenyan woman, had volunteered at an ODM call center in support of Raila Odinga's candidacy. I was introduced to her by a mutual friend. We met in the garden of the compound in which she was effectively trapped for the first few weeks of January 2008.

Eric is a young Kenyan man who, like Zain, moved to Kibera slum when he was in his late teens, and who, like Winnie, had a lot invested in Raila Odinga. He was amongst the malcontented youth who have borne a good share of the blame for the post-election violence and whose motives are often oversimplified by others.

Florence is a professional and a mother whose experience of the post-election violence shows, among other things, that the suburbs are not as far from the slums as they seem to be in the normal order of life in Nairobi.

Kate observed the post-election violence from the U.S., as a member of the Kenyan diaspora. She returned to Kenya not long after the power-sharing agreement. Her experiences on both sides of the world and her personal reflections on the politics of ethnicity further complicate what is already a very complex story.

Samuel and his family were subject to the "retaliatory attacks" in Naivasha. They fled for their lives and lost everything they owned. He came to Nairobi to give his testimony.

Anne was displaced along with her husband from their farm in the Rift Valley. They resettled in Nairobi where she had grown-up, and where she told me her story. Although very different, it is, like Samuel's, a profound, personal meditation on forgiveness.

Multiple views on the 2007 election as it unfolded

Winnie: “So we went and voted and were really happy and proud to be Kenyan again.

‘Our vote will finally count and life will get better.’ That was the 27th.”

Eric: “First of all, Raila’s victory would be a victory for all Kenyans. All Kenyans had high expectations for a real change. We believed the way he was selling his policies. He campaigned for a new constitution and equal distribution of resources. He had a youth agenda: more jobs. He was focused on corruption.”

Zain: “This was the first time in Kenya that the majority - the young people and women - were interested in voting. Actually, that was the first time in Kenya that there was such a high voter registry. I was at most of the polling stations in Nairobi. We were going around to see how the elections were going. I came to Kibera. I went to Mathare. I went to Ngong Road. I went to most parts of Nairobi just to see what was actually going on. By that time, though there were some cases of violence, it was not that big. When people voted it was peaceful; although there were cases of vote bribery and intimidation, it was peaceful.”

Winnie: “The day before, we usually have the whole family come around. Everybody was getting texts to ensure that they'd all voted. There was so much excitement. And then day one...day two...no election results. ‘What's going on?’ But Raila was on top through most of it. I remember going to sleep and Raila was on top, then waking-up the next morning and Kibaki was suddenly way up there.”

Eric: “I voted in the rural. Then I traveled back to Nairobi to witness the swearing-in of Raila Odinga. That was my aim. That is why I was traveling so soon. All media were showing 59 percent to 38 percent. At 12:00 the following day votes were supposed to be

announced. Then Kivutu [elections commissioner] came on the TV saying 'we are still waiting for a few remaining results, so we will announce the winner shortly.' He kept saying 'shortly, shortly,' and the time was just moving.”

Eric: “By five o’clock in the evening changes started to happen. [In Kibera] people started grouping themselves, talking about why the results were delayed. I, myself, was very angry. [*He smiles*] I joined the crowds. At a certain point people went back indoors to follow what was happening at the KICC⁷.”

Zain: “People were watching what was going on national television. And there were serious, serious problems in the official results coming out, for example, in constituencies such as Nide in Central Province, in which they were saying that the turnout was 205 percent. Even some of the aspirants within those constituencies had issues with the results.

Eric: “I saw politicians changing their attitudes. There was rumor of rigging. It was said that the votes were being ‘cooked.’ In all the major areas where Kibaki was getting votes most of them were already announced. And the places where Raila was getting most of his votes were already announced, so that is why we were wondering where all of this is coming from.”

Zain: What happened was - something that brought violence into it - is that traditionally Kenyans are used to one-time result, in the sense that once the election commission receives the report they announce it. They are able to declare a president within a span of 24 hours, which in 2007 didn't take place. There were a lot of serious allegations of rigging of the national tally. And there was anxiety all over. There came a time when

⁷ Kenya International Conference Center (KICC)

people were not allowed to get near the international tally, the KICC, because of the anxiety. Police were all over. You could not get into KICC so easily, so I decided to come back home.”

Eric: “Demonstrations started when they started delaying the announcement. Before Raila spoke anything people were already on the streets. They were chanting ‘aki yetu,’ ‘our rights.’ Protesting youth were Luos, Luyas, and Nubians. At times we were joining them in the streets. If you were staying here, youths would come to you and ask why you were sitting there while they were suffering out there for democracy.”

Winnie: “When the results came out, Kibaki was president! And while people are busy making noise about it, all the media stations go off except KBC, which is the state-owned one. Suddenly it is dusk and there are people [politicians] being sworn in.”

Eric: “The results were not announced at the KICC. They were announced, I think, at State House. We started asking ourselves a lot of questions. If Kibaki won democratically, why would Kivutu be moved from where they were supposed to announce the results and taken to another place.”

Zain: “And what happened, and that which is untraditional in the Kenyan election, is that immediately after the chairman of the electoral commission announced that President Kibaki won the election (within less than five minutes) was the swearing-in ceremony. People wondered, ‘how could this happen?’ I was in Kibera at that time and immediately when that happened people started looting and making a lot of noise. And it was all over: violence.”

Eric: “Soon after that, people started shutting down their shops because the shop owners feared the youths. There was no access to the market, so people started looting - everyone

including women - vegetables, charcoal, maize.”

Eric emphasized the non-discriminate nature of the looting:

“Toi market is for all communities. People were looting because people were hungry.

They had to go and rob shops to feed their children.”

Florence: “When the elections were announced things just went haywire. For most of us who live in Nairobi (and this is not a Kikuyu region; Nairobi is cosmopolitan: it's for everybody) we felt that people were going to target Kikuyus. So even in [the suburbs of] Nairobi I felt unsafe. Every time you thought maybe somebody would come looking: ‘Where are these Kikuyus?’ And that was the worry of most of us in Nairobi who were Kikuyus. So it was really a difficult time.”

Winnie: “People went crazy. My mom's phone was constant SMS's: ‘the Kikuyus have stolen the vote again. Go out and burn them,’ stuff like that. But of course Kikuyus were receiving the same, and other tribes, what were they told? ‘The Kisiis have sold the vote...Burn them,’ like that! Such hate messages nonstop that whole night. So immediately things started going up in flames. We started thinking, ‘It's just anger and it will stop,’ but it kept getting worse and we kept saying ‘It won't get to Nairobi.’ And then people from behind here who were Luo started getting thrown out. People from Kangemi started throwing each other out. Where I work doesn't have so many Kikuyu - it's more or less known as a Luhya area - and there Kikuyus were getting thrown out. People were getting killed. We kept thinking it was going to end and it kept getting worse. In January we watched the news about homes being burned down. In the place where I work, my start date was late because people who were pushed out of their homes were living there. Even here people were asking us to move. Who? The people around. The *mungiki*. ‘We

will have five heads if you are not off our land by Friday,' they wrote in a letter. Our gardener's wife was thrown out. I could hear shouting..."

Out of the Rift Valley: Anne's account

Upcountry, in the Rift Valley, violent attacks were underway days prior to the announcement of the election results. I met Anne in Nairobi where she had resettled or attempted to. In fact, nearly four years after the post-election violence she was still unsettled. Before telling me her story she ordered a drink. Then she began:

"My husband and I were living on our farm outside of El Doret. We woke up very early, voted, and came back. And then we just sort of waited for the results. The Sunday before the results came out one of the workers tells the farm manager "You people are still here when we are coming to kill you today?" My husband is Kikuyu. I am Akamba. We had been hearing rumors all year that there might be chaos; it might not be good, but my husband never believed it. He would say, 'this is the Rift Valley; we're used to this. Don't worry; it will not be bad.' For some reason that day when the farm manager came and told him he just believed it; that one got through to him and he said, 'let's go!'"

We don't know through what channel the earlier rumors came, but this statement was delivered by a hired laborer who we would assume tended to comport himself with deference in order to keep his job. His boldness here indicated that the rules of the game had changed. Rumor suddenly gave way to direct threat.

"We didn't have enough time to pack anything. Now, this is a large house with all the modern things that one can imagine. We also had cows that were worth a lot. We only grabbed a file that had our title deeds, passports, and those kinds of papers, and just drove to town.

“We drove to a friend's house, a Kikuyu friend who has been in that region for so long and owns property, so we thought, 'these guys will know.' We went to hide with them, and it was right in town so we thought, 'this is a safe place.' When we got to their house, my husband said, 'No, no, no! My cows! I can't let them go, so let me go back and get the neighbor to hide them for us.' So he got on a motorbike and went. At that point roadblocks were already up.

“Now the votes haven't even been announced. Imagine, there is already all of this hostility in the air. He managed to get to the farm. The workers had gone. Only the watchman was there. He opened the gate for the cows. There was a small forest nearby. He let them go into the forest. Now trying to get back to town (luckily before he got there he picked-up one of his Kalenjin friends), but even then they couldn't get passed the road blocks, they couldn't get back to us. And for three days he was stuck. In fact, if he had come right away and we had left at that time we would have made it to the airport. It was when the roadblocks were just coming up so we would have actually made it. But now because he went back we were stuck.

“What he did was he went into a residential area between our place and town where there were a lot of Kikuyus. In the meantime these guys have surrounded our place. The watchman called him and said, 'there's nothing I can do; they've come!' We tried to call (you know there are these private security companies) we called one and said ‘we will pay you anything just go and say this house belongs to whoever.’ And they went with two armed guys. In Kenya they are not allowed to be armed, but for that one they went with guns. When they arrived there was 700 young men with bows and arrows. The security guys told us they could do nothing. They said that unless you had a machine gun

there was nothing you could do. And for what? Material possessions. These guys would lose their lives trying to protect our stuff. So the security guys gave up. The watchman now just opened the gate. One of the men addressed the others saying, 'These are your things. You are entitled to these things. These people have come to our land, have become wealthy from our land. You must all go in and take whatever you want.' So they looted.

“For the next three days my husband was stuck. Now they are moving closer and closer. There are all of these reports of people we know being killed. I got a call that one of the guys that worked for me was killed. He was a Kalenjin young man, leading a bunch of these guys to raid a Kikuyu community. The Kikuyus got him and burned him. These calls were just coming in about friends and workmates who've been killed.

“We moved (you know these golf clubs or members clubs?), we moved to a members club. We thought that the security would be better. The receptionist said you will not make it if you check-in with your name, so I used a Kalenjin name and got a room.

“So we're sitting at the bar discussing how will my husband get out. And this guy at the counter who is Kalenjin (his dad is Kalenjin but his mom is Kikuyu, so he was battling in all of this; he was lost: 'what do I do?' He's a wealthy man), he heard our story and said, 'where is your husband?' I gave him the details and I thought, 'he's going to kill him, but not yet; let's just pray that he's going to help.'

“The guy drove in. At the roadblocks they let him through. He went right to the house, got my husband into the car. And as he was coming out he had to pay at each roadblock a thousand bob. But at the last roadblock, where the leader was, the guy said,

'you're taking out a Kikuyu are you not?' He said, 'No, no, no. We're just coming from the store.' They were so upset. They later torched his house. And that guy by the end of February had sort of lost it. He's never been the same. He had to give more money later on because he wanted to get his mom. So he forked out money, which they used to go and kill other Kikuyus.

“Anyway, my husband comes. He's a complete mess because he had to leave some of his friends. This guy couldn't rescue everybody. He didn't want to take that risk. So then, there was a rumor at the club that someone had organized a landrover of police to escort them to the airport. There were about sixty cars waiting when this landrover came at seven in the morning. We drive in this long convoy and we just drive slowly to the airport. There are all of these roadblocks with these guys holding machetes and at each of these roadblocks the police would get out and roll the stones off the road. They couldn't even order those guys to remove the stones! We got to the airport. Even at the airport gate there were these guys with machetes. And when we got inside we started wailing, wailing! Unbelievable. I just sat on the ground.

“You know, when we got married we were given every gift you could imagine, so our house had everything. I was thinking, 'We've worked so hard. We were so happy and making such good money,' all these things were going through my head. And we also got a phone call at that time about the church that was burned. It was all too much. There is no culture I've ever heard of where women and children are attacked, where people going to churches or mosques...I've never heard of that. We were just shocked.

“Meanwhile the only airline who was doing that route was asked to evacuate tourists at the Mara, so we were abandoned for a while. Eventually we got seats on a

plane: 'I'm getting out of this hell.' We landed at the airport base in Nairobi and when we came out there was a senior army guy whose daughter was on that flight. So I just asked him (and I was still crying), 'what are you guys doing? Why are you allowing us to be killed?' And he said, 'until the top two men agree there is nothing we can do.'

“Friends had come to pick us up. As we were sitting in the car, now driving through Nairobi, life is just going on: you know, Nakumatt is open. People are having Christmas! I couldn't believe it. My husband gets a call. The house where he had been hiding - the mother of that house calls screaming, saying, 'Your friend, they've killed him. His head is lying here and I don't know what to do.' And she's screaming and screaming. And we were just driving into Nairobi. Nothing can prepare you for such madness.”

Madness and Preparation; Nothing can prepare you; Such madness for nothing!...can prepare you. Anne didn't talk much to me about her life prior to the violence, only that she and her husband were quite comfortable. They had to leave everything they'd worked for behind in an instant. Fleeing for their lives at the drop of a hat, or more literally at the drop of threat posed as a question, Anne and her husband were just as quickly transported from a war zone to an area of relative peace. And in case she had the ability to repress what she had just escaped, the cell phone rings and the woman on the other end screams, "They've killed him!" The distance collapses. Images of decapitated friends transposed into Christmas shoppers, a nightmare in the midst of the everyday.

So much in Anne's story calls for further thought and analysis. To that we will return after, and in relation to, the following stories.

The post-election violence in Nairobi from different vantage points

At first glance upon arriving in Nairobi, it appeared to Anne that “life was just going on” as usual. That wasn’t necessarily the case, as the following accounts reveal.

Florence: “There was actually quite a lot of violence here in Nairobi from the slums. My main concern was that my daughter goes to a school in Karen and the bus was coming through Ngong Road and that's where there was quite a bit of activity: buses being burnt, people being attacked. So you worry even when you are on this side of town and you are working, you are thinking, will your daughter be able to make it or will this child be able to make it home? And then each time your phone rang you just jumped because maybe I'm being told that the bus is being attacked. So we went through, actually for the first part of 2008, was the worst time because it was so, so insecure for most of us and we didn't know. So until the schools closed in April people were under a lot of stress. I guess that is something that every parent who had a child in school who had to go by bus or whatever, even if you are the one driving the child to school you are not sure which way the road block is - people burning tires - and who people were attacking and trying to find.

The city was difficult to predictably navigate, “because,” as Florence said, “it was not one tribe” that posed a threat to her and her daughter. They could not merely take a detour around Ngong Road where hostile Luo youth could be likely to place a road block. As much as she feared the ethnic other, she was also on guard against a kind of ethnic self-policing.

“There was also this gang who was calling itself *Mungiki* which was also looking for [some Kikuyu] people who were not dressed according to what they think is the

customary, acceptable way of dressing. So girls were wearing jeans or tights or whatever, or short dresses, they threatened them, beat them, tear their clothes. Those were the kinds of things that were going round. So where my daughter was going to school they don't wear uniforms; they wear home clothes. That means as a teenager she wore jeans. So those were the things that we were worried about. Is this a group that is going to attack my daughter's bus or will it be these other people who are concerned about their president, the person they wanted to be president that did not get elected? So we have people who are throwing stones, petrol bombs, doing things, and burning. And actually people did get killed both in Nairobi and outside.

Zain: "It was spontaneous here, but I wasn't in other places. And it later turned to be not about [or, more than] the election. Businesses suffered a lot. Their properties were looted; some were set on fire. Especially in places like Olympic, it was all gone, there were no shops there; it was all burnt down. Serious problems and serious allegations, especially here in Kibera, of people being circumcised in broad daylight. And this mainly happened in Laini Saba, which is mostly dominated by Kikuyu and Kamba. There were a lot of serious rape cases, especially in Laini Saba and Mashimoni. And not only rape but defilement, young kids being gang-raped. "And we had serious problems like police killing. And I'll tell you in Kibera, especially from this side, Kachwakera and around [where Luos predominate], I didn't see anybody being killed by civilians. The majority of the people who were killed, they died because of the bullets; they were being killed by the police.

Eric: "There was also a day, the worst day, when the people tried to go from Kibera to city center. I was there in the crowd. There was a statement made by leaders

that Raila Odinga would be addressing his supporters at Uhuru Park. A rumor was started that he had been taken to Langata Baracks. The reason he was taken there was unknown by the people. We realized later that those were only rumors. After those rumors were spread people became angry - all people living in Kibera. Then people decided to go to city center. We started a very peaceful walk to town. It was a very big crowd, the largest I've ever seen in my life. So we were on the road going to town. There was a police roadblock at DC grounds. But they saw that the crowd was so big and so they let us pass. We proceeded to Ngong Road, the main road to town. But when we reached there we got another great big police roadblock. The number of police there was about ten times the number of policemen we got before.

“These policeman stopped the crowd so we didn't reach city center. People were angry because they weren't permitted to go to the city center. The looting started again. It was very bad. Some of the youths went to some government buildings like Posta near Impala Grounds and tried to set it on fire and loot some equipment. Just a few went there; most came back to Kibera. When we came back to Kibera, at around 4:00, youths again decided to go to a certain church here which was believed to belong to former president Daniel arap Moi and tried to set it on fire. But it did not burn.

“That day a lot of policemen deployed to Kibera. Many lorries full of them. That is the day I saw lots of people: children and old people were being shot by the police. And I participated by taking some of the victims to a hospital. There was a pick-up which was being used by youths. We didn't know where it came from; it was just a guy who volunteered it. The matatu drivers also volunteered to transport the victims in Kibera to the hospital. I did that from 5:00 in the evening until 7:00. And there I witnessed a young

lady who was also shot by police, a very young girl. She was about ten years old.

“Three members of our shop were shot by police. Not out on the street, here on the ground!” *The police demanded entry into their shop.* “Then they threw tear gas inside. The first guy - he was Kisii - tried to escape and was shot in the stomach. He died on the spot.” *In the course of Eric’s narration, each of the other victims passed through the shop.* “*This is the guy; he is the one!*” *He told them to show me their bullet wounds.*

“The police boss that time was Luo,” *he explained, emphasizing that if he and the crowd he was a part of had an enemy it was not an ethnic other; it was the police, but then this distinction gets blurred in what Eric said next.* “And that was also the first time I saw policemen with dreadlocks in Kibera, wearing a green uniform and hiding the dreadlock inside the cap. But some of the dreadlock came out.⁸ That’s when we started shouting ‘Mungiki, Mungiki, Mungiki are killing us!’ And they were not scared. They were just doing what they wanted to do.

“After getting angry with the police, youths started burning down the houses. They were not only burning houses owned by Kikuyus, they were even burning houses owned by Luos. There is not a single day that I witnessed a Kikuyu man or woman was killed in Kibera. If that was happening, I didn’t see it.”

Having been watching a lot of the ICC trials I was growing cynical of phrases that begin with: “I didn’t see; I’ve never heard; Not that I was aware of” and the like. “*Kikuyus were killed in Kibera, no?*” *I interjected.*

“Yes, but I never witnessed that. But what happened was that when they went to the showgrounds [the nearest camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs)], they left

⁸ Although not exclusively, dreadlocks are associated with one of Kenya’s most feared gangs, the *Mungiki* (previously mentioned) made up of poor Kikuyu youth who identify with the Mau Mau of old.

their property and houses here, and some of these houses were looted. Most of these properties were looted at night. When we woke up in the morning we found that the door is broken and the window is broken. But I didn't see a Kikuyu or Kamba who was killed in Kibera. And I can tell you some are still living here. After all of this calmed down they came back and are living here with us.”

I would have liked to speak with those who left and returned. If Luo youth were primarily engaged in a battle with the police, and Kikuyus in Kachwakera weren't being targeted, then why did they leave? And if they were threatened, why have they returned? These questions would later be answered by someone else, somewhere else.

So far, there are accounts of Luos being attacked in areas where they are the minority and killed by police in areas where they are the majority. There is a story of Kikuyus being chased out of the Rift Valley. And on multiple occasions the Mungiki have been mentioned. In Kibera, it has been said, they were disguised as police. Another rumor circulates, perhaps with greater evidence as it has reached the ICC, that Kikuyu politicians organized transport and supplies to send some Mungiki upcountry for “reprisal attacks.” What we do know is that after a period of calm in the country, violence erupted in Naivasha; Luos were now being killed there. The account that follows is more than a tale of escape; it is also about struggling with forgiveness and hope; it is an effort to remember despite being compelled to forget.

Samuel's Story

Samuel and I agreed to meet at a certain plaza. His bus was to arrive from Naivasha around 11:00am. I was under the impression that he had numerous errands to

run in Nairobi. That wasn't the case. He had traveled for two hours for the sole purpose of giving me his testimony. I was humbled to say the least.

“I, myself, never actually participated in the election because when the election was happening I was away at work. I work seasonally at a resort in Mombasa. That was the busiest time in the year. Until the 28th we were fully booked. But when the elections results were announced the bookings took a nosedive, so that's why I ended up being at home in early January. When the violence was happening in Nairobi and Nakuru I was at work. But when I got home in early January, things were not as bad. You could travel. I got home without a hitch.

“But it was not long before the chaos happened Naivasha. What happened is (I can't remember the date) but I remember it was a Sunday morning. My mum had left and was heading to church. I was going to follow later. My brother was staying behind at home. At the time we had rented a place in Naivasha. That morning, somehow, my mum left before I left. And an hour later I followed. Normally I would take a matatu (public transport vehicle) to town, which was not far away. When I got to the road there was no transport; people were walking instead. So I decided to walk, hoping that a vehicle would catch up with me at some point. I didn't know why there were no vehicles, so I just started walking. And at some point two big buses went by and normally that wouldn't happen. They just went by. I tried to stop them. They didn't stop. I continued walking.

“When I got to town there was a crowd of people on an intersection. They were shouting. I didn't know what was happening. When I got there, my mum arrived on a motorbike. I didn't know how she ended up being behind me (she had left before I did). When we got there we heard some shooting. Everybody went running for safety.

Apparently it was the Kenyan police who were shooting. They were shooting to scatter people (mostly young people) who had formed a crowd. People scattered and people started running away, but when they pulled back again, the young guys came back and gathered in the same spot. A white vehicle (SUV) came in talked to the guys then, and then the guys started shouting. That vehicle drove off and the prison wardens just went away.

“We sensed that something was not right. Immediately we went into the hospital, which had some police officers and some prison wardens. We went in there because it was the only nearby place where we could get safety. When we got in there, the youths started walking past the hospital. Just on the western side of the hospital there is a large slum called Kabati. A crowd of young people went in there and within ten minutes time we started seeing smoke. Someone's house was burning; something was happening there; there was smoke. In no time, they started bringing people into the hospital. I didn't know where they had been brought from. Apparently these guys had been intercepted by other youths at the Nairobi-Nakuru highway. And then bodies, people, started streaming in, some burnt, some hacked. I remember one guy who I saw. He had injuries on the head and was bleeding terribly. I don't know whether or not he survived. By the look of it he was not going anywhere; this was going to be the end of it.

“At that time my brother was still in the house. I called him and asked him if he knew what was happening. He said he had no idea. I told him what was happening in town and asked him to watch out. We had a neighbor who caught wind of what was happening. She was a Kikuyu lady that was married to a Kamba. We had been brought up with them. We knew them, they were older than me, but I knew them since I was young.

We went to the same school together. They were actually the ones who had introduced us to that area.

“That lady told my brother that there was something wrong and asked him to go to her house. At that point they didn't know if it was going to spread to where we lived. So she wanted my brother to be close to her so that she could continue updating him on what was happening. It turned out that there were some young men who went and blocked the road near where we lived. At that point this lady told my brother that she was afraid that that thing was going to spread to where we lived and she was also afraid that there was one guy near our house who was involved.

“The youths started going from one block of houses to the other. The lady told me that they were looking for people who were perceived to be not pro-government, basically, tribally speaking, being Luo. I am Luo. My mother is Luo. My father is Luhya. I was raised by my mother. My name is a Luo name and so I look at myself as a Luo. They were looking for Luos and all the other tribes that were then ODM (At that time you could just be profiled as belonging to a certain political party by your tribe). At that point I called my brother. Luckily he had a mobile phone and I was able to communicate with him. I told him where I had money and documents. I told him to take the money and my documents, which were in a small suitcase. He went from there to the ladies house. As I am told, one of the young men said he had seen my brother around, so they were looking for my brother. But they didn't know which house was ours.

“We were later told that our land lady actually contributed to it by pointing out our house. When the guys went into the house they wanted to break down the door, but the landlady said they should not break it because she had the keys and she was going to

open it. She opened the house. We weren't there so they just tore everything apart, destroyed everything, stole whatever they could steal. Whatever they could not steal they just took it out, put it in front, and set it on fire. Everything. I had two big boxes of books. They set it on fire. Clothes. Any electronics I had were stolen. We are told that it actually smoldered for two days.”

“The neighbor of the lady was someone who had bought a small plot of land and used it as his own home. She asked him if he could take-in my brother because the man was a Kikuyu and it would not be possible for the youths to go into his house. So he accepted and took in my brother. Because he was a Kikuyu they would not go into his house, but he also was afraid because if they went in and found my brother they would destroy his house and destroy his property and probably do something harmful to him. And so what he decided was that he was not going to keep my brother in his house. Instead his house had a large wall all around it with a metal door. So he locked the door and hid my brother somewhere in his compound.

“I called my brother when he was there. He said he could hear them coming. He could almost identify the people involved by their voices because some of them were guys we used to play football with. So I kept contact with him all the time. The most difficult time was when he thought they were going to break into the house, but luckily the owner of the house refused to open it and said that nobody should go into his house because nobody was in his house. Luckily they did not break in.

“Things seemed to calm down a couple of hours later. The guys, thinking that my brother had escaped, went on looking for other people. I was told later on that they had got hold of a young Luo guy who they beat up and then circumcised. As a result of that

(they used very crude machetes for the circumcision) he never made it. It was very difficult because at the time this was happening we were with his mother.

“I remember one time when I was trying to get hold of my brother I went to a policeman and asked him would he be able to give us an escort to go and bring me my brother and he said, no. He just said, ‘no.’ One of my friends had a taxi. He was also Kikuyu. I called him and asked him what he could do. He told me to hold on, that he would see what he could do. I had another friend of mine who had some influence some distance away from town. I called him and asked him (there was a private security firm that normally has police officers) if it was possible to get those guys to come in and rescue my brother. He tried but they said they couldn't. So we just basically were resigned to whatever would happen. And at that point the friend of mine who owned the taxi was just driving around checking on what was happening. He called me and told me that he's now going to take my brother from where he was hidden and take him to a place nearby, but he was going to do it not with his taxi but on foot because if his taxi would have been seen anywhere around it would draw attention.

“So he went and took my brother, walked him on foot to the police post in the area, hoping that nobody was going to identify him on the way. Luckily he got there. Being there was good because at least he was in a secure place, but still I wanted to have him where we were (we were still in the hospital). So I asked my friend if it was possible to get him to where we were, and at first he says he doesn't think so. He thinks it is too dangerous to try to bring him from there. It's about five kilometers distance from the police post to the district hospital. He said he didn't think it was a good idea to move him. But he later told me that he thought he should move him, so we had planned that my

brother was going to sneak into the boot of his taxi and he was going to drive without drawing attention. But when he got there he just decided that he was not going to put him in the boot; he just got him in the car and drove. He told my brother not to draw any attention; just sit like anybody else. Luckily they got the hospital.

“It was around five o'clock, whereas the whole thing started at eight in the morning. So we didn't get to church or whatever. We stayed there in the hospital until ten in the night. And it was only at ten in the night that the Kenyan prison service came and transported us to the prison where we spent the night in the prison chapel. The prison guards were so nice. They did whatever they could do to make everybody comfortable. But still it was very difficult because we're talking about a small chapel trying to hold some few thousand people. Later on I was told that we were around 5,000 people.

“Luckily when I got there my case was not as dire as those who just got out of their homes, people who lost everything, who lost their kin. And luckily my brother had brought me the money I had in the house. There was a canteen in the prison so we were able to buy food for ourselves. I had 20,000 Kenya shillings when we arrived. And in the next three days that we were there I spent around 10,000 just for food. At one point the Red Cross brought in some water and they also brought in some rations for people, mostly cereals. But because we had the money we thought we would let those who didn't use that [Red Cross support] and spend whatever money we had, instead of jamming the system; whereas we had the capacity to look after ourselves because we had money.

“But in all the time we were there we had, at one point I remember, because the roads were still barricaded and blocked, and at one point a group of youths came wanting to get into the prison compound. And because most of the guys inside were so terrified,

they picked up rocks, you know, all sorts of things to try to keep these guys from coming into the prison compound because we thought they were going to overwhelm the guard at the gate. There was only one guard. The prison itself is not properly secure - the land beyond the immediate prison facility. We could hear gunshots. There was still smoke coming out of the town (you can see the town from the prison). I can't remember the date but there was a point at which three small military helicopters came in. They started firing, not at the prison, but in town. And they did that for quite some time. We could not tell who was being fired at. Then they left but every now and again you could see military helicopters swinging by.

“One day there was a DC [District Commissioner] who came trying to calm people, to assure people. At that point people were becoming very restless and tired and most of the people wanted to be taken back to Western Kenya because within the prison compound most of the people there were coming from Western Kenya: mostly Luos and Luhyas who were deemed to be sympathetic to the opposition guy. So people were being told to calm down, but, you know, obviously people were getting frustrated. There was nothing that was happening. There was a shortage of supplies. There were a lot of problems. So people wanted to go. Phones were not going through. Nobody knew what was happening. And there was a media blackout, so you didn't know what was happening. And also in all that time I was communicating with those I worked with and all the time they assured me that they were going to do anything they could to get me out. For two days we tried to see if I could get out so that they could send an aircraft to take me out. It wasn't possible; it was too dangerous.

“I remember at that point I managed to talk to somebody (I can't remember who it

was) in our office in Nairobi and he linked me to somebody - his friend - who was the head of the prison. There are two areas of the prison: the main prison and the prison annex. I managed to talk to that guy to help me to get my brother who was in school in town. To get us there and to help us get him out so that we could all be in the same place. If we were to move we would all move together. We managed that. We go to the town. We go to the school. And the school refused to let my brother out! I don't know why but he said that he could not let anybody out because if they were to do that then every parent would come wanting to take away their children. So we couldn't get him out. So we asked the prison guys to take us to the town to buy some warm clothing. We got to the market and the women who were in the market at first refused to sell anything to us. Then when they sold they increased the prices.

“We got back to the prison and luckily that evening I was also in contact with another guy who was operating a taxi who was also checking out how the roads were from Naivasha-town to where we could be safely picked up. And that evening he said it was safe and that he was coming to get us. So we managed to get out and got to my brother's house, my other brother who is married to a Kikuyu. We spent the night there. And that next morning there was an aircraft that had already been organized by my boss, so we were picked up and we were flown directly from Naivasha all the way to Mombasa. Luckily we were looked after. The hotel later on employed my brother. And my mother was accommodated for one month until things calmed down.

“I was going to organize for my mother to go all the way back to Western Kenya because that's where it seemed to be more peaceful and secure. What happened was that things had calmed down - it's only that we were not sure that things were going to be the

same in Naivasha. My mother was going to head all the way down to Western Kenya where my grandmother and my maternal grandmother live, but when she got to Naivasha she bumped into one of her former employers and at that point that employer had a position and wanted to hire my mom as a house-help, but for a very short time. So she said she would take it and when the job was over she would go home. But then it so happened that it was the job she held to date. And in the end because of the sense of calm that eventually came about we decided that we were going to stay. And we have stayed on and have been able to rebuild ourselves, basically from scratch.”

Beginning Analysis

I find it awe-inspiring that they decided to stay in Naivasha and rebuild. I was stunned in a different way when Anne conveyed that she and her husband would never move back to the Rift Valley. In either case it is clear that life will never be the same.

In retrospect the image of the bus passing Samuel by on his way to church is eerie. It marks the moment, unbeknownst to him, that he became a foreigner in the place of his birth. It is similar to the comment casually made by one of Anne’s workers, “You people are still here?” The sudden reversal of power and suspension of law. Anne also provides us with the image of lawlessness: the police having to manually remove barriers erected by militias from the road (as opposed to commanding them to do it) in order to keep the rescue convoy moving. Arriving in Nairobi she confronts an officer about the complacency of State forces. “There is nothing we can do,” she’s told.

From Zain and Eric we hear step by step how things unraveled from their vantage point. Interestingly, these young men, who symbolize in the public imaginary the

irrational and emotionally unregulated, recounted what transpired in a sort of removed or even “objective” fashion; they provided specific timelines and evidence for what motivated the escalation of violence. They distinguished between what they “only heard about” from what they saw with their “own eyes.”

What they said was that when the votes had been counted in areas where either candidate had their base of support, Raila Odinga appeared to be the winner. But the announcement was delayed for an exceptional period of time. People who voted for Raila started becoming suspicious. In the slum, Eric noted, people gathered to discuss the situation. Meanwhile on television there were reports of flawed counts, politicians’ attitudes were visibly changing, and rumors of rigging were heard. Later there was a media blackout.

Protestors attempted to march from the slum to the KICC tallying center. Police turned them back. Perhaps the protests would have devolved into destruction of property in Nairobi’s business district. That was a risk the government was apparently unwilling to take even if it meant suppressing what could be seen as democratic action. The protestors chanted in contestation: aki yetu! / our right! It is our right to protest foul play in the elections.

Eventually the winner was announced. It was Mwai Kibaki. He was sworn-in immediately and privately, though the ceremony was broadcast on public television. It is at this point in Nairobi that violence ensued. Kikuyus were being attacked, held violently accountable for “stealing the vote.” From the Rift Valley we hear the depiction of Kikuyus as foreign exploiters: “These people have come to our land, have become wealthy from our land.” And they are persecuted as such: “You must all go in and take

whatever you want.” Retaliation then occurred against Luos, Kalenjin, and other perceived ODM supporters in areas where they were minorities.

Raila Odinga refused to concede. Political protests continued to be suppressed. In Nairobi police blockades continued to force ODM protestors back into the Kibera slums. Looting then became rampant and indiscriminant. Kibera’s Makina Market was burnt to the ground. Police moved into the slums, reportedly killing a lot of people. Law enforcement as well as medical personnel were seen as discriminating against the Luo.

So now despite having a much more detailed picture of the escalation of the conflict, we still have the impression that it is this ethnic group against that ethnic group. When we add to this the accounts of Samuel, Anne and Florence, ethnicity and ethnic violence become more complicated. Florence, for example, was also scared of the Mungiki despite - or actually because she is of their same ethnicity. She feared they would assault her daughter over her nontraditional dress. Or, consider the numerous references to interethnic marriages. Such knowledge troubles narratives of the violence as manifesting easily or simply along or across “tribal lines.”

The stories articulate the complex and varying sets of relations and identifications that enabled some to survive. What’s striking in the escapes of Anne and Samuel is how much they relied on people of other ethnicities. While I saw the moment that the bus passed Samuel by as a subtle sign that everything has changed, his story represents a refusal in this regard. He has friends and neighbors of other ethnicities, including Kikuyu. He does not hesitate to call and ask them for help. He expresses nowhere any doubt in their friendship. Likewise, Anne’s escape relies on the help friends who are Kalenjin.

Class also comes into play. What we hear in the stories of Samuel and Anne is a pragmatic engagement with their respective means of survival. There is much in Anne's account that reinforces her privileged status. After abandoning her home for a safer location, she calls a private security company to see if they can protect her property. She seeks shelter in the country club to which she belongs. And a significant amount of cash was essential to getting her husband through the check-points.

Lest these observations be misperceived as moralistic, I recall that the planes that were used to carry Kenyans to safety were diverted to evacuate tourists. Those like me whose foreign-exploiter status is unquestionable, far from being vulnerable, were some of the most protected. Furthermore, what Anne's story also reveals are the limits of what money could buy her. The private security company couldn't prevent the looting. At the country club she had to check-in under another name.

The accounts of Anne and Samuel provide much less explanation for how and why the post-election violence happened. In fact they tend to emphasize the opposite: the inexplicable. Their narratives don't rely as much on shared public knowledge. It's clear that in such a state of emergency temporality is altered. And in the retelling the listener feels the same sense of immediacy, seemingly uninfluenced by knowledge of what happened later. Samuel gives us fragmented memories and sense impressions: I saw smoke; someone's house was burning. Or, I saw a man who was bleeding terribly, and I do not know if he survived. Everything is still very much colored by the same feelings of uncertainty and impossibility for true knowledge that he must have felt then.

The failure of knowledge in those moments is gestured at in various ways in other narratives. For example, Eric in his description of taking people to the hospital mentions

that he doesn't know where the van came from that they were driving. The sense of the inexplicable is articulated more globally by Anne: "We were just shocked," she says. When she finally arrived at the airport she collapsed and wailed in disbelief. The meaning of the post-election violence, it seems, also lies in the rupture of all sense and in the tears that flow there.

Chapter VI - Contextualizing the Violence: History, Politics, and Economy

'Why is it exactly that those sunglasses, clean shaven, cigarette smoking, mobile phone talking, rich mutherfuckers at the steering wheel get to you?' she asked.

~Mehul Gohil~

We should learn to step back, to disentangle ourselves from the fascinating lure of this directly visible subjective violence, violence performed by a clearly identifiable agent. We need to proceed to the contours of the background which generates such outbursts.

~Slavoj Zizek~

And nothing has been done! An account from a young leader

I had the opportunity to discuss the causes and consequences of the post-election violence further with Zain, the election observer and a community organizer in Kibera. I met him in January of 2007, just about one year prior to the elections, when I was referred to a project he was working on at the time to eliminate domestic violence and stem the spread of HIV. He was clearly no foreigner to politics or public speaking. "Where should we begin?" I asked.

"It didn't start in 2007. All of this started in 2003 when there was a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between President Kibaki and Raila who is now the Prime Minister. These were guys who teamed up together against the Moi regime, that was KANU. And they made an informal agreement: If Raila supports Kibaki and Kibaki wins, Raila will be the prime minister and Kibaki will be the president. So after they won the election, President Kibaki's team did not honor the agreement; there was a strong disagreement between the two and that led in 2005 to a big divide in the parliament. It was so obvious when we had a constitution referendum. One team was led by President Kibaki and another team led by Raila - opposing the constitution. During the referendum it happened that the opposing side, which was Raila's team won [defeated] the

referendum. And immediately they were sacked or removed from the Cabinet. When they were removed from the cabinet they went ahead and founded the Orange Democratic Movement, which is now the ODM party, with some people like William Ruto.

“It went ahead, and in the 2007 elections it was about the same teams: Raila vs Kibaki. And what was happening was that Kenyans or the Government were not so keen on addressing the issues of hate speech; they were not so keen on addressing the issues of inequality. We had a time when most of the campaign was that if you vote for someone you are actually protecting a certain legacy, like Kibaki’s. ‘Kibaki *tena*’ means ‘Kibaki again,’ talking about his development record. But Raila was saying - the ODM team was saying - ‘no, it is time for new ideas, this person has not done enough.’

“There were a lot of things that happened. We even had some political rallies where there was a lot of chaos and violence. We had one incident where young people removed a machete, and it was reported that someone even removed his gun and pointed to one of the presidential aspirants. But there was nothing that the government actually did; people who committed crimes at that time were just let go free.

“It became now a community [ethnic] issue. For example the Rift Valley would say, ‘If you vote for this person we will be able to take our land back,’ and so that was the politics. And the Coastal Province would say, ‘If we vote we will be given our freedom. They were Muslim and wanted Sharia Law. The issues were ethnic based.

“Also what fueled the violence to that magnitude later was the propaganda. For example, I witnessed one incident in Kibera whereby someone used his mobile phone to fuel the violence. He was saying in some parts of this nation a certain community were being targeted: that Luos were being killed in Naivasha. And when people heard about

that they took the issue seriously. Fortunately, personally I didn't witness people butchering each other in Kibera, but I witnessed serious cases of police murder. There was an incident around here, about two hundred meters from where we are now sitting, police shot an eight year old kid who was coming all the way from the school. They treated that as a stray bullet. It wasn't a stray bullet. We also witnessed cases where people from a certain community, when they were taken to Kenyatta National Hospital, they were not being treated because they were seeing them as against the government because they were Luos. In Kibera, here, it is cosmopolitan, but I went to the hospital and witnessed such cases. If you were a Luo you were not being treated like other people. People made noise about this but the government denied it.

“The violence was a surprise the way it happened, but I would say, even with the initiatives that have been put in place, that's what is happening is calm: people just tolerating each other. There were some serious issues that even today have not been addressed. Even with 'peace building' and 'conflict resolution,' there are some individuals right now who are still wounded with bullets. I had a friend of mine who used to stay in Kachwakera, here (this happened in 2007) and this guy has been in hospital since that time. There are even people who lost their kids, but nothing is happening.

“And in this way I think that the government is getting it sometimes wrong. In terms of compensation of internally displaced people, they are actually concentrating in one province [Rift Valley] like that was the only place where violence occurred. But they're not addressing the plights of other IDPs in other places. There were also IDPs in Nyanza. There were IDPs in Western. But the government has concentrated so much in Rift Valley. And they are saying there are serious issues with land in Rift Valley. Yes,

but up to date it has not been addressed. We still have so many IDPs in the camps. We are approaching 2013 - it's just around the corner - and people are going to vote, and people are still in the camps! We have some people still traumatized. Nothing has been done.

“What we see, and this is the disappointing part of it, we have the politicians actually politicizing the process. When one group is saying this the other group is saying that. Conflict and friction within the government itself. If we don't address these issues we might actually experience the same repeat of the 2007 post-election violence. Even up to now the campaigns are ethnic-based campaigns. We even had presidential aspirants saying that this community [ethnic group] and that community are going to form unity. Serious people are saying, ‘As a community we must make a stand.’ And the government is not addressing this issue. It's giving loopholes. During the referendum process of the new constitution that we had just a year and some months ago there was serious hate speech. Even up to now there is serious hate speech from the politicians. But nothing is happening. I haven't seen anyone jailed or fined over hate speech. But they [the politicians] are all over the media - doing nothing!”

Just days later, I was happy, as I imagined Zain would be, to come across an article about three prominent Kenyans who were, indeed, being indicted for hate speech. Zain's own choice of words is interesting though for different reasons. He described the present “calm” or peace as “people just tolerating each other.” For whom is this negative peace adequate when there are still “serious issues” that have yet to be addressed? He insinuated that victims of the post-election violence, whether as hospital patients or IDPs, are subject to further discrimination, adding insult to injury. Moreover,

political campaigns, which must be considered central to violent consequences of the last elections, appear, in Zain's view, to have changed very little. They address themselves to ethnic constituencies and form strategic alliances meant to combine whole ethnic groups into voting blocks. As discussed in the introduction, one way of understanding this phenomenon is to see it as a result of an incomplete modernization, a holding on to remnants of the ancestral.

Let me take you back: History and post-election violence

I was introduced to Winnie through a mutual friend. She picked me up where I was staying and drove me to her home where we sat in the garden and talked at length about the post-election violence before enjoying lunch with her family. I had spent the morning in Kibera. And at that point, aside from downtown, most of my experience of Nairobi was in Kibera. So walking through her gate and seeing a vast and well-kept lawn and trees and flowers, and hearing the sound of silence broken only by the songs of birds, I was suddenly overwhelmed with emotion. Tears filled my eyes. With the sprawling slum juxtaposed so freshly in my memory, the gap between what is and should be broke my heart. And we hadn't even started talking about the horror of the post-election violence.

"If someone can figure it out," said Winnie "I would be impressed because I can't and I'm Kenyan." She continued, "Where did that hatred come from? Or was it hidden all the time and people didn't know? People were willing to kill each other over tribe. I grew-up knowing my tribe: Luo, knowing that in some regions I could get a job, but I didn't know it could come to this."

To help me to understand how such a volatile election took shape, Winnie described her own political hopes and disillusionments with multiparty politics. Although elections were held in 1992 and 1997, by no account were they free and fair. Moi retained his position. With pressure some reforms were made and Moi would not run in the 2002 elections.

“The election in 2002 - this one was big. And I was at the University studying and felt that we really can change this world. They made people very optimistic. People were united,” Winnie reminisced. “I wish we could have continued like that.”

She saw the Anglo-leasing scandal, graft on an enormous scale that implicated the president and people around him, as marking a downward turn. “During that time our President went silent. A plane crash killed six members of parliament. Kibaki didn't say a word. Plus they had signed a memorandum of understanding and nothing came out of it; he backed out of that. Anger stirred because this is what happened to his father with Kenyatta.” Jamorgi Oginga Odinga had famously demanded Jomo Kenyatta's release from detention under the British. He, himself, was later appointed vice president, but it was a relatively powerless position. More importantly, it appeared to Odinga that Kenyatta didn't intend to live up to the promise of Independence (Odinga, 1967). He and 28 members of parliament left KANU to form the Kenya People's Union (KPU). Kenyatta soon banned the KPU.

In Kenya power has been highly concentrated in the presidency. One of the platforms of the National Rainbow Coalition, Kibaki's party, was a new constitution, which among other things would address this problem. So in enumerating her reasons for supporting Raila Odinga in the 2007 elections, Winnie finished by saying, “The main

thing is that there was no constitution which had been promised within 100 days. When we went into the elections I was feeling that nothing had changed since Moi's time. I and a lot of people who had registered, we just wanted Kibaki gone, same as Moi. That's the thing, we don't have party ideology, just that 'if he gets in, the roads will be better in my area.' We don't look at how can you make the country better. That's the way we were raised. Let me take you way back to the colonial era:

“When the whites came to Kenya they divided people into eight provinces along tribal lines to close off people in different areas so that then they could take over the Rift Valley, which is the most fertile land we have in Kenya, for their farming and things like that. So that's where it started, the tribal thing. And then, of course, there were a few translators and sell-outs or whatever, the black people who worked with the white ones, and they were the ones, you know, that if you want something, fertilizer or whatever you talk to the black guy and give him something and he'll talk to the white guy and sort you out, which is basically the history of bribery here. That's how it started. But then when the whites had left who did they give their pieces of land to? These people who were working for them. That's why most of these politicians, like Kibaki our President, you can trace back their ancestry to people who were with the white settlers.

“People like Kenyatta came in. He was given all of this land and he needed to reward the people who had helped him out. A lot of them, of course, were his tribe, and he gave them ninety percent of Rift Valley, which ideally belonged to the Kalenjin and people like that, which is why the internally displaced of Rift Valley are all Kikuyu. But that tribal division started very long ago and was used to play people against each other, which is what they still do today. Divide and rule, that's what Moi called it. It works.

“But you see the history I've given you, if you listen to a Kikuyu's version it might be a bit different. That's why it's advisable to talk to people from different sides and make up your mind. I'd like to think I'm a bit more objective but not by much. I can't tell a lie. I'm very biased toward the Luo and feeling marginalized and stuff like that.”

What then followed was tragic: A conversation

I paid a visit to someone I'd befriended the last time I was in Kenya. A friend of hers happened to be visiting. Nick and I were introduced and started chatting; before long we were talking about the post-election violence. It seemed to strike him well when I said, “so many people think they know how Kenya should move beyond the election violence” and that I wasn't so sure. He started in without pause, “If you have seen members of your family killed, if your livelihood has been taken away, you can't move on. If you are in an IDP camp how can you move on?” I was taken aback. To me “moving on” was simply a temporal necessity, the character of which would vary, whereas for him it connoted something like “recovery from.” So our immediate rapport seemed to be built on a misunderstanding.

Nick continued talking, but, in what were to me vague terms: about some people having bought land for prices that today could only purchase one fourth as much; people sold their land and drank away all the money, while the owners worked hard to cultivate it, and then looked at them with envy. It took me a moment to see that he was referring to the claim that Rift Valley is Kalenjin land and that those others who own property there don't belong. Nick explained that Kikuyu, Kamba, Luo had all bought land in the Rift Valley, and not only there. “If the people responsible are not punished property

rights will not be secure anywhere,” he exclaimed. I asked for clarification. “Did the Kalenjin sell their land? I thought their land was captured by the British, that this land issue goes back to colonialism, am I right?” “Yes you are right but not entirely.” He explained that at independence some *wazungu* left (he repeated ‘*wazungu*’ many times as he explained this part of history) and that there were Kenyans who said they should take the land from the rest of them. Kenyatta instead provided money for people to buy it. Later Kenyans with capital bought land from some Kalenjin-Kenyans, if I understood him correctly.

He explained that the land in that area is fertile and is relatively risk free in terms of yields, so it was in demand. But, I asked again, wasn’t it Kalenjin land prior to colonialism? “No it was no one’s land.” I didn’t understand his answer. “In that individuals didn’t own the land, it was collectively owned?” I inquired. “No, prior to colonialism the people were hunters and gatherers.” But I had just read in a history book that the Kalenjin grazed cattle in the region hundreds of years ago and gradually switched to agriculture due to clashes and encroachment from the Maasai - prior to colonization. I didn’t argue and his thoughts went elsewhere.

I found myself at a loss. Was I misinformed by the history books? Was I inadvertently recycling the same prejudices at play in the post-election violence? A few days later I came across the following account, in Meja Mwangi’s *Striving For Wind* (1990), of the legacy of colonial land relations in Independent Kenya. Though Mwangi is a novelist, his explanation of how the order of exploitation persisted even after the colonizers fled, reflects a widespread sense that some Kenyans disproportionately benefited from decolonization. He illustrates this through the character *Baba Pesa*

(Father of Money).

“His ruthlessness came to be legend. Using his little money and his big ideas, he had whittled way at his neighbors’ land, buying a little at a time, giving them offers they couldn’t resist, forcing them into so much indebtedness they were glad to exchange their land for their freedom” (p. 17).

“The Baru place was five hundred meters down from the Pesa compound, a collection of mud and thatched huts hidden from the road by a cluster of stunted thorn trees that Baba Baru had preserved as a source of firewood. A paltry ten acres of land, surrounded on all sides but one by Baba Pesa’s three hundred acres.

“The whole ridge and valley below had once been a ten thousand acre farm owned by a single Boer settler named Soames. When Thome fled the country to South Africa for fear that the natives might, after Uhuru, revenge the many beating they had suffered, the farm had been sold to the present small holders, most of whom had been displaced by the Mau Mau War.

“What then followed was tragic,

The new settlers soon found themselves hard pressed by the need for hard cash. They needed money to develop their newly found land and to educate and bring up their children. Pretty soon, the poorer of the new settlers were at the mercy of their wealthier brothers. Selling bit by bit, they ended up landless in Kambi village struggling as labourers and village beggars.” (p. 16)

“As Baba Pesa walked to the pick-up, he came across Moses Baru carrying two bottles of milk.

‘If your father would sell me his land,’ he said to Moses, ‘he might afford a milk cow of his own.’

‘Yes,’ said Moses.

‘Tell him that.’

‘Yes,’ said Moses. ‘Where would we graze our milk cow?’

‘Where the landless graze theirs,’ Baba Pesa told him. ‘By the roadside.’” (p. 15).

I was struck not only by the story’s recurrence, across contexts, in the space of a few days, but also wondered how many Kenyans of all ethnicities feel left by the roadside in the post-colony.

Returning to the conversation with Nick, and referencing PEV specifically, Nick reiterated the injustice of being expelled from land they owned. I asked him what happened to that land. People have neither sold it nor been able to reclaim it. He supposed they would observe the next elections and then decide whether or when to return. Nick's main point, in the end, was that those responsible needed to be punished or further violence would occur.

Our friend returned and asked us to change the subject, which she also noted was Nick's favorite. "It goes on and on," she said. Nick's thoughts turned to the "financial crisis." "The US is having all sorts of problems" he noted. "What's going on?" He predicted that what was happening in the US, as though a plague, would pass to Kenya via Europe.

Dollars and Sense: The spontaneous violence of the economy

Within a couple of weeks newspaper headlines read, "Kenya Shilling in free-fall as Central Bank runs out of options." "The shilling hit Sh101 to the greenback, a 26 per cent decline since the start of the year, pushing inflation into the upper teens and undermining the growth outlook for the economy" (Reuters, 26 September 2011). Various partial explanations were given (e.g., "the euro zone debt crisis prompts investors exit from riskier emerging markets," [Reuters, 26 September] local "importers, telecoms and energy firms moved to cushion themselves against a weak unit" [Reuters, 26 September], etc.), but an aura of confusion, nonetheless, surrounded the sudden depreciation of the shilling. From a restaurant I watched some of the proceedings of the

10th parliament, fourth session. They were conducted in English.⁹ Uhuru Kenyatta was called to explain what he, as Minister of Finance, had done to stem the fall in value of the Kenya shilling. Having given his account of the internal factors that he took steps to address, Uhuru called on “all players in the foreign exchange market to trade responsibly” (KTN Broadcast) One MP challenged him to name banks that are said to have been partially responsible for the problem by ‘hoarding dollars.’ He did not.

According to the report in the *Standard* entitled “How the sick Kenya Shilling is destroying lives” (Oct 12),

Many of the Kenyans interviewed...have never heard words like ‘interest rate differential, inflation, austerity measures, and global financial crisis’ so familiar to Central Bank of Kenya Governor Njuguna Ndung’u. But they know something is wrong with the shilling. They know this because there was a time they could stretch Sh75 to last two days. That was when they hovered just above the poverty line. Then Sh75 was equal to one US dollar. Today they need twice that to make it through the day following the heavy depreciation of the shilling, but chances are they do not make even Sh50. [...] With fuel going for as much as Sh119 per litre, maize flour retailing at Sh190 per packet, kerosene at Sh85 per litre, sugar at Sh175 per kilo and cooking oil at Sh100 per litre in Nairobi, the poorest of the poor have also adopted pitiful austerity measures of their own,” explained the author before painting a picture of the desperate situation through one woman’s voice: ‘We escaped post-election violence in Naivasha to settle here, but life has been very difficult especially after prices of essential commodities shot through the roof,’ she says. ‘My husband earns very little from his hawking job, about 150 per day or less. We cannot afford unga (maize flour) or kerosene,’ she says.

The slums were central sites of violence in Nairobi during the 2007/2008 election dispute. From the accounts I heard police efforts seemed to have focused on protecting property in the business district by preventing protestors and looters alike from leaving

⁹ It was confusing to me that while there was translation in sign language, there was none into Kiswahili.

Kibera slum. Barriers that in some ways are always there in the geography of class inequality were erected quite literally. The symbolism of this action is captured well by Alfred Omenya in his essay “The Architecture of Fear”

“Nairobi is not a planned city. It is a city built on a reaction, on an incremental fervor, on the need to exclude and protect, to smother our neuroses - realistic to some extent - that the barbarians will get us... There are, of course, many good reasons for putting up gates in a city as violent as Nairobi. But none of them addresses the vast majority of excluded citizens who are not violent. They may even increase the chances of becoming so, as they walk past these no go zones day after day and start asking themselves the same question that helped provoke the January 2008 chaos: how can one be a true citizen in a city one cannot access?” (2011, p. 54-55).

Omenya is describing another kind of violence, what has been termed “systemic violence” or “structural violence”. Structural violence refers to “the mechanisms through which large-scale social forces crystallize into the sharp, hard surfaces of individual suffering. Such suffering,” says Paul Farmer, “is structured by historically given (and often economically driven) processes and forces that conspire – whether through routine, ritual, or, as is more commonly the case, these hard surfaces – to constrain agency” (1997, p. 282). Slavoj Zizek refers to “systemic violence” as “the often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems. [It] is precisely the violence inherent in the ‘normal’ state of things” (2008, p. 2).

There are times when structural violence is accepted and taken for granted. There are other times when the unjust order is called into question. The struggle for multiparty politics in Kenya and elsewhere was one such moment, though as we’ll see, the energy of the democratization movement was largely appropriated by less admirable forces. While Kenyans lost their lives to achieve greater democracy, there was also external pressure to democratize. For example, in 1991 donors suspended one billion dollars to Kenya to

pressure Moi to submit to multiparty elections (Abrahamsen, 2000). Abrahamsen continues to show that there is far more continuity than is commonly thought between the old Western development paradigms that justified authoritarian regimes in Africa and the shift, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, to promoting multiparty politics (Abrahamsen, 2000). The very same economic austerity measures continued to be pushed by the World Bank and IMF and the interests they represent.

Recalling again Obama's speech in Ghana (2009), we must reflect upon the "fundamental truth" – "That development depends on good governance" – for this assertion is more problematic than it seems. The term "good governance" was introduced into the field through a World Bank Report in 1989, *Sub-Saharan Africa: from crisis to sustainable growth, a long-term perspective*. Abrahamsen painstakingly demonstrates that "good governance" means more than accountability and transparency; it has everything to do with fiscal and monetary policy. Liberalization, privatization, and deregulation are the hallmarks of neoliberal "structural adjustment" and the "good governance" that enforces it.

When we observe problems surrounding elections today, it is crucial to remember that "for the poor the demand for political change was a demand to end poverty and suffering" (Abrahamsen, 2000, p. 102) and that "mass protests across the continent were first and foremost demands for *change* rather than of *democracy* per se" (p. 98). Whether significant change is possible under the constraints imposed by the international financial institutions should be seriously considered. In Kenya, Okello and Owino observed that "The decline in social investment by the government is attributable in large part to the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programmes" (2005, p. 84). And Ferguson

says, “The idea that deregulation and privatization would prove a panacea for African economic stagnation was a dangerous and destructive illusion. Instead of economic recovery, the structural adjustment era has seen the lowest rates of economic growth ever recorded in Africa (actually negative, in many cases), along with increasing inequality and marginalization” (2006, p. 11).

“This suspension of politics and the construction of democracy as a political form separate and apart from social and economic structures serves to bestow legitimacy on the existing social order, including the marginalization of large sections of the population,” argues Abrahamsen (2000, p. 144). “This minimalist democracy serves the interests of the international community and the local elite. But contrary to its claim, it has failed to up-lift the living standard of the majority of Kenyan people and in fact has created serious problems for the ordinary Kenyan by deepening poverty [...] The result is conflict, insecurity, and serious tension in the body politic of the country” (Bujra, 2005, p. 37).

Constitutional reform and participation

While addressing poverty in the country doesn’t appear to be entirely in the hands of the Kenyan politicians, members of the coalition government were prepared to fulfill the old promise of a new constitution. It addresses a number of structural problems thought to have contributed to the post-election violence. Notably, the new constitution sets new limits on the power of the executive, which should lower the stakes to some extent of the presidential race. Additionally, the provinces, inherited from the British, which were divided up around tribal territories, have been dismantled into smaller

counties. The representatives of these counties will constitute the new senate.

The new Constitution came into being in Kenya in the summer of 2010. A year later the Alliance Francaise hosted a forum on “media and the constitution.” A prominent activist, representing civil society, explained that the very auditorium we sat in had been, during the rule of Daniel arap Moi, a center of dissonant activity. Plays such as “Can’t Pay, Won’t Pay” and Ngugi wa Thiongo’s “Trial of Dedan Kimathi” were performed on that stage which during those tense times enjoyed diplomatic immunity.

The event was packed and, not surprisingly given the topic, there were a lot of media folk there prepared to churn out ironic stories such as “CIC says media has crucial role to play in implementation of the constitution.” Charles Nyachae of the Constitution Implementation Commission (CIC) invoked two major moments in Kenyan history: independence (1963) and multiparty politics (2002). “Both opportunities were largely squandered,” he said. As the discussion proceeded, a number of significant points were made. The term ‘political class’ was often used. Speakers emphasized the importance of public participation. And PEV was referred to a number of times. But the main lesson of the day was that “people need internalize the new constitution.”

“Devolution was a pivotal aspect of the 2010 constitution,” said Charles Nyachae. “Who is going to manage public funds? People need to understand this,” he emphasized. But perhaps the answer to that question is not as clear as we would like. An article in the *Nation* on September 18 publicized the role of the IMF in the process of implementing the constitution, specifically on the management of public funds. Whereas the new constitution was intended to devolve such powers to county governments, the IMF has worked closely with Kenya’s Finance Minister and Central Bank Governor to

draft legislation that includes the establishment of a *single* treasury account. This, of course, transpired in the context of IMF loan negotiations. Devolving the management of public funds to the county level was a democratic move and is being undercut by the IMF. Good governance and democracy seem to be two very different things.

Chapter VII - Personalizing the Violence: Challenging Identifications

From tribe to class: Florence's warning

“How it affected me? Well, like any other Kenyan we were all really distressed because Kenya has been a peaceful country for many, many years; we never had anything of that magnitude. We've heard of nations who have been having civil wars. Never thought it would happen to us. This was more because of differences of what tribe (Kenya is made up of forty two tribes); there were many tribes that were expecting that the president would come from their tribe. And I think this is where the issues are: these tribal differences.

“I am a Kikuyu and there are many Kikuyus living in every part of the country. And it is the tribe with the largest population, as you know already from your own data. So for that, Kikuyus tend to settle everywhere. In the Rift Valley (that's where the main violence was) it was really, actually [directed] toward the Kikuyu community there because of this idea of ‘foreigners' in those areas. They were supposed to go away and go back to Central Kenya. And of course there was no way! Some of those were born there and have settled there; they have their own property there. Some people were killed and their properties burnt, cows/livestock killed. So it's not so easy for them. If they were to come back to Central Kenya no person there is going to allow them to settle on their farm. For them they have never been there so who is going to allow them?

“So now, for most of us who live in Nairobi and have no property anywhere else (and this is not a Kikuyu region; Nairobi is cosmopolitan: it's for everybody) we felt that people were going to target Kikuyus. But it was not just Kikuyus who were killed. There

were also other places: Naivasha and Central Kenya were other tribes now were also victimized. The Kikuyus felt that Kikuyus were being thrown out in other sides so now they are going to throw others out on these sides. Again, it doesn't really solve anything. Some people [Luos] don't know anyone in Western Kenya. They have never had any property. It's just because they are in Central Kenya, so where do they go and start over? So the whole issue was for me very stressful.

“And also, even now among professionals, even now, people started mistrusting and distrusting each other. If you are of a particular tribe you feel that people cheated. Being a Kikuyu (the current President is a Kikuyu and all the other tribes felt that he was rigged in, which I am not a politician so I'm not going to sit here and argue against or for him), but we do know that we, now every Kikuyu, even someone like me who is not involved in politics, who has been doing my profession all these years, advocating for – it doesn't matter who – you are seen like you are not good from your professional colleagues who are from the other tribes. So you almost actually felt segregated. At one point, even, clients would say I have been told not to come to you because you are Kikuyu. Or if they got sick Kikuyus would say I'm not going to see a Luo doctor or a Kalenjin. I mean people would be speaking openly: ‘Why would I go and see a Luo or a Kalenjin? I will go and see my Kikuyus.’ Or a Luo would say why should I see a Kikuyu, I'll go and see my Luos.’ I mean something that I've never ever experienced in this country. We've lived as professionals for all the while. We would refer people to those qualified in their area. So when you find that your professionals cannot refer clients to you because you are from a certain tribe... And those were things that were quite depressing for quite a while. So 2008 was not a very good year for most of us.”

Hearing Florence's account one wonders how different it is, really, from the reports in the New York Times in the early period of post-election violence: this tribe against that tribe, "perhaps tapped a root that always lied beneath the surface." But she doesn't leave it at that. She blames the politicians, which, by the way, was what the New York Times would later do. But she would go further to offer solutions, essentially outlining a representative democracy worthy of the name.

“People felt - I felt - the whole thing was pressurized and fueled by the politicians because these people have lived together for many years. They have built friendships; some of them have intermarried. I could not understand where that animosity came from. At no time would we have thought that humans could become as violent as it happened.

“Things seem to have gone back to normal now. When the new coalition government was formed I think people felt that there was an equal sharing of power. I do not know why people think they have to have some power to be able to go forth, even for professionals. Most of us are not in politics, and yet we are the ones who build the economy of this country. So if people were to all agree at a certain level that we'll leave the politicians to do their bickering and we'll do our work I think this country would be so far ahead. But the way the politics, the campaigns start, people become brainwashed, even people who are really intelligent. I don't know how they get affected. You'll see people in a discussion they'll start talking about their politicians being this or that, but not even being informed by their performance.

“I will not vote for a politician who is doing nothing. I have a voting card but I will not vote for somebody because he is my tribe, never. I will vote for somebody who has made a change in the economy of this country and the wellbeing of the common man.

I would like to vote for somebody who has developed his constituencies. I deal with a group that goes to different constituencies to see how people have developed in the way of schools, the health sector, and even self-employment (people are able to do things to generate income instead of relying on handouts), and the food availability and nutrition. What has this particular person done for his community? So I would like to see somebody who has gone back and made a difference; those are the kind of people I would vote for. And for a leader of the government, the top person, I would like someone who could harmonize people.

“The President should have a team of advisors from across the board, from professionals, from the community, religious leaders, all of these people. Somebody who is willing to accommodate these people. It doesn't matter whether he is from one tribe or from one region or whatever it is that he carries, he should be informed, and also seek advice. Some of these people say they are doing things for us. Nobody even asks the person they're supposed to be acting on behalf of. There are no surveys that are conducted as to how we can improve our city. There are so many brilliant ideas and if somebody would care to listen to them I'm sure we wouldn't be having the kinds of traffic jams we have in this country. But nobody asks. We have professionals who know these areas.

Given where Florence's analysis of the conflict began, I was surprised where it would end up, surprised by her final words on the topic.

“When you look at our country here we have the haves and the have-nots. The haves (the rich and really rich) are very few. The percentage of the poor is so large that in the future, if we do not take care of things, it will not be a tribe against a tribe; it will be

the haves against the have-nots, the have-nots against the haves. You'll have the poor people actually fighting. And it will be the worst war because the masses are the many who don't have and they will be directing their wrath to the rich who are few. And they will be empowered by the poor people. It will be bad, very massive, and it will destroy even the little bit that we have.

So somebody has to rectify that very quickly. And we would have a leader who has that vision and can see that far into the future because people will be saying that they want to go burn the people in Muthaiga or in Karen (these are the suburbs where the rich live). So all the poor people will come together, whether they are Kikuyus, Luos, Kalenjins, Kambas, Maasais, they will all gang and go and fight the people who seem to have amassed so much wealth and who have seemed to have taken everything from everybody, even those who have worked for it; nobody will be able to differentiate. Poverty has to be addressed; it's not an option; it's a must. Otherwise we will eventually end up there.”

Suddenly it was as though I was listening to a manifesto of the militant Kenyan Marxist, Maina Kinyatti, and not the wealthiest, perhaps, of all the people I interviewed, and certainly not the mother whose story of the post-election violence was centered on the commute of her daughter from her home in one suburb to an elite school in another. But then perhaps it makes perfect sense, for in between those two suburbs is the largest slum in Africa, and though it is populated largely by Luos, there is no tribe in Kenya whose majority isn't impoverished, and Kibera is but one of a number of large slums in the city of Nairobi. As someone who has worked hard for herself, her family, and her country, and has been rewarded for it, Florence feared being lumped together with those

who have gained their wealth through corruption and exploitation. Thus her account troubles class category distinctions as much as ethnic ones.

Florence's explanation of the post-election violence started with "tribal differences" and ended with a prophetic vision of a class war. I attempted to clarify the in between: "Because that hasn't happened yet it seems to me that the potential anger at the rich has become tribalized in a way that people will say, 'the rich are Kikuyu;' that's the identification at the moment, isn't it?"

"Yes," she replied, "it has been like that for quite a while, though I hope that impression is fading. Because we still have rich people from other tribes. If you go to Muthaiga, if you go to Karen, if you go to Lavington you will see people from all tribes there."

White flight and other elitist elusions

With all of the inquiry into ethnicity and class in Kenya, and reading books such as Marjorie MacGoye's *Homing in* (1994), Carolyn Elkin's *Imperial Reckoning* (2005), James Fox's *White Mischief* (1982), I wondered about the progeny of the white settlers in Kenya. Of those who remained, who are their descendants? What are they like? What are they up to? And as pertains to my research, how did they experience the post-election violence? So I took a trip to Karen to see what I could learn. Karen is an area on the outskirts of Nairobi named after Karen Blixon, who at some point owned most of the land there. Those in the West know of her from the film *Out of Africa*.

I knew someone, a Robert Redford type (I'll him call Jack), who I thought might be able to help me make some connections. "Join me at the country club on Thursday evening. There's a group of people there I can introduce you to," he said. When Thursday

came I decided to go to Karen early to get a feel for the place. On the bus I actually passed right by Karen, expecting something more luxurious and suburban than the shopping mall junction indicated. I caught another bus back and made my way to a nice restaurant for lunch. As I sat there, I overheard a cell phone conversation about telecommunication deals as near as Tanzania and as far as Angola, and another about investment in local banks. The guys were white but I don't think they were of settler stock; they were likely more recent immigrants, probably retained citizenship elsewhere.

Jack picked me up a little later and drove me to the country club. Along the way I saw more of what I had expected: big houses on large manicured properties. I checked in as one of Jack's guest and he gave me a tour. We walked onto the back patio and joined some of his friends at a table that overlooked the golf course.

It was an ethnically mixed group, not the Brits of my fantasy. They were a rather formal crowd, and to judge by their stiffness apparently hadn't had much to drink by that point. And to make matters worse, we started out with a misunderstanding. A couple of them had been told that I'd be joining them and why, but most were alerted by Jack in that moment that I wanted to talk with them *about* my research. I did of course describe my project, but when I swiftly transitioned to soliciting their participation, things got interesting. "Well, we weren't really affected. You should, if you can, try to talk to people in Kibera," was the first reaction I got. "I have," I said. Then from someone else, "Well tell us what you've learned so far. What are your findings?" I stumbled a bit speaking to some things I'd learned in Kibera, but as I spoke I felt that I was colluding in something I didn't like. They seemed to presume that poor people should be my source of

data and they, the privileged, would help me analyze it. Why should they, of all people, be treated differently than any of the other research participants?

One of the men was a teacher. He asked me what my thesis was and to my response said that I was doing anthropology. Then one of white guys there spoke up: “Are you asking everyone the same questions?” “You must,” he was implying. “Where are your control points?” “Control points,” I repeated to myself, amused that the comment came through a British accent. He went on to say that people were paid to throw rocks for the cameras. A woman, not originally from Kenya, jumped in to emphasize that she and the others at the table didn’t have much to say about the post-election violence, that they merely watched it on television.

Jack then mentioned becoming aware that police were guarding the Karen roundabout to prevent people from the slums from entering. I was confused because I knew that the marches on Ngong Road were in the opposite direction, toward the city center. “They wanted to demonstrate in Karen?” I asked. “It’s their constituency,” quipped the man with the British accent. Some laughed.

“Can I ask what exactly you are looking for?” he asked. The laughter seemed to indicate for a second time, at least, that I hadn’t properly prepared them for the conversation. They seemed to wonder why I would want them to provide me their perspectives of the PEV. So I reiterated, emphasizing “descriptions of PEV from different locations.” With that the man seemed to have gotten the clarification he was looking for, or perhaps submitted to my persistence: “Let me tell you. I was here. The club stayed open. We played golf. We went home in the evening and watched TV. I caught a plane to the coast to a hotel where I was paying 25,000 a night. Because it was a holiday the hotel

was full. Then suddenly it was three-quarters empty. The tourists all evacuated the country. So I went down and told them to reduce the price or they'd lose another customer. They cut it by half and I enjoyed a week of vacation."

His frankness seemed to leave the others with little to hide. The teacher spoke: "We closed school for a week. We had the children of politicians from all parties here. We had to shuttle them privately and secretly." A young business woman followed, "Where I was business was dead. We had to shut down." She stayed in a hotel with friends, people from all tribes were there, including, I believe she said, the son of a prominent politician. Ethnicity didn't seem to divide the wealthy like it did the poor.

The Kenyan man sitting straight across from me spoke now for the first time: "This is a subject most of us don't like revisiting. Forget and get on with it." Some nodded their heads in agreement. The man continued, "If we start arguing here it won't get us anywhere. If you are talking about rigging, both sides rigged!" He explained that the president had to be sworn-in in secrecy because the opposition would not have allowed it to happen publicly, without mass action, that is. "All of us sitting here, we don't know, we don't know who won."

"Yes," the Brit jumped in, "and can I, as a non-tribal Kenyan, say something? Everything is conjecture! Talking together like this will never come to a result." Indeed, perhaps they were, whether "tribal" or "non-tribal" not able to give me *the* answer that they supposed such research should result in. What they showed me, however, was that such discussion could potentially damage their relationships with each other. As I thanked them and prepared to politely excuse myself, a Kenyan woman who had remained quiet throughout the conversation offered her contribution. She had been part of

a counseling group / reconciliation process that took place over the course of two months. She said it was “a very healing experience.”

The politics of the personal: Winnie continues

As much as Winnie provided a lot of historical context to explaining the post-election violence, her narrative was also quite personal; she speaks to how she herself has been changed.

Just as with the struggle for independence, Winnie said, “It is the rich who have benefited, but it is everyone else who has lost out. People have awakened to the fact that what we did was we burnt down our houses and things like that for these people so that ‘they can change our lives,’” she said, “and we are even worse off than we were! We're heading to where we were when Moi was in power: we had no maize in this country, we had to get it from America.

“Somebody needs to be held accountable for what happened,” she said. “That's the only way. We can't watch the people who are responsible for it walk around. There was the picture on the news of the policeman who shot the boy who was dancing. He has never been to trial.” She was horrified by MP William Ruto's (alleged) role in the violence. “Such a guy needs to be in jail. They have to be held accountable for using ethnicity as a campaign. They all did that: Raila, Kibaki, Ruto. Raila would go up country, of course he would use the constitution, he'd give all these reasons. *And* he'd say things like ‘which are the same kinds of things that happened to my father’ or ‘these people own half of Kenya,’ ‘these people’ to be interpreted as Kikuyu. And then he would break off and say in Luo ‘It's our time now’ , ‘We also deserve this leadership.’ He

would be interviewed by these vernacular stations, speaking in Luo saying, 'this presidency has been held from us for so long. Initially Tom Mboya was going to take over. He got assassinated. My father was put in jail. Now look they are doing the exact same thing to me and I am the one who gave them the presidency.' Very obvious what he means. But of course the Kikuyus were doing the exact same thing as well.

“So that's what they used in such a way. In fact, on that day before the elections (my sister is married to a Kikuyu man) my father said 'please, let's not discuss politics on Christmas' because people were so emotional about it. So of course, whether there was rigging or whatever, this was bound to happen irrespective of who won. Even if Raila had won, the Kikuyus would have been up in arms saying that it was stolen from them. Maybe it wouldn't have been as bad, but there was no fair winner that was going to come out because emotions were so high, and it was all based on tribe in such a way that by the time this guy, Kolanzo, was made vice president, now the Kambas were going to get murdered. And a few did. That's the really sad thing - that people out there really did get beaten up. Girls and women were raped. I have two cousins who lived in Kibera and until today nobody knows where they are. After the post-election violence when they were clearing up *Mungiki* (because they're such bad people and they were the ones killing others) they just picked all boys up off the street basically.

So there is a lot of hurt and it has not been cleared up. I have issues I'd love to see laid to rest, but you don't know where to go. You don't know who to tell. The police are very scary people. They generally don't listen, and shoot first and then ask questions later. Your member of parliament is too busy.

“That you were locked-up in your house for a month and a half, you couldn't

work, you couldn't go anywhere, you were worried sick, and nobody has been held accountable for it either. So what we have is this distrust. You know I read this book on Rwanda, *Left to Tell*. The way it describes the Rwandan genocide is almost exactly like Kenya. That anger came back. She was describing her neighbors and the friendships. That's how it was here. These guys weren't talking to us. We would call and they wouldn't answer their phones. They're Akamba and the one down there is Kikuyu. He moved out. Literal distrust. And that's where we are today. ” *Although what happened in Kenya wasn't genocide by definition - that was not the intent - when you are a targeted minority in the midst of it, it must indeed feel just as a genocide would.*

I asked Winnie to describe more specifically how the post-election violence has impacted her. She ran off a list of bullet points. “For one, I will not employ a Kikuyu.” Aware she was unfairly generalizing she nonetheless said that “they” can be vindictive if fired. “Total distrust of the police. As for the government, the result is that I know they don't care, other than collecting taxes. Fear of physical safety. My mom doesn't want us to be here in this house during the next elections because of what happened last time. She put the house on the market for sale. And it's her dream house! At a time when the property value is good and increasing.” Winnie's last point on the list: Fear of losing her life.

She thought back to earlier and more idealistic times in her life. “I had big time arguments with my parents. I would say, ‘Don't refer to them as 'them' and ‘I have friends who are Kikuyu and they are loving people.’” Once they warned her to beware of her best friend. ‘But we're twenty-two, we're not like you guys. That's what happened in your time,’” she said. “But these days I very much believe in the rumors going around because

last time people kept saying ‘these people are stocking up;’ ‘those people are ready to fight if Raila doesn't win;’ ‘Mungiki will burn down different parts of Kenya if Kibaki loses;’ blah, blah, blah. And it happened.”

“That's a big consequence: I don't think anyone cares what will happen to Winnie or her family or anyone she loves. They are all too busy. And meanwhile we're getting more and more angry. On a personal level, I try not to let it get to me too much in terms of friends, but it's hard. My boyfriend's mom doesn't approve of me because I'm Luo. The reality is that it's easier to marry someone of your tribe, (laughs) but that's not how life goes.”

Intimate relationships across tribal “lines” were prevalent throughout my fieldwork experience, and in a number of cases such relations and their extension of family and friends saved peoples lives. Juxtapose this with another phenomena that Winnie alerts us to: division within ethnic groups. By referencing the “homeguards” she invoked a painful history of betrayal among the Kikuyu. Indeed few of those who fought for independence in the Kenyan Land and Freedom Army (KLFA), otherwise known as the Mau Mau, ever received remuneration for their sacrifices. Nevertheless, the myth of ethnic homogeneity persists.

Reliving it: Samuel's repetitions

“Naivasha is my home because I was born and raised there. I spent most of my life in the house where we used to live. It's only the last six or seven years since I've been away from that place. But most of the time when I was away working somewhere I came back for my leave. I loved the place. I wanted to stay there.”

Samuel's use of the past tense here alludes to the traumatic disruption he described, and much of the analysis that follows reflects his ambivalence about remembering what happened.

“It's kind of the past that I've always avoided and the house we lived in, it's only my mother who has ever gone back, although it's not far away. I've never gone because I wouldn't want to relive that difficult memory. I just don't want to relive it. I'm hoping that with time it will heal; ‘time will heal all things.’ So I've never gone back there, ever. I drive by, but I've never gone back there again. It's difficult to go back and look at it again.”

Recalling that Samuel had said that his brother recognized the voices of some of the perpetrators, I asked him how he interacts today with the people who were involved.

“I do not know individuals who were involved,” he replied.

“And you don't suspect?” I asked.

“I chose not to, otherwise I'll be bogged down by thinking and worrying. So I'm choosing to take one day at a time and hoping that it will not happen again, hoping that it will not happen again. So I don't even - and this is what I told my mom - I don't even want to know who was involved in it because I don't want to relive it again. Because if you try to start to figure out who was involved then you end up enforcing that division; so you put up a wall of separation between you. Because it would be hard to know someone who really backtracked your life. You just don't want to know. You remember when I told you earlier that our landlord - that we were told later on - that she kind of aided or helped, or seemed to have an input into it? That's one of the reasons I have never wanted to go back to our old house because I don't want to come across her and start reliving that

incident.

Samuel does not want to know what he knows because that knowledge is painful. It is the pain of loss, the recollection of terror, and the sense of betrayal.

“I believe in good neighborliness: that you must do everything within your power to protect that neighbor. And she didn't do it. We were her tenants. She had a responsibility to look after us and whatever was in our house, but she did not do it. Totally different from a neighbor who we didn't know for long but who risked her life, her property and hid my brother. So I never wanted to go there and see her because that would make me relive that whole thing, and I would not want to go through that again. Its very painful and I'm very sad that it happened.

“And I know that there are a lot of people who went through much worse things then that. There are people who lost family members, not to mention the family that lost the children who were burned in the house; and so many whom I saw, whom I think never made it. And those who made it, I'm sure their lives are not the same. It's those kind of things in life where you say ‘well I'm lucky that I came out.’”

Samuel narrates the precariousness of life with such visceral effect. And what the future holds is sensed with great uncertainty:

“I am optimistic that probably it will not happen again, but that is not a reason to be careless. I know that it could happen, but I am very optimistic given what has happened in the country in terms of institutional changes; it gives us hope, but as I said, it's just hope that it will not happen. But sometimes you get very afraid when things happen like the prosecution of the suspects in the ICC. We are not very sure what will happen after that. So far it has been very peaceful and we hope it will continue the same.

But everything that happens in government, anything to do with law and order, makes us very leary. Obviously, I don't know. It may happen; it may not happen. It all depends on us because at the end of the day it would not have happened if young people wouldn't have gone into the streets.

“I know that it would not have happened if law and order would not have broken down. It would not have happened if politicians did not play some role in it. And it would not have happened if some had not sought power, or, one person holding on to power and the other person wanting that power. Whether the one holding onto power was holding onto it legitimately or the other guy looking for it was looking for it legitimately is not for me to decide. Probably someone else will need to do that. But as we know now, as they say, it was difficult to tell who won the election. It seemed that was the reason why the country went ballistic.

“But you know, on the ground we didn't know what was happening. All this, as they say, is considered a reprisal attack, which was later. We had seen other chaos, like the tribal clashes of 1992 and 1997. In all that time Naivasha was the place where people sought security. People from all over the tribal areas come to Naivasha. It was a very mixed area. There were lots of different tribes. So it was very difficult for it to erupt there. I remember we had a fundraiser, raising money for those people who had been displaced in other places in Kenya, who had no place, no food, no clothing. And we all donated.

“And most of these people who were in Naivasha were mostly Kikuyus from Molo, you know, Rift Valley. We didn't know, even when Nakuru was going into flames, I couldn't think that that was going to happen in Naivasha because it had never happened,

and it was going to be difficult for it to happen because it was going to be very difficult to get people from one tribe to go against the others, very difficult! So we never thought it would happen.

“I’m born and raised with Kikuyus and some many other tribes. My mom speaks better Kikuyu than many Kikuyus. I understand Kikuyu, it’s only that I don’t speak it. I do not connect with Nyanza. I do not speak my mother tongue. Because I was raised with all the other tribes. I understand my mother tongue but I’m not fluent. So when I go to Nyanza, and I’ve been there, I think, twice in my life, my cousins who were born and raised in Nyanza do not understand how at my age I cannot speak Duluo. A distant or immediate relative speaks to me in Duluo and I respond back to him in Kiswahili. I’m not connected with that. In fact, to those people who would be telling me to go back to Nyanza, I should be the one telling them to go back to where they came from because I was raised and brought up in Naivasha; most of the people who are telling people to go back, most of them were not raised there. It just happens that they got there and they are many so they want to tell everybody else to go. And I must tell you, it puts a lot of Kikuyu in a very difficult place/position. They want to treat everyone as a human being but are afraid that someone is going to lump them together with the person they want to save. A lot of them did not know what to do.

This last comment seems to speak to the question of whether the ethical precedes or follows from culture. Ethnic violence puts people “in a very difficult position,” the impulse to protect the other is countered by fear of becoming the other in the process. To be complicit with ‘the enemy’ is to become the enemy, and both the impulse and the consequence of this complicity highlight the precariousness of ethnic divisions and

whatever moral orders they imply. The safe thing seems to be – and we saw this in Winnie’s account – to retreat into ethnic solidarity of some sort. This is easier for some than others and complicated for all. Zain and Florence both described Nairobi as “cosmopolitan.” And Samuel reiterated a point made by Nick - in much more personal terms - of the disjunction between what are considered tribal homelands and the reality of where Kenyans live. In talking about his relationship to his birthplace, his mother tongue, and his extended family, he emphasizes the gap between how people are ethnically identified and how they understand and experience themselves. It becomes clear that the violence for those who lived through it entailed far more ambiguity and complexity than it appeared to through the prejudices of the Western media.

“I don't think the violence or the reason behind it, I don't think it was tribe. Because if it was tribe, then how did we coexist with one another for five years? And I look back and see that people who played a critical role in securing my brother, and having him safe, were all Kikuyus, risking their lives, risking their property, to save my brother. So, yes, there was a tribal part in it but it was not the main or core reason behind it. Tribe just became the convenient aspect, the thing to fuel the flames. There are so many other important and fundamental issues that underlie, and sometimes ties up with tribe, but I don't think tribe is the main thing. It's very difficult to say that it is tribe when you look back and see how people who had nothing to gain from helping me took upon themselves to risk losing everything they had to try and see if they could give me safety. So I've got difficulties trying to say that it is tribe, a lot of difficulties. I know that tribe is an issue here in this country, and not only in this country but all over, but I have a lot of difficulties convincing myself that it is tribe.

“Because at the end of the day the violence in Naivasha worked against the interests of the dominating tribe - the Kikuyus themselves. They are the ones who run businesses. They're the landlords, and all that. And most of the other people are their tenants, the people who buy from them. After the violence the price of rents dropped because there was nobody to rent. So I don't think it was tribe. In fact, it worked against their interests to do that. And I think the element of tribe in it must have been very small, that could have easily been contained.

“That the whole thing ‘tribe against tribe’ that’s what has been passed around mostly by politicians saying ‘this thing was tribal,’ so, *spontaneous*. They want to portray the chaos as spontaneous. They say it was a reprisal attack, but that is not really explaining enough. Okay, if it's a reprisal attack, then by who? By who?! They say its a reprisal attack, but Kikuyus who were attacking other tribes because of what had been done to their kin in other places, why didn't they do that on 29th or 30th of December? That's the difficult part of it that I don't understand. If it is reprisal, why did it take three or four weeks to do it. If it’s just reprisal: people seeing their kin being attacked in another place, the natural thing that normally happens is you respond immediately. And most of the time, if it takes time for you to respond, it’s very unlikely for you to attack because you think otherwise, that probably that is not the right thing. So to me I think there is a lot of explanation that needs to be done for most of us to be convinced that it was tribal. It was not.”

Samuel’s use of, or struggle with, the meaning of, “reprisal” speaks to the enigmatic source or cause of the violence, whether offensive or retaliatory. The metonymic relation of the terms “tribal” and “spontaneous” that he employs fits with the

way the post-election violence was initially represented by the Western media. But Samuel suggests that perhaps it's not so mysterious, or rather, that the mystery lies not in the ancestral but in the signification of a peculiar chronological order: the time of orders and plans. So I asked, "The attacks you were talking about, some of them were Mungiki coming in and stirring up the local youth, isn't that what they say?"

"To say that it was *Mungiki*, I would be speculating because I'm not very sure, but I could not discount them; I could not discount them. But the question is, the question we've always asked is: Prior to that point, prior to 2007, we had extrajudicial killing of *Mungiki* youths by the government or by police, so how they could carry out attacks after the election without some kind of 'okay' from someone with influence is very difficult because prior to the elections they were at loggerhead with government. At that point I think their leader was in jail or being prosecuted; I can't remember exactly what was going on, but he was in jail.

"So I don't know whether that would have happened: just the *Mungiki* taking the initiative to come to stir up youth or their own, I don't think so. What I would like to say is that the kind of violence that happened in Naivasha had some semblance of organization to a point whereby the police seemed to be overwhelmed by design or by choice, but they did not seem to be in charge. When I went and told this officer to give me the help I needed to get my brother, he just shrugged off and said, 'no'. They were more interested in getting people to the hospital, the injured ones, than getting the people who were in danger. So I must say, the question of *Mungiki*, were they involved? Absolutely. Were they the instigators, I'm not sure, but there was someone, some kind of political influence and logistical capacity to organize it the way it worked out. Because if

it was just spontaneous, then why did it happen in February, that long after the election? And if it happened spontaneously then why was the government not prepared? They had a long time between the time when the election crisis started and when the violence in Naivasha happened. Today I still believe, and I may not have the evidence to prove it but I am very, very sure that someone somewhere who had some influence with the capacity to organize was involved. Someone planned it somewhere. I may not know who that person is but someone planned it somewhere.”

The tone of Samuel’s account changes as it progresses. In the beginning he is tentative, emphasizing that he does not know, and alluding indirectly to what he does know. Toward the end he makes much stronger assertions, particularly in reaction to the idea that the violence resulted from tensions somehow inherent in ethnic or “tribal” difference.

“Issues like poverty also played a role in it because there are so many young people who could be bought very easily, you know, very easily, maybe being promised a certain amount of money they could make to do anything. We saw it at political rallies where people were paid 50 shillings to go participate or disrupt people’s rallies. It’s people who were just criminals who used tribe as an excuse to commit a crime. But then the whole thing needs to be looked at deeper than that. And if you look deeper, it’s about fighting and competing for opportunity and resources that are very minimal in our country, or, are not there in our country. So you hear of nepotism and corruption, it’s all about very minimal resources available that people are fighting for. And most of the time people find the warmth and trust in their tribe. But I’ve got people who have helped me a great deal who are not from my tribe. I cannot remember someone from my tribe helping

me or doing anything significant in my life. The people who have helped me the most, my friends, are not my tribe. The job I have now is with a friend of mine who is Kikuyu, who called me and asked if I would take an interview. You cannot divorce tribe from it, but I don't think tribe alone is the issue. It's an issue about fighting for opportunity and resources, and then the total breakdown of law and order because the question has always been, why work hard if you can still get what you want in another way? Why should I go to school if I can buy a certificate or a degree? As they say, 'Why hire a lawyer when you can buy a judge?'"

And that's why I call them warlords: An account of the post-election violence

Kate returned to Kenya from the US not long after the power-sharing agreement was established. I was given her number by a friend who said she was open to meeting with me. I knew very little about her when I called to see if we could schedule an interview. I invited her to lunch at a restaurant. She was one of the first people I interviewed, and her account will be the last of this section.

“So it sounds like you had an investment in the outcome of that election. Who did you want to win?” I asked, pushing through my hesitance to pursue questions that in the immediate aftermath of the elections were asked by executioners of people caught in their path; the believability of the answers determining their fate. The questioning look on my face as she answered was conversely a product of my ignorance of the nuances of the presidential campaigns. “I wanted Kolanzo to win - who is the vice-president now - because he seemed to be less - you know - there was so much polarity between Kibaki and Raila, so I thought that somebody less entrenched than those two would be a better

candidate.” I noted aloud the prophetic character of her narrative. “Yeah, especially because these two people represent some very powerful ethnic groups, and it was at that point that I realized it is important if we got somebody totally different and that would reduce the charge. It was so - I could feel the tension. And then Kolanzo, to me, is less corrupt. I think so. Maybe I’m wrong; I don’t know,” she said refusing to hold too firmly to her views, I think indicating her opinion that such adamance is a source of violence.

I asked where Kalonzo had stood in the polls. “Kibaki and Raila were neck to neck. But then he was somewhere far below, so not many people shared my view, obviously. I still believe he saved the day, Kolanzo.” “At what point? Or how?,” I asked. “When the election results came out and the claims that Kibaki rigged, that he stole the elections, there was a call to disregard him and not accept this as a legitimate election. But then there was - we could have done that, but there wasn’t an alternative. So when Kolanzo decided that he would accept to be the vice-president to this deligitimate leader he kind of threw people off because he went against the hype of the day. So he brought some sanity to the whole situation because, I think, if he had refused he would have just fueled the fire. There was so much going on at that point. I think his decision ultimately reduced the violence or reduced the tempo of the violence at that point. This is my opinion. I’ve never discussed it with anybody.

“And at that point, would you believe that there was a lot of tension between me and some other people in the diaspora?” She asked me to pause the recorder while she described what had transpired between herself and a friend of hers [...] *Resuming*: “And I just felt that this is somebody I have known for so long and they are talking to me as though I am the President. I didn’t choose to be born from his ethnicity. I didn’t choose to

be a member of his constituency. You know, I'm not even proud to be a member of his constituency. But I just - that's when I realized that this thing is bad. This thing is affecting everybody. It had nothing to do - just because - you know - I reached a point when I stopped having phone conversation with him. I said 'let's talk about this three months from now; let's not talk on the phone because we are going to damage our relationship.' Yeah, it was that bad.

“So that experience right there made me realize that ethnicity is a tool that can be used to divide us. And I am acutely aware, before I wasn't; nowadays I'm acutely aware of people's ethnicity. I will not ask. I will not discriminate against anybody, but I just wonder if our friendship will - my friendships from different ethnicities - will degenerate the way that one degenerated, just from a ten-minute phone conversation. As far as I was concerned, this was my brother! So I was in total shock.

“So what has that done to me now? Before I could have worked anywhere in Kenya. Today I can't. I'm jobless. I will not take a job in Kisumu. I will not take a job in Mombasa. I will not take a job anywhere where I saw the hostility toward Kikuyus because I'm not sure that this same thing will not happen in the next elections. I cannot take a job in El Doret because I do not want to be there for three years and then my house is burnt down. I can't. Imagine, your life is disrupted again. So I have just become afraid of my fellow Kenyans. I can't predict them. I have become so unsure. I will have to go through the test of time.”

There was along pause between us. “Stop looking so shocked,” she said to me and then apologized, “I'm very sad that that is what I have been forced to do.” I tried to convince her that I wasn't judging her, and that I was just feeling the weight of the

mistrust that makes plenty of sense following what happened. “Let’s say there are no riots during the next election, what would that mean to you?” I asked. “I would see. I’m not sure. It depends. The way things are going, if there’s no violence during the next elections I’ll be shocked. I’ll be shocked! And if there isn’t, I will be very happy because Kenyans will have realized that it is the politicians really that are making us kill one another. It has nothing to do with ethnic differences. It’s just an excuse to kind of distract us from what they are doing. And that’s why I call them warlords. There are warlords in this country. And they distract us by pulling the ethnic card. We are left tearing each other apart while they are amassing wealth to keep them in power. So if Kenyans refused to fight I would be happy to go anywhere else again.

“The other thing is, I think people have an idea that that’s what’s happening, but when the time comes again the people will forget and then we’ll be caught up in the same. I don’t know what it is. I call it - it’s like a demon comes and possesses people because it’s unexplainable how people just become wild again.” Kate’s invocation of the demonic seems to resonate with the psychoanalytic conception of violence presented in the literature review, and it has a similar function here, as a removed, almost Western bystander’s criticism that distances her from her “fellow Kenyans” who are so easily swept away by violence as a result of short memory and susceptibility to manipulation.

“You forget how painful it was last time. We’ve had ethnic violence now for many years, I think, since ‘92. That’s when it started. It’s just that this time it went out of control,” she said. *Tracing ethnic violence back to 1992 differs dramatically from attributing it to the ancestral, but not necessarily from the instinctual.*

“Yeah, so I don’t know why people forget, but I suspect it’s because people are so

hungry, so when you are given money you forget that you are being given money for a short time, and you think it's going to last forever. You must have heard this: that people were being given 500 shillings to burn a home or 1000 shillings to kill." "Who promised them that?" I asked. "The politicians."

Uhuru (Independence) on Trial: The ICC confirmation hearings

When I was in Kenya in 2009, Attorney General Amos Wako, head of the Waki Commission, handed over to ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo a sealed envelope of names of big men in Kenya said to have been involved in orchestrating the post-election violence. He did this after the coalition government failed to establish a local system for prosecuting them. The word on the street was that many people in the government feared they were on that list and that as a group they therefore stalled the process. Their next move was to try to withdraw from the Rome Statute¹⁰. Had these "Devils on the Cross" (Thiong'o wa, 1987) studied their criminal teachers a bit more closely, they would have, like the United States, refused to sign-on in the first place. Too late. Kenya's independence or at least its jurisdiction over crimes committed within its borders would be challenged by the International Criminal Court.

Suddenly the loud chaotic mix of television and radio clarified as one voice was broadcast through all speakers of the restaurant where I was. Turning toward the TV screen I recognized the ICC judge who swiftly introduced and called Uhuru Kenyatta to take the stand. My attention was captured. I set down the book I was reading; of all books it was his father's ethnography, *Facing Mt Kenya*, on Kikuyu traditional society

¹⁰ The legal foundation of the ICC, defining its principles, jurisdiction, composition, administration, protocols for investigation and prosecution, format of trials, penalties, appeals, enforcement, and financing. The Rome Statute was adopted by 120 countries in 1998 and went into effect in 2002.

(Kenyatta, 1965). I didn't know that his testimony was set for that date. The hour or so of his lawyer's questioning was fascinating.

"Please, describe the ethnic make-up of the KANU party." "Your honors..." The right answer, of course, was "multiethnic." Uhuru explained that Moi had made him his successor. Running for president in 2002 under KANU he was accused of splitting the Kikuyu vote as Mwai Kibaki was also running, under another party. The implication by the defense was that clearly he was not a tribalist. The point was exemplified further by the fact that at a time when many doubted that KANU would give up power, Uhuru had actually conceded defeat prior to the final vote tally, in order "to relax tribal tensions." He explained, also, that in 2005 he voted against the constitution that Kibaki supported, but that he eventually left the Orange Democratic Movement because he saw it producing animosities rather than bringing the country together.

A day or so later, I was watching the pre-trials again. One of Uhuru Kenyatta's witnesses was being questioned. Uhuru was accused of funding and transporting a criminal gang made up of Kikuyus, the *Mungiki*, from Nairobi through Naivasha and into the Rift Valley for reprisal attacks against ODM supporters. The questions had to do with the secret meetings that were said to have taken place. I was utterly surprised to hear Uhuru's witness utter the words, "Yes, I met some Mungiki." At that moment the connection to the live-stream was lost. I obviously wondered if the lost-connection happened other than by chance. When it came back on he quoted the gang members he met with, "The community is protected by three groups: political leaders, the rich, and the warriors." The warriors wanted to reestablish ties with the other two and that was the why they were requesting him to put them in touch with certain politicians. "Did you?"

he was asked. “No, your honors, I did not.”

It's interesting - the modern reinvention of traditional roles and tribal solidarity implied in that interaction. I suppose that's what "tribalism" is. Perhaps "tribalism" is a postmodern thing, less a matter of inherent identity than variable identification.

Chapter VIII - Discussion

Turning and turning in the widening gyre. The falcon cannot hear the falconer.

~W.B. Yeats~

The light is buried under chains and noises in an impudent challenge of rootless science.

~Garcia Lorca~

This dissertation has centered on the violence that followed the 2007 elections in Kenya. I went to Kenya wanting to talk to people, to Kenyans of various backgrounds, about what had transpired. As is obvious from this dissertation, I was in contact not with barbarians but thoughtful, smart, caring people who are, also, nonetheless, flawed, and prejudiced, and biased – just as everyone else in the world; people who care about home, their families, friends, neighbors, even as they deal with people who seemingly don't, and who loot, and kill. They were my teachers. I was receptive to their stories and worked to follow what they told me. To even begin to understand what had happened, I needed to explore the country's colonial history, historical inequalities and class dynamics; I needed to open myself up even more to the literature and poetry, the rhythm and melody of the place, then and now. What I learned is that there was not *one* post-election violence, anymore than there was one singular or homogenous ethnic group fighting another. It was, indeed, much more complicated than that.

Regarding Civilization

Strikingly, without my having ever posed the question, many of the Kenyans I interviewed spoke to *why* the post-election violence occurred. For this reason, analyzing how Kenyans narrate the post-election violence has resulted in a meta-narrative that, in part, weaves together their answers to the question, even as it is impossible to answer,

namely, why did it happen?

On the other side of world the question was answered before it was even adequately stated. Learning about the violence in the United States, as I did, and relying on media outlets, particularly the *New York Times*, for a response, if not an answer, to the questions why and how, the response seemed familiar; it recalled old Western tropes about Africa dating back to colonial conquest and the need to justify it. Summarizing this tradition of representing violence, or rather, this tradition of violent representation, James Ferguson states that, “Generations of Western scholars have regarded Africa as either beyond the pale of the modern (the savage heart of darkness that lurks beyond the edges of the civilized world) or before it (the ‘primitive,’ ‘traditional’ place that is always not yet in the time of the up-to-date present)” (Ferguson, 2006, p. 176).

The representation of the violence as “Tribal War”, as “tribal militias” “with rusty machetes” “squared off against each other in several slums”; word pictures of armies of “glue-sniffing street children” roaming the streets alongside “vigilante groups, wielding knives and automatic weapons”, operating under the pall of “barbarous” rituals and commitments, such as oaths cemented by “drink(ing) human blood”, and an unfeeling, inhuman hunt of others ending in “Bloodletting... Bloodbath ... hacking to death ... Beheading”¹¹ were some of the allusive descriptors and referencing tropes through which the violence in Kenya were made sense of. Of course, as I suspected, what was made sense of was more than the violence itself; but Africans. The classic and circular deductive error in personality psychology comes to mind: one makes an attribution about the personality by the observation of an act, only to explain, in the next step, the act by

¹¹ The reader will recall that all of these terms were referenced in the first chapter as reporting examples from the *New York Times*.

the personality. In this way the violence in Kenya serves to confirm an instinctual, barbarous African violence that then explains the violence in Kenya.

We find some resonance of the *New York Times*' narrative in Psychology. We've already reviewed some of the psychoanalytic perspectives, and illustrated, by means of an analysis of Johnson's paper (2012), how easily the theory can be used, perhaps abused, some would say, both knowingly and unknowingly, to verify or find supposed evidence that "primitive races...still inhabit the earth and...are certainly closer to primitive man than we" (Freud, 1918, loc. 327). This "only too familiar evolutionist temporalization of difference" (Ferguson, 2006, p. 182) is one which we'd like to move beyond in this project. Certainly there is more to Freud than the racist and unreflexive ethnocentrist uses and abuses of Freud's theory (which is not too difficult to do, given some of Freud's own problematic statements about "primitives" and "backward races")¹². Perhaps Freud's theory could at least provide a starting point for summarizing and analyzing the findings of this research.

By way of a brief summary, psychoanalytic theory provides a narrative of human development, both individual and collective. The theory is grounded in the idea, obvious to some, contestable to others, of our human origins being savage¹³. Freud says, for example, "we are descended from an endlessly long chain of generations of murders, whose love of murder was in their blood as it is perhaps in ours" (Freud, 1918, loc. 338).

¹² Of course he is far from alone in this regard: Jung's disparaging (and racist) views about "primitive Africans" are well known and another case in point.

¹³ "We have rejected the commonsense view of violence as an essential, universal, sociobiological or psychobiological entity, a residue of our primate and prehistoric evolutionary origins as a species of hunter-killers. Our incisors are, after all, very small. Our nails can inflict pain but not death. Our minds and our cultural inventiveness, more than our hominid bodies, are our ecological niche. We are *social* creatures. Cultures, social structures, ideas, and ideologies shape all dimensions of violence, *both* its expressions and its repressions" (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois, 2004, pp. 2-3).

It is this primitive part of ourselves that is eternally at battle with the forces of civilization and must be sublimated for the greater social good, if there is to be a greater good.

Violence, according to psychoanalytic theory, arises when the regulating institution, the paternal authority and power, diminishes as in anarchy, or lawlessness.

There may, at first glance, be some evidence for this explanation throughout the narratives. We think of Kate who spoke of a “demon” that overcomes people, and images of anarchy such as in looting and burning, or, the sudden emergence of a new “law” derived from the old force and threat of violence - seen in the erection of barricades by militias and door to door searches for enemies. Samuel said straightforwardly, “I know that it would not have happened if law and order would not have broken down.”

According to Freud, law and order are precarious: “The community must be maintained permanently, must be organised, must draw up regulations to anticipate the risk of rebellion...” (1932, para. 4). In this regard, Zain talked a lot about how the government dealt with, or failed to deal with, the escalation of threats leading up to the election. He was also critical of the government’s reaction to the riots in Kibera and its failures in dealing with the aftermath of the post-election violence (e.g., unequal treatment of IDPs).

It is not enough for a people to merely establish regulations to ensure peace and order. Freud sees it as essential to “institute authorities to see that those regulations - the laws - are respected and to superintend the execution of legal acts of violence” (1932, para. 4). The majority of Kenyans I spoke to felt that the culprits should be punished in order to avoid a repeat of the violence. They needed to be made an example of.

According to Freud, “there are two factors at work in the community which are sources of unrest over matters of law but tend at the same time to a further growth of law.

First, attempts are made by certain of the rulers to set themselves above the prohibitions which apply to everyone - they seek, that is, to go back from a dominion of law to a dominion of violence” (1932, para. 6). We think of the way former president Moi is depicted by just about everyone, and the ways in which he and Kenyatta before him consolidated power in the executive branch of government, leading to the “perception on the part of the public that [...] everything flows not from laws but from the President’s power and personal decisions” (CIPEV, 2008, p. 29). Kate put it strongly: “There are warlords in this country. And they distract us by pulling the ethnic card. We are left tearing each other apart while they are amassing wealth to keep them in power.” This “distractibility” certainly indicates something about the political (dis)order of the day. Samuel highlighted the cynicism that surrounds law and politics in Kenya with the joke: “Why hire a lawyer when you can buy a judge?” “That’s the thing,” said Winnie, “we don’t have party ideology, just that ‘if he gets in, the roads will be better in my area.’ We don’t look at how can you make the country better.”

To understand why this is the case, Winnie said one needs to understand colonial history, which brings to mind the groundbreaking work of the late Chinua Achebe and his interrogation of “civilization.” The very equation of violence with the uncivilized rests upon an unquestioned assumption of who is civilized, or what it is to be civilized. “Civilization,” Achebe showed, cannot be thought in simple binaries of a civilized west, or Europe, against a barbarous or “uncivilized” Africa, or rest – in both contemporary and historical senses. Hence, for example, it is precisely the colonizers and their “civilizing” mission that tore apart the cultural fabric through which the African social world was held together. Indeed, European intervention in Africa could be considered a prime

example of spreading anarchy. As depicted in Achebe's novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1958), the missionary role was to undercut the authority of traditional leaders and to undermine traditional values and norms. A *lack* of law and order was necessary for the effective exploitation of Africans. The military and missionary were two sides of the same coin. As Jomo Kenyatta said "When the Missionaries arrived, the Africans had the land and the Missionaries had the Bible. They taught us how to pray with our eyes closed. When we opened them, they had the land and we had the Bible."

Several of the interviewees were acutely aware of the violence inherent to colonization, as well as the generational ways that violence was perpetuated. Winnie's narrative, especially, emphasized how tribal politics in Kenya began with colonialism. The nepotism that is so disparaged today, along with deceit and coercion, was precisely the means through which white settlers and the colonial administration were able to expropriate African land and labor. In Kenya, as Winnie said, they managed to "take over the Rift Valley, which is the most fertile land we have in Kenya." As for those Kenyans who colluded with the colonists, they would reap the benefits for generations to come, she said. It so happens that many of these beneficiaries are Kikuyu. This is due, paradoxically, to the fact that those who resisted the British most forcefully were Kikuyu, which made it exceedingly important for the colonial administration to have collaborators and informers among them. This state of affairs has led to resentment of Kikuyus, particularly of those who own land in Rift Valley, but also more generally and by some Luos who have felt politically and economically marginalized.

As Mahmood Mamdani (1996) illustrates, "the native question," that is, how a minority was to effectively rule over a majority, was resolved by dividing people. After

undermining the authority of tradition, the Colonists sought to (re)inscribe it in order to stem Pan-African formations. Europeans divided “their” colonies into tribal reserves, establishing lines where things had been more fluid, and instituting “customary” laws and orders markedly different from the traditions of those peoples. Apartheid, argues Mamdani (1996), was less the exception than the rule in late phase colonialism in Africa.

As noted, in Kenya, in addition to the formation of ethnic provinces, the British outlawed national political organizations. Jamarogi Oginga Odinga stated the dynamic in this way: The colonizers “prohibited the formation of supra-tribal bodies and fostered every kind of local separatism. When, as a result, a profusion of parties and leaders developed, all with district and regional loyalties, the African people were blamed for tribalism and disunity!” (Odinga, 1967, p. 132). Indirect rule, or “decentralized despotism,” as Mamdani refers to it (1996), did not end with Independence – an argument Oginga Odinga also makes in his book, *Not Yet Uhuru* (1967). Violence, then, actually inheres to “civilization”, amply illustrated in the structural violence of everyday life in the (post)colonies.

The other major “source of unrest,” according to Freud, and one that opens up our analysis beyond the psychoanalytic, is that “the oppressed members of the group make constant efforts to obtain more power and to have any changes that are brought about in that direction recognised in the laws - they press forward, that is, from unequal justice to equal justice for all” (1932, para. 6). Again, we find seeming evidence in the narratives. The breakdown of law or collective agreement, according to the accounts of Zain and Winnie, pertained first to agreements made during the 2002 elections in the form of a memorandum of understanding between Kibaki and Raila and the broken promise of a

new constitution. They noted that the major parties in the 2007 election, whose members, or some of them, would later resort to violence, were born out of a disagreement on the shape the new constitution should take.

Raila Odinga and the Orange Democratic movement catalyzed people with a populist platform. In Eric's words, "Raila's victory would be a victory for all Kenyans. All Kenyans had high expectations for a real change. We believed the way he was selling his policies. He campaigned for a new constitution and equal distribution of resources. He had a youth agenda: more jobs. He was focused on corruption." The State was to be reformed to serve the interests of the people. Eric's sentiment also seems to exemplify Abrahamsen's contention that "for the poor the demand for political change was a demand to end poverty and suffering" (2000, p. 102).

When we talk about the (breakdown of) the rule of law and ask what specifically has broken down in democratic nations such as Kenya, I believe it is exceedingly important to recognize that "Only in relation to the world political economy can one fully appreciate and understand the functioning of liberal democracy and its assumptions" (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2005, p. 14). There is, on the one hand, the law of government and the rights that it guarantees or attempts to guarantee. And there is, on the other hand, the law of economy, which everywhere defines the freedoms and restrictions we know and live as inequality, if not poverty. These different orders - far from forming a unitary paternal authority - can lead to moral contradiction depending on where one is positioned. For example, in "Nai-robbery," as it is sometimes called, if you are willing to work but find that the invisible hand of the free-market is not open to you (i.e., that there are no jobs) and you need to eat and pay rent, is it so wrong to pick the wallet or cell phone of

someone clearly better off than you?

In regards to PEV, I found it interesting that when talking to young men in Kibera I couldn't always differentiate between "hungry" and "angry" in the story. One time I asked for clarification. The response was laughter. "Both hungry and angry" he said. It's in this very specific context that the notion of "instincts" can be resurrected and rethought in relation to post-election violence, or at least the looting. If the violence resulted from the breakdown of the regulatory authority, we need to ask what was in need of regulation in the first place? People's hunger? Or the anger that can arise from chronic hunger? Is the political suppression of anger-hunger a desirable form of "peace"? When people said, "things have gone back to normal now," we had to wonder what that meant and how to evaluate it. Turning to Freud again, it is the case that sometimes "the ruling class is unwilling to recognise the [need for] change, and rebellion and civil war follow, with a temporary suspension of law and new attempts at a solution by violence, ending in the establishment of a fresh rule of law" (1932, para. 6).

Racist, nationalist, sexist, capitalist forces determine who will be most affected by everything from disease epidemics, natural and industrial disasters, to collective violence. If the existential revelation is that I could die at any moment, this fact is made far truer for some than others. In Kenya in late December 2007, while looting may have marked the transition to 'lawlessness' and violence in the media, some of the people I talked to indicated that it was the arbitrariness of the law enacted by the police that stirred people to violent re-actions. It seems important to note that their infamous chant: "No Raila, No Peace" is a derivation of the popular chant "No Justice, no Peace." The metonym is telling. Barricades preventing demonstrations in the city's center pushed

people from Kibera back into their 'proper places,' confining them to the margins. Police enforcement of law and order came to literalize the symbolic power that had the very same effect.

James Ferguson says that, "the key questions are no longer temporal ones of societal becoming (development, modernization), but spatialized ones of guarding the edges of a status group--hence, the new prominence of walls, borders, and processes of social exclusion in an era that likes to imagine itself by an ever expanding connection and communication" (Ferguson, 2006, p. 192). And "while development narratives have hardly disappeared, they have undoubtedly lost much of their credibility for certain people in certain places," says Ferguson, whose work has been largely concentrated in Southern Africa (2006, p. 182). He argues that we should see modernity "as many Africans do [...] as a social status implying certain institutional and economic conditions of life" in a world of inequality and exclusion (2006, p. 168).

Thus at the same time that Kenya can be characterized as a democracy with a relatively strong economy, Florence defined it in different terms to me: "When you look at our country here we have the haves and the have-nots. The percentage of the poor is so large that in the future, if we do not take care of things, it will not be a tribe against a tribe; it will be the haves against the have-nots, the have-nots against the haves." Samuel said something very similar: "if you look deeper, it's about fighting and competing for opportunity and resources that are very minimal in our country, or, are not there in our country. So you hear of nepotism and corruption, it's all about very minimal resources available that people are fighting for. I don't think tribe alone is the issue. It's an issue about fighting for opportunity and resources."

While psychoanalytic theory has been helpful framing the analysis thus far, it should also be clear by now that it is, in and of itself, inadequate in explaining collective historical phenomena such as the post-election violence in Kenya. The functionalist argument that with the breakdown of (paternal) authority, especially to the extent that that authority functioned to deter violence, results in the dispersion of violence as a means of resolving disputes is only half the story, if that. Without something like historical materialism, a demonstration of the human need for a paternal authority articulated through psychoanalysis can too easily be co-opted by forces of domination and oppression, as is revealed in the extra-Freudian connotations of the terms “civilized” and “civilization”, and in the contemporary development discourse. We would be benefited by an integration of sociological and psychological theorizing here. We must read Freud with Marx, lest we content ourselves with “civilization” as defined by the colonialists, or a world in which barbarians are defined not by a propensity for violence, (for history has shown the “civilizers” of the world to be far more vicious), but as an impediment to (neo)colonial capitalist desires.

In the context of post-election violence in Kenya, and in light of the preceding critique of a Freudian reading of it, what do we make of Fromm’s psychosocial defense mechanisms described in the literature review? Are they helpful to think with? Or do they need to be rethought?

Clearly the sadomasochistic relation between leaders and masses fits with popular representations of the violence: The susceptibility of Kenyans to being manipulated by power hungry politicians. Put simply by Kate, “it is the politicians really that are making us kill one another. It has nothing to do with ethnic differences. It’s just an excuse to kind

of distract us from what they are doing.” This was echoed by a number of people I talked to. I find it interesting and problematic that people, both foreign/Western and Kenyan, tend to take hold of this “corrupt African leader” explanation not just in relation to election violence but also to numerous other problems in Africa. If I didn’t know how to spell I would say that “politician” in Kenya is a four-letter word. On the other side of the continent, and in the famous words of Achebe, “The Trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership, [...] the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example” (1983, p. 1).

I won’t disagree with people who know their leaders much better than I do, nor do I want to make excuses for corrupt politicians, but it has also been shown that “good governance” is a problematic discursive form that places politicians between the demands of international finance and those of the people who elected them. Even so, says Kenyan writer and social theorist Ngugi wa Thiong’o, “...the Mobutus, Moises and Eyademas of the neocolonial world are not being forced to capitulate to imperialism at the point of an American maxim gun. They themselves are of the same mind: they are actually begging for a recolonization of their own countries with themselves as the neocolonial governors living in modern fortresses. They are happier as the neo-slave drivers of their own peoples; happier as the neo-overseers of the US-led economic hemorrhage of their own countries” (1981, p. 80).

Continuing to consider Fromm’s schema, it is as possible to view the violence, perpetrated as it were by youth, primarily, in terms of Fromm’s “destructive” character, who seeks to destroy the world so as “to avoid being crushed by it” (Fromm, 1941, p. 177). We recall that for Fromm destructiveness exists in equal proportion to the

“thwarting of life;” the appetite for destruction grows under suppressive conditions (pp. 181-182). Perhaps that’s the position of those who actually carried out the violence, largely impoverished young men. The spirit of elimination, present in the post-election violence, seemed in part to be motivated by a sense of powerlessness.

The theory of contemporary forms of ethnic violence advanced by Arjun Appadurai (1998, 2006) is consistent with Fromm’s thinking. Appadurai describes ethnic violence in terms of the instability that comes with “the forces of globalization – weakened states, refugees, economic deregulation, and systematic new forms of pauperization and criminalization” (1998, p. 226). My research revealed that Luo youth expected a Raila presidency to provide opportunity for social mobility. His “youth agenda” was synonymous, for Eric, with the creation of jobs. Upcountry, Kalenjin militias intended to (re)gain land. And mungiki wanted employment (as warriors) from a Kikuyu elite. In all of these narratives, people are said to be for hire. For example, Samuel said, “there are so many young people who could be bought very easily, you know, very easily, maybe being promised a certain amount of money they could made to do anything. We saw it at political rallies where people were paid 50 shillings to go participate or disrupt people’s rallies.” Kate spoke to higher stakes: “people were being given 500 shillings to burn a home or 1000 shillings to kill.”

Economic instability is only one aspect of the uncertainty that is heightened with globalization. Identity is another. During the post-election violence, people’s identity cards and linguistic abilities were one of the means of identifying the other. A certain last name or the mispronunciation of the local linguistic terms would confirm the suspicion that one’s physical features may have raised. For warriors in search of enemies, physical

features were not only a means of identification, but in cases such as forced circumcision, mentioned several times in the interviews, as well as the reporting on the PEV, such physical differences became the object of violence.

I hesitate, and am careful, to “analyze” the deadly circumcisions of Luo men mentioned by Zain and Samuel, for as Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois put it, “Focusing exclusively on the physical aspects of torture/violence misses the point and transforms the project into a clinical, literary, or artistic exercise, which runs the risk of degenerating into a theatre or pornography of violence” (2004, p. 1). I’ll take the act, then, as a starting point and work to understand its cultural construction and deconstruction in attempts of further problematizing the binary of the modern and the traditional in our understanding of ethnic violence.

Making the genitalia of Luo men the object of violence highlighted a difference that the very act eliminated. Circumcision is a practice of the Kikuyu and not the Luo – a traditional marker of adulthood for Kikuyu men (Kenyatta, 1965). During the 2007 campaigns, condescending comments were made about Raila Odinga - that an uncircumcised man (i.e., a boy) cannot lead the country – suggesting that discourses of masculinity and ethnicity intersected and were clearly at work here.

In his book *Facing Mt. Kenya* (1965), Jomo Kenyatta writes that the initiation rite of circumcision “signifies that the children have now been born again, not as children of an individual, but of the whole tribe” (p. 145). A more concrete instantiation of the paternal function, to use psychoanalytic language, would be hard to find; the source of instinctual pleasure is literally cut in the passage to adulthood. This transformation implies becoming a part of a symbolic order of prohibitions and obligations, or the

acceptance as “self evident” of the “truths governing the conception of what is right and what is wrong, good and bad, beautiful and ugly, courageous and cowardly, generous and mean in their internal and external relations” (Thiong’o wa, 1981, p. 14).

But this tradition of circumcision by the Kikuyu, removed from its ritual context and the cultural constraints that govern the expression of the act, as was the case in the post-election violence, obviously changes its symbolism and requires a different order of analysis. It seems to indicate a terrible blurring of self and other, courage and cowardice, good and bad. Arjun Appadurai says that “The maiming and mutilation of ethnicized bodies is a desperate effort to restore the validity of somatic marker of ‘otherness’ in the face of the uncertainties posed by census labels, demographic shifts, and linguistic changes, all of which make ethnic affiliations less somatic and bodily, more social and elective” (1998, p. 242). In other words, Things fall apart...and mere anarchy is loosed upon the world. Violence, according to Appadurai, can be seen as an effort to restore some order or to reestablish some certainty. The Waki report has already alerted us to the “rootlessness” of the youth involved in the violence. “Obviously,” says Appadurai, “these actions indicate a deep and dramatic uncertainty about the ethnic self. They arise in circumstances where the lived experience of large labels becomes unstable, indeterminate, and socially volatile, so that violent action can become one means of satisfying one’s sense of one’s categorical self” (1998, p. 244).

While consistent with social identity theory, Appadurai moves us beyond psychological functionalism, its universalism and ahistoricism. He shows how politics mediate and impinge on the psychological. The sense indeterminacy and uncertainty of which he writes can be found throughout the narratives. I was struck, for example, by the

term “cosmopolitan” that people used both in describing Nairobi and its infamous slum, Kibera. It was invoked to emphasize how complicated and confusing it was for ethnic violence to be occurring there. While people may have been able to find sources of shelter there was nowhere that was definitely safe to be.

This acute problem for those in Nairobi during the post-election violence, was multiplied for those who were minorities in other provinces. Florence explained the situation of the internally displaced: “They were supposed to go away and go back to Central Kenya. And of course there was no way! Some of those were born [elsewhere] and have settled there; they have their own property there. Some people [Luos] don’t know anyone in Western Kenya. They have never had any property. It’s just because they are in Central Kenya, so where do they go and start over?”

Perhaps Kachwakera or Kisumu Ndogo villages in Kibera slum. This is where Zain and Eric lived. I took for granted that they were Luo, needing only to hear their sense of injustice with regard to the 2007 election to confirm this. Similarly, I assumed Nick was Kikuyu by the nature of what he said about land and property rights. But he didn’t actually state how he identifies ethnically, nor did the people I talked with at the country club – except for the white man who defined himself as a “non-tribal Kenyan.” Winnie, in contrast said very early in the interview, “I grew-up knowing my tribe: Luo, knowing that in some regions I could get a job...” Likewise, Florence identified herself to me as Kikuyu almost immediately, explaining that “there are many Kikuyus living in every part of the country. And it is the tribe with the largest population” as the preface of a story about feeling targeted.

In other stories it was the memory of being targeted that prompted the tellers to

mention their ethnicities, and not visa versa. Anne's story goes like this: one of the workers tells the farm manager "You people are still here when we are coming to kill you today?" My husband is Kikuyu. I am Kamba." Samuel identifies himself ethnically at the same point in his own story: "We had a neighbor who caught wind of what was happening. She was a Kikuyu lady that was married to a Kamba. The lady told me that they were looking for people who were perceived to be not pro-government, basically, tribally speaking, being Luo. I am Luo."

We recall Samuel's description of his relation to land and language which doesn't much coincide with what others expect from a Luo: "I'm born and raised with Kikuyus and some many other tribes. My mom speaks better Kikuyu than many Kikuyus. I understand Kikuyu, it's only that I don't speak it. I do not connect with Nyanza. I do not speak my mother tongue because I was raised with all the other tribes. I understand my mother tongue but I'm not fluent. So when I go to Nyanza, and I've been there, I think, twice in my life, my cousins who were born and raised in Nyanza do not understand how at my age I cannot speak Duluo." Kate spoke with frustration about being interpellated similarly, but as a Kikuyu: "they are talking to me as though I am the President. I didn't choose to be born from his ethnicity. I didn't choose to be a member of his constituency. You know, I'm not even proud to be a member of his constituency!" And Florence in giving her account of post-election violence mentioned being afraid not only of ethnic others but of fanatics of her own ethnicity who may not agree with the way her daughter dresses, for example. Moreover, she felt compelled to note that "it was not just Kikuyus who were killed," expressing concern for all victims of post-election violence.

I think of Winnie who reminisced about a moment in Kenya when "People were

united.” After giving a historical account of ethnic inequality she said, “But you see the history I've given you, if you listen to a Kikuyu's version it might be a bit different. That's why it's advisable to talk to people from different sides and make up your mind. I'd like to think I'm a bit more objective but not by much. I can't tell a lie. I'm very biased toward the Luo and feeling marginalized and stuff like that.” She talked about how that sense of marginalization can and was used to stir passions and mobilize people in a manner that made the elections extremely contentious. She portioned some of the blame to Raila Odinga, who she at the very same time believed would have improved the country significantly had he been president. She said, “He would be interviewed by these vernacular stations, speaking in Luo saying, ‘this presidency has been held from us for so long. Initially Tom Mboya was going to take over. He got assassinated. My father was put in jail. Now look they are doing the exact same thing to me and I am the one who gave them the presidency.’”

Through a very cogent depiction of tribal politics and its history, Winnie at the same time showed the distance she had from it. She was conscious of her distrust. As was Kate, who said, “I will not take a job anywhere where I saw the hostility toward Kikuyus because I'm not sure that this same thing will not happen in the next elections.” Samuel in remembering his desire to forget the post-election violence, simply provided counter-evidence to tribalism: “The people who have helped me the most, my friends, are not my tribe. The job I have now is with a friend of mine who is Kikuyu.”

Samuel further explained, “There are so many other important and fundamental issues that underlie, and sometimes ties up with tribe, but I don't think tribe is the main thing. It's very difficult to say that it is tribe when you look back and see how people who

had nothing to gain from helping me took upon themselves to risk losing everything they had to try and see if they could give me safety.” Ethnic violence, Samuel noted, puts people “in a very difficult position.” There is pressure to seek safety in ethnic solidarity. But there is also another force, that is, the other-in-danger whom I may be able to help. And in between is a subjectivity that can neither be contained by ethnic identity nor transcend it.

Can we become free *from* the constraints of tradition without simultaneously becoming alienated and endangered? Freud says, “Anything that encourages the growth of emotional ties between men must operate against war. [...] Whatever leads men to share important interests produces this community of feeling, these identifications” (1932, p. 1). The question is what are these “important interests”? Obama, in his speech in Ghana, articulated “our common interest” in this way: “if people are lifted out of poverty and wealth is created in Africa, guess what? New markets will open up for our own goods. So it’s good for both” (2009). But we know that “free” trade places many in shackles as the so-called comparative advantage of some nations is their cheap labor.

Fromm thinks through the possibility of “a society in which the individual, his growth and happiness, is the aim and purpose of culture” (1941, p. 269). He understands that “the realization of positive freedom and individualism is bound up with economic and social changes,” and advocated democratic socialist policies (p. 270). Yet he is not bound to ideology. As he says, “All that matters is that the opportunity for genuine human activity be restored to the individual [so that] the work he is doing is something for which he can feel responsible because it has meaning and purpose in terms of his human ends” (p. 271).

From numbers to narratives

I have attempted to elaborate the dominant discursive formations in which this research is unavoidably embedded. In doing so I have attempted to avoid the common ruts worn in the road of foreign “concern” with political violence in Africa, and thus to show how such violent conflicts are naturalized in a way that reinforces some of the central power dynamics at play in what become seen as primordial problems of Africa.

Perhaps such prejudices could be overcome by a more objective approach, one that would exclude or transcend history and politics. That stance would certainly be consistent with most research in the field of psychology today. But I’ve suggested that explanations based in the positivist paradigm are not as impartial and objective as they purport to be. Edmund Husserl, who like Freud was compelled to apply his theorizing in the wake of WWI, argued that the state of science was reflected in the crisis of European civilization, which I think is all the more true today, and just as un-recognized. Science, Husserl said, had become forgetful of its origin in the human world, the life-world. It had mistakenly taken its abstract knowledge as the foundation of reality.

The consequences of this vary depending on particulars of the science and its knowledge. It seems most problematic in the social and behavioral sciences. As Foucault has shown in virtually all of his works (e.g., 1977, 1980, 1985, 2003), human knowledge, or, knowledge of the human, is always a matter of power. From his perspective, the effects of such knowledge often have to do with disciplining of bodies and the management of populations. It was thus important to me to articulate an epistemological position from which to resist the force of a scientific tradition that would render people for whom elections were a matter of life and death mere subjects, or, objects of

knowledge. A radical rethinking of psychological research was necessary.

The deconstruction of foundations or origins is also the deconstruction of the expert/privileged position (i.e., the philosophical, scientific, or political) that constituted the origin, cause or truth in the first place. The intention of this research was not simply to learn about Kenya and the post-election violence that occurred there, but to learn from Kenyans how such violence occurs and the meanings made of it, and perhaps something about peace building in the aftermath of violent conflict. No longer are we constructing African research subjects to be learned about in order to intervene on their behalf with our expertise (e.g., on the psychosocial causes of violence and peace). Rather, the expertise as to how to move beyond violence is appropriately situated with those who have had to live through it. As far as I am concerned it is as though the authority of the white coats was burnt up with all the other clothing in *Makina* market. It was in and through this exposure amidst hot coals and ashes that truth about the post-election violence and its aftermath was disclosed, to the extent that it was, to this researcher.

Such an approach required some methodological innovation and appropriation. I found within the transdiscipline of Cultural Anthropology, methods that had been fashioned through struggling with the very kinds of concerns and questions raised here. Narrative ethnography with its emphasis on the process of “ethnographic encounter” would serve to counter academic tendency “to speak from nowhere,” as Yancy put it. Multi-sited ethnography allowed for the rearticulation of important associations that had been severed through the dominant discourses of “tribalism,” “good governance,” and “development.” Most importantly ethnographic methods allowed me to record voices and stories of Kenyans themselves.

Narratives are a form of resistance to a regime that deals with governing populations. What stories can do, among other things, is evoke the meaning of our existence. In seeking out the stories that don't make the press, and that, by virtue of being stories, don't figure into the explanations of economists and political scientists, this dissertation serves as a corrective to approaches that seek to merely "manage conflicts." In this sense, although quantitative research can be helpful in certain ways, it also colludes with the construction of human beings as populations to be managed. And this is anti-democratic. To the extent to which research, or various forms of intervention, has as its objective to ensure the peaceful transfer of power from one elite representative to another, it is not an overstatement to term it neocolonial. The point in presenting not just Kenyans' stories, but a relative few of them, is to emphasize that each voice matters, that the personal stakes are high in elections, that people believe in their democratic rights, that people do intend to have a say in the shape their lives take. My hope in re-telling the stories that have been told to me by urban Kenyans of all walks of life is that the text itself at least leans in the direction of democracy.

Across the narratives there was a sense that certain things needed to happen in order to prevent such violence from occurring again. The new constitution was a long awaited, enormous success for Kenya. Although it will take time to implement, the immediate diffusion of power away from the executive branch and the renewed autonomy of the judiciary surely contributed to the 2013 elections having been peaceful despite being disputed.

All wounds are not healed, however. In the course of my research I heard over and over that those responsible for the post-election violence must be held accountable.

Yet two of the remaining three defendants of the ICC trial have been elected as president and vice president, indicating that for at least 50 percent of Kenyan voters justice lies somewhere other than the ICC. The Kenyan Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission (KTJRC) is yet to release its report and recommendations. Its mandate was broad, seeking to address the whole history of violence and injustice that the Kenyans I spoke to saw as motivating ethnic tension in the country.

However illuminating it was for me to gain more and more understanding of the context in which the post-election violence occurred, for most of those I spoke with there was always a sense that no amount of explanation would suffice or satisfy. “If someone can figure it out,” said Winnie “I would be impressed because I can’t and I’m Kenyan.” She said this just prior to providing so much in the way of understanding the motivational context out of which the violence arose.

Other comments about the limits of understanding the post-election violence seemed intended to shut down conversation about it, as when the friend of Nick and I invited us to change the subject, lamenting that “It goes on and on.” Or the words of the Kenyan man at the country club: “If we start arguing here it won’t get us anywhere.” No good could be seen to come from talking about it.

The unpredictability of the violence was communicated in statements made by Florence and Samuel, such as “We’ve heard of nations who have been having civil wars. Never thought it would happen to us,” and “We didn’t know, even when Nakuru was going into flames, I couldn’t think that that was going to happen in Naivasha because it had never happened.” The impossibility of recovery was also indicated: “If you have seen members of your family killed, if your livelihood has been taken away, you can’t move

on;” said Nick, “If you are in an IDP camp how can you move on?”

I felt the ethical limits of knowledge at different times: at the beginning, middle, or the ending of an interview. For example, following the courtesies and formalities with which interviews tended to start, there would be a pause that would mark a transition to talking about those things one would rather not remember. Or, somewhere in the telling and in the listening, or, in between the telling and the listening, what was being spoken about came to claim us, to take hold of us, to suspend us there in the pain and horror of violence, in the unsayable, and in the truth that goes without saying: that it shouldn't have happened, that it didn't have to happen. And it did.

Conclusion

Neither in literary criticism, nor in the social sciences, is there such a last word. Or, if there is any, we call that violence.

~Ricoeur~

In the final reckoning the people who will advance the universal conversation will not be copycats but those able to bring hitherto untold stories, along with new ways of telling.

~Chinua Achebe~

Defined as a multi-sited ethnography, it seems important to highlight in the conclusion of this dissertation the “chains, paths, threads, conjunctions or juxtapositions” that I didn’t follow, or could have followed much further (Marcus, 1998, p.90). Of course, even the “connections, associations, and putative relationships” (p.81) that I did trace in this dissertation (e.g., ethnic identification both within and as a response to political violence; constitutional reform and structural violence; and [post]colonial history of inequality) all call for almost infinite elaboration in the form of greater detail. But there were clearly paths of inquiry that I didn’t follow or didn’t follow very far. There is a striking absence in this dissertation, for example, of the voices of two major characters in the story of the post-election violence in Kenya: the politicians and the perpetrators. Perhaps it’s not so surprising that that latter don’t make their identities public in such a way that they could be found for an interview. As for the politicians, they were excluded from the research at the outset by the terms of my research permit.

I was more deliberate about not following certain paths in this research: the legal aspect, for example. Clearly, much more attention could have been given to the work of the Kenyan, Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission (KTJRC) and the ICC trial. Likewise, and based in the groundbreaking work of Mahmood Mamdani (1996),

exploring more closely the interplay of rural and urban politics in Kenya would have been very fertile soil to till had I the appropriate tools and implements, leads and relations, and the labor-time to carry out that work. Furthermore, the economic climate in Kenya could have been articulated further, specifically in terms of the strikes that occurred at the tail end of my research: those carried out by professors and doctors, and the threat by the matatu drivers to immobilize Nairobi. Indeed, I only began to trace the context out of which arose the post-election violence of 2007/8; I only followed the stories so far.

Struggling with the limitations and shortcomings of this dissertation, all that I could or should have done differently, all that I still don't know, I came across the following passage:

The task of ethnography is not to know the other in any final sense, nor even to know the self through the other. Nor is it to change the lives of others, or even to critique one's own culture. Its warrant and worth lie in its power to describe in depth and detail the dynamics of intersubjective life under a variety of cultural conditions in the hope that one may thereby be led to an understanding of how those rare moments of erasure and effacement occur when self and other are constituted in mutuality and acceptance rather than violence and contempt (Jackson, 1998, p. 208).

The Kenyans whose stories make up the heart of this dissertation have taught us much in this regard. My dream is that in the not-to-distant future, the "inter-community dialogues" for which Zain advocates will become the new form of international relations; that those in the highest echelons of power will take lessons from the citizens of Kibera; and all of us will allow ourselves, like Winnie, to *fall* in love *across* ethno-political lines. In concluding this dissertation, I must follow Kate's lead and admit that what I've written "is only my opinion. *I don't know.*"

In terms of future directions that this research could go in, I think it would be

useful to undertake a project that compares the development of democracy in other former British colonies such as Ghana, India, the US, and Ireland *and* to explore the historical relations between them. Clearly, such research takes us beyond psychology, and perhaps beyond the academy. But then that would be quite consistent with the trends in both international psychology and qualitative research. The theme of the most recent International Congress of Psychology was “Psychology Serving Humanity.” The theme of the last International Congress of Qualitative Research is “Qualitative Inquiry Outside the Academy.” And the next meeting of the American Anthropological Association “is dedicated to examining our efforts to transform our disciplinary identity and capacity in terms of knowledge production and relevance in a world of radical change” (American Anthropological Association, 2013).

In light of all the discussion of paternal authority and the nature of the law, I think that an important direction to take this research into the future is to return to a particular body of wisdom from the past that has been strikingly neglected. That is the writings left to us by those who fought colonialism. The very titles of the texts of Kenyan Heroes such as Oginga Odinga, Tom Mboya, and Bildad Kaggia all speak to “Freedom/Uhuru,” and how to continue to advance it in the postcolonial era. And In this regard we should not forget the life and writings of J.M. Kariuki in the continued search for justice. And from across the continent: the wisdom of Pan Africanist Kwame Nkrumah, African Socialist Julius Nyerere, and the Freedom Fighters of South Africa and beyond.

In relation to those who have been forgotten, let me conclude by acknowledging that there are many untold stories, my ignorance of which haunts this research. I hope, against all odds, that I’ve done them justice.

Postscript: Representing Kenyans

This manuscript was in its final stages as Kenya approached another election. The presidential race this time was between Uhuru Kenyatta and Raila Odinga. Election day was set for March 4th 2013. One day in late February one of my co-workers leaned in through my office door, “Did you see the article about Kenya in the *New York Times* today?” I had not. “It’s awful,” she said, appearing very disturbed, “on the front page there is a picture of a baby with a machete scar on her head.” I was speechless at first, save for a few mumbling and under my breath curse words. My co-worker mentioned fighting between “two tribes” but couldn’t explain much more. I wanted to know what was happening. When I got home, the first thing I did was search for news on the internet. I looked at the Kenyan papers first. I was confused when I didn’t see anything about ethnic violence. So I looked at the *New York Times*. Indeed Jeffrey Gettleman made the front page with an article entitled “Neighbors kill neighbors as Kenyan vote stirs old feuds.”

Surprisingly he wasn’t talking about the Kikuyu, Luo, or Kalenjin, but of a conflict between the Pokomos and the Ormas, people from the Tana River Delta near the northern coast. He reported that over the span of several months, more than 200 people had been killed. The article begins like this: “In a room by the stairs, Shukrani Malingi, a Pokomo farmer, writhed on a metal cot, the skin on his back burned off. Down the hall, at a safe distance, Rahema Hageyo, an Orma girl, stared blankly out of a window, a long scar above her thimble-like neck. She was nearly decapitated by a machete chop — and she is only 9 months old” (February 21, 2013). Reading this I understood why my friend

cried when she read the article.

Gettleman ended the piece with the line: “Up and down the crocodile-infested Tana River, Pokomo and Orma youth are now patrolling the banks with spears and rusty swords” (February 21, 2013). My irritation was palpable.

What was the killing about? Gettleman turns to his local informant, a Pokomo elder by the name of Elisha Bwora, who reportedly notes “There are three reasons for this war. Tribe, land and politics.” Now where politics are concerned, Gettleman makes a very important point about the negative consequences of changes brought about by the new constitution: “Kenya has overhauled its judiciary, election commission and the nature of power itself. Dozens of new positions, like governorships and Senate seats, have been created to ensure that resources flow down more equitably to the grass roots, an attempt to weaken the winner-take-all system that lavished rewards and opportunities on some ethnic groups while relegating others to the sidelines. [...] The new emphasis on local government has translated into more spoils to fight over. And there are nearly 50 governor races coming up across Kenya, many of them quite heated” (New York Times, February 21, 2013).

However, whereas it is important how changes in the structure of government shift the stakes of elections to the local, Gettleman doesn't say any more about it; he doesn't alert us to which of those 50 gubernatorial races might entail violence or why. He doesn't even elaborate or ask his informant to comment on the land dispute in the Tana River Delta. How, for example, does the Kenyan State in its old and new forms figure into the distribution of resources in the area? He could say a lot more about the “longstanding rivalry, which both sides say has been inflamed by a governor's race.”

Given my research topic I wondered if there was violence between these two groups in the last elections. The extent of post-election violence in the Tana River District in 2007/8 is not clear from the WAKI Report. It is not listed as one of the districts in coastal province where no violence occurred, but there is also no report of violence occurring there. What *is* noted in the WAKI report about previous conflict in that region is that the “Tana River District featured consistently in Intelligence reports where there was ongoing conflict between the Orma and Wardei communities within the Bura and Galoloe Divisions and also between the Pokomo and Somali over a disputed 3-mile strip along the banks of the River Tana” (CIPEV, p. 222). Note, at least by this account, that although the Orma and Pokomo were involved in previous conflicts, they were not against each other.

Such details take away from the point of Gettleman’s story, which is that “Every five years or so, this stable and typically peaceful country, an oasis of development in a very poor and turbulent region, suffers a frightening transformation in which age-old grievances get stirred up, ethnically based militias are mobilized and neighbors start killing neighbors.” That’s the story that sells papers. So instead of following the details of a conflict that led to the little girl he photographed being attacked, Gettleman shifts his attention to the “National stage” and to the fact that that Uhuru Kenyatta and his running mate William Ruto “have been charged by the International Criminal Court with crimes against humanity” (for a different conflict). He doesn’t mince words when speaking to Uhuru’s charges: “accused of financing death squads that moved house to house in early 2008, slaughtering opposition supporters and their families, including young children.” Gettleman sees these different instances of ethnic violence as an “echo” or parallel

process of leaders inciting violence. Shifting the focus further to the continental stage he makes reference to Zimbabwe and quotes a professor from London, reinscribing the notion that this is an African problem he's reporting on.

Furthermore, Gettleman uses an interesting rhetorical tactic when reflecting on the potential for the 2013 elections in Kenya to become violent. For every reason he gives to expect a peaceful election, he follows it with a doubt or negation. "The country has spent years agonizing over the wounds and has taken some steps to repair itself, most notably passing a new constitution. *But* justice has been elusive, politics remain ethnically tinged and leaders charged with crimes against humanity have a real chance of winning" (my emphasis). And "This time around, the vitriolic speeches seem more restrained, *but* in some areas where violence erupted after the last vote the underlying message of us versus them is still abundantly clear" (my emphasis).

Referencing Kenyan Human Rights Activist Maina Kiai, Gettleman noted that "it was the Kikuyu and Kalenjin who fought one another in the Rift Valley in 2007 and 2008, but now many members of those two groups are on the same side because their leaders have formed a political alliance." Gettleman also perceives the collective fear of the economic consequences of violence as a deterrent. And he acknowledges the significance of judicial reform and its potential to resolve election disputes. "But," he says "the Tana River Delta remains a blaring red warning sign." And, "As the election draws nearer, more alarm bells are ringing." His examples: "Seven civilians were ambushed and killed in northeastern Kenya," "Farmers in the Rift Valley say that cattle rustling is increasing," and "Kenya's chief justice said that a notorious criminal group had threatened him with 'dire consequences' if he ruled against a leading presidential

contender” (New York Times, February 21, 2013)

Gettleman wasn't the only Western reporter on the lookout for warning signs of election violence to come. Within a week of his story, CNN broadcast a piece entitled “Kenyan's armed and ready to vote.” In what looks and feels like a satire of Western representations of tribal violence in Africa, the report begins with footage of four men in a forest carrying “guns fashioned from iron piping, homemade swords,” ; “Up in the hills of Rift Valley,” says the reporter, “the local Kikuyu militia is getting ready for the election.”

The men featured in the broadcast have their faces painted; some have branches attached to their bodies, which could be good camouflage if one of them wasn't wearing an orange hat. The wig that another man wears adds to the absurdity. Throughout the report, which lasts all of three minutes, there are sound bites from an interview with a man who talks about the need to be prepared to protect themselves in light of the post-election violence on 2007/8. Interspersed with this are images of the men from the unnamed militia doing training exercises. Interestingly, all four of them manage to fit into the frame of most of the shots. My personal favorite is when one of the men, while falling backward to the ground, points his gun at the camera. It's hard to convey the full absurdity the spectacle. Suffice it to say it comes across like child's play at best or, as a number of people commented online - bad acting.

The reporter cites Human Rights Watch in conveying that militias like the one she was filming were prolific in Kenya in the lead up to the election. In an effort to be “balanced”, she also quotes “a Kenyan government spokesperson [who] calls these reports ‘rumors intended to cause confusion.’ About the possible violence, he says, ‘the

government is on top of it.” The reporter directly follows this statement, like Gettleman, with a “but.” “But in a country that has for decades known violence following elections,” she says mistakenly, “tribal elders say preparing for the worst is their mission.”

Macharia Gaitho, in an article published by the *Nation*, a few days later said he was “offended by a foreign press corps that descended on Kenya in droves, all eager to train their lenses on savage Africans beheading each other for sport” (*Nation*, March 5, 2013). He continued: “I’m a newshound. I’m never one for cover-ups and sugar-coating and burying my head in the sand. I know that if it bleeds, it sells, and that good news is no news. However, I am never one for telling lies, wild exaggeration, concocted stories and scare-mongering. That is what a few irresponsible hacks resorted to when they could not find the bloodshed and savagery they came looking for” (March 5, 2013). Another Kenyan reporter, Alphonse Shiundu, addressed this issue in a piece entitled “Online fury over CNN's story on unnamed militia group.” (*Nation*, March 1, 2013). One of his readers, Eunuch, had this to say: “Shame on warmongers. Sorry we won't provide you with bloody screens for your news. Shop elsewhere CNN” (March 1, 2013).

Shiundu explained why CNN's report received such a backlash In Kenya:

The bile from the online community was that the story ran on the day that there was a rally at Nairobi’s Uhuru Park about peaceful elections, yet the story did not even mention the rally, or the preparations by the police to ensure acts of crime and violence do not happen at election time. There was also no mention of the unprecedented move earlier in the week where all presidential candidates had met and had made a public vow that they will concede defeat, and if they felt aggrieved, they will go to the courts. The peace messages being aired in mainstream Kenyan media and the deployment of 99,000 police officers to maintain order, are indications the country is keen to avoid a repeat of the 2007-2008 chaos” (*Nation*, March 1, 2013).

Shiundu quoted a tweet he received: “Where was CNN when all the candidates stood together and told their followers to commit no acts of violence? Parachute-in

journalists in search of disaster completely miss the great story of peace and reform b4 their eyes” (Nation, March 1, 2013).

Indeed, on March 4th, Kenyan’s voted in peace. The results were to be announced by March 6th. But that didn’t happen. There were some technical problems that delayed the announcement all the way until March 9th. Still there was peace. As day after day passed, I for one was awed by the absence of violence despite having been very impressed with all of the efforts that went into ensuring that.

Kenyatta had a significant lead during that time. The question that remained was did he secure over fifty percent of the vote, or would there, under the rules of the new constitution, be a run-off vote? In the end that wouldn’t be necessary. Uhuru Kenyatta won, garnering 50.07% of the vote. The margin was so small, and there were some apparent mistakes pertaining to how the disqualified ballots were calculated into the larger percentage, that Raila Odinga chose not to concede and to contest that election at the Supreme Court.

And how, one wonders, after a peaceful election, and a judicial process in place to hear a contested result, not at all unlike one the United States lived through, not too long ago, would the press report on it. Gettleman of the New York Times (February 21, 2013) writes:

In the Kibera slum, where the sun beats down mercilessly on the metal shacks and ribbons of raw sewage snake across the dirt, people are about as angry as they have ever been. Their preferred presidential candidate, Raila Odinga, lost the election. He claims it was rigged, again. And he is refusing to concede. But unlike the reaction after the last presidential election, in 2007, which Mr. Odinga also lost amid evidence of vote rigging, Kibera has not exploded. There have been no major clashes this time, here or anywhere else across Kenya, no blockading of national highways or ripping up of train tracks. The chaos that reigned during the last election dispute cost more than 1,000 lives and shook Kenya to its core, but so far this disputed election seems to have been absorbed

remarkably peacefully. “I am not a happy man,” said John Otieno, a community leader in Kibera and an Odinga stalwart. A crowd of young men who had gathered around him on Monday morning grunted their support, muttering the words “thief” and “stolen.” “But there will be no protests,” Mr. Otieno said, and the men around him simmered down. “We will listen to our leader. Raila said he will take this to the courts, and we have faith in the courts. We will wait for them” (New York Times, February 21, 2013).

The story is pretty flat, as though only violent content can be made to appeal to emotion. Compare Gettleman’s story to David Smith’s coverage of election day in Kenya (*Guardian*, March 4, 2013). Writing for the *Guardian*, a paper that is no stranger to sensationalizing stories, Smith ended his piece with more respect: “Christopher Kibanzanga, an election observer from Uganda's National Consultative Council, told the Associated Press: "This can only be likened to South Africa when [President Nelson] Mandela was elected. The people have turned up in large numbers. The spirit of patriotism and nationalism has come back. I think this is a perfect process."

The success story is downplayed by Gettleman and the New York Times through a negative rhetoric exemplified in the language: “Unlike last time when _____.” By filling in the blank he’s able to maintain the old story of African violence. But he does give credit where credit is due: to the local media for example who campaigned for peace to such an extent that some have said, “It has basically become uncritical, losing its oversight role” (Allen/BBC, March 10, 2013). But Gettleman doesn’t give much credit to the young men in Kibera, whose voices featured powerfully in this dissertation. To Gettleman they merely “mutter” angrily, their propensity for violence staved off by their obedience to their (tribal) leader. This is the new storyline, and like the old one can easily be translated to other (African) situations and other (tribal) groups. So when the Supreme Court confirmed the victory of Uhuru Kenyatta – son of Kenya’s first president and

bearer of the name “Freedom” that his forefathers fought for, what was Gettleman’s headline? “Kenyan Court Upholds Election of Candidate Facing Charges in The Hague.” While that’s the storyline, he begins and ends the article still searching for mob-violence, and finding little to report: “On Saturday night, after the Supreme Court upheld Mr. Kenyatta’s victory, protests broke out in several slum areas of Nairobi, the capital, and in Kisumu, Mr. Odinga’s ethnic stronghold. His supporters tried to barricade roads with burning tires, but police officers shot in the air and chased them away” (May 30, 2013).

The story of “atavistic” violence Gettleman told during the post-election violence of 2007/8 gave way to more nuanced stories, perhaps as a result of op-ed pieces and readers’ comments, so that he could rename the “underlying tensions that agitated Kenyans in 2007” as “yawning economic inequality, historic disputes over land and the bitterness that many feel about the continued dominance of Mr. Kenyatta’s ethnic group, the Kikuyu, in business and politics” or reinterpret metaphors of roots and surface: “The horrific memories from that time [2007/8] have been fresh in the minds of many Kenyans, like little shards of glass painfully embedded *just below the surface*. Many have feared that another contested election could set off the same type of violence” (Gettleman, March 11, 2013, my emphasis). Notice the use of a similar phrase in December 31, 2007: “The election seems to have tapped into an atavistic vein of tribal tension that always *lay beneath the surface* in Kenya” (December 31, 2007). We welcome the change in understanding however incremental, just as we rejoice with Kenyans over the peaceful elections and incremental struggle to implement the new constitution and the more just society that both the constitution and the electoral campaigns intended to advance.

Perhaps it's Gettleman's (un)healthy skepticism that led him to largely neglect Uhuru Kenyatta's message to Kenyans following the supreme court's verdict:

I want to assure all Kenyans, including those who did not vote for the Jubilee Coalition, and indeed even those who challenged the validity of my election, that my Government will work with, and serve all Kenyans without any discrimination whatsoever. I assure Kenyans that our government will be as inclusive as possible and will reflect the face of our great country. Personally, I sincerely thank my brother Hon. Raila Odinga for wishing us well and reach out to him and our other worthy competitors to join us so that we can work together in the interest of the wellbeing of our people. I call upon all Kenyans from across the entire political divide to now rise above the partisanship of the recent electoral contest and join hands in building our country. Let us all renew our sense of nationhood and let us all rededicate ourselves to building a united country at peace with itself (Kenyatta, 2013).

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Appendix A

A Timeline of Major Political Events in Kenya¹⁴

1895: British East Africa protectorate is founded.

1902: Village Headman Ordinance instituted: British provincial commissioners appointed official “headmen” amongst whose responsibilities was collecting taxes.

1905: With the British government’s promise of cheap land and labor 3,000 white settlers had come to Kenya by 1905.

1915: An act is passed by the colonial administration requiring that all African adult males carry identification papers.

1921: Local authority ordinance established local native counsels. Members were appointed by the provincial commissioners and all resolutions required their approval.

1944: Kenyan African Union (KAU) is founded to agitate for independence.

1952: Kenya Land and Freedom Army (KLFA), popularly known as *Mau Mau*, begin a revolution. Britain declares a “state of emergency.” Somewhere between 160,000 to 320,000 Kenyans, mostly Kikuyus, were detained in the period of 1952-1956.

Approximately 10,000 freedom fighters were killed, while around 500 members of the British forces, mostly African “loyalists” were also killed. Ninety European settlers were killed, 26 of them were civilians. Nearly 50,000 African civilians were killed during the emergency.

¹⁴ Compiled from Elkins (1995), Kags (2009), Mitullah & Mboya (2002), Mutahi (2002), Owiti (2005), and Wanjala (2002).

1953: Jomo Kenyatta, leader of the KAU, is imprisoned, accused of conspiring with the KLFA.

1957: General Dedan Kimathi, leader of the KLFA is murdered by the British.

1961: The Kenyan National African Union (KANU) is formed under the leadership of trade unionists and African nationalists, Tom Mboya and Oginga Odinga among others.

1963: Jomo Kenyatta is released and is appointed president of KANU. Kenya gains independence.

1964: The Republic of Kenya is established. Jomo Kenyatta is President and Oginga Odinga is vice president.

1966: Oginga Odinga leaves KANU to form the Kenya People's Party (KPU), an African socialist organization.

1969: Tom Mboya is assassinated. Oginga Odinga is arrested. The KPU is banned, making Kenya a *de facto* one-party state.

1974: Jomo Kenyatta is reelected president.

1975: J.M. Kariuki, former *Mau Mau*, socialist, and member of parliament (MP) and assistant minister, is assassinated.

1978: Jomo Kenyatta dies in office at age 85. Vice President Daniel Arap Moi is sworn in as acting president and is later elected president of KANU and declared the president of Kenya. He appointed, long-time Minister of Finance, Mwai Kibaki as his vice president.

1982: Oginga Odinga is expelled from KANU for his efforts to establish a Kenyan Socialist Party. Numerous professors and students were detained around the

same time. An amendment to the constitution was passed making Kenya a *de jure* one-party state.

1990: Kenneth Matiba, Charles Rubia, and Raila Odinga attempted to organize a rally to promote multiparty politics. They were denied a permit and were arrested. Kenyans gathered nonetheless on what is known as *Saba Saba*. Police responded with force and 15 people were killed.

1991: Section 2A of the constitution is repealed, marking an official return to multiparty politics. Mwai Kibaki leaves KANU to form the Democratic Party of Kenya (DP) and run for president.

1992: A year prior to the elections a Kalenjin militia attacked, raided, and burned Luo homesteads and businesses around Kisumu. 20,000 people were displaced. Such attacks spread to other areas including a Kikuyu enclave in Nakuru. All told 1,500 people were killed and 300,000 displaced. Moi won the election. Mwai Kibaki came in third place behind Kenneth Matiba. Raila Odinga formally entered government, as he was elected member of parliament of Langata District of Nairobi, which includes Kibera.

1997: There was more pre-election violence in the Rift Valley. In addition attacks occurred on the Coast against Luos, Luhyays, and Kikuyus that had settled there. Calls for constitutional reform surrounded the 1997 elections. Moi was elected again. Mwai Kibaki took second place.

2002: Following some reforms Moi was not constitutionally permitted to run in 2002. Uhuru Kenyatta was chosen over Raila by Moi as KANU's candidate. Kibaki was representing National Alliance Party of Kenya (NAK). As the campaigns progressed, and with a memorandum of understanding (MOU) Raila Odinga, and his supporters, joined

Kibaki to form the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC). Mwai Kibaki garnered twice as many votes as Uhuru Kenyatta to end the nearly 40-year rule of KANU.

Appendix B

IRB Proposal Research Proposal

When and where things fall apart: How differently situated Kenyans narrate the post-election violence of 2008

Joseph Hamer

1. Statement of the research question

How do Kenyans narrate the post-election violence?

2. Purpose and significance of the study

This research begins with a critical analysis of Western representations of “tribal violence” and of positivist research tendencies within the field of psychology, seeking to reveal a more complex picture, irreducible to simple variables and reductionistic processes; and as such, will find a need for an other way to think research and the “truth” about violence. In order to rectify popular and professional misconceptions, this project seeks to enter, through ethnographic fieldwork, the relational world in which the post-election violence in Kenya occurred, and to give rise to subjugated knowledge on peace and conflict. I am less attempting to explain (objectively) Kenya’s post-election violence

than to give an account of how Kenyan's themselves work to make sense of it. This entails what explanations different people give for the post-election violence as well as how they anticipate the future in light of it. I'm looking for the contextual background indicated in what Kenyans say and do. I'm assuming that the social disruption that took place has brought to people's reflection some of this taken for granted social context. I might expect or hypothesize that within the narratives people give of the post-election violence will be revealed what was at stake for various groups of Kenyans in the 2007 election. I expect some narratives to show how the violence the country endured shows itself in daily life and specifically intertribal relations today. I also seek to find examples of how Kenyans negotiate peace in everyday life.

3. Research design and procedures

My research methodology is narrative multisited ethnography. Whereas traditional ethnography set out to describe a particular culture in relative isolation, "Multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography" (Marcus, 1995). In other words, our understanding of "context," which provides the basis of interpretation, has changed as the world has changed. Context, now, is understood less as a structure and more as a complex network of processes with both intended and unintended consequences. This approach is based on an understanding that culture and society are sustained or changed

through the everyday activity of people. My challenge will be to follow the traces and connections that link different social locales or life-worlds in attempting to answer the questions of how the post-election violence was accomplished and how peace is accomplished today. Understanding this will require a “more open-ended and speculative course of constructing subjects by simultaneously constructing the discontinuous contexts in which they act and are acted upon” (ibid). This will include a careful textual articulation of the process of the research itself.

4. Instruments

Digital audio recorder and notebook

5. Sample selection

I intend to interview Kenyans of various tribes, classes, and political affiliations.

6. Recruitment of subjects

My research participants will be recruited through personal networks established in my previous visits there. Colleagues from the University of Nairobi have offered to introduce me to Kenyans that they're in contact with, as have a few Kenyans I know in the U.S. I will also recruit research participants in the course of my daily life for the period that I am in Kenya. My hope is that among these potential research participants,

some of them introduce me to others, creating a “snowball sample.” In all, I should have access to a diversity of identifications and perspectives.

7. Informed consent procedures

Informed consent will be obtained in written form wherever possible (See attached Consent Form) and orally in some cases after I have outlined all dimensions of the consent form (which I have memorized). These cases are the following:

In those cases in which potential participants are illiterate, I will speak the points in the informed consent form.

There may be instances in the course of my research, in the context of my everyday life, in which someone who for any number of reasons has not been and/or will not be formally interviewed by me makes comments that shed light on my project. In these cases I will ask permission to write what they have spoken, following my protocol for informed consent.

8. Collection of data and method of data analysis

The knowledge I seek will be based on observation, casual conversation, and semi-structured interviews. The interviews will not be standardized; they will take place in a variety of settings, some private, others more public. Some of the interviews will be

planned, some will be conducted impromptu. Also counting as data are interactions I observe in the public sphere. Observations I make of public life will be brought into discussions in order to clarify their potential meanings. And conversely, the interviews will help to attune me to noticing the traces of the post-election violence on daily life. I will keep fieldnotes of my observations and audio recordings of interviews. The digital audio recordings will be stored in a password-protected file on my computer and later transcribed. Transcriptions of interviews will delete all identifying material of research participants and anyone they talk about, including names and any other identifying descriptions.

The nature of ethnographic data is such that one cannot determine in advance exactly how it will be analyzed; the data guides the analysis. As previously stated, explanation in ethnography proceeds by way of contextualizing that data. There are multiple levels to this. The first is with respect to the process of data gathering. The conditions (situational, interpersonal, political) in which interviews are conducted are to be given with the content of interviews. Furthermore, the content itself, in order to be made intelligible to the reader, requires providing the historical, cultural, and political context indicated by what people say. So rather than have a particular and predetermined analytical frame with which to interpret that data, other data points are drawn into the research such that showing the relation between them is what constitutes the argument to the ethnography. And finally, with regard to studying violence and peace, it is assumed that total understanding is impossible. It is important to show the places and ways in which discourse on violence breaks down.

9. Issues relating to interactions with subjects and subjects' rights

I believe that this research is structured in an ethical manner, such that participants are empowered to contribute or not contribute as they see fit with no risk posed to their well-being. Yet there are two issues that require special emphasis.

If I am aware that a person I'm interviewing was directly and severely impacted by the post-election violence I will ask them if they would like to talk with me about their experiences. If they say no, I will ask if there is anything that they would like to tell me about how the politics of the country affects them. I would emphasize that I'm a writer and ask if there is anything they would like others to know about their lives.

The last issue I need to attend to is that of compensation. I will likely carry out some of my fieldwork in the slums, and economically quite impoverished areas of Kenya. I'm anticipating the possibility that the participants there will believe I will provide help of some sort even though I say I won't. If I believe that is happening during my research, I would need to find a culturally appropriate way to emphasize that no material benefits will come to those who collaborate with me in this project. Though I won't tell them this, I will make a donation to a community development group with the idea that this serves, however indirectly, as a form of reciprocity.



DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

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CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

- TITLE:** Where and when things fall apart: How differently situated Kenyans narrate the post-election violence of 2008.
- INVESTIGATOR:** Joseph Hamer
P.O. Box 2192, Pittsburgh, PA, 15230
Phone: 0717105294
E-mail: hamer907@duq.edu
- ADVISOR:** Leswin Laubscher, Ph.D.
Psychology Department
+1-412-396-6522
- SOURCE OF SUPPORT:** I am doing this research as a part of my education to earn a Ph.D. in Psychology from Duquesne University.
- PURPOSE:** I am requesting you to participate in a research project about post-election violence: how it happened and its consequences. I'll ask you what actually happened and how it affected you, people you know, and the larger city and nation. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed (written down). I will also be writing down comments and observations as we go along.
- These are the only requests that will be made of you.
- RISKS AND BENEFITS:** You may feel some relief talking about what you've experienced, especially if you haven't had much opportunity to do so. However if you think talking about the post-election violence will make you feel

distressed, I recommend that we not go through with this interview.

Otherwise, your participation in this research poses no risks greater than those encountered in everyday life.

COMPENSATION:

There will be no direct benefits provided for your participation in this study. My hope is that it contributes to increasing the peace in Kenya, but there is no guarantee of that either.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Your name will never appear on any survey or research instruments (e.g. my notebook). The recordings will be transferred to a computer that no one else can access. I am the only one who knows the password, and in addition, the computer itself will be locked away. So what I record here today will be deleted from this recorder at the end of the day. The only risk, then, that anyone else has access to these interviews is if this recorder is stolen from me today. Keep that possibility in mind, and if there is some part of our conversation that you don't want to be taped, just tell me and I'll pause the recorder. When I transcribe these recordings I will remove all identifying characteristics of you and those you speak about. So if someone read them they would be able to know who it was that I was interviewing. This will be true of any material made public, whether in the form of a book or a presentation. Because I will be working on this project for some years, I will transfer the recordings and transcripts to a safe. Please feel free to ask any questions or express any concerns you have about any part of this process.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time. This means that if you decide that you don't want me to write anything you said just contact me and I will delete those recordings and transcripts.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS:

A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT:

I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms and by going ahead with the interview, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call principal investigator, Joseph Hamer (0717105294), research advisor Dr. Leswin Laubscher (+1-412-396-6522), and Dr. Paul Richer, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board (+1-412-396-6362).

SIGNATURES:

Participant's Signature

Date
