

Introduction

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A new political geography of the world has emerged in the last two decades, in which whole areas are marked off as “violence-prone areas,” suggesting that the more traditional spatial divisions, comprising metropolitan centers and peripheral colonies, or superpowers and satellite states, are now linguistically obsolete. The violence in these areas seems to belong to a new moment in history: it certainly cannot be understood through earlier theories of contractual violence or a classification of just and unjust wars, for its most disturbing feature is that it has occurred between social actors who lived in the same local worlds and knew or thought they knew each other. While some see this violence as a remnant of long-standing primordial conflicts, others see it as a sign of the distortion of local moral worlds by forces (national and global) which originate outside those worlds and over which local communities can exercise little control. In either case it becomes necessary to consider how subjectivity—the felt interior experience of the person that includes his or her positions in a field of relational power—is produced through the experience of violence and the manner in which global flows involving images, capital, and people become entangled with local logics in identity formation. Our notions of normality and pathology seem to be at stake as we explore the connections between the different forms of violence that pervade our contemporary world.

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* (Kleinman, Das, and Lock 1997), dealt with sources and major forms of social adversity, with an emphasis on political violence. It gave illustrations of how transformations in cultural repre-

sentations 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 present volume, the second in our series on social danger, examines the processes through which violence is actualized—in the sense that it is both produced and consumed. The comparative ethnographies provide graphic accounts of the manner in which everyday life is transformed in the engagement with violence, but in doing so the essays also interrogate the notion of the everyday as the site of the ordinary. Because most of the essays are located in spaces in which ongoing violence has blurred boundaries between violence, conflict, and peaceful resolution, they look at these issues from an off-the-center position in two senses. First, they ask how people engage in the tasks of daily living, rehabilitating the world in the full recognition that perpetrators, victims, and witnesses come from the same social space. Second, they seek to analyze not only the explicit acts of bodily harm that occur in violent conflict but also the more subtle forms of violence perpetrated by institutions of science and the state. The traditional appeal of ethnography has been the ability to see the social world in terms of a scale that is commensurable with face-to-face inquiry. Yet these ethnographies reveal that larger social actors such as the state, international organizations, and the global media, as well as transnational flows in finances and people, are all implicated in the actualization of the violence that transforms the everyday life of local communities. In order to portray this heterogeneity of contexts, authors were invited to describe forms of violence that are widely dispersed—taking in ethnic riots, civil war, and the subtle technological violence of organized science and state policies and programs.

The strength of the ethnographies in this volume lies in their careful attention to detail and the long-term engagement of the ethnographers with the places and people they describe: they demonstrate that there is no straightforward translation of social scripts into social action. The continuous creation of new contexts and the sudden removal of the access to established contexts frame the manner in which violence and subjectivity tend to become mutually implicated in the contemporary world. Without presuming to summarize the rich descriptions in the essays, we indicate some of the themes which bind these ethnographies together.

GLOBAL FLOWS AND LOCAL LOGICS

Taking a close look at contemporary ethnic violence and wars, many scholars discern a bewildering loss of context as collective identities forged through practices of the nation-state, or through images that cascade

through global media, invade the local worlds of face-to-face relations. Arjun Appadurai states it as follows: "The worst kinds of violence in these wars appear to have something to do with the distorted relationship between daily, face-to-face relations and the large-scale identities produced by modern nation-states and complicated by large-scale diasporas" (Appadurai 1996: 154). While there is much merit in this argument, it treats the actual processes through which such distortion happens as a black box; it also seems relatively silent on the ethnography of transnational institutions through which the pressure on locally defined identities is generated. The essays in this volume propose a tighter integration in the analysis of institutional failures and the phenomenology of affect in the analysis of collective violence through attention focused on the specificity of their interrelations.

The first chapter, "Violence-Prone Area or International Transition? Adding the Role of Outsiders in Balkan Violence," by Susan Woodward, can be read as a contribution to the ethnography of international organizations and to local-level forces in the large-scale violence in the case of former Yugoslavia. In terms of a story of local events, nostalgia for an ethnic identity led to an attempt to recover that identity through the process of war, and there was a longing to right the wrongs of history at one stroke through a violent confrontation with the "other." These longings came to form the rhetoric of the inter-ethnic violence in this region. While such longings for a lost home cannot be regarded as *causes* for the conflict—they do seem to have provided the local context within which the violence witnessed at the breakup of Yugoslavia may be said to have been actualized. In order to understand this actualization, though, we need to understand how the perception of international organizations concerned with international relations interacts with the vector of forces described above to change local worlds and the world at large in distinctive ways.

Woodward traces the outbreak of internal violence in Yugoslavia to the last decade of the Cold War, when the state in Yugoslavia was faced with a series of dilemmas, which eventually overcame it. Bringing the vision of a political scientist and security expert to these issues, Woodward shows first how the state broke down and then how communal violence emerged out of "the demand for majority rights in a land of minorities." Yet her argument is that these local failures, dangerously disturbing as they were, were ultimately of less significance for generating civil violence than the responses of the international community. The European community undermined Yugoslavia's political order. The IMF, NATO, and other international agencies, in the name of mediation, pressed the situation toward its violent denouement. The UN, individual European nations, and the United States all contributed to the Balkan debacle. What is tragic is that such concepts as "the culture of violence" and "violence-prone area" seem to have

served as a shorthand for international agencies to define away their own role in the dissolution of the country by attributing a form of dangerous subjectivity to the inhabitants of these regions. Woodward's acute analysis shows that, rather than culture as a cause of violent peoples and places, it was the politics of international relations and agencies that enabled the internal disintegration to reach the point of complete breakup. This international politics of violence complements views from within settings of violence, suggesting that for each of the cases of local violence described in this book, the level of nation-states and international agencies must be engaged if we are to understand the powerful sources and consequences of internal conflict.

The former Yugoslavia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Sri Lanka, and Rwanda loom large in the popular imagination as places caught within a spiral of violence. A theory of transnational flows needs to address not only how the representation of people and places as "inherently violent" distorts identity in face-to-face relations, but also how the circulation of such images in the global media seeps into the relatively peaceful and affluent homes in countries like the United States and alters the experience of social suffering. In an impressive description of the "dismay of images," Arthur Kleinman ("The Violences of Everyday Life: The Multiple Forms and Dynamics of Social Violence") offers an example of the way in which images of disaster circulate and connect not only distant spaces but also different kinds of events through analogy. Icons of Nazi savagery, which stand for extreme violation and horror, are offered in newspaper advertisements along with more recent examples of the savagery of war in Bosnia or Rwanda. But what does such a mediatization of violence do to the moral sensibilities of the vast number of people who consume such images on television or in the press? They may be moved to help by offering financial assistance while remaining relatively secure that they risk nothing, for nothing very tangible is at stake for them. Or they may tune out with the morally troubling excuse of fatigue with victim accounts or even criticism of a culture of victimhood. Thus the appeal of the perceived experience of suffering to mobilize social action and create solidarity with the victims is transformed via the media into what Kleinman calls "a dismay of images." If this dismay becomes overwhelming, we are always free to switch the TV channel or turn the page of the newspaper to something more palatable for the moment. Thus the consumer of these images may require ever more detail in words and images of hurt and suffering to authenticate reality. This, in turn, alters the social situation of the people on whose suffering this authentication is to be produced by making their interiority ever more present, as if their experiences were commodities that were being advertised. A transnational analysis of violence must focus on the junction where the forms in which violence is produced can be linked to the forms in which its images are consumed. If we have a

sense that such images of violence are displaced from their local contexts in the process of their circulation, we cannot yet ignore the fact that the media itself may be seen as generative of the contexts that produce authoritative versions of the different spatial mappings upon which we base our visions of global conditions.

In Kleinman's essay cultural representations also contribute to collective experience and the shaping of subjectivity. One cannot draw a sharp line between collective and individual experiences of social violence. These are so thoroughly interwoven that *moral* processes (i.e., social engagements centered on what is at stake in relationships) and *emotional* conditions are inseparable. Violence creates, sustains, and transforms their interaction, and thereby it actualizes the inner worlds of lived values as well as the outer world of contested meanings. Neither are social violence and its consequences only of one kind. Multiple forms and dynamics of social violence animate local worlds and the individual lives in them. From this perspective, the social violences of day-to-day living are central to the moral order: they orient norms and normality.

The relation between global flows and local logics raises powerfully the question of the struggle over the real. One of the important claims of modernity is that the forces that shape the world can be represented as totalities, which can, in turn, be verified. The genealogy of realism would point, however, to the *multiple* realisms through which legal, penological, and economic disciplines are instituted under the constitution of modernity. Several essays show how these realisms are experienced in both zones and times of terror. Allen Feldman, for instance, in his powerful analysis of the dangers of photography in Northern Ireland ("Violence and Vision: The Prosthetics and Aesthetics of Terror"), asks how realisms are experienced in zones of terror, where to be seen is to become hypervisible to the apparatuses of the state. The capacity to survive in such zones of terror consists not in optical clarity but in the ability to hide, dissimulate, and defuse one's presence. Photographs, documents, or numbers through which the real is authorized may circulate in many contradictory contexts and become the subject of micro-exchanges, which bear traces of the apparatuses of the state.

TRACES OF THE STATE: END OF MASTER NARRATIVES?

Although many have theorized that this is the era of declining states, the chapters that follow point to the contradictory aspects in which the state is encountered in the context of violence. In some cases it is the agency through which brutal violence is perpetrated, as in the hateful regime of apartheid in South Africa or in the violent civil wars in Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland. In other cases it ensnares the poor and the disadvantaged

to work for it even in their own repression, as was the case of the national emergency in India; in still others it redefines violation through bureaucratic procedure to produce its own legitimacy by normalizing trauma in terms of business as usual, as in the case of hemophilic patients infected by the HIV virus in the United States. Finally, in cases such as that of former Yugoslavia, the absence of the state was the prelude to the desperate civil violence that followed.

The ambivalent role of the state invites us to focus attention on the processes through which the state works in everyday life in both the "emergency zones," as Feldman calls them, and in the relatively more peaceful situations when violence is muted. Behind, or rather in the neighborhood of, the official rationality and the rule of law to which the modern state is officially committed, lies the secret life of the state. Feldman shows how stories of photographs displayed in the briefing room of security officials become part of the rumors through which notions of the secret rituals of the state's repressive apparatus circulate. The rumors derive their authenticity from the everyday ecology of fear, mistrust, and anxiety in which life is lived in the zones of emergency.

These issues are further explored in several essays and show how the secret life of the state has its corresponding affect in the everyday ecology of fear and greed. Emma Tarlo, in her contribution ("Body and Space in a Time of Crisis: Sterilization and Resettlement during the Emergency in Delhi"), demonstrates how two administrative schemes, the Resettlement Scheme and the Family Planning Scheme, were implemented during the National Emergency declared in India in 1975. Though ostensibly formulated to provide housing for the poor and to control the burgeoning population, their mode of implementation ended up by making the poor into partners in the coercive programs of the state. Given the atmosphere of fear in this period when all fundamental rights were suspended, the lower echelons of the bureaucracy were under tremendous compulsion to meet targets and produce results. As part of bureaucratic procedures, claims to housing were made dependent upon the production of certificates of sterilization, though this connection was never officially acknowledged. This translated at local levels into a structure of co-victimhood—people searched for poorer relatives or neighbors who could be induced to undergo sterilization for money. An informal market in certificates arose in which the poor migrants, beggars, or other homeless people could be induced to undergo sterilization, and the certificates were sold to those who needed to show that they had motivated others, so that they could keep their jobs or their houses. By portraying the poor as active participants in the implementation of state policies of repression, rather than passive victims or noble resisters, Tarlo is able to show how the political regime of the National Emergency was able to draw different sections of people through fear or greed into its implementation.

Compelling cases for further understanding how the pathologies of the state get folded into everyday life are provided in the accounts of the destruction of the family under the long, unrelenting violence of the regime of apartheid in South Africa and the terror of populations caught between the violence of the state and the terrorist organizations in Sri Lanka. But if the pathologies of the state acquire a life in the everyday, then we need to interrogate our idea of the ordinary. Is the ordinary a site of the uneventful, or does it have the nature of something *recovered* in the face of terrible tragedies?

INTERROGATING THE ORDINARY

The two essays dealing with the themes of family, kinship, and the shaping of masculinity in South Africa by Pamela Reynolds (“The Ground of All Making: State Violence, the Family, and Political Activists”) and Mamphela Ramphele (“Teach Me How to Be a Man: An Exploration of the Definition of Masculinity”) show how institutions of family and kinship which were singled out for destruction during the apartheid regime were bent, shaped, and deformed by the policies and programs of the state. There is an important difference in the cohorts of young men described by these two authors. Reynolds is narrativizing the lives of the young who were active participants in the Soweto rebellions, who could forge meaningful models of masculinity through engagement with the political process. Ramphele, on the other hand, is dealing with the ruinous consequences of apartheid on local communities. One of the most poignant points made by Ramphele is that the relations between the sexes and the intergenerational connections on which the flow of everyday life is premised were themselves destroyed under the policies of apartheid. There is a high prevalence of sexual abuse in the localities she studied. Intergenerational connections were broken as young boys were forced to do battle with “fathers” who controlled the squatter camps with the help of South African police. Thus, while there is an adherence *in form* to traditional norms of male initiation, the affirmation of maleness promised through intergenerational connections within the community of men has been completely broken down by the wars between fathers and comrades, among other wars. The definition of what it is to be a child is forcefully shaped by the experience of the ongoing violence in which children have played major roles. As one woman said to the researchers, “What is worse—letting children handle corpses and preside over funerals or getting them to settle family disputes?” Ramphele’s engagement with the youth she describes is not only to show why it becomes so difficult under such conditions of violence to fulfill life projects that tradition enjoins, but also to ask how a young generation brought up under a brutal regime may be taught to take up fresh responsibilities as a new regime is brought into being. Her insights have much to offer on questions of what responsibilities toward the

young need to be addressed as societies such as that of South Africa make a transition to democratic regimes and responsible governance.

Ethnography of this kind makes many of the concepts offered in recent years to explain brutal violence of civil society appear too mechanical. There is a slow erosion through which connections between generations, as in this case, or loss of trust in one's known world happen in the shadow of violence. Without a sense of people's unremitting engagement with violence in their everyday lives, through which their subjectivity is produced, it would be difficult to understand the manner in which their access to established contexts and trusted categories disappears. Patricia Lawrence, in her contribution ("Violence, Suffering, Amman: The Work of Oracles in Sri Lanka's Eastern War Zone"), puts it with devastating simplicity: "In Eastern Sri Lanka there is a pervasive sense of living out life without the possibility of extrication from the unrelenting political violation pressing upon daily life." Lawrence's essay provides one of the most powerful ethnographies on how the old maps and charts that guided people in their relation to the ordinary have disappeared. People have to "unlearn" normal reactions—for instance, they learn how *not* to respond to cries from a neighboring house in case their reactions are being watched by the security police or one of the terrorist organizations and are interpreted as sympathy for one or the other political cause. The grounds on which trust in everyday life is built seem to disappear, revealing the ordinary as *uncanny* and in need of being recovered rather than something having the quality of a taken-for-granted world in which trust can be unhesitantly placed.

We see this particular quality of everyday life as the loss of *context* even in face-to-face relations, as these are bent and distorted by the powerful social forces emanating from the state as well as terrorist, insurgency, or resistance movements. As faith in trusted categories disappears, there is a feeling of extreme contingency and vulnerability in carrying out everyday activities, a feeling to which all the essays provide testimony in one way or another. As Daniel points out in his essay, yesterday's terrorist could be today's prime minister. Everyday life is then something that has to be recovered in the face of a skepticism that surrounds it like a ditch. One is not safe simply because one never left home.

The relation between local structures of feeling and the large events that work their way into local communities is not easy to describe. Commenting on the diachronic dimension of this linkage, Appadurai (1996) suggests that local readings of macro events or cascades become shot through with local imaginings of broader regional, national, or international events. He goes on to state, however, that "the trouble with such local readings is that they are often silent or literally unobservable, except in the smallest of passing comments. . . . They are part of the incessant murmur of urban political discourse and its constant undramatic cadences. But people and groups at

this most local level generate those structures of feeling that over time provide the discursive field within which the explosive rumors, dramas, and speeches of the riot can take hold" (153).

Deepak Mehta's essay in this volume ("Circumcision, Body, Masculinity: The Ritual Wound and Collective Violence") discusses precisely this question—how do local structures of feeling provide the discursive field within which the speech of riots takes place? The transitions he suggests are much subtler than even such a sensitive thinker as Appadurai can imagine. Mehta starts with a classical, thick description of the ritual of circumcision in an Indian Muslim community to show how this ritual encodes masculinity on the body and simultaneously marks the transition in the life of a child from having a "Hindu" uncircumcised body to the circumcised body appropriate to a Muslim male. But what Mehta is further interested in is to show how the notion of the Muslim as a circumcised body travels from the context of the ritual to that of exegesis in male conversations in everyday life. In everyday discursive talk, he argues, circumcision becomes a *verbal* rather than a *corporeal sign*, designated as *musalmani* (the making of a Muslim), through which men articulate the differences between Hindu and Muslim male identity. In his fascinating account of the circulation of these signs, Mehta reveals the slippage between the ideas of circumcision, the making of a Muslim, and castration—slippage which transforms the Muslim body, in the eyes of the Hindu, into a bestial body. The movement and slippage between the verbal signs leads to the reconstitution of the Muslim as one who is unable to respect boundaries necessary for the maintenance of social life: those between pure and impure, sexual abandon and control, man and animal. This magma of significations crystallizes during communal riots when the discourse of *musalmani* and *khatna*, both referring to rituals of circumcision and the dense encoding of maleness on the body, are completely effaced and replaced by the notions of *katua* (castration; lit., one who is cut), a kind of lack, circumcision becoming castration.

Examples of similar linguistic transformation, and especially the theme of animalizing a victim through verbal slippage, draw upon a rich cosmology in many cultures (see, for instance, Gilsenan 1996). Mehta's essay is a salutary reminder that face-to-face relations in local communities are fraught with the potential for violence and that the shifting of contexts as signaled in the use of different terms shows the impregnation of everyday life by the potential for violence. The point is that while nationalist or separatist projects might have further complicated the question of how identities are defined, the potential for effacing the concreteness of relationships and replacing them by imagined identities such as that of "the castrated ones" or "the sacrificial beasts" is equally embedded in the logic of everyday life. It is true that these are not the imagined identities created by nationalist or global discourses, but they are as removed from face-to-face relations

as identities created by such processes as enumeration and classification of census reports.

REMAKING THE WORLD IN THE SHADOW OF VIOLENCE

Interestingly, while everyday life is fraught with the potential of danger, as many of these essays show, it is in the institutions of everyday life itself that we find the making of hope. Thus, despite the fact that under the regime of apartheid the black family was singled out for destruction, it was in the family that the youth who led and participated in the struggle against apartheid found shelter and solace. Reynolds's essay gives a moving description of the capacity of mothers to hold and support their children in times of terror, forming a counterpoint to the dominant ecology of fear and hatred. Reynolds offers an important methodology for looking at family in times of stress. She isolates co-residence as a factor, which provides an index to the political turmoil of the period. Thus the residential configurations, she suggests, cannot be analyzed as phases of the developmental cycle of domestic groups formed only by the gentle rhythms of births, marriages, and deaths. Rather, they indicate the processes of fleeing and hiding as children and youth faced and struggled with the brutality of the political regimes.

Veena Das's essay in this volume, "The Act of Witnessing: Violence, Poisonous Knowledge, and Subjectivity," similarly addresses the way in which the gruesome and terrifying brutalities of the Partition of India left a legacy of relationships marked by suspicion, bitterness, and betrayal not only between the Hindus and Muslims but also between men and women of the same community and even the same kinship groups. The violence that is folded into intimate, interpersonal relationships comes to constitute what Das, following Martha Nussbaum (1992), calls "poisonous knowledge." She shows that the way out of this knowledge for many women was not an ascent into some kind of godliness but a descent into everyday life. Through the life of one woman, Asha, Das shows how women engaged in the patient repair of relationships, establishing continuity between the estranged generations and the estranged sexes. The cultural memory of the Partition of India is made up of stories of women who chose to sacrifice their lives and thus were valorized in family narratives and popular culture in the Punjab. The trajectories of many female lives did not correspond to this culturally sanctioned memory: such women were often erased from familial accounts of the past. Yet the case of Asha shows that even the most injurious signs of violation could be taken up as part of one's own being to radically redefine the self and one's place in the world. The events of the Partition became points of origin of a new configuration of the self and the social world for Asha. Her case shows that subjectivity, understood as the lived and imaginary experience of the subject, creates both resistance to the expected

norms through which women were expected to perform their gender identity and an elaborate subjection to these norms. These women “performed” their gender identities in a manner that made them the castaways of the official culture. Yet it seems to Das that they transformed the social death handed over to them into the birth of culture through acts of forgiveness.

Many who write about so-called violence-prone areas or a culture of violence often assume that powerful social scripts of vengeance and hatred get mechanically translated into social action. Such are the assumptions behind models of violence contained, for instance, in the genealogical models of the feud, in which agency is displaced from the person to a structural position. Collective violence particularly presents the temptation to homogenize a collectivity through languages of patriotism and betrayal in popular representations, which is then mimicked in anthropological accounts of this violence. Jonathan Spencer’s essay (“On Not Becoming a ‘Terrorist’: Problems of Memory, Agency, and Community in the Sri Lankan Conflict”) reformulates the question to ask: How do some individuals manage to *resist* the collective trance created through social pressures to join the violence? The figure of Piyasena, the villager who rejects the idea of community created through violence but can express his own subject position only through acts of avoidance, indicates that within the dominant ecology of fear, it is not easy to find individuals who actively resist the violence. But acts such as running from the scene of violence may not express consent; rather, these may be the only ways available to individuals to express their distance or even their disapproval of violence. Spencer’s essay further shows that there are different ways of imaging violence which anchor the individual to the community. Thus the figure of the martyr provided the central trope through which the discourse of the Tamil militants sought to both demand sacrifices from individuals and give meaning to the deaths that have occurred in this movement. Piyasena’s resistance to the seduction of this trope shows that nonviolence requires as much effort within this climate of alternating affects of fear and euphoria as does the capacity to engage in violent acts.

If Mehta’s essay showed how local structures of feeling are generated to sustain the potential for violence, Lawrence, Spencer, Reynolds, and Das show the heterogeneity of these local structures of feeling and the potential for a different stance toward violence contained in them. Clearly the anthropological text must take into account these varied subject positions as well as the temporal realignments that prolonged engagement with violence seems to create at the level of local society. The identity of the individual cannot be seen as subsumed by the identity of the group, despite pressures toward totalization and clear demarcation of groups in times of terror. To the image of the consumption of violence through its mediatization we can now add the image of its consumption within local structures of feeling.

While the potential of dramatic stories relayed in rumors or in tea shop conversations to generate violence is important, as shown by Feldman and Mehta, there are also the counterimages of digesting, containing, and sealing through which local societies deal with this violence. These are especially important in the narratives of women (but not exclusively so) as they describe their work of protecting the future generations from the spirals of continuing violence.

MEMORY AND RENARRATIVIZING: THE CALL OF STORIES

How is the act of writing (on) violence to be conceptualized? This question haunts many of the authors of these essays and in fact mirrors the struggle with representation in the accounts of survivors and witnesses of violence. Valentine Daniel, for instance, takes us to the fieldwork context of Sri Lanka ("Mood, Moment, and Mind"), where a daughter who had witnessed her father's murdered body being dragged away, tied to an army jeep, in the midst of the applause and cheering of soldiers, asks him at one moment to write about the way her father was made to meet his brutal death and, at another moment, never to write about her father because the way he was made to die was a direct negation of all he had lived by. How is the writing to be commensurate to this kind of divided responsibility?

The survivor's tale or the sufferer's lament may be seen as examples of stories called forth out of what Lawrence Langer (1991, 1997) calls the "ruins of memory." But do the voices that speak through the wounded call victims to say something that is not theirs to possess? For a story to count as memory it must have a feeling of pastness about it, yet violence distorts the sense of time so that it becomes difficult to say when the past enters the present. In Daniel's words, "When the past facts return in memory and experience only to reactualize themselves, the past does not enter the flow of time in the full sense." Thus victims of violence as narrators appear as those who have already lost the means to author their stories. Perhaps for this reason one of the struggles of survivors is to find the means of reestablishing authorship over their stories.

Two opposite ways of responding to the loss are evident in the accounts given in these ethnographies: both relate to the collective authorization of individual experience. In the first case a culturally authorized form draws out a story of terror to return the subject to her everyday life. The stories that are made present by Saktirani's enactment of terror in Lawrence's telling; or those that have taken the form of poisonous knowledge in the life of Asha, the protagonist of Das's essay; or the accounts related to the researchers in South Africa do not become part of the official public memory. In the case of South Africa some of these stories are now part of the public memory through the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Com-

mission, but others continue to be circulated only in small private circles away from the eyes of the judicial work being performed by the Commission. Take the poignant example of the young boy who is in a demonstration, arrested by the police, and imprisoned. Reynolds describes how—hungry, alone, and afraid—he suddenly hears his name being called by his mother, who, unable to get any information about him, had simply trudged along from one prison to another, calling out his name. The feel of this cadence is registered only on the walls of the child's memory, though many would have read accounts of the brutal torture and imprisonment of young children in South Africa. When we ask how the subject is produced under such conditions of violence, we have to recognize that much work on the production of the subject is invisible to public commissions and judicial inquiries. Such repertoires of sensory memories call for authorization in culturally recognized forms but paradoxically also exceed these forms. In this sense the various lines of connection and exclusion established between these forms complicate the relation between cultural memory, public memory, and the sensory memory of individuals.

An opposite direction may be discerned in the relation between collective hurts and public recognition of these hurts in some of the other essays, as in the cases of Guatemala and Nigeria described respectively by Kay Warren and Murray Last. How a society deals with the violence of memories as it moves from active warfare to low-intensity peace is demonstrated in the pan-Mayan movement in Guatemala. Kay Warren's analysis of Mayan multiculturalism and the violence of memories shows how Mayan intellectuals dismantle the *authoritativeness* of accounts of sixteenth-century Spanish chronicles that recorded the initial contacts with indigenous peoples in the New World and are still seen as neutral windows to the national past. Reading the texts against the grain, as many subaltern historians have done with other colonial records, the Mayan intellectual Enrique Sam Colop is able to authorize a new account of the past in which the reverberation of terror through centuries is mastered and molded. Connective flashes that are attuned to the reverberations of signals that have to do with torture, confession, and punishment from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries are not one-way temporal insights, Warren suggests. These flashes represent the reflection of present violence and racism in a past of which the present is a part.

Thus the question of memory and representation is not only a question of the authenticity of memories, as if these were written in stone, but the struggle to author one's stories in relation to representations that seek to impose a different kind of truth on them. The pressure to create a different kind of past for oneself is related to how one deals with the violence of memories in the present. The notion of memory as text may be complemented perhaps by the idea that work is required to forge a future in relation to a

violent past. In our contemporary political context, with its emphasis on the “politics of recognition,” such work is oriented toward creating a public sphere in which the hurts of the victims may be voiced: dramatic gestures in which representatives of the state have offered “regrets” or “apologies” for historical wrongs committed on behalf of the state come to mind.¹ At one level such gestures are important because they signify an acknowledgment of the “crimes” of the state even when it has acted within the “law.” As performative gestures, however, the “apologies” acquire force only if notions of “sincerity” and “authenticity” can be read in these gestures and if there can be an agreement on the identification of communities as perpetrators and victims as these are crafted through such gestures. On this point Murray Last’s essay (“Reconciliation and Memory in Postwar Nigeria”) offers important and novel insights. Taking us back to the Nigerian civil war and Biafra’s attempted secession in the tumultuous period of 1966 to 1970, Last argues that the policy of reconciliation was a move made by the government midway through the war as an inducement to bring the fighting to an early end. Thus reconciliation was not coupled with “truth” and was oriented toward different kinds of ends—those that had to do with resumption of everyday life rather than with justice or healing. As Last states it, “Hurt was shifted out of the public domain and became a dimension of private memory . . . there was no public judgment on what had been suffered, no reparations, no apology; almost no one was held to be accountable for what they had done. Nor were any medals awarded.”

Last’s essay then addresses the issues of memory and recovery that arose in local communities away from public debate. He points to the divisions within the category of victims—the Biafrans who could re-create community on the basis of the solidarity born of “heroic failure” are distinguished from the communities on the margins that were divided by their differential support of Biafra or Nigeria. Further, not all communities had the same resources to benefit from the state policies of reconciliation, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. Thus, while dramatic gestures of apology construct the victims as singular communities, the work of rehabilitation sees survivors as having very different capacities to reengage with everyday life. Reconciliation therefore is a complex process of reestablishing sociality, in which the differential stakes of not only the perpetrators and victims (different from the vanquished), but also of witnesses and bystanders, must be understood in order for a return to everyday life to become possible.

The major part of this volume is dedicated to the understanding of violence in extreme situations, but the organizing tropes are not those of horror and mesmerizing brutality—instead there is a turn toward the everyday, within which the authors have engaged questions of violence and subjectivity.² Thus, whether the context is that of the ecology of fear or the redefinition of family, violence is seen in these ethnographies as having a

temporal depth that influences the patterns of sociality. The stake in the everyday takes us further into an exploration of how violence is embedded in the “normal” patterns of sociality in Western industrialized societies.

Describing what he calls “the *violences* of everyday life,” Arthur Kleinman makes a case for understanding the variety of ways in which structural violence affects people throughout the social order. He argues that the lion’s share of ethnographic description has dealt with the violence of everyday life almost as if that form of violence were equivalent to the social experience in shanty towns and slums in poor countries or in the poorest inner-city ghettos of wealthy nations. Yet violence that is multiple and mundane may be all the more fundamental, because it is out of such hidden or secret violence that images of people are shaped and experiences of groups are coerced. One telling example is the manner in which the experiences of hemophilia patients in North America who were exposed to infected blood products has been “normalized” through routine bureaucratic procedures. Is there an insight here regarding how disaster is absorbed through bureaucratic procedures and is made to appear as part of a world engaged in “business as usual”? It seems to us that to understand the cases of extreme violence described in many of the essays in this volume, another generation of ethnographers must describe further the routinization and domestication of the experiences of violence. On the other hand, it is imperative to see how the violences which may have become buried in the routines of the everyday may acquire life—how unfinished social stories may be resumed at different times to animate feelings of hate and anger.

The essay by Margaret Lock on the world of transplant technology (“The Quest for Human Organs and the Violence of Zeal”) seems far removed from the scenes of violence and death described in most of these essays. Its importance lies in the new directions in which it takes the discussion on violence. Lock argues that the rhetoric of progress within which scientific experimentation takes place masks a violence of zeal. In the world of transplant technology which she scrutinizes, bodies of donors and recipients of organs are brought into intimate relations. This coupling is, however, elided in the success stories of this technology by silencing the plight of those from whom organs are taken. The protocols through which death is defined and ethical rules for procurement of organs formulated have to be interpreted in specific institutional contexts where subtle distinctions between deserving recipients and nondeserving ones are put into place. Thus, while the *rhetoric* of transplant surgery focuses on its success in saving lives, the *practices* show a far greater ambivalence. Lock suggests that until the practices on which the progress of science is based can be named as violence and the ramifications of these practices in the lives of communities and individuals are documented, the language of these discourses will continue to mask this violence as progress. We must note here that Lock does not take an essen-