

3 *Representing trauma and collectivizing emotions*

The previous two chapters explored the personal as well as the social nature of trauma, showing that trauma is an intensely emotional experience that can paradoxically fragment and help to constitute communities. My inquiry sought to further our political understanding of trauma, specifically probing how exactly this dual process takes place. To do so, I turned to the emotional dimensions of trauma. As a psychological and affective, sensory encounter, trauma is experienced in the intensity of its emotional impact and in the absence of words able to sufficiently express it. However, trauma is at the same time an inherently social phenomenon, capable of affecting not simply those who endure it directly, but also those who are either forced or strangely compelled to bear witness to it, from both near and far-off distances.

The present chapter constitutes the third and final step in establishing my framework for appreciating the links between trauma, emotion and political community. The chapter argues – and demonstrates – that processes of representation are key to the wider social, political and emotional significance of traumatic events. Even while inevitably incomplete in their expression of trauma, representations allow traumatic occurrences to be known beyond immediate experiences: they play a key role in translating ostensibly individual experiences into a phenomenon able to be understood by many. Representations are as such mediums through which trauma can attain and proliferate wider social meanings – meanings that can be politically influential and help to constitute communities in various national and transnational contexts.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section comprises a conceptual examination of representation and narrative theory. It explores how practices of representation and narrative give shape and meaning to social realities. Here, I show that ways of seeing and understanding representations of reality are intimately connected to how individuals are socially situated. Second, I show that even though trauma belies the words used to express it, modes of representation still

manage to transcribe trauma into a “language” through which trauma can be collectively understood and enacted. Representations do this by shaping not only trauma’s expression (and thus its subsequent ability to be communicated and known within a particular context) but also the social meanings such expressions convey. In other words, representations locate trauma within particular historically embedded ways of understanding; they frame, provide a lens to interpret, and constitute “trauma” by appealing to established discourses concerning what it means to experience extreme events. Trauma is in this way understood and made meaningful in the context of a wider community.

The third section then examines more closely the politics of representing trauma. I demonstrate that post-trauma solidarity and community can seem to take place almost “automatically,” as a result of the always implicit social dimensions of experiencing and recovering from trauma – and through individuals’ need to overcome isolation and locate a community that cushions trauma’s pain. Traumatic events and histories can also be unconsciously or strategically manipulated through politics and the media in order to foster a sense of community that enhances social and political cohesion. I further suggest that the process of representing trauma can help to constitute new, possibly more inclusive political communities. This is a somewhat underappreciated view, yet one that I argue warrants further attention, particularly in international relations where trauma is not only an everyday but also – as a result of global media networks – a potentially deeply politically constitutive experience capable of transcending national boundaries. Fourth and finally, I return full circle, so to speak, and underline that there is a compelling need to systematically examine the role emotions play in bestowing trauma’s various representations with shared meaning and political value. I do so by further scrutinizing the social and discursive basis of emotion, and by underlining that individuals make sense and meaning of trauma representations at least partially through historically embedded forms of feeling. The links between representations and emotions are in this way a key site of identity, community, politics and power.

Representation, narrative and discourse

No longer is it contentious to suggest that social reality is constructed, and thus contingent. Countless scholars – from not merely politics

and international relations but a broad range of social science and even natural science backgrounds and perspectives – study the way in which the social world is mediated and constituted through practices of representation.¹ From this perspective, objects and events cannot be construed outside of the modes of expression that animate them. How the world is perceived and ultimately understood is inseparable from the processes of presentation and apprehension through which it appears.

As active and persuasive as recent studies of representation have been in politics and international relations, the centrality of representations has, however, remained largely confined to poststructuralist and social constructivist theorizing of the international.² Even if more traditional approaches accept the basic tenet that reality is constituted through representations, the full significance of this fact does not seem to be taken seriously: an understanding of the links between representations and the sociopolitical realities that representations construct has not managed to infiltrate and entirely expand orthodox ways of conceiving of world politics. One reflection of this is that in many global political situations “realpolitik” continues to predominate, even though a realist spirit of power politics was itself long ago proved to be a social construction.³ This is why I now go back to explore the inherent, constitutive role of representations in more detail. I draw from a diverse range of literatures to do so, yet I also stress that there

¹ For instance, Jerome Bruner, “The Narrative Construction of Reality,” *Critical Inquiry*, 18.1 (1991), 1–21; Stuart Hall (ed.) *Representations: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage and the Open University, 1997); Michael J. Shapiro, *The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography, and Policy Analysis* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); Bas C. van Fraassen, *Scientific Representation: Paradoxes of Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

² In politics and international relations, the most influential texts for my present inquiry have been Roland Bleiker, *Aesthetics and World Politics* (New York: Palgrave, 2009); David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Roxanne Lynn Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of Representation in North–South Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

³ Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” *International Organization*, 46.2 (1992), 391–425.

are significant ambiguities and conceptual differences in the various literatures. Articulating all positions is beyond the scope of this one chapter. In what follows, I thus outline, first, the significance of the relationship between representation, narrative, discourse and social reality, and, second, why in turn an understanding of representation is crucial to appreciating the linkages between trauma and political community.

When literary theory, history and cultural studies literatures discuss “representations of reality,” what they are referring to are essentially images, reproductions of people, objects and events as they appear and come to constitute the reality before each of us. Practices of representation – whether they are linguistic, bodily, or aesthetic forms of expression and description – are the mediums through which the world comes to be known and understood. According to art critic John Berger, representations are “an attempt to explain how, either metaphorically or literally, you see things.”⁴ Here, a connection between seeing, telling and knowing is implicit. Ways of seeing and interpreting representations of reality are affected by beliefs, by the things thought to be known, and how that knowledge shapes one’s perspective.⁵ Similarly, for something to be known, literatures suggest that it must be susceptible to some form of description. It must be free to be captured through the representational reflexes most familiar to our everyday – language.⁶

Even though representations of reality appear to be “real,” they are interpretations rather than fact. Representations do not mimic reality, but are instead more like a painting with shifting shades of gray. The part of the picture that is in shadow depends upon where one stands in order to see. Simply put, how reality is represented is never just about the object, event or person under observation. Representations of reality are inevitably concerned with the relation between subject and object; practices of representation concern the relationship between who is seeing and who or what is being seen.⁷ An object or

⁴ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 1972), 9.

⁵ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, p. 8.

⁶ See Elaine Scarry, *Resisting Representation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 3–41.

⁷ Shapiro, *The Politics of Representation*, p. xi; Roland Bleiker, “The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 30.3 (2001), 503–539, at 511–514.

event cannot, in other words, be represented through mediums that are value-free. Ways of representing reality reflect how one is situated in relation to an other – whether that other be an object, person or even an event or type of encounter. Bound up in the values of the perceiver, practices of representation cannot portray the world as it is, for both the world and strategies of perception do not exist as pure objective fact.⁸ Representations are thus interpretations, inevitably subjective abstractions about the nature of reality. Indeed, representational genres can in one sense be considered to be stories, spun in a particular way and in particular light, rather than the “factual” depictions of reality that they are often unknowingly taken to be.

Considering representational practices in this way highlights the contextually bound nature of not only modes of representation, but also the ways of seeing that shape how representations are understood. Processes of socialization engender responses toward particular concepts, ideologies, emotional schema and behavioral stimuli. Or, said differently, various cultural, linguistic, psychological and historically embedded perceptual codes and processes constitute one’s experience of the world. These processes have enabling and disabling effects on how individuals understand and find meaning in the world, in turn prompting representations of reality to be interpreted through a particularistic lens. It is in this way – through the genres used to represent reality and the techniques of abstraction that allow us to interpret the world around us – that objects and events gain the meanings that they do. Hayden White explains that the various ways reality is represented are part of a cultural “meta-code.” They are “messages” through which “the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted.”⁹ Lene Hansen likewise explains that representations situate reality by providing a “particular interpretative optic.”¹⁰ Representational practices provide and situate particular political issues and problems within a particular frame, or lens, which is central to how the respective phenomena come to be understood. As Hansen continues, political policies are in this way “dependent upon representations of the threat, country, security

⁸ See Jonathon Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), esp. pp. 19–20; Stuart Hall, “Introduction,” in Hall (ed.) *Representations*, pp. 1–13; Shapiro, *The Politics of Representation*, pp. xi–xii, 7–13.

⁹ White, *The Content of the Form*, p. 1.

¹⁰ Hansen, *Security as Practice*, p. 6.

problem, or crisis they seek to address.”¹¹ By appealing to socioculturally and historically embedded “orders of meaning,”¹² practices of representation provide mechanisms (of signification) through which reality can not only be described, but also distributed and made meaningful in a wider (or indeed, more limited) social or communal context.

For meaning to be shared, therefore, there must be some common standard or basis of perception, a shared social structure that unites individuals in the ability to interpret linguistic or otherwise-expressed meanings. Here, literature highlights the significance of language.¹³ According to early analyses of discourse and semiotics, the social world is carved up (and identities constituted) by the ways we speak. Words and their various connotations divide the world, creating social groupings (and identities) that are bound by the understandability of speech. This is not to suggest that verbal language is the only medium of communication. Critiques of this “linguistic turn” underline that individuals communicate through an array of nonverbal mechanisms just as much as they do speech.¹⁴ Gesture and visual stimulation are all equally regarded as powerful mediums of expression and representation.¹⁵ Yet, significant here is that even nonlinguistic, aesthetic forms of representation remain reliant upon language for wider social signification and meaning. Even while modes of representation are of a visual or visceral nature, language remains an instrumental component of how individuals “make sense” of aesthetic sources and what they perceive to be their meaning.

Recognizing the power and potential of language is, moreover, fundamental to understanding what John Tagg has called “the burden

¹¹ Hansen, *Security as Practice*, p. 6.

¹² Roland Barthes, “Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives,” in *Image, Music, Text* (London: Harper Collins, 1977), pp. 79–124.

¹³ Michael J. Shapiro (ed.), *Language and Politics* (New York: New York University Press, 1984); Michael J. Shapiro, *Language and Political Understanding: The Politics of Discursive Practices* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981). Explicitly on the linguistic constitution of identity, see Anne Norton, *Reflections on Political Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).

¹⁴ See Donald Brook, “On Non-Verbal Representation,” *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 37.3 (1997), 232–245.

¹⁵ See, for instance, Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without Ends*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 48–62; W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

of representation.”¹⁶ Because all representations are ultimately mediated through linguistic means, modes of representation gain meanings that are bound by one’s ability to understand that language. Power is, in this way, what is centrally at issue in practices of representation.¹⁷ Because practices of representation are value-laden and socially and discursively produced, they reflect the relations of power from which such values and forms of communication have been derived.¹⁸ They emerge from and appeal to particular contexts; they both shape and are shaped by communicative processes specific in space and time.

The concept of “narrative” is equally important to scholars of representation. “Narratives” can be commonly understood to be stories. When applied to real or even imagined events, narratives shape experiences so that they unfold as if occurring in a smooth continuous sequence or chain, like a story. Not necessarily fiction and yet also not indisputable fact, narratives construct a kind of life-flow, bestowing a pattern upon life and the happenings within it. They provide life with a beginning, a middle and an end, and in doing so they construct a vision of life as continuous, as a harmonious search for personal and social meaning irrespective of any discontinuity or disruption.¹⁹ Narratives can therefore help individuals to cope with confusion and chaos. Like practices of representation, narratives are not a simple reflection of events themselves. They are a construction, a linguistic and symbolic artifice, involving the creative and perceptive activity of the storyteller. In this way, narratives constitute an important and often invisible form of thought. Employed often unconsciously, David Olson comments that “[n]arrative is a natural, unreflective, uncritical form of discourse.”²⁰ For Olson, narratives are socially significant in that how

¹⁶ John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays in Photographies and Histories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988).

¹⁷ For an analysis of the nature of power in society and how it pervades discourse – the actions and language that constitutes the everyday, see Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Routledge, 2002); Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981).

¹⁸ Shapiro, *The Politics of Representation*, pp. 7–13; Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, pp. 21–22.

¹⁹ See Roland Barthes, “Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives,” in *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 79–82, 85–91; Richard Kearney, *On Stories* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 3–7, 129–131.

²⁰ David R. Olson, “Thinking About Narrative,” in Bruce K. Britton and A. D. Pelligrini (eds.), *Narrative Thought and Narrative Language* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1990), pp. 99–112, at p. 99.

individuals envisage their own “life narrative” – their own story – can affect how they conceptualize both their self and their relationships with others.

In a broad analysis of political history, art, psychotherapy and literature, Richard Kearney suggests that we are each compelled by a search for narrative. According to Kearney, a so-called narrative mission,²¹ prompting us to unravel and articulate even the darkest moments in our lives, characterizes human existence.²² So much is this the case that, for Kearney, an “unnarrated life” seems simply “not worth living.”²³ Implicit in our search for narrative is the desire for coherence and continuity – the desire to iron out any ill-suited unsubtleties that contradict how individuals have come to define their sense of self. In this sense, narratives can be understood as continually revised stories about the nature and meaning of both individual and social (and by extension, communal) existence.²⁴ A sense of narrative invites individuals to define their self and to view the world in ways that allow their own story to continue smoothly. John Lahr quips, “[w]e all need stories, but the story we need most is the continually revised one that we tell about ourselves.”²⁵ If something does not “fit” with how we consider our identity or purpose, it can be omitted, or perceived in a way that it does. Put differently, when it comes to constructing and reconstructing a sense of narrative, reality can simply be “bent into shape” – “narrativized” – through the practices employed to represent it.²⁶

Finally, to fully conceptualize the significance of both representations and narratives in framing (and constituting) political realities it is also important that we distinguish the role of discourse. While it is important to conceive of representational practices as distinct from

²¹ I borrow the term “narrative mission” from John Lahr, “Down and Out: Twenty-Seven Characters in Search of a Play,” *The New Yorker*, May 31, 2004, p. 92.

²² Kearney, *On Stories*, pp. 3–4, 125–129; and see also Richard Kearney, “Narrative and the Ethics of Remembrance,” in Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley (eds.), *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 18–32.

²³ Kearney, *On Stories*, p. 14.

²⁴ Kearney, *On Stories*, p. 129. Another author who explicitly credits story telling with providing both individuals and collectives with a sense of identity and meaning is William L. Randall, *The Stories We Are: An Essay on Self-Creation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

²⁵ Lahr, “Down and Out,” p. 91.

²⁶ Scarry, *Resisting Representation*, p. 3.

discourse, representations are an intrinsic element of the signification processes that constitute a discourse. Likewise, prominent social discourses are key indicators of how representations of reality are to be interpreted.

An understanding of discourse helps us to apprehend how the meanings attributed to representations are created and prioritized. Discourse is used, very broadly, to designate (either accepted or transgressive) ways of thinking about a particular issue or phenomena or about one's social world writ large; discourses encompass the codes, conventions and habits of language (spoken or otherwise) that mediate one's experience of the social world and bestow it with culturally and historically located meaning. To elaborate, I draw from Jennifer Milliken's classic article on the study of discourse in international politics. Milliken understands discourse as "structures of signification which construct social realities ... discourses make intelligible some ways of being in, and acting toward, the world, and of operationalizing a particular 'regime of truth' while excluding other possible modes of identity and action."²⁷ Roxanne Lynn Doty similarly suggests that "discourse delineates the terms of intelligibility whereby a particular 'reality' can be known and acted upon." While "inherently open-ended and incomplete ... discourse enables one to make sense of things."²⁸ Discourses often function silently, or implicitly; the beliefs and values they hold and communicate are not always overtly asserted. Indeed, discourses that possess most power draw some of their influence from their presupposed, "hidden" nature.²⁹ As Foucault put it, discourse is about "the said as much as the unsaid."³⁰ Examples would include, for

²⁷ Jennifer Milliken, "The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods," *European Journal of International Relations*, 5.2 (1999), 225–254, at 229.

²⁸ Roxanne Lynn Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of North–South Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 6. To be clear, discourses are "inherently incomplete" in so far that they can be reconstituted – legitimized and de-legitimized – over space and time in accordance with prevailing sociocultural norms and expectations.

²⁹ To analyze discourse is then "to make explicit what normally gets taken for granted." See Deborah Cameron, *Working with Spoken Discourse* (London: Sage, 2001), p. 7; see also Lilie Chouliaraki and Norman Fairclough, *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

³⁰ Michel Foucault, "The Confession of the Flesh," in Colin Gordon (ed.), *1972–1977*, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mephan and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon, 1980), p. 194.

instance, discourses on gender and sexuality, and nationalism. Even when unspoken and inexplicitly articulated, the normative conventions associated with, for instance, what it means to be either a “man” or “woman,” or “Chinese” or “Australian” are in particular contexts very clear.

A scholarly examination or analysis of discourse is concerned with uncovering the either implicit or explicit social symbols and codes that signify and constitute – thereby enabling and disabling – meaning in particular circumstances. Therefore, when referring to “discourse” through the guise of a text or an analysis of a text, policy, image or even gesture or action (let us say, for example, X), what is most important are the social practices, norms, customs, ways of thinking and perceiving that inextricably confine how X is interpreted. This is to say that prevailing discourses produce the “truth” and “knowledge” about representations of X, which signify and feed back to an audience the respective (contextually bound) content or meaning.³¹ Significant here is that discourses “work to define and enable, and also to silence and to exclude ... [by] endorsing a certain common sense ... [and by] making other modes of categorizing and judging meaningless, impracticable, inadequate or otherwise disqualified.”³² It is in this way that discourse – as much as the representations and narratives through which reality is understood – is a key part of the constitution of social and political realities.

Certain critical questions for politics – and in particular for our understanding of political identity – emerge from conceptualizing the constitutive role of representation, narrative and discourse. Most potently, in the words of Doty, “[t]hinking in terms of representational practices highlights the arbitrary, constructed, and political nature ... through which we have come to ‘know’ the world and its inhabitants.”³³ Continuing, she argues that to examine representations is thereby to scrutinize how “we have come to ‘know’ the world and its inhabitants” and how this knowledge has in turn “enabled and justified certain practices and policies.”³⁴ How an actor views itself, then,

³¹ See Milliken, “The Study of Discourse in International Relations,” 228–230, 232.

³² Milliken, “The Study of Discourse in International Relations,” 229.

³³ Doty, *Imperial Encounters*, p. 3.

³⁴ Doty, *Imperial Encounters*, p. 3.

is not based on a pre-given sense of self and interests, but is deeply linked to its narratively constructed self. Practices of representation frame how individuals understand reality and situate themselves in relation to others, and are thus inherently connected to the formation and renegotiation of identity. In a comprehensive analysis of narrative and politics, Maureen Whitebrook also understands group or collective identity as a narrative construct. According to Whitebrook, “identity requires the telling of stories both by and about the self.”³⁵ The sense of belonging that is necessary for the configuration of community can also be understood as bound by such stories, or, more generally speaking, by the representational practices that constitute an individual’s subjectivity and how an individual’s subjectivity inevitably situates them in a particular social and collective context.

These insights are particularly significant to the task of understanding the social impact of trauma. Like all events, trauma presents itself in the social sphere not through an authentic mechanism of description, but through the representational practices considered best able to express it. Such practices are inevitably subjective and constituted through the social and cultural discourses and narrative structures in which they have been derived. Recognizing this is key to understanding the social and political significance of trauma. Even though in one sense victims and witnesses feel as if they live alone with their suffering, representational practices allow trauma and associated emotions to be in some way conceived of and worked through in a social and communal context. Indeed, the practices used to represent individual trauma enable particular understandings of trauma to resonate and constitute a “trauma story,” which is much more than a collective account of the individual encounters that make it up. Stories that individuals tell themselves and each other about trauma are in this respect “performative”; they are socially constituted and also constitutive, in that they can change the way that individuals perceive of themselves and their relationships with others. Recognizing the political power and potential of representations and narratives is, therefore, key to understanding how traumatic events can pave the way for the restoration or reconstruction of social cohesion and community.

³⁵ Maureen Whitebrook, *Identity, Narrative, and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 22.

Representing trauma, no matter how inadequately

To comprehend how traumatic experiences and the emotions that accompany them can help to constitute communities, it is therefore necessary to examine how processes of representation and interpretation shape the wider social meanings that traumatic events and histories can acquire. I need to examine how an experience as emotional and sensory as trauma translates into language (as well as other forms of expression), which in turn makes possible the shared understandings that bind community.

At first glance, however, the centrality of representation sits uneasily with the communicative crisis that trauma scholars identify. For these scholars, much of trauma's impact is felt in the challenge of its representation.³⁶ While all objects and events are understood and ascribed meaning through processes of representation, literature suggests that trauma at least initially resists it. Jenny Edkins comments that "[c]ommunicating trauma is very difficult ... [trauma] is something that cannot be conveyed in speech."³⁷ Elsewhere, Ulrich Baer likens the problem of trauma's representation to an "enigma."³⁸ Encoded more in sensations and images than in verbal narrative, trauma evades the parameters of everyday expression, and in doing so highlights the limits of the representational codes and processes upon which human existence relies for understanding and meaning. Trauma's "enigma" can in this way be seen as the challenge of placing traumatic experiences within a coherent psychological, textual and sociohistorical context.

This "crisis of representation" that accompanies trauma is telling, for the inability to psychologically and linguistically process traumatic experiences results not simply in a loss of faith in oneself, but also

³⁶ See, for instance, Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Leigh Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2000); Nancy K. Miller and Jason Tougas (eds.), *Extremities: Trauma, Testimony, and Community* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

³⁷ Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, p. 41.

³⁸ Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002), p. 8.

in a detachment from the various communities that victims and witnesses had previously thought themselves situated. Meaning seems to fall away following trauma; trauma becomes an experience distinguished foremost by its abjection.³⁹ Psychological research that has examined the everyday life and survival of trauma victims and witnesses demonstrates the significance of trauma's representational inadequacy. Studies of Holocaust survivors and their children, returned Vietnam veterans, victims of political persecution, torture, rape and sexual abuse suggest that speaking about or otherwise representing traumatic experiences is central to regaining a sense of familiar social context and narrative flow of life.⁴⁰ Yet, how can those who experience trauma reinstate the so-called narrative flow of their lives, whilst that very flow is fragmented by an experience that haunts, seeming to exist outside of or beyond representational and narrative control? If modes of representation provide the link between trauma and the possibility of moving on, how do victims and witnesses express an experience that is so strangely resistant to representation? And is there something politically significant about the apparent "space" or "gap" between the (affective) experiencing of trauma and the practices used to represent it?

Despite the linguistic challenge and emotional difficulty of recounting trauma, those who endure or bear witness to traumatic events often feel the need to provide testimonial accounts of what they have witnessed or suffered.⁴¹ Sarah Kofman writes that even though words

³⁹ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); Michael Humphrey, "Horror, Abjection and Terror," in *The Politics of Atrocity and Reconciliation: From Terror to Trauma* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 11–25.

⁴⁰ See, respectively, J. E. Dimsdale (ed.), *Survivors, Victims, and Perpetrators: Essays on the Nazi Holocaust* (Washington, DC: Hemisphere, 1980); Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991); Barry Heard, *Well Done, Those Men: Memoirs of a Vietnam Veteran* (Carlton: Scribe Books, 2005); John Conroy, *Unspeakable Acts, Ordinary People: The Dynamics of Torture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (London: Basic Books, 1992).

⁴¹ See, for instance, Susan J Brison, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 2002), pp. 86–104; Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, pp. 175–181; Humphrey, *The Politics of Atrocity and Reconciliation*, pp. 105–108; Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies*; Dori Laub,

feel inadequate, victims and witnesses live with the feeling that there is a “duty to speak” of and somehow transmit the debilitating nature of their trauma.⁴² Dori Laub goes as far as to claim that trauma survivors “tell their stories in order to survive.”⁴³ So desperately do they seek confirmation for what they have experienced that they continue to search for ways of sufficiently communicating the impact of their trauma.

Speaking of trauma – regardless of how inadequately, unsuccessfully or incompletely – is thus one medium through which victims and witnesses attempt to represent trauma. Language essentially translates the incomprehensible and ostensibly antisocial nature of trauma into comprehensible patterns of speech. Perhaps in some sense speech can be thought of as a constant, as the residue of a reality that has been torn apart by the shock, horror and dislocation of trauma. The logic behind a victim’s or witness’s search for language becomes clearer when speech is considered in this way. The communicative act of expressing and belatedly bearing witness (and thus reexperiencing) mediates and transforms trauma and traumatic memory into a more “normal” encounter, one that can be incorporated into the narratives that frame one’s everyday reality. Put differently, when transcribed into speech, trauma can be more readily integrated into the survivor’s sense of self and view of the world.⁴⁴ Therefore, narrating trauma – telling a story about trauma and linguistically encoding one’s emotions – re-associates victims with the social world and enables them to reconstruct a sense of normality.

Because of this, finding a language for traumatic experiences is generally understood as therapeutic.⁴⁵ Words provide a way of transforming what feels like a meaningless experience into something meaningful, and additionally provides a mechanism through which trauma can be understood by others. Akin to Judith Butler, Susan Brison suggests

“Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle,” in Cathy Caruth (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 61–75.

⁴² Sarah Kofman, *Smothered Words*, trans. Madaleine Dobie (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1998), p. 36.

⁴³ Laub, “Truth and Testimony,” p. 63.

⁴⁴ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, pp. 44–45.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, pp. 133–140; Mihnea Moldoveanu and Nitin Nohria, *Master Passions: Emotion, Narrative, and the Development of Culture* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002), p. 38.

that in this sense speech is “performative.”⁴⁶ Saying something about trauma does something to it, she argues. Not only does it provide a path through which victims and witnesses can (in some way) know their trauma, but also it locates survivors within a community. It is in this way that trauma literatures suggest that testimony and language more generally provides the first step toward sharing one’s experiences.⁴⁷ This is to say that by appealing to a linguistic community that shares both one’s vocabulary and the sensibilities implicit in the ways one speaks, language provides a way of reestablishing a victim’s or witness’s connection to the social world.⁴⁸ Speech is, in other words, one step toward locating a wider collective that is sympathetic to understanding the nature and impact of trauma. Recognizing the significance of speech, we see that trauma is tied to modes of representation not only in order to obtain social meaning, but also so that victims and witnesses can work through their trauma and piece themselves back together in a sympathetic social or communal context.

But speech is not the only medium through which trauma can be represented. Nonverbal modes of representation provide a way of working through and understanding the disorientation of trauma as well. Some scholars even question whether nonverbal, aesthetic mediums of representation are more adept at depicting – and then in turn communicating – trauma’s emotional impact.⁴⁹ At issue for these

⁴⁶ Brison, *Aftermath*, p. x.

⁴⁷ See Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, pp. 8, 11, 41; K. M. Fierke, “Whereof We Can Speak, Thereof We Must Not Be Silent: Trauma, Political Solipsism and War,” *Review of International Studies*, 30.4 (2004), 471–491, esp. 472, 477–480.

⁴⁸ Roland Barthes does not write specifically on the linguistic translation of trauma. However, the understanding of language and its socially embedded meaning employed here is taken from his Saussurian-based work on linguistic signs and semiotics. See Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux/Hill and Wang, 1967, esp. pp. 21–26.

⁴⁹ Literature often turns to alternative, aesthetic modes of representation, such as photography, visual art and sculpture, poetry and literature, and creative movement and dance for more adequate expression of trauma and political violence. See, for example, Baer, *Spectral Evidence*, esp. pp. 8–14; Laura Di Prete, “Don DeLillo’s *The Body Artist*: Performing the Body, Narrating Trauma,” *Contemporary Literature*, 46.3 (2005), pp. 483–510, esp. at 483–484, 491–492; J. Brooks Bouson, *Quiet as It’s Kept: Shame, Trauma and Race in the Novels of Toni Morrison* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000); Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject*

scholars is that aesthetic sources are capable of transforming or even displacing language and, in so doing, finding a way through which trauma can “speak.” This is why some scholars argue that to appreciate the impact of trauma we must elevate the importance of gesture, and, more broadly, aesthetics. Distinct within these literatures is that aesthetic sources – such as visual and dramatic arts, poetry and fiction – can help victims and witnesses to come to terms with trauma, perhaps more than conventional modes of giving testimony. As Laura Di Prete explains, such mediums might be better equipped to “capture the truth of an experience lived primarily within the skin.”⁵⁰ Aesthetic sources may therefore hold greater possibilities of finding a voice emotionally attuned to expressing the wounds of trauma.

Representing trauma through photographs is therefore a way of capturing the impact of trauma without first mediating it through words. Indeed, it is for this reason – for their lack of words – that literatures often consider photographs and visual culture more generally to be a particularly potent medium for the expression of trauma.⁵¹ Scholars such as Marianne Hirsch, Ann Kaplan and Nancy Miller have researched the relationship between photography and the period of recovery that followed the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center.⁵² Their studies examine the concept of “photographic testimony,” and broadly conclude that the psychic and peculiarly visual nature⁵³ of trauma makes photographs particularly well suited to

(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Laura Di Prete, “*Foreign Bodies*”: *Trauma, Corporeality, and Textuality in Contemporary American Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

⁵⁰ Di Prete, “Don DeLillo’s *The Body Artist*,” 484.

⁵¹ See, in particular, Baer, *Spectral Evidence*; W. J. T. Mitchell, “The Unspeakable and the Unimaginable: Word and Image in a Time of Terror,” *ELH: Journal of English Literary History*, 72 (2005), 291–308; Jay Prosser, *Light in the Dark Room: Photography and Loss* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

⁵² Marianne Hirsch, “I Took Pictures: September 2001 and Beyond,” in Judith Greenberg (ed.), *Trauma at Home: After 9/11* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska, 2003), pp. 69–88; E. Ann Kaplan, “A Camera and A Catastrophe: Reflections on the Trauma and the Twin Towers,” in Greenberg (ed.), *Trauma at Home*, pp. 95–106; E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Loss in Media and Literature* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), pp. 136–148; Nancy K. Miller, “‘Portraits of Grief’: Telling Details and Testimony of Trauma,” *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 14.3 (2003), 112–135.

⁵³ See Kaplan, “A Camera and a Catastrophe.”

communicating the wounds and memories left by extreme experiences. Miller even goes so far as to argue that photographic portrayals of loss safeguard against the “watering down” of trauma through words.⁵⁴ This argument is reinforced by how several key international newspapers chose to represent and mourn the lives that were lost when the Twin Towers fell: they measured the tragedy not through words but through pictures. A prominent example is that of the *New York Times*, which ran individual portraits (rather than stories) of those who were missing or presumed dead. These “portraits of grief” consisted of the victims’ faces, unaccompanied by description.⁵⁵ Recent studies of the atrocities perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia also point to the potential of photographs to provide testimony.⁵⁶ Notwithstanding the deceptions, multiple meanings and even possible “untruths” that photographs can convey, these studies largely suggest that portraits of the victims provide an account of the innocence and injustice of their deaths, and as such incite a responsibility of witnesses to act. Elsewhere, in his study of the influence of trauma photographs on foreign policy, David Perlmutter suggests that “iconic” images can arrest the emotions and senses not only of those who directly experience violence and ensuing trauma, but also of those who watch and bear witness – even if such witnessing takes place from the comfort of home.⁵⁷ Perlmutter’s research reflects a growing trend in social and political research. Increasingly, interdisciplinary political science and international relations studies are recognizing the representational significance (and influence) of photographs of either distant or forgotten instances of trauma.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ See Miller, “Portraits of Grief,” 122–123.

⁵⁵ See Miller, “Portraits of Grief,” 123–131.

⁵⁶ Jenny Edkins, “Exposed Singularity,” *Journal for Cultural Research*, 9.4 (2005), 359–386, esp. 375–378; Rachel Hughes, “The Abject Artefacts of Memory: Photographs from Cambodia’s Genocide,” *Media, Culture & Society*, 25.1 (2003), 23–44.

⁵⁷ David D. Perlmutter, *Photojournalism and Foreign Policy: Icons of Outrage in International Crises* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998).

⁵⁸ Examples include David Campbell, “Horrific Blindness: Images of Death in Contemporary Media,” *Journal for Cultural Research*, 8.1 (2004), 55–74; David Campbell, “Geopolitics and Visuality: Sighting the Darfur Conflict,” *Political Geography*, 26 (2007), 357–382; David Campbell, “Atrocity, Memory, Photography: Imaging the Concentration Camps of Bosnia,” Parts I and II, *Journal of Human Rights*, 1.1/2 (2002), 1–33, 143–172; Cori Dauber, “Image as Argument: The Impact of Mogadishu on U.S. Military Intervention,” *Armed*

Artistic representations are also thought to play an important role in the working through of trauma. The most ubiquitous of these mediums are the monuments erected to represent and commemorate trauma – most often that of national tragedy and war. Many literatures focus on their therapeutic and conciliatory dimensions. Sites of commemoration and remembrance, such as memorials, museums and national holidays, provide a social, public (and ultimately communal) context in which survivors and witnesses are urged to remember a history of trauma and pain.⁵⁹ They help to shape the physical and social landscape in arguably much the same way that the psychological and emotional pain of trauma has shaped the landscape of victims' minds. By encouraging a spirit of commemoration and of paying tribute to trauma, monuments tend to direct individuals to consider trauma in a particular way – often a communally reinforcing one. Scholars reveal that the reason for this is that meaning becomes attached to the physical structure or commemorative site, which is no different from processes involved in linguistically representing trauma. When given a meaning that enables “life to go on” – either through words or, as suggested here, through architectural structures – trauma is made to be a seemingly “normal” component of the landscapes and historical narratives that give structure to one's everyday.

Scholars have also reflected upon the significance of representing trauma through personal art.⁶⁰ One of the most discussed examples is

Forces and Society, 27.2 (2001), 205–229; Edkins, “Exposed Singularity”; John Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, “Public Identity and Collective Memory in U.S. Iconic Photography: The Image of the Accidental Napalm,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 20.1 (2003), 35–66; Miller, “Portraits of Grief”; Frank Möller, “Rwanda Revisualized: Genocide, Photography, and the Era of the Witness,” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 35 (2010), 113–136; Simon Philpott, “A Controversy of Faces: Images from Bali to Abu Ghraib,” *Journal for Cultural Research*, 9.3 (2005), 227–244; and finally: the Special Issue titled “Securitization, Militarization and Visual Culture in the Worlds of Post-9/11,” in *Security Dialogue*, 38.2 (2007).

⁵⁹ See, for instance, Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, pp. 153–154, 190; Nuala C. Johnson, “Cast in Stone: Monuments, Geography and Nationalism,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 13 (1995), 51–65; James M. Mayo, “War Memorials as Political Landscape,” *Geographical Review*, 78.1 (1988), 62–75; Maria Sturken, “The Wall, the Screen and the Image: The Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial,” *Representations*, 35 (1991), 118–142.

⁶⁰ See, for instance, Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).

that of the Holocaust. Survivors and their children as well as indirect witnesses have used various forms of art in an attempt to depict and come to terms with the atrocity and its memory.⁶¹ Matthew Biro discusses the work of artists Joseph Beuys and Anselm Kiefer, who used sculpture and painting in order to problematize the prevailing postwar West German perspective of the Holocaust.⁶² Biro suggests that the works of Beuys and Kiefer capture the brutality of the Holocaust so powerfully that they inspire a kind of “reflexivity” in those who view them. They prompt people to engage with the suffering of the Jews and in so doing provoke both a personal and political awareness of what took place.

Thus while trauma’s shock and grief first appear to be isolating and privatizing, literatures show that practices of representation provide a mechanism through which so-called inexpressible experiences of trauma can be expressed and in some way shared. Modes of representation provide a way for trauma to be spoken of, written about, or pictorialized through images. Importantly, they allow trauma to be translated into something able to be known and made collectively meaningful. Some strategies of representation are thought to socialize trauma, in an important way “normalizing” an encounter that seems far from normal. Key here is that rather than producing new forms of personal and social meaning, representations frequently shape traumatic events in ways that make them “fit” with existing personal and social narratives. Feelings of isolation and emotional distress can consequently be “smoothed over” by practices of representation and the narratives that are subsequently generated. Put differently, processes of representation give trauma the ability to be narrated, to be ascribed

⁶¹ For academic texts that discuss some of these attempts, see Aaron Haas, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Marianne Hirsch, “Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory,” *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 14.1 (2001), 5–37; Amy Hungerford, *The Holocaust of Texts: Genocide, Literature and Personification* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Sue Vice, “Yellowing Snapshots: Photography and Memory in Holocaust Literature,” *Journal for Cultural Research*, 8.3 (2004), 293–315; Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory Through the Camera’s Lens* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

⁶² Matthew Biro, “Representation and Event: Anselm Kiefer, Joseph Beuys, and the Memory of the Holocaust,” *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 16.1 (2003), 113–146, esp. at. 116–117.

meanings that can underpin shared understandings and can mobilize a sense of common purpose. It is therefore in this way – through the genres used to “voice” trauma and the culturally embedded, affective perceptual processes that allow it to be interpreted – that trauma can become a collective event or experience that helps to “fix” meaning and identity. This type of “naturalization of meaning”⁶³ may be part of a process of reinscribing existing configurations of identity and community. Or, given that representation, narrative and the discourses that bind them are inevitably incomplete and evolving, it can possess the possibility for transformation and help to form the foundations of new ones.

The politics of representing trauma

The previous two sections have theorized the processes through which individual, unique experiences of trauma can be shared and made collectively meaningful. The focus of this section rests with the political nature and consequences of doing so. Drawing on politically orientated studies of both trauma and representation, I show that representing trauma is an intensely political endeavor. Of course, representations can be overtly political in motivation or intention. But as intimated earlier, what I also mean to imply is that the “real” location of the politics of trauma is situated in the very space between the experience of trauma and the practices used to represent it. It is within this space that the central paradox I identify lies: experiencing trauma may feel isolating, yet modes of expressing and representing trauma highlight trauma’s sociality. It is therefore precisely in *how* trauma (and associated emotions) are shared and “collectivized” after that reflects the politics at stake. The “how” question is important because, to again follow Doty, it examines the meanings that are “produced and attached” to the respective “traumatic” occurrence, and how in turn these meanings “create certain possibilities and preclude others.”⁶⁴ While this type of “gap” or space should not be something to be feared,⁶⁵ it calls for a particular attentiveness to the politics of practices of representation: the meanings they produce hold both potentials and

⁶³ Doty, *Imperial Encounters*, p. 7.

⁶⁴ Doty, *Imperial Encounters*, p. 4.

⁶⁵ Bleiker, “The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory,” 512–513.

limits for how one conceives of boundaries of identity and community in both national and transnational political contexts.

Representational and narrative practices associated with trauma have significant social and political possibilities. By involving not only those who endure trauma directly but also those who bear witness, practices of representation can translate individual, distant experiences of trauma into influential social and political phenomena. This is because representational practices and narratives of trauma shape how individuals perceive extreme events, and how they interact and connect with others as a consequence. Importantly, practices of representing trauma are part of a process of ascribing trauma with social meaning – meanings that narrate (i.e. tell a particular story about) trauma and in so doing can diminish feelings of isolation and disruption. They can tap into sensibilities and prompt trauma to be considered in a collectively meaningful (and often politically influential) way. Communities bound by shared emotional understandings and discourses can ensue. Given the increasingly transnational dimensions of media representations today, this process can play out in not only the national but also the international and transnational arena.

Even though some scholars argue that trauma is an encounter through which community can be reconfigured, most agree that traumatic events tend to reinstate existing forms of political community. They highlight that dominant representations of trauma (by politicians, policy makers, journalists and scholars) present the particular event's shock and horror in ways that are designed to restore faith and allegiance in the prevailing social and political authority.⁶⁶ In this way, representational practices are thought to be key to reinstating the communal bonds that trauma previously deconstructed. This process of communal renewal can take place almost automatically, through a need for a social environment conducive to working through the discomfort and terror of trauma. It can also be an intensely political moment, an occasion where political powers purposefully grapple to reinstate meaning and control. Herein lies the central paradox of trauma that I identify: because trauma isolates it also reconstructs. Just as trauma seems

⁶⁶ See Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, pp. 229–231; K. M. Fierke, *Critical Approaches to International Security* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), pp. 123–143; Kate Schick, “Acting Out and Working Through: Trauma and (In)security,” *Review of International Studies*, 37.4 (2011), 1837–1855.

to detach individuals and damage the fabric of communities, representational practices can be employed – strategically or unconsciously – to restore the social and political cohesion that trauma has disrupted.

The period following traumatic events is consequently not only intensely emotional, but also of great political significance. Work by Richard Devetak, Jenny Edkins, K. M. Fierke and Kate Schick has drawn attention to the political dimensions of the aftermath of trauma. Their research suggests that political elites often “rush” to reinstate their narratives of control after catastrophe.⁶⁷ It is precisely because trauma shatters a sense of belonging and uproots entrenched political patterns that politicians and the media (again, either consciously or otherwise) focus on restoring community and concomitant notions of authority.

Distinct here is that by recognizing that traumatic experiences can never truly “fit” existing configurations of power (and thus politics), political elites often represent and frame trauma in ways that force it to fit with established narratives of politics and community. Here, too, the political responses to 9/11 are illustrative. Washington’s foreign policy became immediately centered around the terrorist attacks. Couched in a rhetoric of “good” versus “evil,” the United States’ (US) reaction sought to reestablish the sense of order⁶⁸ and certitude that had existed during the Cold War: an inside/outside world in which, according to the words of former US President George W. Bush, “you are either with us or against us.”⁶⁹ So the process of memorializing the trauma, through commemorative and arguably belligerent representations, gave way to not simply a more unified American national community but also a culture through which wars of retaliation were made possible.⁷⁰ Across the Pacific, a similar situation soon took hold in

⁶⁷ Richard Devetak, “After the Event: Don DeLillo’s *White Noise* and September 11 Narratives,” *Review of International Studies*, 35 (2009), 795–815, at 805–811; Jenny Edkins, “The Rush to Memory and the Rhetoric of War,” *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, 31.2 (2003), 231–251, at 235–238. See also Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, pp. 229–231; Fierke, *Critical Approaches to International Security*, esp. pp. 123–143; K. M. Fierke, “Bewitched by the Past: Social Memory, Trauma and International Relations,” in Duncan Bell (ed.), *Memory, Trauma and World Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 116–134; Schick, “Acting Out and Working Through.”

⁶⁸ See David Campbell, “Time is Broken: The Return of the Past in the Response to September 11,” *Theory & Event*, 5.2 (2002).

⁶⁹ “You are either with us or against us,” CNN, November 6, 2001.

⁷⁰ See Gearóid Ó Tuathail, “‘Just Out Looking for a Fight’: American Affect and the Invasion of Iraq,” *Antipode*, 35.5 (2003), 856–870; David Simpson,

Australia. When a terrorist attack in a well-known expatriate nightclub in Bali, Indonesia, killed more than 200 people (almost 100 of whom were Australian), the then Australian Prime Minister John Howard was quick to resecure the national community that the attacks had fractured.⁷¹ Reviews of domestic security and counterterrorism legislation were immediately ordered and the Defence Department even went so far as to call their white paper “Fortress Australia.”

These examples indicate that the social dislocation brought by trauma can lead to an urgent, overtly political narration of the respective event as well as subsequent commemorative legacies. The “powers that be” seek to smother the social and political disorientation that trauma brings. This is particularly the case during times of perceived “national trauma”⁷² – when a catastrophe (such as the Bali bombing) that directly affects only a few is thought to be (and represented as) an attack on a much larger, distinctly national community. In such circumstances, moments of grief and remembrance are often represented as an occasion where an entire nation is seemingly brought together in an expression of outrage and loss.

Significant in this respect is that representations of trauma can enable – yet paradoxically also limit – the boundaries of political community. Representations can reinstate power structures traditional to the nation-state, which while seemingly strengthening a national community simultaneously silences alternative discourses through which new configurations of community can be generated. In this way, it may be useful to consider the various ways of representing trauma as modes of “cultural governance.”⁷³ According to Michael Shapiro, forms of cultural governance involve the consistent support for communicative and representational strategies that constitute and legitimize existing configurations of political sovereignty. In this view, representational strategies that are thought to consolidate a sense of collective identity and community after trauma are actively pursued, while, in contrast, modes

9/11: A Culture of Commemoration (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

⁷¹ See Matt McDonald, “Constructing Insecurity: Australian Security Discourse and Policy Post-2001,” *International Relations*, 19.3 (2005), 297–320.

⁷² Jill Bennett, “The Limits of Empathy and the Global Politics of Belonging,” in Greenberg (ed.), *Trauma At Home*, pp. 132–138, at p. 133.

⁷³ Michael J. Shapiro, *Methods and Nations: Cultural Governance and the Indigenous Subject* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

of expression that challenge or diminish social cohesion and political sovereignty are restricted. This may involve contextualizing (representing) trauma in terms concomitant with rebuilding national allegiance. Such stories smooth over trauma's disturbance, and help to constitute and reconstitute the ways that individuals are connected to each other. Thus, through modes of representation, trauma can be shaped in ways that serve the political interests of those who have the power to represent it. Trauma can be appropriated in order to legitimize particular political positions or policy prescriptions.

This situation – when traumatic events come to restore prevailing forms of political community – has been observed not simply during times of politically motivated trauma and violence. Scholars comment that natural catastrophe and incremental forms of suffering can foreclose the boundaries of communities as well.⁷⁴ Consider how Western viewers readily bear witness to various atrocities and suffering, yet only infrequently do anything substantial to help. Scholars have long critiqued the way the Western world seems to ambivalently play “spectator” to suffering in the developing world. Ann Kaplan argues that emotions associated with witnessing suffering may be “empty,” because rarely does another's suffering solicit indignation, responsibility and action.⁷⁵ In a similar manner, Arthur and Joan Kleinman claim that the widespread – yet utterly ineffectual – representation of distant trauma can only be considered with dismay.⁷⁶ International relations scholars have additionally cautioned against such “sentimentality,” arguing that in reality emotions such as pity tend to generalize (rather than sensitize) onlookers to cultural difference, in turn perpetuating the selectivity toward those needing to be “saved.”⁷⁷ To varying degrees these thoughts are also shared by scholars who write of “compassion fatigue” or an “exhaustion of

⁷⁴ For example, Philip Darby, “Security, Spatiality and Social Suffering,” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 31 (2006), 453–473; Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das and Margaret Lock (eds.), *Social Suffering* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); Martin Shaw, *Civil Society and Media in Global Crises: Representing Distant Violence* (London: Pinter, 1996).

⁷⁵ Kaplan, *Trauma Culture*, pp. 93–94.

⁷⁶ Arthur Kleinman and Joan Kleinman, “The Appeal of Experience; The Dismay of Images: Cultural Appropriations of Suffering in Our Times,” *Daedalus*, 125.1 (1996), 1–25.

⁷⁷ See, for instance, Patricia A. Owens, “Xenophilia, Gender, and Sentimental Humanitarianism,” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 29.3 (2004), 285–305.

empathy.”⁷⁸ So common is this kind of indifference to others’ trauma that when sudden natural disasters occur individuals and governments sometimes do not know how to respond. Is it that we are constituted not only by “our own” trauma but also by witnessing the trauma of others? Could the sight of distant trauma help to constitute boundaries of witnessing communities as well?

International relations scholars have studied the political implications of representational strategies more generally. These scholars draw attention to how dominant practices of representing the social world – for example, people, places, nationalities and cultures – frame individuals’ perceptions and in so doing produce forms of knowledge that shape global political relations.⁷⁹ Some in turn show – and often lament – that processes of communication prioritize particular traumas and crises over others, which may be believed to be more worthy of attention. Yet, it is not simply the prioritizing of particular incidents that is important. Key for these scholars is that some crises are portrayed with a corresponding sense of “danger.”⁸⁰ They show that it is precisely by alluding to the danger of the world outside that processes of communication – representation – can bestow events with meanings that close off forms of community and political sovereignty.

Reflections on the construction of danger also link with literatures that examine the securitization of identity. Scholars have demonstrated that it is in this way – through processes of representation and interpretation – that disingenuous, often antagonistic perceptions of particular identities or cultural groups are cultivated. From these, a legacy of violence may consequently ensue, in turn perpetuating the very opinions

⁷⁸ See Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering* (Cambridge: Polity, 1993); Susan D. Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sells Disease, Famine, War and Death* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Keith Tester, *Compassion, Morality and the Media* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 2001).

⁷⁹ See, for instance, Bleiker, *Aesthetics and World Politics*; Campbell, *Writing Security*; François Debrix and Cynthia Weber (eds.), *Rituals of Mediation: International Politics and Social Meaning* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Doty, *Imperial Encounters*; Janice Bially Mattern, *Ordering International Politics: Identity, Crisis, and Representational Force* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Hansen, *Security as Practice*.

⁸⁰ Campbell, *Writing Security*, pp. 1–13; K. M. Fierke, *Critical Approaches to International Security* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), pp. 80–90, 100–119; Michael Williams, “Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics,” *International Studies Quarterly*, 47 (2003), 511–531.

that fueled the conflict in the first place.⁸¹ David Campbell and K. M. Fierke have specifically examined this process in the context of the violence in the Balkans.⁸² Analyzing dominant representations – or as Fierke puts it, “pictures”⁸³ – of the conflict, they contend that not only was the violence mobilized through belligerent perceptions of self and other, but also that similar dichotomies limited the international community’s ability to respond. Also relevant here is research that has linked the configuring of world politics with the various communicative and sociolinguistic exchanges through which international relations take place.⁸⁴

One can thus see that the representational, narrative and discursive practices associated with trauma have immense social and political significance. They hold the possibility of constructing forms of identity and community. Yet traumatic events can do still more than this. They can also mark the beginning of a new political era. Intended here is the idea that representing human suffering holds possibilities for transforming identities and renegotiating political affiliations, potentially so as to form communities of responsibility beyond the nation-state. Put differently, if forms of community are constituted through representations, then it follows that to alter how we represent the social world may also be to alter and rebuild the foundations of community – to reshape how and to whom we feel attached. William Connolly and Philip Darby are two scholars who advocate that we consider suffering as a point through which such critical engagements with others can take place.⁸⁵ They argue that recognizing the commonality of pain

⁸¹ For example, Michael J. Shapiro, *Violent Cartographies: Mapping Cultures of War* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1997).

⁸² David Campbell, *National Deconstruction: Violence, Identity, and Justice in Bosnia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); David Campbell, “MetaBosnia: Narratives of the Bosnian War,” *Review of International Studies*, 24 (1998), 261–281; K. M. Fierke, “The Liberation of Kosovo: Emotion and the Ritual Reenactment of War,” *Focaal: European Journal of Anthropology*, 39 (2002), 93–113.

⁸³ Fierke, “The Liberation of Kosovo,” 93, 95–99.

⁸⁴ Janice Bially Mattern, “Why ‘Soft Power’ Isn’t So Soft: Representational Force and the Sociolinguistic Construction of Attraction in World Politics,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 33.3 (2005), 583–612; K. M. Fierke, “Links across the Abyss: Language and Logic in International Relations,” *International Studies Quarterly*, 46 (2002), 331–354; Thomas Risse, “‘Let’s Argue!’ Communicative Action in World Politics,” *International Organization*, 54.1 (2000), 1–39.

⁸⁵ William E. Connolly, “Suffering, Justice, and the Politics of Becoming,” in David Campbell and Michael J. Shapiro (eds.), *Moral Spaces: Rethinking*

may prompt individuals to transform their perceptions of others in ways that include them in their sphere of solidarity and support.

Feminist and interpretative scholars also write – with hope – of the possibility of shifting or “contingent” identities.⁸⁶ They argue that if one recognizes how the social world is constituted, through representations, it may then be possible to reimagine (and thus reconstitute) it in more inclusive ways – in ways that afford suffering minorities a space to voice their interests and desires. One may also see that each individual is constituted by a vast array of alternative or shifting identities, rather than an identity that is fixed and unchanging. These scholars further argue that political inclusion can be achieved through representational practices that help to “disturb” entrenched perceptions of identity.⁸⁷ These insights may be practically relevant during times of crisis and trauma. This is to say that we may be able to consider representing trauma as a process through which identities can be disrupted in order to transform understandings of community. Central here is the possibility of harnessing the contingent and shifting nature of identity (and concomitant notions of responsibility) in order to respond to the needs of suffering. Questions of how to represent trauma are also key. Some strategies of representing trauma disrupt prevailing social attachments and hold possibilities for creating new ones. Others close off the boundaries of one’s self, generating meanings that limit the boundaries of community.

There are rare occasions when representations of trauma and catastrophe created understandings that resulted in the constitution of a uniquely transnational form of community. Consider the Southeast Asian tsunami disaster of December 2004. When the giant wave struck the shores of more than fourteen countries on Boxing Day an unprecedented outpouring of international aid and support was set off. Several scholars have suggested that the inundation of critically

Ethics and World Politics (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp. 125–153; Darby, “Security, Spatiality and Social Suffering,” 453–473.

⁸⁶ For example, Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself: A Critique of Ethical Violence* (Fordham University Press, 2005); Kathy Ferguson, *The Man Question: Visions of Subjectivity in Feminist Theory* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993).

⁸⁷ A recent article by Christine Sylvester suggests that artistic representations may hold potential to transform configurations of community and responsibility. See her “The Art of War/The War Question in (Feminist) IR,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 33.3 (2005), 855–878.

emotional visual representations of the catastrophe were in this respect crucial. Lilie Chouliaraki and Virginie Mamadouh, for instance, contend that the twenty-four-hour global media coverage played a key role in mobilizing the transnational collective response.⁸⁸ Benedict Korf has also analyzed the micropolitics of aid giving in response to the tsunami, suggesting that the representational responses of humanitarian aid organizations had (more than ever before) opened private donors to “practicing generosity as a global symbolic act of solidarity.”⁸⁹ A recent article by Brent Steele also suggests that linguistic representations of the tsunami were instrumental in persuading foreign governments to give as generously as they ultimately did.⁹⁰

Key to these very different political situations is how traumatic events are represented. Rather than an arbitrary or even impartial system of depicting trauma’s “truth,” representations of trauma both communicate and are filtered through the particular cultural, aesthetic and affective sensibilities of those who view or listen to them. Trauma gets its shape, its public meaning, from the way it is represented and the messages that such representations are perceived to convey. Representational practices thus shape how individuals perceive of trauma, and create perceptions that help to bestow trauma with meaning. And it is the meanings that trauma attains that can help to either open up or close off how individuals perceive of their attachments to others. Identity and community can be constructed and also manipulated in this way. Trauma that directly affects a few can – through techniques of representation and narrative – be portrayed as damaging to many, to the individuals and wider society that bear witness, at a distance, rather than feel trauma’s impact immediately. Practices of speaking, writing and imaging trauma can be consciously crafted in order to foster particular perceptions and furnish the social attachments and feelings of solidarity that are needed to consolidate forms of political community. However, representing trauma can also

⁸⁸ Lilie Chouliaraki, *The Spectatorship of Suffering* (London: Sage, 2006), p. 1; Virginie Mamadouh, “After Van Gogh: The Geopolitics of the Tsunami Relief Effort in the Netherlands,” *Geopolitics*, 13.2 (2008), 205–231.

⁸⁹ Benedikt Korf, “Antinomies of Generosity: Moral Geographies and Post-Tsunami Aid in Southeast Asia,” *Geoforum*, 38 (2007), 366–378, at 370.

⁹⁰ Brent Steele, “Making Words Matter: The Asian Tsunami, Darfur, and ‘Reflexive Discourse’ in International Politics,” *International Studies Quarterly*, 51 (2007), 901–925.

be a politically enabling – and possibly politically transformative – act. Representations of trauma can disturb entrenched perceptions of identity and community, and in so doing can mobilize the agency needed to question prevailing forms of power and configure new forms of political community.

Representing trauma and the power of emotions

The preceding three sections examined the role that practices of representation and narrative play in constructing or consolidating community after trauma. They showed that the representational practices used to express trauma provide frames to help individuals to “make sense” of extreme, catastrophic events, and that they do so by situating individuals within a social and communal context. Practices of representation make trauma socially meaningful, and, in so doing, allow trauma to be incorporated into both the personal and political narratives that give structure and meaning to communities.

This section extends our understanding of this process. It does so in one crucial way: through an examination of the relationship between representation, discourse and emotion. I show that emotions and seemingly more ephemeral affects are an inextricable part of making meaning; the ways we feel are a constituted and constitutive part of the interpretive processes that allow individuals to make sense of practices of representation. To this end, I return to and further explore the key theme introduced in the previous chapter: the argument that in order to more fully understand how practices of representing trauma can help to constitute forms of community we need to examine how emotions are implicated in bestowing trauma’s various representations with meaning and value.

Recognizing that emotions are social phenomena constituted through discourse renders the linkages between emotions and representations of critical importance. This is because discourses – the everyday codes and norms of signification that attribute meaning, value and, as such, “define the (im)possible, the (im)probable, the natural, the normal”⁹¹ – do not take shape in a vacuum. Discourses are constituted and reconstituted through an array of culturally and historically located languages, customs and social practices: in other

⁹¹ Clarissa Rile Hayward, *De-Facing Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 35.

words, through *representations*, those that are relied upon as much as those that are excluded. So, to be clear, since emotions and discourse are inherently linked, as are discourse and practices of representation, then so too are emotions and representations. Representations serve as the primary vehicle for expressing emotions. They are like a metaphorical black box filled with a specific emotional history, symbolism and meaning.⁹² How you make sense of (or, indeed, whether you can at all) what is inside that box then of course depends upon one's own vantage point, one's own emotional history. One of the most renowned early theorists of representation, Stuart Hall, explains how the words, images and various other gestures and symbols we use to portray the world essentially "stand for or represent our concepts, ideas and feelings."⁹³ For instance, "[t]he expression on my face 'says something' about who I am (identity) and what group I feel I belong to (attachment)," he continues. Expressions can in this way "be 'read' and understood by other people, even if I didn't intend deliberately to communicate anything formal."⁹⁴ To put this simply, through the words of William Reddy, "[e]motions are the real world-anchor of signs."⁹⁵ Emotions help to signal and locate meaning. Thus, just as "thinking and feeling are themselves 'systems of representation,'" contingent upon context,⁹⁶ representations also embody, dictate and gain salience within particular contextually bound forms of feeling.⁹⁷

⁹² This is not to argue, however, that elements of affective experience do not lie outside of representations. While I suggest representations act to symbolize and communicate emotions, I also agree that there is inevitably something "missed" or outside of representations. Nigel Thrift and Brian Massumi are two scholars who argue for the nonrepresentational qualities of affect. See Nigel Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2008); Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). In international relations Janice Bially Mattern provides a compelling argument against simplifying the affective dimensions of emotions, which she suggests much political work inadvertently does in an attempt to render emotions susceptible to systematic political scrutiny. See Janice Bially Mattern, "A Practice Theory of Emotions for International Relations," in Emanuel Adler (ed.), *International Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁹³ Stuart Hall, "Introduction," in Hall (ed.) *Representation*, p. 1.

⁹⁴ Hall, "Introduction," p. 2.

⁹⁵ William M. Reddy, "Against Constructivism: The Historical Ethnography of Emotions," *Current Anthropology*, 38.3 (1997), 327–351, at 331.

⁹⁶ Hall, "Introduction," p. 4.

⁹⁷ See also Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 151–169;

Understanding that emotions and representations are inherently linked buttresses earlier ideas concerning the intrinsically social nature of emotions. As I surveyed, emotions are constituted in relation to culturally specific traditions, such as language, habits, customs and memories – all of which pivot on the practices through which they are represented and communicated. Emotions are also inherent within the sociocultural and historically constituted patterns of “knowledge” through which individuals and collectives make the social and political world meaningful – thus again underlining the key role of the representations through which we each come to “know” the world.

Representations are therefore central to examining the individual and collective politics of emotions. They form crucial links not simply between personal/public and individual/collective emotions, but also to how we understand the discursive processes through which emotions take shape. Practices of representation give meaning to the world around us. The expressions one uses also “say something” about one’s identity, emotions and to whom one feels they belong. As I just intimated, Hall goes further in arguing that not simply is the social world given meaning through representations, but that “thinking and feeling are themselves ‘systems of representation,’ in which our concepts, images and emotions ‘stand for’ or represent ... things which are or may be ‘out there’ in the world.”⁹⁸ It is through representations, therefore, that emotions can be embodied, transmitted and interpreted; representations allow our feelings to be attributed with particular sociocultural meanings, values and even beliefs.⁹⁹ To put it differently, it is through representations that affect and emotions are socially embedded and can thus “function as the ‘force’ of bonding that connects subjects to their identities.”¹⁰⁰

Representations thus gain power in part through how they affectively resonate in particular circumstances among receiving audiences.

William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 47.

⁹⁸ Hall, “The Work of Representation,” p. 5.

⁹⁹ See Nico H. Frijda, Antony S. R. Manstead and Sacha Bem, “The Influence of Emotions on Beliefs,” in Nico H. Frijda, Antony S. R. Manstead and Sacha Bem (eds.), *Emotions and Beliefs: How Feelings Influence Thoughts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 1–9; and in international relations scholarship, see Jonathon Mercer, “Emotional Beliefs,” *International Organization*, 64.1 (2010), 1–31, at 2.

¹⁰⁰ Ty Solomon, “The Affective Underpinnings of Soft Power,” *European Journal of International Relations*, 20.3 (2014), 720–741, at 731.

As some scholars put it, ways of representing and narrating the social world can have a particular kind of emotional “pull,” or perhaps more adeptly, a “circulation,”¹⁰¹ “stickiness”¹⁰² or “grip.”¹⁰³ This means that representations of particular events, issues, people and so on find (are attributed) value and significance in a particular context at least in part through the emotions that are evoked. How or whether representations get “stuck” is then “a function of the connection to past social experience and norms.”¹⁰⁴ Ty Solomon articulates the affective dynamics at stake eloquently. He does so by adding to extant work on the “attractiveness” of soft power in international relations,¹⁰⁵ showing how affect plays a central role in constituting the identities and actions that undergird notions of soft power. Policies and political narratives that prevail, he contends, are dependent upon the extent to which they can affectively resonate with audiences – hence the idea of “affective attraction.”¹⁰⁶ Fierke makes a related yet slightly different point. She illustrates the salience or emotional “stickiness” of representations through an examination of the image of the dying body in acts of political self-sacrifice. Examining the emotional and bodily dynamics of suicide terrorism and civil disobedience, she shows how dying or injured bodies evoke certain emotions and how these emotions in turn become political by reaching and relating to various audiences. She highlights that this contextually bound circulation of emotion is in turn important to shaping collective agency and identities.

Yet, it is important we conceive of this emotional resonance (of representations) as not simply a process through which power is “gained” but moreover as the product of forms of power that ordinarily remain concealed as well. Put differently, the emotional receptivity of an

¹⁰¹ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 11; Andrew A. G. Ross, *Mixed Emotions: Beyond Fear and Hatred in International Conflict* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2014), pp. 1, 10, 21–38, 36; K. M. Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice: Agency, Body and Emotion in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 90–95.

¹⁰² Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*, p. 79.

¹⁰³ Solomon, “The Affective Underpinnings of Soft Power,” 727.

¹⁰⁴ Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*, pp. 79–80.

¹⁰⁵ Most prominent here is Janice Bially Mattern, “Why ‘Soft Power’ Isn’t So Soft: Representational Force and the Sociolinguistic Construction of Attraction in World Politics,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 33.3 (2005), 583–612.

¹⁰⁶ Solomon, “The Affective Underpinnings of Soft Power,” esp. 727–732.

audience to specific representations depends upon how emotions have been constituted, through discourses and social structures and norms that are themselves governed by historical and contemporary power relations.

Implicated, once again, is thus a different notion of power than is customary in the study of world politics. As introduced in the previous chapter, power in this conception is structural and “productive”; it lies within the social structures that shape and confine identities and their capacities. Moving beyond traditional realist, materialist understandings of power in world politics, Michael Barnett and Robert Duvall explain that “[p]ower is the production, in and through social relations, of effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine their fate.”¹⁰⁷ To be “productive” means that power functions through “the social processes and the systems of knowledge through which meaning is produced, fixed, lived, experienced and transformed.”¹⁰⁸ Power is thus implicated in the very possibility of meaning, and in which meanings are legitimate and prioritized, in turn enabling an actor with the autonomy “to make or to receive any change, or to resist it.”¹⁰⁹ From this purview, Barnett and Duvall conclude that any “[a]nalysis of power in international relations, then, must include a consideration of how social structures and processes generate differential social capacities for actors to define and pursue their interests and ideals.”¹¹⁰

Of significance here is that emotions are inherently imbued within the representational and interpretative practices that are both constituted by and also come to constitute the very social structures through which power is enacted. Emotionality – the ways we seem to feel almost automatically in response to particular representations – is part of the signification (and interpretative) processes through which social meanings are formed. The capacity of particular issues, events, people and so on to emotionally resonate is consequently a productive function of power.

Representations can politically resonate by appealing to discourses (and associated emotional meanings) that are already established,

¹⁰⁷ Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, “Power in International Politics,” *International Organization*, 59.1 (2005), 39–75, at 39.

¹⁰⁸ Barnett and Duvall, “Power in International Politics,” 55. See also Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*, pp. 67–69.

¹⁰⁹ Steven Luke, “Power and the Battle for Hearts and Minds,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 33.3 (2005), 477–493, at 478.

¹¹⁰ Barnett and Duvall, “Power in International Politics,” 42.

therein perpetuating hegemonic or dominant ways of understanding the respective phenomena.¹¹¹ In a recent essay, Jack Holland and Ty Solomon employ the concepts of “naming” and “affective investment” to better understand the links between affect, emotions and political resonance. While adopting the perspective that “affect is ... somehow beyond or before discourse,”¹¹² they contend that it is precisely through articulating affect as emotion – that is, the process of naming emotion in response to the particular circumstances – that political standpoints and policies can be made possible. They specifically examine the construction of “crisis” after 9/11, suggesting that while processes of socialization conditioned the ways American people affectively responded to the terrorist attacks (predominantly with shock, incomprehension and fear) it was only through the incorporation of these affective experiences within official constructions of the event and its aftermath that they became politically salient and, ultimately, instrumental in legitimizing the war in response. It is furthermore only through this emotional disciplining (or construction) of events that audiences come to enable particular foreign policy possibilities: foreign policy choices, they contend, are partially dependent upon the “ability to affectively invest” audiences within the prescribed course of action.¹¹³ Here, Holland and Solomon’s concept of “naming” equates very much with the concept of representation, and of the potential “power” held by the presentation of political events. For them, it is precisely therein this “naming” – or representation – of intangible affect through language that the politics (and power) of emotions take place. In this instance, too, it can be seen that representations gained credence by resonating with hegemonic discourses (of security and of terrorism as “incomprehensible” attack on US “way of life”¹¹⁴)

¹¹¹ Examples of other work in international relations that have begun to examine the links between affect, emotions, discourse and representations include: Jack Holland and Ty Solomon, “Affect is What States Make of It: Articulating Everyday Experiences of 9/11,” *Critical Studies on Security*, 2.3 (2014), 262–277; Andrew A. G. Ross, “Coming in from the Cold: Constructivism and Emotions,” *European Journal of International Relations*, 12.2 (2006), 197–222; Paul Saurette, “You Dissin Me? Humiliation and Post 9/11 Global Politics,” *Review of International Studies*, 32 (2006), 495–522; Williams, “Words, Images, Enemies,” 522.

¹¹² Holland and Solomon, “Affect is What States Make of It,” 264.

¹¹³ Holland and Solomon, “Affect is What States Make of It,” 273.

¹¹⁴ Holland and Solomon, “Affect is What States Make of It,” 267–271.

and the emotional meanings they evoke. Prevailing links between emotions and power were as such reinforced.¹¹⁵

Power has in this way been said to be “dangerous” in terms of human emotionality, in so far that it “stifles the experimental nature of emotional expression.”¹¹⁶ Prevailing power disciplines emotional liberties and freedoms, and, as a consequence, people rely on “emotional conventions [which] allow for only a few overlearned habits.” Rather than enabling and enriching, emotions constrain us, and as historian Barbara Rosenwein concludes, we can consequently “suffer.”¹¹⁷ But this is not always so. A number of prominent instances also show that emotions can be important sources of societal change: from the more recent Arab Spring uprisings that swept the Middle East, global reactions to devastating natural disasters such as in Haiti in 2010 and Southeast Asia in 2004, political responses to the rise of global terrorism, and even within the domestic realm such as was the case following the public’s reaction to the death of Princess Diana in the UK.¹¹⁸ In all of these situations, collective emotions ostensibly informed the conditions through which social and political relations and even behaviors were mobilized and transformed. Rosenwein captures these paradoxical, performative elements of emotions by revealing that even while emotions can be “stifled” they can also be “engines of conversion.”¹¹⁹ “[N]o emotion is pure and unchanging,” she argues.¹²⁰ Emotions and emotional norms shift and change in response to particular social, political, economic, religious and other pressures. What is central, however, is exactly how such pressures are captured and communicated to audiences; representations are fundamental, in other words, to whether links between power and emotions are reinforced or indeed transgressed.

¹¹⁵ See also Ian Burkitt, “Powerful Emotions: Power, Government and Opposition in the ‘War on Terror,’” *Sociology*, 39.4 (2005), 679–695, at 682–683.

¹¹⁶ Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 18.

¹¹⁷ Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 18–19. Here, Rosenwein also draws from the work of Reddy; see his “Emotional Liberties.”

¹¹⁸ Jennifer Harding and E. Deidre Pribram, “The Power of Feeling: Locating Emotions in Culture,” *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 5.4 (2002), 407–426.

¹¹⁹ Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 19.

¹²⁰ Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 19. See also pp. 197–202.

Representations are therefore politically significant also because of the immanent potentials they possess: representations can transform social, collective contexts and political prerogatives by tapping into previously marginalized or dissident forms of feeling. In this sense, emotions (evoked in response to a particular phenomenon) can help challenge prevailing sets of power relations and reposition subjects and attachments. Representations and the emotions they implicate can, simply put, mobilize transformative understandings and meanings, which can be key to new forms of political agency. Andrew Ross forwards a compelling theorization of emotions as “a creative source of collective agency.”¹²¹ Examining conflict and its aftermath, he both forwards a more nuanced understanding of how emotions are transmitted and circulated before and after violence, while at the same time showing that social transmissions of affect provide “an opportunity for change: new [political] movements may succeed while established ones fail, distant memories can revive a cultural symbol in decline; or an institution may resonate with popular expectations in ways its architects never anticipated.”¹²² Alternative, transformative political and communal configurations may consequently ensue from collective emotional mobilizations.

Key to both of these possibilities, however – that is, whether emotions circulate in ways that reinforce prevailing power and agency or transform it – are modes of representation. Emotions are constituted by, while at least also partially constitutive of, the forms of meaning that ensue from representing social realities. They are a pervasive yet often neglected part of the historical discourses and social structures that situate representations and make them contextually meaningful.¹²³ At the same time, forms of feelings can reshape how individuals and collectives interpret and perceive of the social world. Emotions can transform the meanings of the very representations they also simultaneously emerge from; hence making “emotions themselves the causes of their own transformation.”¹²⁴

¹²¹ Ross, *Mixed Emotions*, p. 9.

¹²² Ross, *Mixed Emotions*, pp. 45–46.

¹²³ J. M. Barbalet, *Emotion, Social Theory and Social Structure: A Macrosociological Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹²⁴ Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 197.

Representing trauma is in this respect no different. Emotions are inherent within the various ways trauma is represented. A range of affective reactions – feelings, sensitivities and emotions – can be stimulated and mobilized in response to the needs of suffering. These emotions shape not only the meanings attributed to trauma, but also the social forces and agency that can cohere community after. Important here is that representations of trauma both convey and solicit particular socially embedded emotions, shared structures of feeling that can, due to their social and historical nature, in turn help to generate the sense of shared purpose and understanding needed to constitute identity and inscribe boundaries of comfort and belonging. The emotions and sensibilities that are implicated in the various ways trauma is represented can in this way play a pivotal role in constituting communities.

The influence of trauma's emotions becomes clearer when we consider the cultural (and collectivizing) dynamics of its representation. Immediately following catastrophe, a wider community or society is often depicted as feeling the disorientating effects that others, who experience the events more directly, consequently suffer. By portraying the terror of trauma in this way – as something that touches not simply direct victims but also those witnessing at “home” – representational practices prompt trauma to be considered in a way that appeals emotionally to many. Claudia Aradau comments that it is in this way that witnesses may be “emotionally affected and experience solidarity with victims.”¹²⁵ Carefully mediated by mass or collective representation, “popular imagination”¹²⁶ can thus translate individual and often distant trauma into emotional discourses that shape and define a community. Affects – feelings, sensibility, mood and emotions – sink into how one represents the seemingly abstract and unspeakable, and how one transcribes the incomprehension of trauma into comprehensible patterns of words and pictures. A kind of social connection and moral relationship between victim and witness is summoned in this way.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Claudia Aradau, “The Perverse Politics of Four-Letter Words: Risk and Pity in the Securitisation of Human Trafficking,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 33.2 (2004), 251–277, at 255.

¹²⁶ Ross, “Coming in from the Cold,” 213.

¹²⁷ Lilie Chouliaraki, “The Aestheticization of Suffering on Television,” *Visual Communication*, 5.3 (2006), 261–285, at 264; John Silk, “Caring at a Distance: (Im)partiality, Moral Motivation and the Ethics of Representation,” *Ethics, Place and Environment*, 3.3 (2000), 303–309.

Feelings of sympathy and also solidarity can emerge between witness and victim, and processes of mourning can in turn solidify communal connections.¹²⁸ Although forms of collective identity and community can be constituted and reconstituted by communicating trauma, it is often found that existing communities are reinforced or strengthened by spatial and linguistic constraints that are inextricably linked to practices of representation.¹²⁹

One way to consider this process is to think of emotions as phenomena that can be “pulled upon” or “framed”¹³⁰ by both by one’s own experiences and by events that one is exposed to in the social realm. Illustrative here is the process of bearing witness to distant trauma. Witnessing trauma through the mediations of photographers, journalists and politicians prompts one’s emotions to be “steered” – “pulled” this or that way depending on what is seen. Individuals may be presented with images of death and heroic survival, of families and friends in mourning, and the expedience of political responses. Such mediations may not go so far as to specifically tell individuals what to think and how to feel, yet by invoking culturally specific modes of representing trauma and its pain they provide a mechanism through which individual and distant experiences can affectively appeal to a wider society, or – as nationalism scholars have long suggested – to some kind of “imagined” community of feeling.¹³¹ Fierke specifically examined this process, arguing that it is because images of dying bodies prompt a search for meaning that they in turn become “a symbol for social objects and worlds.”¹³² Put differently, through processes of representation and interpretation, injured bodies are imbued with emotional meaning, meaning that then circulates “outwards towards a nascent community, that ... is restored and expands through its

¹²⁸ See J. R. Martin, “Mourning: How We Get Aligned,” *Discourse & Society*, 15.2–3 (2004), 321–344.

¹²⁹ See Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, pp. 21–39; Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, pp. 229–233; Fierke, “Whereof We Can Speak, Thereof We Must Not Be Silent,” 472, 477–481.

¹³⁰ Kimberly Gross and Lisa D’Ambrosio, “Framing Emotional Response,” *Political Psychology*, 25.1 (2004), 1–29.

¹³¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991); see also Thomas J. Scheff, *Bloody Revenge: Emotions, Nationalism and War* (Boulder: Westview, 1994).

¹³² Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*, p. 22.

identification.”¹³³ The emotional meanings attributed to dying or injured bodies “becomes ‘stuck to’ the nascent community,” thereby constituting or reconstituting the body politic.¹³⁴

Representations of trauma are in this way fundamental to the emotionally embedded discourses that can be mobilized after catastrophe. To return to the work of Lila Abu-Lughod and Catherine Lutz, emotional discourses are those that “seem to have some affective content or effect.”¹³⁵ I would go further than this, to suggest that all discourses possess emotional underpinnings and effects, even if they do so implicitly or in unobvious ways. Abu-Lughod and Lutz do, however, extrapolate to further theorize that emotional discourses can be considered to be forms of social and thus collective action, in so far that discourses are inevitably interpreted through a culturally sensitive (affective) lens, which in turn shapes how discourses are perceived and the social and political consequences they produce. Representing trauma can in this view be seen to inspire discourses that have the function of enabling individuals to emotionally situate themselves within (or indeed apart from) a community that is feeling similarly traumatized or aggrieved by the idea of suffering fellow community members.

Representation is thus the process through which seemingly individual emotions associated with trauma acquire a social, collective dimension and can, in turn, help to shape political processes. Although witnesses can never truly understand the emotions of someone directly affected by tragedy, processes of representation – communication – establish a public context where the private and possibly inimitable nature of trauma can be ascribed wider social, emotional meaning and significance.¹³⁶ It is therefore through practices of representation that the emotional dimensions of trauma can be transcribed into influential political, and communally constitutive discourses.

Theorizing the relationship between trauma and representation in this way helps to make clear how catastrophe can help to underwrite

¹³³ Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*, p. 28.

¹³⁴ Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*, p. 79.

¹³⁵ Lila Abu-Lughod and Catherine A. Lutz, “Introduction: Emotion, Discourse and the Politics of Everyday Life,” in Catherine A. Lutz and Lila Abu-Lughod (eds.), *Language and the Politics of Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 1–23, at p. 10.

¹³⁶ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, pp. 20–39, 92–100.

the emotional dynamics of political communities. Important here is an understanding of how emotions can help to shape the representational and interpretative processes through which trauma gains social meaning and, in some cases, the kind of social and political significance needed to constitute boundaries of identity and community. In turn, by conceptualizing how representational processes may intersect with or align individuals, emotionally, we may be able to more fully comprehend how trauma can constitute communities, as well as the commemorative legacies that often glorify traumatic loss, generating animosity and divisive political relations.

Summary

This chapter has constituted the final step of the conceptual part of my inquiry into the relationship between trauma, emotions and constitution of political community. It has argued that practices of representation play a critical role in transcribing trauma and its associated emotions into a phenomenon able to be shared and made collectively meaningful.

The chapter began by discussing literatures concerning the theory of representation and narrative. In doing so, I demonstrated that the process of representation is fundamental to how we perceive of social and political realities. Objects, people and events attain meaning only through the representational and interpretative strategies that we bring to them. I also showed that for meaning to be shared there must be a common (or accepted) history and social structure that enables individuals to make sense of representations in similar ways.

I then drew out why an understanding of representation and narrative is crucial to conceptualizing the constitution of community after trauma. I demonstrated that although trauma is commonly conceptualized as an isolating and somewhat incommunicable experience, representational practices help to “make sense” of trauma. Practices of representation and narrative make trauma knowable; they shape trauma’s expression and also the meanings such expressions convey. Whether through mediums such as speech or writing, visual arts, photography or even creative movement and dance, representations translate what may seem to be an isolating, indescribably emotional experience into something able to be understood by many. As such, trauma can attain meanings that are instrumental in diminishing

feelings of uncertainty and isolation, and can generate shared understandings and common bonds. It is in this way – through practices used to represent trauma, and interpretative processes that come to construct narratives around it – that individuals experience and can emotionally enact trauma in ways that help to constitute political communities.

My inquiry then turned to the political dimensions of representing trauma. In particular, I highlighted that representations of trauma can both limit and transform how we think about our attachments to others. Put differently, representations of trauma can both consolidate existing forms of community and mobilize individuals in ways that generate new ones. Most scholars stress the former process. But some also emphasize that representations of trauma hold immanent possibilities for change. This latter scenario taps into emotions and sentiments that disrupt how individuals consider their attachments to others. Representations of trauma then generate emotions and meanings that are capable of creating a new sense identity and community.

The final section of this chapter brought the conceptual part of my research into trauma full circle by more closely showing how emotions are central to a more holistic appreciation of the relationship between the representation of trauma and the constitution of political community. Most important here is recognizing how emotions inevitably help to shape and give value to the representational and interpretative practices from which (post-trauma) forms of community are produced. Forms of feeling distinguish representations of trauma by attributing value and signaling meaning. This attribution of meaning and value is, as I showed, inevitably laden with power. Yet, it can also hold immanent potential in so far that emotions can either work to reinforce the status quo or they can disrupt how individuals and collectives consider their attachments and responsibilities. Existing forms of community may be replicated, or forms of feeling can inspire the collective agency needed to transform or fundamentally rebuild the foundations of community.

