Remaking a World

Violence, Social Suffering, and Recovery

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Introduction

Veena Das and Arthur Kleinman

Social trauma and the remaking of everyday life are the subjects of the six essays in this volume. Much has been written and continues to be written on the traumatic effects of war, political violence, and systematic practices of state terror, as well as on the adverse impact of development projects on marginalized communities. Psychologists and psychiatrists are engaged in documenting, describing, and diagnosing post-traumatic stress disorder and other distressing consequences of murder, rape, torture, molestation, and other forms of brutality. The anthropological contribution to this has been of a different but no less important character. Ethnographers have described how political violence is both mobilized and targeted—and how it works on lives and interconnections to break communities. Sometimes this violence is sudden, as in the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. At other times it takes the form of a continuous reign of terror, as with the policies and practices of the brutal regime of apartheid. Even when violence is not present in such dramatic forms, there can be the slow erosion of community through the soft knife of policies that severely disrupt the life worlds of people. And yet in the midst of the worst horrors, people continue to live, to survive, and to cope. This might appear as an obvious, even banal statement, especially if we think of the everyday only as the site of the taken-for-granted, the "uneventful," from which one seeks escape in the realm of the transcendental. Yet, in relation to lives severely disrupted, to be able to secure the everyday life by individuals

and communities is indeed an achievement. What is the stake, then, in the everyday after such overwhelming experiences of social suffering, and how do people learn to engage in it? Is it possible to speak of this re-engagement as a healing at the level of the community and of the individual? Are these processes similar?

In 1993, the editors, who are members of the Committee on Culture, Health, and Human Development of the Social Science Research Council (New York), planned a series of volumes to examine anthropological questions on the relation of violence to states, local communities, and individuals. The first volume, *Social Suffering* (1997), dealt with sources and major forms of social adversity with an emphasis on political violence. It gave illustrations of how transformations in cultural representations and collective experiences of suffering reshape interpersonal responses to catastrophe and terror. It also charted the effects of bureaucratic responses to human problems, and found that these institutional actions can (and often do) deepen and make more intractable the problems they seek to ameliorate.

The second volume, *Violence and Subjectivity* (2000), contained graphic accounts of how collective experience of violence can alter individual subjectivity. It questioned much of the present wisdom in subjects such as international relations and political science, which tend to conceptualize collective violence as a direct translation of social scripts through which relations between ethnic groups and identities are said to be defined, especially in parts of the world in which identity politics rather than the civilized conflict characteristic of modern polities is said to be operative. Questioning the polarity between violence and civilized politics as either a mark of social evolution or the basis of contemporary classification of societies, *Violence and Subjectivity* showed how social force transforms itself into political violence. In the process it demonstrated the entanglement of various social actors, ranging from global institutions to modern states on the one hand and small local communities inhabiting increasingly uncertain worlds on the other, in the production and authorization of collective violence. Most important, it interrogated the notion of the "ordinary" as a site for understanding the nature of sociality in local communities. A surprising finding was that actions of global institutions and agencies of the state have often inhibited the mechanisms of restraint and notions of limit that have been crafted in local moral worlds: it is not that such local worlds have some kind of natural immunity to violence, but simply that in response to the

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The present volume, the third panel in our triptych of social danger, highlights how communities "cope" with—read, endure, work through, break apart under, transcend—both traumatic violence and other, more insidious forms of social suffering. It is the result of an effort to bring the immediacy of multifaceted, complex, and intricately woven ethnographies to describe the processes through which communities cope with various forms of social suffering. We hope the comparative ethnographies presented here are rich enough in local detail to support comparison and analysis of the societal consequences of violence, in both its spectacular and everyday forms, at the level of local worlds, interpersonal relations, and individual lives.

The process of producing this volume was itself an interesting one. While each essay describes the theoretical issues in a specific local setting, an attempt was made to stitch together the issues in a larger framing through commentaries by each editor, which have been incorporated into the essays as well as this Introduction. There were lively and intense interactions between the entire group of scholars (editors and authors), so that the chapters can be read as the result of a cumulative cluster of conversations. Though the social and cultural contexts of these studies are diverse, their resemblance lies in the crisscrossing and overlapping of certain key questions. They extend our concepts of social suffering, violence, coping, and healing, in the way one twists fiber on fiber when spinning a thread. This metaphor of spinning was explained by Wittgenstein thus: "And the strength of the fiber does not reside in the fact that some one fiber runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibers" (Wittgenstein 1953: para 67).

The fibers that overlap to make up the thread of narration in what follows may be characterized in terms of the (a) relation between collective and individual memory; (b) creation of alternate public spheres for articulating and recounting experience silenced by officially sanctioned narratives; (c) retrieval of voice in the face of recalcitrance of tragedy; and (d) meaning of healing and the return to everyday.

The social and cultural contexts of these ethnographies are varied. Yet there are important similarities in the way in which the project of re-creating "normality" seems to engage the survivors of collective tragedies in, on the one hand, creating a public space in which experience of victims and survivors can not only be represented but also be molded,

and, on the other, engaging in repair of relationships in the deep recesses of family, neighborhood, and community. The recovery of the everyday, resuming the task of living (and not only surviving), asks for a renewed capability to address the future. How does one shape a future in which the collective experience of violence and terror can find recognition in the narratives of larger entities such as the nation and the state? And at the level of interpersonal relations, how does one contain and seal off the violence that might poison the life of future generations? How these goals are secured is complicated, for it asks for the simultaneous engagement of political and judicial institutions, as well as families and local communities. While everyday life may be seen as the site of the ordinary, this ordinariness is itself recovered in the face of the most recalcitrant of tragedies: it is the site of many buried memories and experiences. At the level of the public discourse many of these communities seem to be engaged in a "politics of recognition," to use the felicitous phrase of Charles Taylor (1992), but one has to understand also how this form of politics is itself anchored to the material, moral, and social aspects of everyday life in marginalized communities.

It is a commonplace that underlying the contractual theories of society is a vision of the polis as a creation of its members and not simply a reflection of either divine will or natural order. This vision of the polis implies the capacity to speak for oneself politically—to be able to find a voice *in community with other voices.* Emerging from the studies that follow is the stunning fact that even in the "oneiric geography of fear" (Pandolfo 1997), as in the postapartheid society of South Africa or during the period of terror in southern Sri Lanka in the late 1980s, the fresh attempt to build communities or neighborhoods is never purely a local affair. In fact, it is simultaneously an attempt to redefine and re-create the political society. Such is the case with the Cree in Canada or the Kui in Thailand, whose deprivation comes from the fact that they have been consistently excluded from participation in the collective life of the polis. Historically they have been the objects of state policies and not their subjects; hence they cannot recognize themselves in the collective projects of the wider political community. As we shall see later, the projects to redefine their places in the political community might be said to be a matter of finding *voice* that appears in a complicated relation to *words.* Sometimes, in certain spaces, words which have been frozen, removed from circulation, are reanimated by being embodied in voice—while at other times and in other places, stories are extracted from violent ex-

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One of the strengths of the ethnographies presented here is that these questions have been addressed by paying close attention not only to the content of narratives, but also to the processes of their formation within local communities. How are institutions implicated in allowing or disallowing voice? How does the availability of a genre mold the articulation of suffering—assign a subject position as the place from which suffering may be voiced? It may be the experience of survivors that certain categories that the culture readily assigns to them (such as the "dignified suffering mother" role often assigned to the women survivors of Hiroshima) become completely or partially disconnected from the ongoing contexts of their lives. When such subject positions are assigned they can lay to waste whole forests of significant speech—questions of representation become questions of connecting the enunciations with the lived world of the survivors. In collecting the narratives of survivors by directly participating in the contexts in which stories are made, the authors of the essays in this volume show the tremendous tensions between competing truths: they explore the shadows that fall between what is regarded as truth and what as fiction. Saying, as Pandolfo (1997) puts it, overflows the content of the utterances, for it gathers gesture, context, and signature in the process of telling.

There is clearly a tension between interpreting a violent event in the form of a text (even a text that is performed) and trying to find ways in which violence is implicated in the formation of the subject, foregrounding the category of experience. The view of culture as text has come under sustained critique, especially by those who have questioned the appropriation of ethnographic authority through different conventions of representation (e.g., Marcus and Fischer 1986). The links between aesthetic, legal, and political forms of representation are now recognized to be at the heart of the problem in the theorizing on the relation between culture and power. Yet if one were not willing to experiment with how much one's own voice finds recognition in other voices—and, conversely, with when it is that in speaking for oneself one is also legitimately speaking for another—it would be hard to conceive of any democratic processes at all. Hence the category of shared experience as a ground from which this recognition may stem has some attractive possibilities, provided we do not slip into the idea of a *pre-given* subject to whom experience happens. Thus in a salutary footnote Gupta and Ferguson (1997) state that "By decoupling the idea

of experience from the vision of an ontologically prior subject who is 'having' it, it is possible to see in experience neither the adventures and expressions of a subject nor the mechanical product of discourses of power but the workshop in which subjectivity is continually challenged and refashioned" (29). Yet in the body of their own text they seem to encounter this process only in moments of resistance, as if the processes of everyday life, the efforts required to reproduce the everyday, are not equally implicated in the formation of subjectivity. The notions of subaltern resistance, of hidden scripts, and of other such resting points where it seems possible to say no to power have obvious advantages in locating what Daniel (1997) calls agentive moments. Finding one's voice in the making of one's history, the remaking of a world, though, is also a matter of being able to recontextualize the narratives of devastation and generate new contexts through which everyday life may become possible. That communities formed in suffering do not always succeed in this, and that life can drain out of words that signify healing and overcoming of tragedy, and that as the scribes of such experiences we need to be able to read such experiences—that is also the burden of some of the essays. There are other positions: the Cree vigorously reject the subject position of victims; others, such as the mothers in Sri Lanka, are still too close to the deaths, torture, and disappearance of their children to even be able to own such fears as their own. They seek to hear what they fear most from the mouths of oracles. The image of culture as a workshop in which subjectivity is shaped seems to offer little scope for the understanding of this oneiric quality of fear captured especially in the chapters by Perera, Ross, and Mehta and Chatterji. In the other cases too, the relation between the formation of the subject and the experience of subjugation is shown to involve a complex process. As Butler (1997) argues in her important exploration on the psychic life of power, the experience of subjugation may itself, when owned and worked upon, become the source for claiming a subject position. The movement from the first person singular pronoun, the "I," to the claiming of a plural first person, the "we," calls upon experience, but this does not provide some kind of unmediated bedrock on which the foundations of subjectivity can be laid. Thus while the Cree and the Kui are able to forge links of community on the basis of shared experiences of subjugation, the women *hibakusha* in Japan try to redraw the boundaries around themselves, as they do not want to lease their voices to the collective representations of themselves as the silent enduring mothers.

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The rich contextualization provided in these essays, as also their vantage position in capturing not any particular spectacular moment of violence but its shadows, its reverberations years later in the lives of communities, is extremely important. Sometimes violence in one era is grafted onto memories of another, as the ethnic and communal violence that occurred in Bombay after the destruction of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya in India has become entangled with memories of the Partition of the country in 1947. As stories are layered upon other stories, the categories of history and myth collapse into each other. Thus spaces become imbued with these mythic qualities, narrations not only representing violence but also producing it. Pandolfo's evocative description of violence as inscribed in the memories of the local community in Morocco she studied ("The *fitna* of that distant past, recent past, *fitna* of the ruinous consequences of foreign invasions, *fitna* of women, of buying and selling of words" [Pandolfo 1998: 223]) provides a glimpse of how local communities might experience themselves. Her sense, though, that from such wounds springs the poetry of ruins does not seem to find any resonance in the accounts of violence presented here. If anything, there is an angry rejection of the aestheticization of their experiences by the women hibakusha, or by the slum dwellers of Dharavi in Bombay. When and how does suffering then become a source from which poetry can spring? The Cree now seem to be able to imagine how to create well-being, the Kui to be able to align with larger civic movements in Thailand to resist the appropriation of their traditions as tourist commodities. The diverse forms that the processes of coping and healing take demand the kind of thick ethnography that Geertz advocated without necessarily an allegiance to the notion of culture as text.

TRAUMA AND EVERYDAY LIFE

When I talk about language (words, sentences, etc.) I must speak the language of everyday.

Is this language somehow too coarse and material for what we want to say?

Then how is another one to be constructed?—And how strange that we should be able to do anything at all with the one we have!

Ludwig Wittgenstein

From the point of view of the relation between trauma and everyday life, these ethnographies can be divided into two kinds. On one side are the descriptions of the communities, the Kui in Thailand (Komatra Chuengsatiansup) and the Cree in Canada (Naomi Adelson), among whom the hurts are historical and the experience of violation is more in the nature of policies and programs of the state that have marginalized these communities and endangered their sense of identity. On the other side are the ethnographies of violence in which traumatic events seem (from the actors' point of view)[1] to have caused sudden and often inexplicable hurt on their social and individual lives. Thus there are the women hibakusha in Japan suffering from radiation diseases (Maya Todeschini); the stories of wandering ghosts that mark a geography of brutal violence in post-terror southern Sri Lanka (Sasanka Perera); the difficulties of inhabiting a common locality and of carrying life forward after a vicious communal riot in Bombay (Deepak Mehta and Roma Chatterji); and the complex interweaving of stories in the testimonies offered by women before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa (Fiona Ross). In all these cases the societal spaces as well as individual bodies are *marked* by the signs of brutality: the violence is *visible* in radiation disease, wounds, destroyed houses, and the dishevelled, dispossessed bodies of women. The process of reinhabiting these spaces of terror puts demands on the survivors for forging memory and forgetfulness in new ways. On the other hand, the call by the Kui and the Cree for recognition of their own voice in their history engages the public and private dimensions of experience by reformulating questions of history and tradition, not only within discursive formations but also in the new ways in which their identity is sought to be performed.

TRADITION, COLLECTIVE MEMORIES, AND ALTERNATE PUBLIC SPHERES

> Are these harms that have too often gone unrecognized, unnamed, unaddressed? Can and should there be alternatives to traditional institutional responses? Should working through the emotions of victims and survivors figure prominently in the goals for the nation or the world, or instead find a place as by-products of fact-finding, guilt-finding, and punishment?
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> *Martha Minow*

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Various writers have addressed the relation between collective memories and individual memories, highlighting the disjunction between public culture, official memories, and the "sensory" memory of individuals (Pandolfo 1997; Rèv 1997; Seremetakis 1994). Seremetakis makes the point that sensory memory does not simply repeat what is part of official memory but has the potential of challenging and transforming it. Following the trajectories laid out in the various contributions by Benjamin (1966) on this theme, she outlines a polarity between official memory and official inattention, arguing that the history produced throughout modernity, the official memory, is created as though it were a continuum from which both the mundanity of the everyday and discordant experiences are excluded through inattention. There are two themes here, that of contesting the history of inattention and that of using the sensory memory of individuals to challenge the official memory created through official record.

Chuengsatiansup's rendering of the manner in which the history of the Kui, a marginal community in Thailand, is *overwritten* by the practices of the state suggests that erasure is not achieved simply through inattention but by the production of a different kind of history by specific forms of attention. "In the case of the Kui," he says, "their memories have been taken away not only because their history has been incorporated into that of other states and written in languages not their own, but, more importantly, because official historical records take no notice of the Kui, either as a people, a race, or a nation." The colonial practices of historiography assigned a place in history to social groups such as the Kui, but in a manner which would basically support colonial claims for territorial conquest. The modern nation-state too saw them as "wild," as standing outside the definition of the nation and thus in need of being domesticated and brought within the agenda of national integration. Indeed, to contest the hegemony of the state under whose sign social history is written is the classical theme of subaltern historians. Chuengsatiansup shows, though, that more than in the texts of history, it is in the bureaucratic practices and in the particular ideology of the welfare state in Thailand that we should seek reasons for the marginalization of the Kui community. The community is now engaged in a process of social reformulation, creating networks of affiliation with the wider movement of voluntary organizations in Thailand to create new definitions of civil society and new definitions of citizenship. Thus authenticity is seen not as turning away from modernity to some distant,

more authentic past, but as an engagement with the present, creating what Chuengsatiansup calls alternate "subaltern counterpublics."[2]

A similar theme appears in the efforts of the Cree, an aboriginal community in Canada, to create institutional mechanisms for transmission of tradition and hence of the creation of collective memories. Since much of the thrust of colonial educational policy was "to take the Indian out of their children," an imagination of well-being by the Cree includes the creation of pedagogic spaces in which the children can learn their traditions. Adelson is clear that in creating the subject position of a Cree nation there is a reimagination of aboriginality. Thus indigenous healing and cultural practices are reinvented, and processes are put in place through which these invented traditions can acquire authenticity. Adelson sees these as creating both transnational indigenous unity and local potential.

Neither the Cree nor the Kui present us with cases of dramatic violence or genocide of the kind that was witnessed in the case of former Yugoslavia or Rwanda, or indeed historically in many other indigenous communities. Yet the soft knife of state policies in these cases shows how experiences of violation may become embedded in the everyday lives of marginal groups. The Kui and Cree experiences bear some resemblance to descriptions of peasants in various parts of Southeast Asia whose resistance to various forms of domination has been captured by the notion of hidden scripts (Scott 1992), marked by the use of irony and other such rhetorical devices to convey passive resistance. Dumont (1992) has noted, of peasants in the Philippines, that "confronted with such violence, the Visayan peasants responded like most peasants do, that is neither with enthusiasm nor with rebellion but with increased passivity, cynicisms and witticisms included" (148). Chuengsatiansup's and Adelson's ethnographies show the capacity of marginal groups for collective action in their reimagination of well-being, which takes resentment in a different direction from either everyday passive resistance or violent confrontation. Engagement in collective action then moves resentment from the arena of private conversations towards the making of a counterpublic sphere within which notions of citizenship may be renegotiated with the state.

COUNTERING INATTENTION

Do you want me to tell you what I think, Yes, do, I don't think we did go blind, I think, we are blind,

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Blind but seeing, Blind people who can see, but do not see.

José Saramago

Violence that is embodied in the hibakusha, the survivors of atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, carries a different significance for world history. Quite apart from the terrible suffering and death it caused (and continues to cause) hundreds of thousands of Japanese, the unleashing of nuclear weapons signified our entry into an era in which the self-annihilation of humankind is now possible. Hence the burdens of memory for the whole of mankind are of a different order (see Lifton 1967, 1983). Yet the official Japanese response to the bombs, on balance, was one of memory erasure. The shock of defeat in war followed by the headlong struggle for economic recovery and further modernization led to an official inattention, an erasure of the pain and losses caused by the bomb. Maya Todeschini in her sensitive ethnography of women survivors shows how this collective memoropolitics (a term after Ian Hacking) of erasure was only partially effective: informal recording of suffering started as soon as peace was declared. But she also points out that men were seen to be so deeply implicated in the brutality of war, especially a war of aggression and colonization, that with the end of the war they were not considered appropriate as cultural representatives of the nation. In defeat and foreign occupation other images were called forth. Yet the suffering of the women survivors was represented, even in popular novels and cinema, only within the dominant modality of portraying them as suffering mothers. Frozen into position as mythical mothers, as women who showed inhuman strength and endurance, the stereotypes fixed women's experiences within certain permitted genres of expression. Women whose children did not survive, for instance, were turned into living memorials to these dead children. The account by Todeschini of women as storytellers relates how women counter by various means the social death imposed upon them: they resist both the stigma and the cardboard heroic roles assigned to them. Listening to them as an ethnographic stance requires that we not only assign importance to their stories for the lessons Hiroshima or Nagasaki has to teach us in relation to the grand projects of world history, but also tune our ears to hear the more local pitch at which such women speak to establish a new normality for themselves. Their attempts to escape the molds in which Japanese literature and society have fit them are as

important as any lessons against the futility of war that they have to convey.

The other essay in this volume (by Fiona Ross) that deals primarily with the testimonies of women, this time in the context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, repeats the gendered nature of recounting traumatic experiences.[3] She notes that women testified primarily against the brutality committed on sons, husbands, and brothers—rarely could they speak of the harm done to themselves. The Commission had to repeatedly endorse the importance of women speaking about their own experiences of violation. The stories women tell record impossible levels of violence, but their terror lies in the manner in which the everyday punctuates these accounts. Thus one woman speaks of hearing about a police attack on supposed Russians in the genteel atmosphere of the house in which she works as a maid. Already fearful, with a premonition of disaster, she turns on the television on reaching home and recognizes one of the persons killed to be her son. The memorialization of these events is in the register of the everyday, as women speak of the dispersal of families and the extraordinary tasks of continuing to maintain relationships and provide nurturance in the context of political turmoil. The stake in heroic political struggle waged by the young in South Africa has its counterpoint in the manner in which women as mothers maintained the everyday relationships. Hence there is an interweaving in their stories of different voices—their own suffering is embodied in the suffering of their kinsmen and kinswomen. The emergence of voice in community with other voices uses the category of experience not to create neat categories of well-bounded units—it suggests rather that the bridges between everyday life and the making of a political community call upon these intertwining stories.

Can societies subjected to such continuous violence as in South Africa recover the capabilities of instituting democratic rights? The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a dramatic effort to provide a public space in which the terror unleashed during apartheid may be articulated and publicly heard. The Commission seeks to give judicial acknowledgment to stories that may have circulated earlier in more restricted circles: the impunity with which whites killed and tortured children and adults beggars belief.[4] Though conceived on the model of a judicial commission, the mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission departs considerably from the gold standard of evidence to establish guilt required under a criminal justice system. In this sense the Commission is different from, say, international tribunals to inquire into human right violations

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in ex-Yugoslavia or Rwanda, for the hope in South Africa is to enclose and seal a certain kind of violence as it was experienced in the past, to put a full stop to it, even as the impossibility of being able to judicially pin responsibility on individual criminals is clear.

The Commission, though, has its own genealogy. It is informed by assumptions about truth, reconciliation, and forgiveness at the level of public pronouncements. The analysis of women's testimonies in Fiona Ross's chapter points to the naïveté of the assumption that forgiveness can be easily earned. As Martha Minow has stated, "Ultimately, perhaps, responses to collective violence bear witness to it. The obligation of witnessing includes the practice of 're-memory,' which is Toni Morrison's term for practices that concretely encourage people to affirm life in the face of death, to hold onto feelings of both connection and disconnection, and to stay wide enough awake to attend to the requirements of just recollection and affirmation and the path of facing who we are, and what we become" (Minow 1998: 147).

It is perhaps also possible to argue that in testimonies offered before the Commission, one is not only reading the events through the testimonial accounts but is also being read. That is to say that while the *texts* of the testimonies might be about the experiences of violation, offering words that were earlier not permitted to be voiced, the *processes* involved in giving and receiving testimony established a new context for the interaction between the perpetrators, witnesses, and survivors. Those who had been silently complicit or actively involved in perpetrating violence had to also learn to read themselves. A recent account by Antjie Korg of her personal transformation as an Afrikaans woman while observing the processes through which the testimonies were produced provides a rare insight into this aspect of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. She describes her own work as that of wrapping the survivors in words, so that over these past hurts they can inherit a common future. But in doing so, she also learns that she did not know how to read the body codes of black people and that she could not escape the way that genealogies of power and familiarity worked within her own body. The pedagogic task of the Commission then is not that it has offered new information, but that it has made perpetrators as well as survivors become part of the formation of knowledge through which it may become possible to create a future in which this divided and traumatic past can be inherited.

It is not only in the Commission but in small communities and families away from the eyes of the Commission that work is being done to

come to terms with painful memories and to domesticate the terror of the past. Work currently under progress by several scholars suggests that communities fragmented by the violence of apartheid are also responding to fresh possibilities in different and less dramatic ways.[5] Reconciliation is not a matter of a confession offered once and for all, but rather the building of relationships by performing the work of the everyday. Such work is comparable to the reconstitution of everyday life as well as the search for the counterpublics described in the other chapters in this volume.

THE RECALCITRANCE OF TRAGEDY

> Thus, the role of memory, of ancient precedents of current criminality, obviously governs our responses to the immediate and often more savage assaults on our humanity, and to strategies of remedial action. Faced with such a balancing imposition—the weight of memory against the violations of the present—it is sometimes useful to invoke the voices of the griots, the ancestral shades and their latter day interpreters, the poets. Memory obviously rejects amnesia, but it remains amenable to closure that is, apparently, the ultimate goal of social strategies such as the Truth and Reconciliation and the Reparation Movement (for the enslavement of a continent?). It is there that they find common ground even though the latter does entail, by contrast, a demand for restitution. Both seek the cathartic bliss, the healing that comes with closure.
>
> *Wole Soyinka*

One of the assumptions behind the judicial reckoning of truth is of a mimetic relation between memory and event. The accounts of horrific events have made us acutely aware of the delicate work of giving testimony and of the facile assumption that our systems of representation reproduce either everything or nothing. Consider the various forms that testimony takes in Primo Lévi, who sometimes speaks of his *pathologically precise* memories and at other times of his memories as a *suspect source* that he must be protected against (Cheyette 1998). One of the most difficult tasks before survivors is to remember not only objective events but also one's own place in those events.[6]

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In this context Sasanka Perera's account of ghost stories and "demon" possession provides a methodological strategy for understanding the process of coping with terror, in which the cultural, political, and experiential are deeply connected. For Perera, coping with trauma happens in both the outer space of the social memory of loss and the inner space of the intimate memories of devastation. The tactics for producing the culture of terror in Sri Lanka that he describes are all too familiar: making persons disappear and making bodies appear in strange and unexpected places (for example, severed heads lined up around an otherwise calming reflective pool near a university). Perera goes on to tell us a good deal about culturally authorized forms such as rituals, folk tales, and possession tales, through which symbolic meanings given to these horrific events and collective memory are supported in the face of official erasures.

Perera sees these culturally authorized forms as providing a coping strategy by which survivors of civil conflict continue to live in the midst of torturers and murderers, long after mass violence has ended but in settings in which there is official silence, a state compliant with offenders, and no judicial ways of seeking justice. The situation may look normal from the outside, but this is mere seeming. Memories of terror continue, as does the desire for witnessing and for a response to deep grievances responded to. Storytelling, ritual, and possession—all symbolic means embedded in folk religions—provide ways by which the traumatized continue to find meaning in their suffering, to exist and to rebuild their relationships.

One may ask, though, if communities ever heal such wounds, or are the memories simply buried for one or two generations, until such time as the perspectives and experiences of those living through the shadow of death can be articulated? The French memory of the collaborationist Vichy government and its policies of conniving in genocide and oppressing resisters is a case in point. Similarly, the examples of Stalinist terror, the discovery of pigeon graves of Serbs killed but not allowed to be officially buried during the communist regime who in turn became killers, and the inability of the Chinese to come to terms with the turmoil, terror, and loss of the Cultural Revolution point to the need for long-term studies among survivors of terror. Ethnographers perhaps need to come to terms with the Weberian logic of the tragic in history and politics (Diggins 1996). But they also need to watch against the tendency to assume that stories that are lying dormant in the time of the fathers will *inevitably* come alive in the time of the sons. We are looking not

necessarily for a grand narrative of forgiveness and redemption but for the small local stories in which such communities are experimenting with ways of inhabiting the world together.

COMMUNITIES AND HEALING: A COUNTERPOINT

In the penultimate chapter of this volume, Roma Chatterji and Deepak Mehta describe how an event that is national in character, the demolition of the Babri mosque on 6 December 1992 by a crowd led by a partisan Hindu political party, may be analyzed at a pitch that is more local and specific. The demolition of the mosque in the city of Ayodhya was followed by riots in several cities in India. Chatterji and Mehta analyze the impact of this on Dharavi, a local slum in Bombay. According to the Srikrishna Commission, appointed by the government to inquire into the Mumbai riots, 900 persons died and 2,036 were injured between 6 December and 20 January. Although the largest number of casualties were due to the police firing, many deaths were also attributed to attacks by local people.

This leads Mehta and Chatterji to ask, what is community? And indeed, what is the individual? They did not find evidence in Mumbai slums of well-bounded moral communities, which could stoutly resist corruption from outside. Instead what they found after the riots was "a multiplicity of fragmented communities, each charting, through rehabilitation work, its strategies for survival and coexistence." Nor was it the riots alone that were responsible for this fragmentation. Dharavi occupies 342 acres of land and houses approximately 600,000 people, with a population density of 187,000 per square kilometer. No wonder the spaces that people are compelled to occupy are not even visible to the visitor. Mehta and Chatterji thus raise important questions about the connections between the violence of the riots and the everyday stories of crime and violence that make up the picture of Dharavi in the popular discourses in India.

What relation do acts of violence described in the testimonies of survivors in South Africa, or in stories related by survivors of ethnic violence in Sri Lanka and communal riots in India, bear to everyday life in society and polity? Nancy Scheper-Hughes, who has given much thought to this question, asks, "How shall we explain the alarming complicity of 'good people' to outbreaks of radical violence perpetrated by the state, police, military and ethnic groups?" Her general theoretical answer is that it is the human capacity to reduce other humans to non-

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humans that allows policies of mass destruction to come into play with broad social consent (Scheper-Hughes 1997: 471).

It appears to us that the deployment of the category of "human capacity" does not offer us tools fine enough to ask how it is that this capacity is realized in some contexts and not others. It is in the extraordinary ethnographic recounting of events in Scheper-Hughes (1995, 1997) that one gets an idea of how it is that people can get *beside themselves*. That is to say, it is as if successive selves come to inhabit the same person—the disappearance or loss of context may be generative of the experience (as in possession, dispossession, or in trance) of a new kind of subjectivity. To investigate the continuity between peacetime crimes and acts of spectacular violence, for which Scheper-Hughes makes an important and convincing case, we feel that we need to examine closely what sudden removal of any access to context can do to the formation of the subject.

Especially in the case of South Africa, the various incidents of violence Scheper-Hughes discusses (1995, 1997) evoke a sense of a complete loss of context in the local worlds in which such incidents happen. For instance, a group of students coming out of a mass meeting see a car with a white driver and think she is a collaborator, a state agent, an enemy out to destroy their movement, and they attack her. This affect of panic, of being somehow endangered, is often produced through particular linguistic forms such as panic rumor—it is part of that oneiric geography of fear when trust in conventions has disappeared. Das (1997) has argued that the rumors during a riot unsettle the context to an extent that even the perpetrators can begin to feel that they are the intended victims. This removal of access to context is when language seems to take on an infectious quality and the dominant affect becomes that of panic. So in Dharavi, where even the "ordinary" act of performing the morning ablutions is fraught with tension because of fights over use of very limited spaces, some maps did exist which could tell people how they might read each other. It was during the riots that all such markers disappeared and had to be reinterpreted—the difference between interpreting a sign correctly or incorrectly became a difference between life and death. Perera similarly gives some stunning examples of the destruction of known landscapes and the production of the constant sense of fear through the circulation of stories that have an infectious quality to them.

Allow us to take the reader to one important moment that occurred in the course of our discussions in the workshop in Cape Town in 1995.

After hearing the presentation by Perera, Arthur Kleinman was moved to say that "pathos is central to historiography and it should be the ethnographer's task too." Violence surely destroys communities, and history is replete with examples of such collapse. In the earlier volume on *Social Suffering*, Lawrence Langer (1997) focused on the terror of memory for the survivors of the Holocaust: rather than using the sanitized terms like "post-traumatic stress disorder," he so resonantly calls such pain and loss the *ruins of memory*.[7] Langer's vision of the anatomy of melancholy among survivors is based on stories told by survivors on video; these tapes are part of the Furtonoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies established at the Yale University in 1982 (see Langer 1991).[8] The context in which the ethnographer listens is (or could be) of a different order, for memory is articulated within local communities through several dispersed narratives in the context of everyday life—it is not seen as already part of an archive. It is this sense of presence, this idea that the events of violence are not past, that they have the potential of becoming alive any moment, which might explain how hard the survivors had to work to generate new contexts in which enough trust could be created to carry on, once again, the work of everyday life.

When Mehta and Chatterji conversed with the survivors in collecting what they call walking ethnographies (as contrasted to what they call sitting ethnographies), they participated in the everyday life of the survivors. So they were able to viscerally experience their fear and defiance. Concerned not only with "what happened?" but also how neighborhoods were now coping with that, the authors are able to document how genealogies of violence and of rehabilitation, though intersecting, have independent trajectories. In the narratives of rehabilitation the authors see the complex subjectivity of actors as they move between subject positions of victims and perpetrators, for in most local contexts these lines are not sharply divided, for precisely the reasons we mentioned earlier.

Thus efforts at rehabilitation of victims in Dharavi were themselves ambivalent and point to a precarious balance between a multiplicity of divergent forces that violent events unleash. There is the question of betrayal, both loss of trust in one's neighbors and suspicion of agencies of the state, since the police actively connived with some of the perpetrators; but there are also pragmatic concerns regarding livelihood, schooling of children, health care for the traumatized. These heteroge-

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neous relations endure through violence. As Mehta and Chatterji state, "The altered everyday is marked by a new knowledge and memory of loss, but also a practical wisdom of negotiating this loss. It tells one that reparation cannot take the form of justice, co-existence is possible only if the past is deliberately set aside."

We return to healing and what it means. For Langer (1991, 1997) there can be no healing after an atrocity like that of the Holocaust, but he makes a distinction between the Holocaust and other kinds of atrocities. For the Hindu and Muslim communities in Dharavi, healing is described as the ability to unite sufficiently closely to allow everyday commerce between peoples to resume after violence has cut ties and broken relationships. Different sorts of healing are implicated in the definition used. Thus to cure pain or to repair loss for the individual may not be possible. Yet communities may see health as the measure of sufficient cooperation to allow for the resumption of everyday activities.

The work of anthropologists in recent years has made it sufficiently clear that locality is produced by forces that come from the outside as much as from internal developments (Appadurai 1996; Gupta and Ferguson 1997). It would thus be perilous to ignore the larger political environment which addresses the hurts that have been incurred in acts of violence that have a local signature. This entanglement of the larger political environment in both the acts of violence and in the creation of possibilities for healing seems important in all the accounts. In fact, Perera's description stands out as one in which an alternate public sphere has not yet been allowed to emerge in which the survivors can articulate their demands for justice. Clearly a double movement seems necessary for communities to be able to contain the harm that has been documented in these accounts: at the macro level of the political system it requires the creation of a public space that gives recognition to the suffering of survivors and restores some faith in democratic processes, and at the micro levels of community and family survivors it demands opportunities for everyday life to be resumed. This does not mean that success would be achieved in separating the guilty from the innocent through the working of the criminal justice system, for in most cases described here it is not easy to separate the guilty and to pinpoint legal responsibility, but it does mean that in the life of a community, justice is neither everything nor nothing—that the very setting-into-process of public acknowledgment of hurt can allow new opportunities to be created for resumption of everyday life.

RETRIEVAL OF VOICE

No foreign sky protected me,
No stranger's wing shielded my face.
I stared as witness to the common lot,
Survivor of that time, that place.
Anna Akhmatova, "Requiem"

The survivor's tale, the sufferer's lament, even the therapeutic narrative of pain transformed through religious or psychiatric healing, are all examples of stories called forth out of the ruins of memory. But is it this way, or rather is it that voices speak through the wounded just as spirits communicate through mediums, that stories call victims to say something that is not theirs to possess? These ethnographies are structured by local narrative styles that are distinctive cultural productions. Thus the narratives of Japanese atomic bomb survivors are a genre within the Japanese literary tradition, as Maya Todeschini demonstrates; and the legends of the Cree are a part of revitalization within the contours of this indigenous North American people's tradition, as Naomi Adelson shows. Pain is always part of a particular culture, the expression of a local world.

Yet this is not an entirely satisfactory way of putting things. In both traditions the choke and sting of experience only becomes real—is heard—when it is narrativized. The expression of personal pain is also a form of cultural representation, yet the relation is not an isomorphic one. There is a sliding relation between social structure and the construction of personal agency in the transformations of ordering experience. The voices of the atomic bomb survivors *resist* inauthentic distortion into nationalist programs of denial and xenophobia; they press up against the limits of stigma and social control to open a local space where survivors can express their individuality as well as an alternative collective sentiment. The therapeutic stories of the Cree establish a space of ethnic authenticity that carries political as well as moral significance. In each setting stories restructure moral experience, defining what matters most to local groups who have been marginalized and whose local world has been broken apart by powerful social force. Even the Kui, Chuengsatiansup shows, speak in order to assert an identity against the stigmatizing alternative provided by the dominant Thai center (king)–periphery (barbarian tributary) discourse. That speech turns against (re-

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Experience moves from inchoate social and psychological processes to definable, even memorable cultural representations through its evocation or realization in stories. This does not mean that there is a pregiven subject to whom experience happens—rather, postulating the subject is a way of thinking about the possibility of experience. Thus it is that these stories provide a cultural shape that has the potential to naturalize, normalize, and thereby order experience in terms of societal processes of social control. But stories, like other social phenomena, have unanticipated consequences. This must be especially true in communities undergoing or trying to break down or break away from established conventions. The social space occupied by scarred populations may enable stories to break through routine cultural codes to express counterdiscourse that assaults and even perhaps undermines the flow of taken-for-granted meanings of things as they are. Out of such desperate and defeated experiences stories may emerge that call for, and even at times may bring about, change that alters utterly the commonplace—both at the level of collective experience and at the level of individual subjectivity. Here Todeschini's comparison of literary works and ethnographic voices suggests more than even her strong analytic line can work out.

The expression of voice is found in a dramatic form in Perera's account of possession and the stories of avenging ghosts. The psychiatric and psychological literature has replaced the term "possession" with "dispossession." Possession places emphasis on the being of the possessing agency or the person-who-is-possessed's experience of being taken over, becoming a medium for that god, ghost, demon, or ancestor. Dispossession, in contrast, refers to an experience of splitting in cognitive and affective states so that the person becomes nearly completely absorbed in that focus. During dispossession what is inner and inexpressible can be projected outward into a culturally authorized voice. We do not wish to imply that there is a completed hidden script in the inner life that is simply waiting to be projected. Rather, the states of dispossession are able to provide the external criteria by which the person traumatized by violence can overcome the suffocation of speech. Thus dispossession, possession, and even the deep call of stories may be seen as stitching together the person's inner space and the outward space. Language does not function here purely as a medium of communication

but is also to be viewed as experience (see Das 1998) which allows not only a message but also the subject to be projected outwards.

We require long-term participant observation to see how such experiences may mold the subjectivity of persons traumatized by violence. We can say, though, that the yearning for recrimination and retribution can be received in the collective symbolic forms and may become a source for collective action. Alternately, voice when it comes may come too late to avert tragedy. This is the sense one has of the communities that have refused to testify before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or of women who did testify but found that they could speak of experience only in the third person—relating what happened to other dearly loved ones but being unable to project themselves within this genre of speech.

An altogether different meaning is given to the idea of voice in Mehta and Chatterji's chapter, because voice has here become untethered from the signature of the person. The authors describe the anonymity of the voices emanating from crowds during the killings in Dharavi. Repeatedly survivors asserted that individuals could not be recognized in these voices—the slogans became signatures of large, hostile collectivities (see also Das 1997). Although Mehta and Chatterji do not speak of possession or dispossession, their account speaks of the impossibility of giving narrative form to experience. Witness the mentally disabled child who sits by the adults overhearing their conversations and monotonically recites, "We were playing India and Pakistan." Overtly this is not a ghost story, but surely the child is *possessed* here by a jingoist nationalist discourse of boundaries that was heard in the context of a local violence that she had little means to comprehend. These fragments of floating stories now shape her memory and make her almost a victim to language. In such contexts voice appears in a lethal form, testimony to how one may be robbed of agency. Paradoxically it is not the retrieval of voice but the appearance of the face through which communities torn asunder by violence begin to accord mutual recognition to each other.[9]

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In a review of a volume on the Rwandan catastrophe, Wole Soyinka (1998) observes:

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CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

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> The orders came from above, yes; the *interhamwe,* the Hutu militia, was schooled and drilled and indoctrinated into the diverse mission of liquidating

> a designated other, but that so many ordinary people turned against their neighbors, blood relatives, co-workers, drinking and gossip companions—this is where the process of comprehension is stalled no matter how eloquent the argument of economics and politics, or of the deleterious role of memory—given the level of unrepentant participation, including the social ostracism of the dissenting or critical bystanders even till now, can the two main components of the Rwandan nation be expected to live together . . . that is to bring to realization the rehabilitation. . . .

This question, once their different stories are taken into account, still haunts the aftermath of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia; the crisis in Kosovo; and the South African, Sri Lankan, and Indian cases in this book. It was the defining question in our second volume, *Violence and Subjectivity*, in this series (Das, Kleinman, Ramphele, and Reynolds 2000). From the ethnographies in this book, sensitive to both the larger political context of these local stories of devastation and the dense intimate connections that have been forged in the context of everyday lives, it would appear that no glib appeal to "our common humanity" can restore the confidence to inhabit each other's lives again. Instead it is by first reformulating their notions of "normality" as a changing norm, much as the experience of a disease changes our expectations of health (cf. Canguilhem 1978), that communities can respond to the destruction of trust in their everyday lives.

The question of carrying on after political violence has a relation to the question raised by truth commissions, commissions of enquiry, or other Nuremberg-style proceedings against perpetrators. Legal procedure may well play a role, even a decisive one, in community coping, but that role cannot account for the continuity of everyday social experience, nor can it alone bring about the repair of social ties and institutions. Moral procedure in responses to mass violence—a recognizable aspect of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission—is not about judging cases to establish criminal status and determine punishment. Rather it turns on *acknowledgment* of pain of victims and the role of perpetrators in causing that pain. Acknowledgment need not be limited to individual injury: it can give recognition to the injury or deaths inflicted on a collective, and also legitimate that collective's quest for repair, revitalization, and healing. The term "healing," as it is used in truth commissions, retains its defining conflation of medical and religious action. Community healing, as we read in chapters in this volume, means repair but it also means transformation—transformation to a different moral state.

All of this sounds interesting, but can it be real? Do, in fact, broken communities that have been fractured by war and structural violence ever regenerate? Or are these simply the official words needed to authorize political processes of normalization that themselves merely prevent ultimate defeat and stanch social hemorrhage and chaos until a later time? Is "coping" then too simple and simplifying a concept to apply to communities ravaged by political terror? The chapters in this book suggest that at the level of the ordinary, the everyday social realities, states of rebuilding and accommodation are as complex as are the networks of individual lives of victims, perpetrators, victim-perpetrators, internal resisters, and critics and witnesses. There usually is no clear-cut victory, no definitive crossing over to safety and renewal. But if that sounds too bleak a conclusion, think of it the other way around: there usually is no complete defeat, no ultimate breakdown and dissolution. Even following the most horrendous ethnocides—the Holocaust, the mass murder of Tutsis—social life continues. And that is the source both of possibilities and of very deep perplexities. Recently, traveling in Poland, one of us (AK) was told by a Polish professional colleague, "Our society is so homogeneous." Stupefied by the historical amnesia of the remark, the listener could only angrily rehearse the scenario of the mass killing of Polish Jews and Gypsies, who together compromised such a large minority of pre–World War II Poland. Continuity often means collective amnesia and rewriting of the historical record. Political and social transformation that fails to engage the moral reality must be contested. Hence the value of memorialization of victims and of the political and social conditions of their victimhood, and the significance of what truth commissions need to establish as an incontrovertible record of the destruction of individuals and groups. Does there need to be an opposite form of moral engagement that limits or qualifies excessive and unending claims of victimhood that aspire to create a permanent condition of moral superiority and that prevent compromise and resettlement? And what of the commercialization of victimhood and its other abuses: political and moral? The materials in this book suggest that even this balancing act may represent too limited an engagement with on-the-ground realities. These realities cannot be adequately categorized by using coarsely definitive descriptions such as health or breakdown, healing or pathology. Local worlds are too multisided and changing to be usefully described in this way. On the other hand, large ethical formulations such as crimes against humanity, abuse of human rights, and claims of social justice seem too large-scale and clichéd to deal with

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the specificity of cases such as those described in the following ethnographies.

The answers to the questions we posed in the beginning of this Introduction, then, are a series of paradoxes. Ian Buruma (1994) has argued that our age is one in which victimization has become of special ontological salience. The assumption is that it helps the victims to emphasize *victimhood* as a cultural representation and collective experience. If that is true, does the appropriation of victimization as the core moral stance create a paradox in that it becomes a means to revivify the fragments of communities, one that works against reconciliation and rebuilding?

The analyses embedded within these detailed renderings of local worlds testify to the need of survivors to be able to articulate their collective hurts by the creation of alternate public spheres, but there is enough evidence of resistance to being made into icons of the status of victims. Clearly ethnography needs to document the recalcitrance of tragedy so as to avoid the sentimental view of suffering, but we also emphasize the creativity of everyday life in arriving at new norms of interrelatedness in communities. The survivors' narratives do get powerfully structured by the cultural genres that can authorize experience, but that does not preclude the appearance of voice that resists such taken-for-granted categories. We suspect that it is because the task of reformulating everyday life in the face of the radical doubts about its possibilities is fraught with unimagined dangers that we find survivors inhabiting all these contradictory positions.

There is now an increasing production of knowledge about violence by those who are the mediators and translators of collective violence to the rest of the world.[10] Images are generated by the media and reports are prepared by judicial commissions, citizens' committees, and other human rights groups in response to the question: what happened? Such images and reports are now part of national and even global patterns of consumption through which a new geography of the world has been brought into existence. The media and the human rights organizations play an important role not only in representing the violence but also in becoming actors in the anticipations of local communities on how their suffering is to be addressed. We need to realize, though, that there are strong compulsions of politics and commerce, as well as personal commitments, which inform these reports. This is true equally for anthropological reports. What may be different is that the importance of violent events lies for the media in their dramatic potential. This is why very few stories are followed over time in the media, especially when

they appear to become dated. Similarly, those writing on behalf of human rights groups are constrained by the immediate needs of victims and by a mode of storytelling that is anchored in judicial ideas of what testimony can stand up in court. Typically the interaction between such fact-finding committees and the survivors of disasters is of short duration. There is rarely an opportunity to observe how everyday life is lived in such communities of survivors, no long-term relation established between those who experience the violence and those who interpret it for others. The eliciting of memory follows judicial models of witnessing: even though it is recognized that memory can only be recovered in fragments, the relation of the fragments to the event is seen as a mimetic one.[11] The commercialization and emergence of powerful global media have further complicated the situation. Not only do the media pay scant attention to long-term and "little" consequences of violence, they are also positioned to demand a sentimental view that privileges miraculous exceptions, hopeful endings, and a clarity in pronouncements. The global media, suspicious of too much local detail that may overwhelm the viewer, have created a viewing stance in which the consumers of news and documentaries are suspicious of mixed messages, paradoxes, and unfinished stories. Yet our ethnographies can only take us to resting points that are not endings but openings to new issues that require continuous working through, so characteristic of everyday life.

As against the judicial or media-oriented confessional models of truth-telling, the ethnographic method used by anthropologists in this volume is based on long-term interactions with communities of survivors. The moment of destruction is but one moment in these accounts—the narratives move to the manner in which processes of resistance, contestation, and accommodation begin to happen.[12] Sometimes it is not even a single event but a series of events spanning more than a century, embodied in the memories that are now being contested of communities such as the Cree and the Kui. Thus we may speak here not only of collective violence but also of the margins that extend the violence backwards and forwards. It is this different temporality of the ethnographic account that marks its special feature.

Since this project relied on an approach that was both ethnographic and comparative, it was able to show the diverse configurations within which the institutional and the experiential, the public and the private, the spectacular and the quotidian come together to define the realm of politics. Rather than preconceived ideas about the nature of the public sphere, the definition of citizenship, and the division between public and

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private, it showed how these domains are themselves constituted by the collective action of marginalized groups in some cases and those suffering from the trauma of collective violence in other cases. By simultaneously engaging the public and the private, it showed how the creativity of social action may be located in the realm of the everyday but also that the everyday itself is implicated in the creation of a new normality in areas devastated by such experiences of terror. These are not solutions to the pressing problems of violence but they point to the necessity for each one of us to engage in sober ethnographic reflection on the possibilities and the limits of the creativity of everyday life. The juxtaposition of translocal ethical perspectives on ethnographic descriptions of local moral worlds makes for a bifocality of perspective, which can illuminate the imperatives of each, as also their limits. We hope the three volumes will be read as part of the same project of addressing social suffering, violence, and the remaking of worlds—a quest which did not yield any final destinations but pointed to some resting places, some temporary closures, stories of hope and despair.

NOTES

1. This is not to say that what appears sudden and inexplicable to the actors may not be shown to be structurally embedded.

2. The idea of alternate public spheres is formulated by Nancy Fraser (1995) in opposition to Habermas's notion of the public sphere, in which the constitutional state is revealed and monitored through organs of rational and intelligent discussion. It opens up a very interesting space for discussion on the various publics that struggle for recognition in the modern democratic constitutional state.

3. The division of voices in mourning laments is the subject of much recent literature. See especially Seremetakis (1992), Das (1997), and Wilce (1998).

4. On the relation between biography and social text see Das (1995).

5. Personal communication by Pamela Reynolds.

6. In *The Periodic Table,* Lévi says: "I find it difficult to reconstruct the sort of human being that corresponded in November 1944 to my name, or better, to my number: 174517. I must then overcome the most terrible crisis, the crisis of having become part of [the] Lager system, and I must have developed a strange callousness if I then managed not only to survive but also to think, to register the world around me, and even to perform rather delicate works, in an environment infected by the daily presence of death" (139–40).

7. For a completely different way of conceptualizing memory as ruin, see Pandolfo (1997).

8. Langer warns that he is talking about the Holocaust and not every kind of violence. We do not think it is useful to enter into a debate on the uniqueness

of the Holocaust in the history of human violence, but Langer's caveat is important because the possibilities for recovery of community differ not only due to the scale of violence but also the styles of violence.

9. The concept of face is taken from Levinas (1998).

10. This theme was explored explicitly by Kleinman and Kleinman (1997).

11. For instance, Pandey (1991) speaks of the importance of fragments and the need to relinquish the idea of finding the whole truth in the context of a fact-finding mission he undertook on behalf of a human rights groups (People's Union of Democratic Rights) following Hindu-Muslim riots in Bhagalpur in the state of Bihar. He imagines these fragments to be in the nature of partial truths bearing a mimetic relation to the event in answer to the question of what happened. It is not our position that such regimes of truth-telling are not important but that fragments of traumatic memory are about the event *and the subject's place in that event,* as Lévi's various explorations with memory show.

12. We can see the temporality of long-term intimacy established by the anthropologist in the accounts of violence by Loizos (1981), Spencer (1990, 1992), and others. These anthropologists found that war and collective violence altered the very fabric of relations in the communities they had studied before the time of violence. Their accounts are therefore much more conducive to understanding the heterogeneity of everyday life—but even these accounts have not addressed issues of how new norms of sociality are established in this altered normality in the lives of communities.

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