

Introduction

PERSON, NATION, AND VIOLENCE IN RWANDA



A human being is only human. You can change at
any moment. We are conditioned by our lives, by our
entourage. No one is stable.
—Thomas, Butare, February 2009

Butare¹ residents are vigilant people. Very little escapes their notice, and from the countless vantage points in the town's hilly terrain, there always seems to be someone watching. When they spot the professor from up the road wearing a suit in the morning, they speculate that he must be on his way to the capital, Kigali. They wonder what takes him there so often and who pays for his travels. One person might tell another that he saw his car parked at an upscale hotel restaurant, a characteristically indirect way of commenting on the driver's extravagant consumption choice. Local authorities call on the population to be on the lookout for former *génocidaires* (those who committed genocide) returned from neighboring Burundi or Congo to finish what they started in 1994. Door locking is practiced compulsively, and razor wire and broken glass line the brick walls that transform wealthy people's homes into miniature compounds. And with a very different kind of vigilance—one that indicates the magnitude of devastation that befell Rwanda two decades ago and the moral imperative to remember—long-time town residents are capable of naming precisely how many and what kinds of relations even their relatively distant acquaintances lost in the 1994 genocide.

Perhaps it should come as no surprise that people monitor each other and remember losses carefully in a social world still marred by the violence of 1994. The Rwandan genocide captivated and horrified the world not only because so few outsiders to the region knew anything about this tiny, landlocked central African country, but also because of the unnervingly intimate way in which the massacres unfolded. On orders from the government led by the Mouvement révolutionnaire national pour le développement (MRND),² the military, youth militias, and ordinary citizens took up arms against their Tutsi compatriots and “moderate” Hutu opponents of the genocidal campaign. Subsistence farmers, laborers, schoolteachers, fishermen, and university students alike joined in the massacres and looted victims’ belongings. The Hutu-led government of the 1990s had painted all Rwandan Tutsi as complicit with the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a Tutsi-led invading force from neighboring Uganda that sparked a civil war in October 1990. In the end, analysts estimate that 800,000³ people were killed between April and July of 1994, an endpoint marked by the RPF taking control of Kigali and forming a transitional government. Tutsi genocide survivors describe the genocide as a time of chaos when they did not know who was a protector and who was an executioner, or which of their family members were dead or alive. Today, survivors muse in private moments about how tranquil Butare felt in the months leading up to the violence. “It was so calm, just like it is now,” Héléna,⁴ a genocide survivor, remarked ominously one evening as dusk fell on the town. “We didn’t know what they were planning. We didn’t see it coming.” And so, Butare residents search for signs. They keep their eyes and ears open for signs of danger in the habits of neighbors and strangers alike, and they wonder what warning signs they missed in 1994 and whether things could have been otherwise.

Two decades after the genocide, Rwandans are still grappling with vexing questions of how an ordinary population could be mobilized to kill their neighbors, colleagues, and friends and what this means for their collective futures. What kinds of persons were capable of making or letting the genocide happen? And most pressing of all, how can Rwandans know that it will not happen again? Vigilance over home security or returning *génocidaires* might seem like very different practices from everyday scrutiny of which neighbors are going to Kigali or where they go to eat or drink. But in Butare, it is precisely these observations, interpretations, accountings, and evaluations that expose the inseparability of concerns about outbreaks of violence and attentiveness to the moral status of one’s co-residents. It is *through* everyday evaluations—of what is good versus contemptible, of why some prosper while most struggle, of what people owe to each other, and of the basis of social belonging—that Butaréens⁵ puzzle through those bigger questions about what made the violence possible. What I suggest in this book is that

Rwandans' understandings of post-genocide social life and their efforts to make sense of the violent past converge on the predicaments of personhood and self-making.

Anthropology, Personhood, and the Post-Conflict Moment in Rwanda

This book tells a story of how Rwandan visions of peace and modern nationhood find expression not just in the political, legal, administrative, economic, ideological, citizenship, and even architectural reforms that other authors have analyzed (e.g. Doughty 2014; Newbury 2011; Pottier 2002; Purdeková 2015; Reyntjens 2015a). My ethnographic findings show that such visions also depend crucially on the production of new kinds of persons in the quest for modern nationhood, since both state leaders and the population at large envision the causes of violence and possibilities for peace largely through the capacities of persons. The intersection of persons with politics is especially palpable in Butare, the “intellectual capital,” from which dominant ideas about ethnic difference and the legitimating fictions of government regimes have long been disseminated. By personhood, I mean not a psychological, biological, or even legal property of human beings, but rather the fundamentally social and cultural nature of the *category* of the person and the modes by which people enact it through concrete practices (Lester 2017). It is the sociocultural basis of personhood that places it squarely within the purview of the anthropologist's ethnographic sensibility.⁶ Personhood is a cornerstone of classic and contemporary social anthropology, and especially debates about whether persons are best understood as bounded, cohesive, and autonomous versus porous, composite, and comprised of relationships with others (e.g. Battaglia 1995; Carrithers, Collins, and Lukes 1985; Carsten 2004; Comaroff and Comaroff 2001; Dieterlen 1973; Dumont 1992; Ferguson 2013; Fortes [1973] 1987; Jackson and Karp 1990; Lambek 2015; Marriott 1976; Mauss [1938] 1985; Piot 1993; Riesman 1986; Strathern 1988; Wagner 1991). It is a conceptual category situated at the nexus of the self⁷ and the collective, and it informs the obligations people have to particular others—both living and dead. Indeed, we cannot ask what a person is without asking how people respond to the question, “Who are you?” Whether the answer is a surname and given name, only a given name, or a relational identifier (e.g. “I am the son of A”), it communicates cultural principles for how to locate others and how people belong to and with each other. Any given view of the person necessarily implies a view of how people can and should connect to and detach from each other (Hickman 2014: 317). It raises nothing less than the very condition of possibility for

groupness and the basis on which collective life is sustained (Cohen 1994: 8, 22), both of which have been profoundly called into question in Rwanda by the history of violence.

The personhood concept is analytically powerful because it captures the fundamental tension between who we are versus who we think we ought to be or could become (Jacobson-Widding 1990: 31). Indeed, personhood demands a view of life as intrinsically problematic (Jackson and Karp 1990: 28): those “oughts” are never singular or consistent, and people can and do feel that they are simultaneously supposed to be very different kinds of persons. This is more than a problem of role conflict. These tensions are located in the fundamental nature of the self—a never static or uncontested abstraction that underlies how people draw on shared yet contested values to make and remake their social worlds (ibid.). In this sense, personhood is an inescapably normative element of social life. In Mauss’s terminology, it is shared expectations of *la personne* against which *le moi*⁸ or actual selves and the things they say and do are measured. People are never simply “passive bearers” of personhood (Fortes [1973] 1987: 251). Their appropriations of the norms that govern it and the practices through which they enact it (Lester 2017) are precisely what preoccupy the ethnographer. Hence, while formalized ideas about the nature of persons should not be conflated with experiences of *being* a self, they should not be dichotomized either.

The normative element of personhood raises the kinds of things of which people are, could be, or should be capable. As Talal Asad (1993: 13) writes, personhood cannot be teased apart from the *capacities* attributed to “normal persons”—and, by extension, extraordinary persons. In the post-genocide moment in Butare, people’s evaluations of each other revolve around discerning capacities for autonomy or dependency, solidarity or exclusion, meeting or breaking obligations, and most crucially perhaps, capacities for violence or for resisting calls to commit it. The question of capacities is shot through with popular Tutsi and Hutu⁹ stereotypes, because in Rwanda, different ways of getting things done are ethnically marked, although often indeterminately so. Ethnicity in Rwanda constitutes the core idioms in which unfold state formation struggles and debates about what a modern, independent Rwandan nation ought to look like. But at the level of everyday practice, ethnicity also informs shared expectations around personal capacities (Eramian 2015). Since Tutsi and Hutu stereotypes remain linked with the nature of work, social relations, hierarchy, and equality (Doughty 2015: 431; Eramian 2014), the possibility is always open for remarks about someone’s capacities for honesty, treachery, dependency, or autonomy to be received as “ethnic” commentaries. Even more troublesome, social actors appear to have contradictory capacities—for both meeting and breaching obligations, for both aiding and exploiting others, or for both violence and empathy, having

killed a neighbor but saved a friend. As Thomas elucidated in the epigraph, it is the changeability of what people appear to be capable of and what those shifts might mean that Butare residents watch over so carefully.

The basic moral questions of human social life that the personhood concept asks us to consider are in no way limited to the Rwandan context or “post-conflict”¹⁰ societies more generally. Indeed, languages and practices of selfhood are “cultural resources” through which all social actors evaluate what constitutes a good life (Illouz 2008: 20). However, the scale of the violence of 1994 and the way it was perpetrated—by neighbors against neighbors, colleagues against colleagues, and friends against friends¹¹—render questions about the capacities of persons and the nature of social belonging all the more pressing. How do social actors navigate the competing demands of remembering those whom they lost and orienting to a future no longer marred by the past? What is owed to those who died so violently? What is a “good life” in the wake of genocide? What of a “good person”? And how do people who suddenly and violently lost so many others experience belonging and dislocation in their social worlds? The argument of this book is that moral and practical dilemmas around what makes for “good” post-conflict persons in Rwanda intersect with debates about how the 1994 genocide was possible and what modern nationhood and a future unencumbered by violence could look like. The ethnographic perspective uncovers how Butaréens are people caught in contradictory moral frameworks of individuated and composite personhood as they try to manage obligations to remember victims, cultural expectations of sociality, and state directives to prosper and develop. Yet this book does not simply tell a story about Butare. Through this Rwandan context, it tells a broader story of the subtle, yet burdensome demands placed on selves and social relationships by global post-conflict imperatives to remember, forget, develop, or reconcile. It is a case for attention to social practices and configurations of personhood for understanding how and why post-conflict reconstruction agendas succeed and fail, and the unevenness with which they do so.

Configuring Personhood in Rwanda

A central question that underpins anthropological debates on personhood is the degree of universality of the dominant model of the person in Western thought, namely the person as isolated, cohesive, autonomous individual (e.g. Carsten 2000, 2003; Douglas and Ney 1998; Dumont 1992; Ferguson 2013; Geertz 1973; Goffman 1959; Mauss [1938] 1985; Mead 1913; Strathern 1988; Charles Taylor 1985, 1989; Christopher C. Taylor 1992). Out of these debates emerge two classic ideal types of personhood, and it

is the practical tension between them in Butaréens' self-making practices that animates this book. On the one hand is the "egocentric," individuated, possessive, rights-bearing subject of (neo)liberal thought who aspires to self-mastery and freely associates with and dissociates from others. This subject seeks self-knowledge and discovery, as though a "core self" is contained within, waiting to be revealed and developed (Taylor 1989). On the other hand is the relational, porous person of the anthropological literature who is never a complete, discrete entity, but is always in the process of being built out of relations with others.¹² This composite, "socio-centric" person is not a bounded and autonomous agent who *has* relations, but rather a "node in a network of social relationships" contingently *constituted by* relationships (Ferguson 2013: 226). But in practice, these types are never mutually exclusive (Carsten 2004; Ewing 1990; Hollan 1992; Lambek 2015). Like all ideal types, they are confounded by the complexities of the world as it actually is, so they are difficult to parse in practical terms. These formalized views of the person are unstable, yet overlapping moral reference points that articulate aspirations, ideals, and evaluations of self and other, the good and the contemptible. Indeed, some argue that the egocentric liberal subject is merely a "folk model" of a self that is always in practice socio-centric and reliant on relations to know who one is (e.g. Douglas and Ney 1998: 8; Smith 2012: 61; Strathern 1992). Smith (2012: 51), drawing on Englund and Leach (2000), even suggests that at least since the turn of the century, anthropologists have taken for granted that all persons are both relational and individual.

For these reasons, I do not argue that Butare residents idealize either bounded individual or relational selves or that they simply "are" one or the other. Nor is my point that the Rwandan state aims to impose liberal, individuated personhood on a population that still values "traditional" relational forms. Rather, I ask how the analytical distinction between relational and individuated personhood—and its confounding in practical, lived moments—can elucidate what it means to live in a post-conflict moment. My analysis foregrounds how *both* state projects and Rwandans' everyday practices are caught—and sometimes caught out—in irresolvable tensions and moral ambiguity over what makes for "good persons." By "good persons," I do not simply mean people with good intentions; moreover, I mean that they strive to live up to post-conflict ideals for what a person is and ought to be. The trouble is that no single set of values can eliminate the dissonance produced by the intersection of relational and individuated moral reference points in people's relationships with both the living and the dead. Indeed, "[w]ho we are is something larger than can be described or circumscribed by any single hierarchy of value or set of commensurable values" (Lambek 2008: 151, emphasis in original).

In Butare, a liberal, individuated view of the self is closely linked with “modern” personhood. *Pace* Bauman (1989), town residents condemn the genocide as premodern, a product of the condition of postcoloniality rather than modernity. The value placed on the ideals of individuated personhood is evident in the growing tendency for town residents to configure the self as a project on which to work, which theorists argue is a defining feature of modern liberal selfhood (Foucault et al. 1988; Giddens 1991; Illouz 2008; Rose 1996). In the Rwandan context, this way of configuring the self is starkly embodied by President Paul Kagame, who has styled himself as not just a political leader, but also a (controversial) modern visionary and moral compass for the nation, or the “New Rwanda.” This latter term captures a vast array of post-genocide reforms, including de-ethnicization, government decentralization, economic development, shifting diplomatic alliances, and judicial, educational, and land reform (see Pottier 2002; Straus and Waldorf 2011). In his public addresses, Kagame adopts the persona of a demanding corporate manager of the New Rwanda as he extolls the virtues of dignity through self-reliance and individual freedom of choice guided by an inner moral core (e.g. Kagame 2013). While we might be tempted to dismiss this as the rhetoric of political elites out of touch with what matters to “the people,” this way of orienting to the self nonetheless resonates both among the prosperous and the disenfranchised in Butare. In their strivings for higher education to develop personal capacities and skills, for start-up capital for an entrepreneurial venture, or for modern housing, clothing, and other possessions, Butare residents struggle to fulfill a vision of modern selfhood, to become persons who take purposeful action to affect their life circumstances rather than leaving it to chance (Bauman and Raud 2015: 9). They articulate these aspirations in their yearnings to be “not just anyone” or “to find their creativity” in order to “start something up” and become a “self-made man [*sic*].” Through these idioms, they invoke not just individualism in the sense of privileging the bounded, autonomous subject, but also individuality in the sense of remarkableness or distinctiveness (Cohen 1992: 181). They stake claims to capacities beyond the expectations of “normal personhood” in Rwanda. In so doing, they reject self-definition as tokens of a type or through status and role obligations. People articulate the failure to “become someone” in the idiom of fading into the undifferentiated mass of unilingual Kinyarwanda speakers. Should a university graduate or failed entrepreneur be forced to return to the hills¹³ to take up cultivating again, he will “forget every word of French and English that he learned,” as one worried soon-to-be graduate put it.¹⁴

What of the relational self in Rwanda? The ethnographic record emphasizes a relational, composite, or context-dependent Rwandan person. Like many an African configuration of self (e.g. Comaroff and Comaroff

2001; Dieterlen 1973; Lienhardt 1985; Riesman 1986), ethnographers have represented the Rwandese social person as never complete and as always being built out of relations with others, including kin, friends, patrons, and clients (e.g. Taylor 1992, 2005; Vidal [1985] 1999). Exchange of social fluids, especially beer, creates and maintains relationships that constitute persons, and the exchange of sexual fluids through the fusion of each parent's "gift of self" explains how a child is produced (Taylor 1992: 45). De Lame (2005) demonstrates how practices of beer sharing and other exchange relations are central to forging belonging and consubstantiality among neighbors on the rural hill of Murundi. During my fieldwork,¹⁵ I found that beer sharing was equally important in Butare as a way of binding people in self-constituting relationships of friendship, kinship, or clientship, as "people *produce each other* through the gift of things that they consume" (Taylor 1992: 6, my emphasis). I also found a relational configuration of personhood in Butare residents' tendency to refer to others by kinship statuses more often than by their names, which indicates that who one is is deeply connected to one's relations.¹⁶ A friend or acquaintance with children is called *la maman* or *le papa* more often than by name, and modifiers for age or other characteristics are used to distinguish people from each other, for example *le vieux papa* (the elderly father). Teknonymy, a practice by which parents are referred to by the names of their children, is also prominent in Butare. For example, a married couple, Ferdinand and Josephine, are usually called by the teknonyms they acquired after the birth of their son, Kalisa: Mama-Kalisa and Papa-Kalisa. Naming practices like these lay bare how the self is situated relative to others and never distinguishable from them.

As much as ideas about personal development and "becoming someone" align with the values that accompany the contemporary transformations of late capitalism and neoliberalization, it would be a mistake to see these "individuated" formal views of the person as purely imported, post-genocide social forms that are replacing "traditional," relational understandings of the self. Indeed, Taylor (1992: 187) found a longstanding Rwandan belief in individual responsibility in that people are thought to bring misfortune on themselves through their transgressions. He also recognized an ethic of personal independence and individual enterprise among the popular healers with whom he did fieldwork in the 1980s (Taylor 1992: 21–22). Finally, Catholicism in Rwanda has for the past century added layers of complexity to the duality of the person: while the relational Rwandan self and its capacities are changeable and never definitively knowable, Catholicism preaches introspection and discovery of the inner self through confession and conversion (cf. Simpson 2003). Competing voices of conservative and progressive Catholicism also produced views of the person as bound by status and role obligations and as autonomous agents of change, respectively (Gifford

1998; Longman 2001: 182). In light of these longstanding contradictions, my point is not that Rwandan configurations of the person have changed significantly in the post-genocide moment. Rather, this book shows how the enduring tension between personal autonomy and relational compositeness in Rwandan selfhood takes on a new moral weight and redoubled significance in light of post-genocide debates about the path to peace, development, and modern nationhood.

Peaceful Selves

Neither the category of “peaceful self” nor those of relational and individuated personhood are ones that Butare residents would ever use. Peaceful selfhood is my way of trying to capture the range of dispositions, capacities, values, and interests—by no means all compatible—to which town residents aspire in their quest to be “good persons,” or those “capable of peace” in the New Rwanda. The term is not meant to suggest that Rwandans *feel* “at peace”—quite the contrary, as this book draws out how they are perennially caught in the paradoxes of their post-conflict aspirations. Indeed, I inflect the term “peaceful self” with a marked sense of irony because the post-genocide moment leaves Butare residents decidedly *unsettled* and beset with imperatives to pursue hopelessly contradictory enactments of their personhood.

Even though composite and bounded views of the person have long coexisted in Rwandan thought, and even as Rwanda is by no means the only place where they coincide, the contradictions between them carry especially high stakes in relation to the violent past. Both state rhetoric and everyday talk link features of relational personhood to the history of violence, and “Western-style” individual personhood to the possibility of more peaceful futures. These ideas find expression in Butare residents’ characterizations of “the West” (*l’Occident*) where they say people respect each other’s rights to pursue prosperity, independent thought, and personal development. But at the same time, there are dangers associated with persons who are excessively atomized and self-interested, and the relational view of the person still informs what it means to live well with others and to realize modern, peaceful selfhood and nationhood. Each ideal type has its duality, and each can both bolster and threaten possibilities for peace; hence the practical indeterminacy of just what a “peaceful self” is or could be.

Popular explanations for the 1994 genocide blame persons who were so enmeshed in social hierarchies that they were unable to resist the influences of superiors to commit violence. In this popular narrative, the Hutu political elite of the 1990s exploited its patronage networks down through local officials to ordinary Rwandans to set the massacres in motion—an account supported

by the findings of scholars like Fujii (2009) who examine the everyday social relationships through which the genocide was organized. To explain people's acceptance of those orders, Butaréens point to "typically Rwandan" qualities of excessive deference to superiors, obedience, and an overall "poverty of the mind" (*pauvreté d'esprit*). The crucial linkage to relational personhood is what Fujii calls the Rwandan "logic of contamination" (2009: 99–101). It is common to hear Butare residents—both Tutsi and Hutu—speak about positive and negative emotions or ideas being contagious. They say it is hard, but essential to steel oneself against the "negativity" of those who cannot move past the genocide, either because they harbor anti-Tutsi sentiment or because they are mired in grief. This logic of contagion is based on the idea that the person is inherently porous; it supposes that it is natural and inevitable that people take on the prevailing outlook(s) of those around them (*ibid.*). Thus, to explain why so many of their compatriots followed orders to join the massacres in 1994, Butare residents rely on the notion that exposure to the ideas of proximate others means that a person will eventually absorb and act on those influences.

The "contagion" explanation for the genocide casts a long shadow over established modes of sociality, selfhood, and the ways people are connected to each other in Rwanda. When they indict webs of hierarchy and people's inability to withstand proximate influences to explain the genocide, Butaréens implicitly indict the kinds of persons who are permeable and who are by extension accused of lacking autonomy and the capacity for independent thought. In other words, the same networks of hierarchy, reciprocity, and relatedness through which Rwandan personhood is built took on dangerous new contours in 1994 when they were mobilized to commit massacres. Today, talk about causes of the genocide easily slips into talk about what makes for modern, moral social relationships and the kinds of persons who are capable of them. Reciprocally, talk about moral qualities and good versus bad social relations can quickly turn to talk about what made the genocide possible. Such a remark came from Simbi, an ex-RPF soldier and intermittently employed university graduate. One day, he complained to me about an altercation between two of his subordinate employees who had asked him to solve their dispute rather than working it out themselves:

You know what the problem is here? If given the choice between someone else solving their problems for them versus looking after their own affairs, everyone prefers the first option. They'd rather have someone else take care of their problems even if that means they have to obey orders. It's always been like this here in Rwanda. It's the source of so many of the problems we see here. You know, sometimes I think that if people here weren't so quick to follow orders, we wouldn't have seen the problems of the 1990s. (Butare, March 2009)

In light of the history of violence, these are not just critiques of the perceived shortcomings of dependent relationships, but are also efforts to distance the self from the moral failings by which people typically explain the genocide. While scholars have noted that educated urban dwellers in many postcolonial settings invoke the virtues of individualism to justify cutting off patronage obligations (Carrier 1999), popular explanations for the genocide provide an additional rationale for doing so. During my fieldwork, educated Butaréens routinely claimed the kinds of liberal, autonomous personhood that one might expect any postcolonial elite to assert. Butaréens like Simbi talked about how dependent relations of patron–client bonds that have long characterized Rwandan forms of sociality produce people who are unable or unwilling to think for themselves. Another typical expression came from Viateur, a university graduate and computer technician, who drew an uncomfortable connection between “Western” selfhood and being more “advanced” and therefore more capable of peace during an informal conversation in his repair shop. When I pressed him about what he meant by this, he explained that Westerners do not become embroiled in violence because they do not blindly obey superiors and they have an inner moral compass that lets them resist negative influences. Viateur asserted that voluntary social relationships rather than obligatory ones make peace possible, and he suggested that patron–client bonds are dangerous because they draw people into hierarchies of command. As he explained, Westerners enter freely into relations of equality based on mutual liking rather than instrumentality and dependency, which they associate with “premodern” life (see Carrier 1999; Silver 1990). The glaring paradox in all of this, and one certainly not lost on all Butaréens, is that those who expound on the linkage between “Western” personhood and peace do so even as it was a Western-educated political and intellectual elite¹⁷ that was the driving force behind the 1994 genocide.

At the same time, peaceful selfhood necessitates living up to ideals of the relational, composite selfhood that Butaréens are at times so quick to disparage. The current government, led by the Rwandan Patriotic Front and President Paul Kagame, may call on Rwandans to develop individual capacities for autonomy and dignity through self-reliance, but the moral worlds of Butaréens are much more complex than this. More than anything, it is the hardships of living in the absence of those killed in the genocide that lay bare the composite dimensions of selfhood even for those Butaréens who claim autonomy. For those who suffered losses of family and other significant others in 1994—so especially for Tutsi whose family members were the primary targets of the genocide—the devastating effects of violence on how personhood is constituted are palpable in their informal recollections of deceased victims. A central finding of my fieldwork was that

genocide survivors in Butare practice informal remembering and maintain relational exchange ties to the dead to mitigate the sense of social dislocation they experience in the post-genocide period (Chapter 3). These kinds of suffering suggest that, when the self is built out of relations with others, to lose those relations is to lose a part of one's own person and one's place in the world. The problem is compounded by the awkward position that postcolonial urban dwellers occupy, the position that Cohn (1996) describes whereby they appear to have one foot in the world of the local and one in the world beyond (often the country of the former colonizer), which makes claiming belonging difficult under the best of conditions. Herein lie the moral dangers that Butaréens tend to associate with the autonomous individual who is no longer sufficiently "of" the local and who cultivates selfhood from an "inner core" rather than composite sources. So while they do strive to set themselves apart from the kinds of persons built out of social relations, at other times they extoll the virtues of being "of" Rwanda and "of" Rwandans. The excessively individualistic person who lacks a sense of sociality, who refuses mutual constitution with others by withholding shared substances like beer, is ultimately just as incapable of living well with others—of peaceful selfhood—as the blindly deferential, composite person. Hence, post-genocide self-making projects also respond to demands to enact longstanding forms of sociality in which persons are relationally constituted through exchange. But it is not only these everyday practices that drive the persistence of relational views of the person. Both state and non-governmental organization (NGO)-driven processes of transitional justice and reconciliation use practices like the sharing of banana beer or other drinks to reaffirm victims' and perpetrators' mutual constitution through shared substance. Such rituals can follow both the local level *gacaca*¹⁸ tribunals and peace-building workshops that aim to provide reparations from perpetrators to survivors (Dominus 2014; Longman 2010b). In the moral order of Rwanda, the composite features of persons figure prominently into dispute resolution mechanisms and reconciliation strategies, like shared agricultural work (see Chapter 5), that aim to promote convivial social relations between those pitted against each other in 1994.

The "peaceful" self, then, is one fashioned neither strictly according to the logic of individuality nor relationality. For Butare residents, each carries its own possibilities for forging good post-genocide social relations and dangers for producing renewed violence. Different configurations of the person catch people in different moral orders. For this reason—and for the same reason it is hard to fully separate Mauss's *la personne* from *le moi*—formalized notions of personhood are never simply abstract. People experience them as thoroughly practical problems of everyday life, which pull them in different directions. And as they work to manage these competing

pulls and strive to close the gap between what they think they are and ought to be, they both engage in social practices of distinction (Bourdieu 1984) and participate in a form of symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) to which they and others are subject. This symbolic violence emerges when impossibly contradictory standards of “good” post-conflict persons—rooted in the irresolvable tension between two configurations of the self—are misrecognized as the personal failings of individuals to adequately reconcile them. The ethnographic question is how these ostensibly incommensurable understandings of the person are played out in practical situations (Lambek 2015: 400). As Lienhardt (1985) warns, we can exaggerate the relational African person, and in Butare, to do so is to miss some of the most striking practices of self-making and self-understanding in which residents engage—ones that I will suggest open up jarring contradictions in what it means to have lived through political violence.

Recovering the Person in Post-Conflict Studies

Attention to the self is a latent theme in studies that rely on life histories to draw out experiences of post-conflict social life (Burnet 2012; McLean Hilker 2014; Sommers 2012). It also emerges in studies of trauma and self-making (Abramowitz 2014) and in studies of care and mutuality under conditions of violence (Bolten 2012). Yet scholars still understand little about how figurations of personhood play out in concrete practices that shape post-conflict agendas and interventions. Explicit attention to these questions is crucial, however, because as Lester (2017: 2) notes, the conceptual foci of anthropological study, like power, identity, violence, and agency, always imply some working understanding of how people configure the self and relationships to others. If not carefully theorized, an unmarked, liberal model of the self often finds its way into the analysis (Douglas and Ney 1998; Lester 2011) such that those whom post-conflict interventions aim to reconcile, develop, punish, or “heal” are represented as individual, bounded, rights-bearing subjects who voluntarily connect with and disconnect from others. By unsettling self-making practices in a post-conflict setting, I aim to raise questions about what concepts like peace, justice, reconciliation, and repair can mean and what kinds of projects—political or personal—are realized in and through them.

In the Rwandan context, two transitional justice frameworks have dominated analysis of the hardships of social life after violence and normative approaches to redressing them: first, judicial processes to try perpetrators of violence, and second, post-conflict reconciliation. This book is not a sustained critique of either these mechanisms or scholars’ analyses of them, and my

purpose in delineating them is not to suggest that they get it all wrong. Rather, I do so strictly to draw out how these two modes of doing transitional justice might be caught in complex, yet often overlooked sets of expectations of what persons are and how people configure belonging, distress, or aspirations for the future in post-conflict settings. An ethnographic approach to personhood in post-conflict social life can shift the kinds of questions we ask about Rwanda and other post-conflict societies by untangling assumptions about what kinds of subjects transitional justice mechanisms aim to embrace and produce.

There is no shortage of critical literature that analyzes post-conflict social life through debates about the potential of perpetrator trials to overcome the legacies of mass violence. Scholars debate the possibilities and limits of trials to “do justice” in the sense of redressing harms, and they ask how judicial processes can promote or undermine possibilities for reconciliation between victims and perpetrators. In other words, they take up the relationship between retributive and restorative justice approaches (Biggar 2001; Booth 2001; Borneman 1997; Felman 2002; Minow 1998; Roht-Arriaza 2006; Stover and Weinstein 2004). However, my interest is in the view of the person contained in these ways of apprehending or bringing about the post-conflict moment. In both the trials themselves and the scholarly debates about them, the rights-bearing qualities of the liberal subject are paramount. Punishment of perpetrators through retributive transitional justice mechanisms is directed at redressing rights violations against victims or, in the case of crimes against humanity, a broader, abstract human collective. In a thoroughly Durkheimian style, restoration of human dignity is equated with restoration and reaffirmation of human rights through the ritual of punishment at trial (Borneman 1997). Here, justice is less about punishing the perpetrator than it is about vindicating the victim (Biggar 2001: 10). Leaving aside the important question of whether trials effectively restore rights or do anything else besides render judgments and punishments (Arendt 1963; Stover and Weinstein 2004), it is worth asking, does this ritual reaffirmation of human dignity interrupt the persistence of the violent past in the present? In what ways do the personhood concepts of those on trial and those whom trials aim to vindicate bear on how we understand post-conflict judicial processes? If Rwandans configure persons not only as bounded, autonomous subjects, but also as relationally constituted “members of one another” (Rivière, quoted in Lambek 2015: 395), to what extent can debates about punishment and its social benefits square with their suffering in the wake of the 1994 genocide, so much of which is brought about by a sense of dislocation in the absence of others who constitute the self? In what ways might trials and the testimony provided at them point also to the impossibility of restoring selves (cf. Booth 2001: 778; Chakravarti 2014; Hamber and Wilson 2002: 47)?

Similarly, a vast critical literature delves into what post-conflict reconciliation means and to whom, what political agendas it might conceal, the burden it places on victims and survivors to forgive, and the mismatch between state-driven reconciliation campaigns and the daily concerns of those who have lived through violence (e.g. Gibson 2004; Rettig 2008; Ross 2003; Shaw 2007; Thomson 2013; Wilson 2001; Zorbas 2009). In the case of Rwanda, much of this work aims to debunk the RPF's claims to promote reconciliation, which many scholars argue is a thin veil for victors' justice and the repression of democratic freedoms. As important as those analyses are, I bracket them to draw out how conversations about the nature of the person are absent from both critical and laudatory work on post-conflict reconciliation, and why they matter.

Reconciliation discourse and practice are caught in the logic of dual moral orders and dual expectations of good Rwandans. On the one hand, reconciliation universalizes the commonsense Euro-American category of the liberal individual person, so that bounded, choice-making subjects precede the transactions into which they enter (Ferguson 2013: 226). The idea of reconciliation supposes that conflicts leave in their wake (at least) two sides to be brought together, each composed of autonomous, individual subjects who choose to make or break bonds with each other. This notion of reconciliation is rooted in a long tradition of social theory that sees the absence of social integration as a modern affliction whose solution is the forging of social bonds (e.g. Durkheim 1997; Mazlish 1989). As Chapter 5 elicits in greater depth, local peace-building experts are quick to read avoidance of social contact between Tutsi survivors and Hutu perpetrators as the absence of a relationship between them and a sign that people need to be educated, coached, and counseled into choosing to re-enter each other's lives. On the other hand, if we think in terms of the relationality of the person, "reconciliation" (if this term retains any sense at all) might be something other than a deliberate act by autonomous persons to reconstitute a broken bond. Butaréens cannot "be someone" unless entangled in reciprocal relations with others that make them members of their social worlds. But there is a double edge to these relations in the wake of violence, and the sources of post-genocide hardship are often not the *absence* of relationships, but rather all of the ways in which victims, perpetrators, and bystanders are *already* enmeshed in relationships (Doughty 2015). Hence, reconciliation as both analytical lens and institutional practice runs up against the ambiguity of how the moral order of reconciliation is conceived and what kinds of subjects it seeks to act on and produce. From a relational perspective on the self, reconciliation tries to re-establish relations in which people are already entangled, and not always by choice. What does it mean to "reconcile" if people conceive of themselves as comprised of relations with others, including with the dead who cannot be brought

back and with perpetrators who, having taken those lives, sit as unwelcome mediators between survivors and their dead? And what kinds of self-claims are advanced when people *do* mobilize the moral language of reconciliation and embrace a choice to actively work on how they feel about those who harmed them or whom they harmed? Far from being a simple matter of bringing divided ethnic groups back together, reconciliation as both state project and everyday practice presupposes particular kinds of persons, but never consistently or unproblematically.

Attending to the self-concepts caught up in and produced by post-conflict strategies of redress draws out the cracks, ambiguities, and paradoxes in both state-level and ordinary people's strategies of managing the challenges raised by legacies of violence. Nonetheless, my foray into personhood in Rwanda's post-conflict moment is not intended as the "missing piece" that renders our understandings of what it means to live through violence complete. Our analytical concepts and categories are always exceeded by the complexities of the social worlds they aim to capture (Bauman and Raud 2015: viii–ix), and the possibilities for how we interpret our findings are always multiple. In this book, I aim to elicit the uncertainties and excesses of self-making in post-genocide Rwanda and the unsettling ways Butaréens experience them. Projects of remaking selves are never merely private, personal matters tangential to state-driven projects to effect the post-conflict moment. Instead, it is in and through self-making that these projects unfold and find expression—projects that are never strictly imposed from above, but that are also embraced by Rwandans, albeit in ambivalent, uneven, and contradictory ways.

Ethnography in/of Butare: Who, What, and How

By now, it might be apparent to the reader that my fieldwork took place with a very particular subset of Rwandans. I worked with Butare residents who constitute an urban, educated elite of the country. My findings are based primarily on long-term participant observation, including living with Butare residents, taking part in their daily lives, and informal conversation. I supplemented this approach with semi-structured interviews, which afforded the opportunity to ask questions that may not come up in everyday talk—not necessarily because they are sensitive, but because social situations powerfully shape appropriate topics of conversation. As concerns the particular individuals whose stories and experiences populate these pages, I tried to build connections with people who were linked to (or felt excluded from) the prominent institutions of Butare life, including the Catholic Church, the National University, and local organizations linked to the post-genocide moment, including survivors' associations and peace-building organizations.

In the end, though, and as is common in ethnographic fieldwork, I am not sure if it was always I who chose my participants or they who chose me.

Almost all of my research participants spoke the colonial language of French fluently or competently, and the handful who did not were proficient English speakers who had lived as refugees in neighboring Uganda or Tanzania. It was in French that the vast majority of my conversations and interviews took place. All of my participants had completed some secondary school, and a number of them had attended university. This is a small fragment of the population, to be sure. Though Kinyarwanda, English, and French are all official languages, 90 percent of the population speaks strictly Kinyarwanda, the Bantu vernacular that is unique to Rwandans.¹⁹ Only 8 percent speak French, and only 4 percent speak English (Steffja 2012).²⁰ While their education and linguistic competencies set my research participants apart from the majority, they were nonetheless a more diverse group than first meets the eye. Some were very much among the socioeconomic elite, including associate and full professors, clergy, successful business owners, civil servants, and doctors. There were others, however, whose “elite” status was more equivocal. New, less-established professors were paid so poorly that, like so many underemployed Rwandans, they were unable to provide three meals a day for their families. I also worked with many low-skill, but not necessarily uneducated workers, including restaurant servers, motel cleaners, and groundskeepers, as well as the unemployed. A number of them were university educated, and they faced difficulty in reconciling the ambitions they had harbored as students with the disappointments of their lives following graduation. Still others worked in high-status, yet precarious positions, especially short-term contracts with foreign NGOs that produced patterns of cash windfalls followed by periods of idleness and penury. Yet even as the intersections of education, occupation, income, and social status are hardly straightforward in Butare (cf. Williams 2015), that does not mean that the challenges town residents face are the same as those of the rural population either. Indeed, from the perspective of the rural majority of subsistence farmers and laborers, even these marginal urban residents lived in a different world characterized by modern privilege.

To work with urban people who have an interest in English and French language politics at all, some of whom benefit disproportionately from and provide ideological support for the RPF’s drive for urban development and modernization, might seem to reproduce uncritically the idea purveyed by government officials that there is nothing to learn about contemporary Rwanda from “peasants” (Thomson 2010). Parallel to the moral imperatives that Williams (2015: 25) notes for anthropologists working in South Africa to study the “poorest of the poor,” so among Rwanda scholars there is an ethic of responsibility to make heard the voices of the poorest and most marginalized

by RPF development policy and standards of legitimate victimhood (e.g. Sommers 2012; Thomson 2013). My intention is not to question other scholars' laudable commitment to studying marginalized Rwandans or to debate the relative legitimacy of different categories of research subjects (cf. Williams 2015: 25). My ethnographic interest in Butare is borne of the central place of this town and its residents—from the colonial period up to the present day—in giving shape to debates about what Rwanda and Rwandans ought to be. Butare is an old colonial seat of power, stronghold of the Catholic Church, and home to the National University. My aim is to provide insight into how the people on whom state aspirations to remake Rwanda depend make sense of the tensions, contradictions, and competing moral demands they face in the wake of 1994. While the social worlds of educated urban dwellers are not representative of Rwanda's rural majority, it is precisely their exceptional social and political location that sheds light on the contradictions at the very core of post-conflict "improvement" schemes in Rwanda. As Englund (2006: 38) cautions, even when social actors embrace the rhetoric of the powerful—in this case, entrepreneurship, development, and individual autonomy—they do not spontaneously become the kinds of subjects that rhetoric aims to produce. What is striking about educated Butaréens' invocations of RPF development rhetoric is not only that it indicates constraints on what is sayable in the "New Rwanda," but also that it belies a deep ambivalence about the visions of a good society behind this rhetoric. For so many aspiring elites in Butare, there is a yawning chasm between the types of persons whom they say they should become and what they think they actually are. In other words, elites have contradictory "lived experiences" too—ones that may alternately prop up or undermine the projects of the most powerful. But they nonetheless offer understandings of what it means to dwell in a post-genocide society, and working with this social category affords novel ethnographic perspectives on the intersections of state agendas, moral regulation, and everyday conundrums linked to selfhood, belonging, and exclusion.

As many others have noted, doing fieldwork in Rwanda is not without its perils. Most problematic are the tight state controls on what researchers are permitted to study and RPF suppression of critical perspectives on their approaches to governance, a point I elaborate in Chapter 1 (see also Thomson 2010). Researchers, just like Rwandans, must be careful about what they say and to whom about the country's past and the direction of government-driven change. Another challenge is that Rwanda has been inundated with foreign researchers seeking to understand social life in the wake of 1994. Perhaps nowhere is this the case as much as in Butare, since many researchers rely on the National University for support ranging from visa invitation letters, library resources, and research assistants, to the expertise of Rwandan

scholars. Many Butare residents are wary and weary of the presence of foreign researchers in their lives. Thomas was a university student in agronomy and executive member of a genocide survivors' association when I met him in 2008. A tall and slender young man, he joked that he has the look of a "typical Tutsi" and that his friends even tease him for bearing a striking resemblance to President Paul Kagame. As a prominent member of his association, he bore the burden of handling the large volume of researchers who came looking for interviews, connections to other survivors, or logistical support. "There were two Americans here not long before you came," he remarked to me one day. "They swooped in for two days, and they asked me terrible questions about the genocide. And then they left—poof!" (Butare, January 2009). He went on to commend me for not asking anyone to recount their experiences in 1994, but for letting them talk about it how and when they wished to. I could not help but wonder if his praise was a strategy of ensuring I did not get any ideas about asking those "terrible questions" now that he and I had known each other for nearly a year and had an established rapport. My choice not to ask people direct questions about the genocide was as much methodologically as ethically informed, since my interest lay in how and when talk turns to the genocide (and other pasts) in everyday talk and how and when people avoid raising it. Understanding life in post-genocide Rwanda necessitates learning to listen for both speech and silence and knowing when not to ask questions (Burnet 2012).

Since Butare is a hotspot for foreign researchers, it takes time and patience to cultivate productive working relationships. Not only are residents cautious of newcomer researchers, researchers are also easily inundated with offers from actual or aspiring "professional stranger handlers" (Agar [1996] 2008: 135) who purvey services as drivers, translators, tour guides, research assistants, or brokers. Following common practice in Butare, I relied on my existing networks for finding local assistance where necessary. I occasionally required a Kinyarwanda translator, notably for the official genocide commemorations and *gacaca* tribunals I attended in 2008, and later in my 2014 fieldwork, for workshops held by local peace-building organizations. I have employed the same translator throughout my fieldwork, a trusted friend I have known since 2004.

Throughout my fieldwork, I lived with a professor and his family, who resided in the mixed-income neighborhood of Tumba-Cyarwa near the university. While their house stood out from many of the neighbors' with its walled compound, spacious flower and vegetable gardens, indoor plumbing, and electricity, living with them nonetheless earned me the credibility of someone willing to live in a modest *quartier populaire*, not *en ville* or in the affluent neighborhood of Taba where most foreigners reside. Living with a Rwandan professor also provided me with insights into the social networks

and private lives of these prominent residents. My hosts relied on me for routine favors, like picking up packages, and in emergencies, as when I was called to the hospital to care for my “host mother” after she was badly injured in a fall from a motorcycle taxi.

Nevertheless, I was not treated as an ordinary member of the household. My comings and goings were closely monitored, and as a young woman, my occasional absence from the house after dark raised the curiosity of my hosts. I typically used evenings to write up field notes and to converse with my host family, especially during power cuts when there is little to do except talk. Simultaneously, though, my foreignness and my status as an academic meant that I was treated with prestige usually accorded only to Rwandan men. In the evenings, my hosts expected me to drink beer in the living room with the men instead of helping the women in the outdoor kitchen. When I offered to assist with meal preparation, the reaction was a combination of dismay and amusement no matter how much I assured them that I routinely prepare food at home. One household resident openly worried that I would lose a finger if entrusted with a kitchen knife.

Living in Tumba-Cyarwa allowed me to do a lot of walking, which made me a visible figure in Butare. Town residents harbor not only suspicion but also curiosity about foreigners and are not shy about seeking a relation of patronage in the first moments of a meeting. It was not unusual for a complete stranger to sidle up to me during the roughly twenty-five-minute walk from Tumba to the town center. He or she (but usually he) would ask where I was from, where I was walking to, what I was doing in Butare, and finally, how we might stay in touch. I found these encounters difficult to manage because of their intensity and the pressure to establish a relationship and exchange mobile phone numbers with someone I had just met. Still, they were useful ways of meeting people, especially university students, who often wanted to practice speaking English with me. By contrast, I got to know older adult Butare residents through the networks of my initial contacts at the university. Over time they introduced me to their friends and associates on campus, including library staff and administrative assistants. Several of my initial contacts were also close with local small business owners, so they introduced me to members of the local commercial elite. The commercial center of Butare is concentrated in a small area, so I would then cross paths with the same people regularly.

With students and faculty, participant observation, informal conversations, and interviews usually took place on campus. A key part of this work involved volunteering and collaborating on projects with a student genocide survivors’ association. The association’s projects aimed to raise money to purchase basic items, like school supplies or toiletries, for its members. With small business owners, participant observation, interviews, and informal conversations took

place in their homes and places of business. I would provide small services to them, like translating their signage from French to English to help them attract the growing numbers of Anglophone visitors to Butare (see note 20). Butaréens also liked to take me on long walks around the town and its outlying areas, because it was a way for them to demonstrate (both to me and to themselves) their rootedness and knowledge of the region. These excursions would always feature narratives of what happened in different places (sometimes during the genocide, but also other pasts), when and by whom each house was built, and the good and bad behavior of the inhabitants. I visited museums and genocide memorials. I attended the commemorations for the annual week of mourning for the genocide in April, as well as ten *gacaca* tribunals for genocide suspects held in Butare town. I accompanied people on trips to the countryside to visit family members, and I went with my host family to Sunday mass every week at the cathedral. I was invited to thesis defenses and celebrations for the birth of a child. I attended parties, sometimes in people's homes, sometimes at a church hall or a private school's anniversary party. For mundane tasks, too, I joined friends and acquaintances, including trips to the market or hardware store. I participated in *umuganda*, the day of community work carried out across the country on the last Saturday of each month. Finally, in 2014, I did participant observation in the offices of two Butare peace-building organizations, attended peace-building workshops, and conducted interviews with organization personnel about their work. Through it all, I listened carefully and asked questions about people's worries, aspirations, successes, and frustrations, what is admirable or discrediting, and what is a good life worth living or one simply lived by necessity. I listened for the topics that people tried to avoid, be it ethnicity, the genocide, their income sources, or the activities and associations they preferred to keep private (or at least that they wanted to keep from me). I learned to map the relationships that Butaréens form with kin, neighbors, friends, co-workers, employees, patrons, and clients, what is exchanged between them, and the meanings they attach to these relationships. In sum, I learned to track the relationships that constitute the social person and the connections people draw between the nature of those relationships, the history of violence, and visions for the future.

The chapters of this book are organized around four politically charged loci of post-genocide social life. They are ethnicity (Chapter 2), memory practices (Chapter 3), work and entrepreneurship (Chapter 4), and civil society-level peace building (Chapter 5). While they seem disparate in their range, what unites them is that each is a flashpoint in which post-conflict expectations of personhood are enacted, contested, and interpreted in everyday life in Butare. Likewise, each draws out a central facet of the relationship between violence, peace, and the capacities of persons, because each is linked into key structural reforms that characterize the "New Rwanda." Chapter 1 acts as an anchor

for the four subsequent chapters with its foundational discussion of the post-conflict moment in Butare and the central place of the town in Rwanda's history and (post)colonial political struggles. As the story of personhood in Butare unfolds, a jarring contrast in the subjectivity of town residents emerges: on the one hand, they come across as deftly strategic in the social relationships they form and the modes of self-making in which they engage. But on the other hand, they emerge as devastated and socially dislocated as they struggle with the weight of the violent past and the losses of significant others in their lives. How can we make sense of these two images of Butare residents? As this book will show, this dissonance reveals much about what it means to inhabit a post-genocide social world.

Notes

1. On the new 2006 administrative map that divides Rwanda's twelve former provinces (*intara*) into only four (plus the city of Kigali), Butare is known as Huyè. Nonetheless, I retain place names from the pre-2006 map throughout this book, since Rwandans still used them at the time of my fieldwork.
2. In 1991, the MRND party was renamed. It retained its acronym, but was re-baptized as the Mouvement républicain national pour la démocratie et le développement (National Republican Movement for Democracy and Development).
3. While 800, 000 is a generally accepted figure for the number of dead, these counts are controversial and political. They range from early estimates of 500,000 (des Forges 1995) to over one million according to the Government of Rwanda.
4. All names used are pseudonyms, and other details have been changed to protect people's identities. As is common practice in ethnography focused on small communities of people who are largely known to each other, some of the Butare residents I describe are composite characters. This is a further measure to protect people's identities while also ensuring that their perspectives and experiences come out.
5. This is a term for Butare residents commonly used by local people and in French-language scholarship on Rwanda.
6. It should be noted that anthropologists have debated whether the self can be studied ethnographically; see Lester 2017 for one account of these debates.
7. Although some theorists of the category of the person, particularly Mauss ([1938] 1985), conceptually distinguish self from person, I use them somewhat interchangeably here. For Mauss, human history unfolded a story in which people went from thinking of themselves as "personas" or "masks" to individual selves and role performers (Hickman 2014: 320). My interest, following Battaglia (1995), is not either the experience of self or cultural frameworks of selfhood alone, but rather "problematics of self-action" and how people enact personhood through concrete practices (Lester 2017).
8. In the essay that inaugurated a sustained anthropological interest in personhood, Mauss ([1938] 1985) conceptually distinguished between *le moi* (the experience of being a self, of having a life trajectory, and the ability to generate a narrative of one's life) and *la personne* (shared, culturally conditioned social expectations of human beings). However, Carrithers (1985: 234) argues that by the end of the essay, Mauss himself has slipped

from a focus on *la personne* to a focus on *le moi*, which suggests they cannot be easily held apart, even for analytical purposes.

9. Since the Tutsi–Hutu opposition has primarily animated Rwanda’s political struggles, I bracket the third ethnic category, the Twa, who comprise 1 percent of the population.
10. I place this term in quotation marks to indicate its fundamentally problematic nature, although I continue to use it since it is a conventional term in the scholarship. The notion of “post-conflict” implies a linear transition from violence, to “post-conflict,” and back to peace, a formulation that rarely captures how people experience conflict and its aftermath. Further, the very idea that there can be a “post-conflict” seems to suggest that there is such a thing as a society free of conflict, a proposition that evokes functionalist perspectives that see “equilibrium” and absence of conflict as the “normal” state of societies.
11. Hatzfeld (2005), through interviews with incarcerated *génocidaires*, found that they framed the act of killing a friend as an act of mercy. Prisoners explained that it was better that they kill a friend quickly and painlessly than let a stranger needlessly draw out the death. These kinds of justifications for killing add layers of moral complexity to the nature of the massacres and the motivations behind them.
12. There are variants of the general type of the relational person, including the “dividual” or “partible” person (Strathern 1988), the “joined up” person (Carsten 2004: 83), and the “fractal” person (Wagner 1991), but all were formulated as ways of probing the cross-cultural relevance and analytical utility of the bounded, atomized individual.
13. Even though the entire country, urban and rural, is built on the rolling hills for which Rwanda is famous—it is commonly called the “Land of a Thousand Hills”—when Rwandans talk about “the hills” (*les collines* [French]; *imisozi* [Kinyarwanda]), they are always referring to rural regions rather than towns.
14. There are no figures available for how many university graduates in Rwanda find work for which their degrees prepared them and how many return to rural subsistence farming. Anecdotally, however, I can attest that I have lost touch with most of the university students with whom I worked in 2008–2009 because they have returned to their rural hills of origin where they no longer retain their mobile phone numbers and where they have little to no access to email. Of the six university students with whom I spent substantial time during my doctoral fieldwork, I remain in contact with only two who did find work in urban centers.
15. My fieldwork in Rwanda began in 2004, followed by two extended stays from 2008 to 2009. Most recently, I returned between May and July of 2014. This book is based on a total of eighteen months of fieldwork.
16. Butare residents also explain this reluctance to use proper names as a symptom of mistrust and secretiveness. It is not unusual for a new acquaintance to avoid giving her or his name upon meeting. I have heard people who have lived in Euro-American contexts where first names are freely disclosed joke about how “Rwandan” it is not to introduce oneself by name.
17. For example, the infamous propagandist of the 1990s, Léon Mugesera, completed his doctoral studies from 1982 to 1987 at Université Laval in Quebec City, Canada.
18. The *gacaca* courts are loosely based on precolonial Rwandan dispute resolution mechanisms, but unlike their predecessor, sentences handed down at the “new” *gacaca* carry legal weight. Because of the volume of suspects who allegedly killed or looted property during the genocide, the new *gacaca* was controversially implemented nationwide in the early 2000s to relieve pressure on the regular court system. See Corey and Joireman (2004) for a review of the controversies surrounding *gacaca*.

19. Kinyarwanda is mutually intelligible with Kirundi, the language of Burundi.
20. Contentious language politics characterize post-genocide Rwanda. In a rejection of its former Belgian colonizers and the French allies of the genocidal regime, Rwanda made a sudden legislative change in December 2008, which saw English, not French, become the language of instruction after the first three years of primary education in Kinyarwanda. In 2009, Rwanda's application to join the Commonwealth was approved, which further cemented English as the new language of power. Fluent French speakers in Butare resented that they were unable to communicate meaningfully with the new crop of Euro-American Anglophone ex-pats who increasingly replace Rwanda's longstanding French and Belgian ex-pat population. For both practical and political reasons, I found it useful to assume people spoke French rather than English throughout my fieldwork. Most were pleasantly surprised when they discovered I speak French, and doing so set me apart from unilingual Anglophone newcomers, whom Butare residents dismissed as understanding very little about Rwanda.