The politics of post-trauma emotions: Securing community after the Bali bombing

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Abstract

This paper examines how traumatic events can influence the constitution of identity and community in international relations. It demonstrates that emotions are central to how individuals and societies experience and work through the legacy of catastrophe. Often neglected in scholarly analysis of international relations, emotions can become pivotal sites for the renewal of political stability and social control. Key to this process are practices of representation. They provide individual experiences of trauma with a collective and often international dimension. They often smooth over feelings of shock and terror and unite individuals in a spirit of shared experience and mutual understanding. The paper illustrates the ensuing dynamics by examining the media's portrayal of the Bali bombing of 12 October 2002. Focusing on photographs and the stories that accompany them, the paper shows how representations of trauma may provide a sense of collective solace that can, in turn, underwrite the emotional dynamics of a political community.

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INTRODUCTION

The bombing of the Sari bar in Kuta, Bali, on 12 October 2002, resulted in the death of 202 people, 88 of whom were Australian. This large number of deaths is why Australia has generally been seen as the nation in which the impact of the bombing was most sharply felt. Indeed, in the days that followed it was suggested that Australia must now 'prepare itself for the worst'.[1] As the extent of the atrocity unfolded, it seemed—if one were to use the media as a gauge—that Australian society was more and more united. Discourses of commemoration and national mourning took over the space the violence opened, ascribing meaning to the potential meaninglessness of victims' pain. Front-page articles documented, both through words and pictures, the distress of survivors—emotions crumbling the composure of their faces—the plight of those left still fighting for their lives, and more generally the blinding destruction that the bombs had reaped. The pain of victims was swiftly referred to as that

1 Dominic Hughes, 'Australians in Shock After Bali Attack', *BBC News*, international edition, 13 October 2002.

of a nation.[2] And an ensuing sense of trauma—the shock and the gravity of loss—was invoked as damaging Australia's 'collective soul'.[3]

Portrayals of the Bali bombing are among many examples that demonstrate the collectivising potential of representing trauma.[4] They show how singular events of trauma can be represented in ways that shift it from the realm of the individual to that of a collective. Indeed, by analysing representations of the violence and ensuing sense of trauma, one sees how frequently the language and in turn solace of a wider community is invoked. Central here are the social discourses and representational practices that allow trauma to be communicated. Often these practices involve portraying trauma and the emotions that accompany it in ways that suggest individual and distant trauma is a shared one. Commemorative discourses claim and displace trauma, prompting that it be remembered in particular socially, culturally or politically significant ways. In doing so, such practices smooth over feelings of shock and terror and unite seemingly isolated individuals in a spirit of shared experience and mutual understanding.

The objective of this essay is to examine this relationship between trauma and the constitution of political community. I use the Bali bombing as an empirical backdrop against which I examine a range of key conceptual issues. Focusing on the role of emotions in particular, I scrutinise how traumatic events can be represented in ways that make them meaningful to many, to those who do not experience the trauma directly, but only bear witness, from a distance. As such, the paper opposes common conceptualisations of trauma as a solitary and deeply internal experience. Instead, I argue that popular representations can mediate and attribute trauma with emotional meanings that are instrumental to the construction or

2   Louise Dodson, 'The Week the PM Felt a Nation's Pain', *The Age*, 18 October 2002, p. 17; Jennifer Hewett, 'Amid a Nation's Pain, a Call to Stand Defiant', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 October 2002, p. 1.

3   Mark Ragg, 'The Numbers No-one Wants to Figure Out', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 October 2002, p. 5.

4   For other examples, see David Campbell, 'Time is Broken: The Return of the Past in the Response to September 11', *Theory and Event*, 5(4) 2002; François Debrix, 'The Sublime Spectatorship of War: The Erasure of the Event in America's Politics of Terror and Aesthetics of Violence', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 34(3) 2006, pp. 767–92; Jenny Edkins, 'Forget Trauma? Responses to September 11', *International Relations*, 16(2) 2002, pp. 243–56; Lawrence Langer, 'The Alarmed Vision: Social Suffering and Holocaust Atrocity', *Daedalus*, 125(1) 1996, pp. 47–65; Peter Novick (ed.), *The Holocaust and Collective Memory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001).

consolidation of wider political communities. Often, representations of trauma draw attention to the harrowing nature of traumatic events: they signify shock, vulnerability and confusion. Depicting trauma can thus be deeply shocking and confronting, even for people who witness the event from a far away, safe place. Witnesses strive to make sense of what they are seeing, being affected by emotional responses and drawing upon prevailing discourses and symbols to make sense of what they see and feel. In this way, trauma can acquire shared meaning and become perceived as a collective experience.

I therefore argue that—and demonstrate how—representations of trauma can generate shared feelings which, in turn, underpin political identity and community. In doing so, my essay seeks to contribute to two distinct debates in the study of trauma and international relations. The first way is by engaging critically with contemporary trauma theory. A significant part of the literature has emerged from Holocaust-based understandings of trauma. With a few notable exceptions, these studies tend to emphasise the solitude and deep sense of anxiety that accompany traumatic encounters. They stress that the difficulties involved with representing trauma obviate the possibility of understanding it in a social and thus collective manner. This essay both draws upon and questions the limits of this approach, ultimately suggesting that while trauma theory may hold true for conceptualising trauma's impact at the level of the individual, it stops short in helping to appreciate how particular traumatic events can resonate and gain much wider social and political influence. The second key contribution of this essay lies in conceptualising and empirically illustrating the centrality of emotion for understanding the politics of identity and community in international relations. Doing so is important, in part because emotions play a particular crucial role during times of crises and trauma, and in part because conventional social scientific modes of analysis tend to dismiss emotions as purely private and personal phenomena.

The paper is structured as follows: to begin, I discuss the nature of trauma. I show that even though trauma is experienced in internal, solitary, and indeed often incommunicable ways, traumatic experiences can play an important role in constituting identity and community. Second, I demonstrate that practices of representation are central to this process: they provide individual experiences of trauma with larger, collective significance. The third section examines the emotional dimensions involved. Here I show, in particular, that emotions are intertwined not only

with how individuals experience trauma, but also with how representations of trauma foster feelings of shared meaning and community. The fourth and final section then illustrates the issues at stake in one concrete setting: the 12 October 2002 Bali bombing. I examine media portrayals, focusing in particular on photographs and the stories that accompany them. I show that these representations of trauma, as harrowing as they were, provided a sense of collective solace that was instrumental to the construction of a wider political community.

THE PARADOX OF TRAUMA: THE BREAKING AND REMAKING OF COMMUNITY

The notion of trauma is one of the most complex yet compelling psychological and political issues today. Consensus regarding trauma—how to distinguish it, determine how it is physically and emotionally experienced, ascertain its psychological impact, and also how to best help victims through recovery—is slim, even despite debates waged in a range of scholarly literatures. One agreement, however, is that events known as 'traumatic' are pivotal, impacting upon victims in a deeply personal and often incommunicable way.

Scholars largely agree that trauma involves the experiencing of something so disturbing that one's understanding of the world and how it works is severely disrupted. Be it a civil war or a terrorist attack, be it experienced as a direct witness or observed from a safe distance, traumatic experiences rupture the linear narratives through which we experience the everyday.[5] Jenny Edkins suggests we think of trauma as 'blurring the very

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5   My understanding of trauma is drawn from a diverse range of inter-disciplinary literatures. See, for instance, Paul Antze and Michael Lambek (eds), *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory* (London: Routledge, 1996); Patrick Bracken, *Trauma: Culture, Meaning, Philosophy* (London and Philadelphia: Whurr, 2002); Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Cathy Caruth (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (London: Basic Books, 1992); Michael Humphrey, *The Politics of Atrocity and Reconciliation: From Terror to Trauma* (London: Routledge, 2002); Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); and Laurence J. Kirmayer, Robert Lemelson and Mark Barad (eds), *Understanding Trauma: Integrating Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

distinctions upon which everyday existence depends'.[6] Commonly held assumptions and meanings that have, over the course of our lives, come to define us are stripped away with trauma. A human vulnerability is revealed, and those who suffer it are left to question their capacity to be in control.

Events we label 'traumatic' are thus usually defined so because they cannot be experienced or processed in the same way as others. Trauma is experienced with feelings of disbelief and terror, and is accompanied by the inability to reconcile it with the practices and memories we are accustomed to. As Maurice Blanchot puts it, trauma is 'what escapes the very possibility of experience'.[7] Feminist scholar Liz Philipose suggests that trauma is 'an experience of a world unmade and undone.'[8] Cathy Caruth, likewise, describes trauma as 'the confrontation with an event that, in its unexpectedness and horror, cannot be placed within the schemes of prior knowledge'.[9] Trauma is thus characterised by how it terrorises, by how it 'breaks down understanding … and places people in utterly different worlds of feeling'.[10]

Events or experiences known as 'traumatic' are therefore in many ways solitary. Trauma isolates those who endure it. But individual experiences of trauma can also seep out, affecting those who surround and bear witness. Studies from psychology, sociology and politics speak of a 'distant survivor'[11] syndrome, which suggests that trauma can psychologically and emotionally affect those who have not stood directly in its path. Although obviously less visceral, witnessing extreme violence and suffering can damage a viewer's psyche by engendering fear and anxiety of death.[12]

6   Jenny Edkins, 'Remembering Relationality: Trauma Time and Politics', in Duncan S. A. Bell (ed.), *Memory, Trauma and World Politics* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), p. 110.

7   Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 7.

8   Liz Philipose, 'The Politics of Pain and the End of Empire', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 9(1) 2007, pp. 60–81, at p. 62.

9   Cathy Caruth, 'Recapturing the Past: Introduction', in Caruth (ed.), *Trauma*, p. 153.

10   David B. Morris, *The Culture of Pain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 73.

11   Robert Jay Lifton, 'Americans as Survivors', *New England Journal of Medicine*, 352(22) 2005, pp. 2263–6.

12   See Nancy K. Miller and Jason Tougaw, 'Introduction: Extremities', in Nancy K. Miller and Jason Tougaw (eds), *Extremities: Trauma, Testimony, and Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2002), pp. 1–24; Vamik K. Volkan, 'Traumatised Societies and Psychological Care: Expanding the

Significant here is a move toward an understanding of trauma that goes beyond the official codification of a direct victim suffering post-traumatic stress disorder. Jeffrey Alexander, Ron Eyerman and Piotr Sztompka speak of 'cultural trauma'.[13] They refer to an event or historic period so extreme that it shatters identity and debases a wider sense of public meaning or cohesion. There is also a push to restore or reconfigure collective identity in the wake of such fragmentation. Violence and an ensuing sense of trauma can then shape the social landscape through which individuals define and redefine the place they occupy in the world.[14] Atrocity and its memory can in this way become, as Sztompka argues, at least partially constitutive of the 'main values, constitutive rules [and] central expectations' that bind community.[15] Thus while trauma's pain may indeed be internal, it can also furnish the social attachments needed to constitute community.

It is through wider processes of representation that experiences of trauma can furnish or strengthen the bonds needed to constitute community. Narratives that coordinate an even-flow of everyday life take over, as trauma is incorporated into a vision of social reality that restores a sense of purpose and order. Threads of the trauma—the more public meaning it obtains—circle individual and community, and in doing so mutually constitute what trauma means and how its pain and memory become socially defined. Discourses of collective solace are established, and as Kai Erikson contends, a community providing both 'intimacy' and a 'cushion for pain' locates itself amidst feelings of trauma's solitude and fragmentation.[16]

Concept of Preventative Medicine', in Danielle Knafo (ed.), *Living with Terror, Working with Trauma: A Clinician's Handbook* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 2004), pp. 479–98.

13   See Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernard Gieson and Neil J. Smelser (eds), *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Ron Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Ron Eyerman, 'The Past in the Present: Culture and the Transmission of Memory', *Acta Sociologica*, 47(2) 2004, pp. 159–69; Piotr Sztompka, 'Cultural Trauma: The Other Face of Social Change', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 3(4) 2000, pp. 449–66.

14   See also Michael J. Shapiro, *Violent Cartographies: Mapping Cultures of War* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1997).

15   Sztompka, 'Cultural Trauma', p. 457.

16   Kai Erikson, *A New Species of Trouble: Explorations in Disaster, Trauma, and Community* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994), p. 234.

Politically orientated studies of trauma go as far as to suggest that it is in this way—through the constitution and reconstitution of community after trauma—that present day political configurations and policy outlooks can be shaped by experiences of, and the discourses that surround, acts of atrocity. Duncan Bell, Jenny Edkins and Karin Fierke are among many scholars who have shown that trauma is indeed a powerful social and political phenomenon, one that influences various aspects of both domestic and international politics.[17] Whether instigated by political violence or natural catastrophe, experiences of widespread or publicly-visible trauma produce discourses that shape not only how individuals are connected to the world, but also how such connections influence the way one responds to the needs of suffering. Edkins' investigation of memory and contemporary statehood shows that generally such discourses commemorate trauma in ways that foster the reification of existing forms of political sovereignty. How individuals, and in turn societies, come to remember past traumas and mourn lives lost to events such as war is intimately connected to discourses that reinstate modes of political power and social control.[18] Remnants of such acts linger, shaping social and political landscapes often for generations to come.[19] Consider the legacy of the Holocaust, two world wars in the space of half a century, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, the Cold War, Vietnam, the terrorist attacks of 11 September and the 'war on terror'. Events such as this—no doubt catastrophic and traumatic for millions—not only directly influence the conditions through which international relations are formally conducted, but they also generate psychological and emotional states that continue to divide the world and shape how contemporary global

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17 A selection of their research on trauma and politics includes Bell (ed.), *Memory, Trauma and World Politics*; Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*; Karin M. Fierke, 'Whereof We Can Speak, Thereof We Must Not Be Silent: Trauma, Political Solipsism and War', *Review of International Studies*, 30(4) 2003, pp. 471–91; Karin M. Fierke, 'Trauma', in Karin M. Fierke, *Critical Approaches to International Security* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), pp. 123–43; and Karin M. Fierke, 'Bewitched by the Past: Social Memory, Trauma and International Relations,' in Bell (ed.), *Memory, Trauma and World Politics*, pp. 116–34.

18 See also Jenny Edkins, 'The Local, the Global and the Troubling', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 9(4) 2006, pp. 499–511.

19 On the theme of memory and the socio-political implications of trauma's commemorative legacy, see, for instance, Duncan S. A. Bell, 'Mythscapes: Memory, Mythology and National Identity', *British Journal of Sociology*, 54(1) 2003, pp. 63–81; Barbara A. Misztal, 'The Sacralization of Memory', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 7(1) 2004, pp. 67–84.

political relations play out. And, of course, this is only to mention a few of the most extreme and geopolitically destabilising events in world politics.

Uncovering precisely how trauma intrudes into public awareness and in turn, into politics, is nonetheless challenging. As my brief literature survey has aspired to show, trauma operates as an intense psychological condition, one that often involves the denial, repression and dismissal of the events that manifest it. These ensuing conditions function on a social level as well as an individual one. They pierce the connection between public and private and often seem to cut one off from obtaining knowledge about the past. Yet past trauma helps to constitute the present. And like traumatised individuals it is crucial that scholars attempt to more fully appreciate how past atrocity and trauma silently but steadily tiptoes into the politics of today. Unpacking the politics that are at play in the narration of trauma is, I argue, fundamental to such a project. Implicated here are not only the communicative practices utilised in the giving of individual testimony, but also—and perhaps more importantly—the practices employed by the media and in politics.

THE PROBLEM OF REPRESENTING TRAUMA

Key to how individual trauma becomes a collective phenomenon is representation. Representational practices provide for the expression of trauma, and in so doing shift it from the realm of the individual to that of a collective or community.

At first glance, however, the centrality of representation sits uneasily with the communicative crisis that trauma scholars suggest distinguishes experiences of it. Elaine Scarry's pioneering research on pain helps to better appreciate this tension. For Scarry, pain is, in an important and seemingly contradictory sense, 'inexpressible'.[20] A certain speechlessness is said to accompany pain, signalling that perhaps both the somatic and emotional nature of it is not only incomprehensible but also unable to be truly shared through language.[21] Consider, for example, a simple pinprick. It could be said the pain is sharp, 'like or knife', or that perhaps with time it becomes 'dull', or 'grinding', or 'throbbing'. These words may seem to contextualise

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20 Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 3.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 3–11.

physical and perceptual feelings, yet simply by examining one's own experiences of pain it becomes evident that linguistic descriptions can never truly convey the feeling and impact of pain.

Scarry's reflections on pain mirror the thoughts of many scholars of trauma. They tend to agree that individuals find it intensely difficult—if not impossible—to communicate the feeling and meaning of trauma.[22] Shocked, pained, and in disbelief, words seem inadequate expressions for the strangeness of the world revealed by one's suffering. Holocaust scholar Dori Laub contends that the telling of stories of survival or of witnessing is inevitably constrained by the impossibility of ever adequately representing it. 'No amount of telling', Laub declares, 'seems ever to do justice to inner compulsion. There are never enough words or the right words, there is never enough time or the right time, and never enough listening or the right listening to articulate the story that cannot be fully captured in thought, memory, and speech.'[23] One may therefore speak and write of trauma yet words fail to convey the perceptual intensity of feelings, either physical or emotional. Language cannot measure the shattering of self that occurs with trauma, because trauma destroys the very understanding that patterns of language have themselves constituted.

The crisis of representation that is produced by trauma can be at least partially attributed to trauma's intensely emotional nature. Emotional reactions to trauma are intertwined with the processes of recovery that reconnect individuals with the social world. Individuals try to give 'voice' to feelings and sensations when they speak of encounters with trauma. Words are searched in an attempt to know the source of trauma's pain, and ultimately to move on. Sexual assault survivors Susan Brison and Roberta Culbertson share that the struggle for words is synonymous with the hope that speech can free the parts of them that remain trapped by pain.[24] Yet, as words form, shaping their emotions from the outside-in, giving social

22 See, for instance, Linda Alcoff and Laura Gray, 'Survivor Discourse: Transgression or Recuperation?', *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture*, 18(2) 1993, pp. 260–90; Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, pp. 1–9; and Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, pp. 11–12.

23 Dori Laub, 'Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle', in Caruth (ed.), *Trauma*, pp. 61–75, at p. 63.

24 Susan J. Brison, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of the Self* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Roberta Culbertson, 'Embodied Memory, Transcendence, and Telling: Recounting Trauma, Re-establishing the Self', *New Literary History*, 26(1) 1995, pp. 169–95, at pp. 178–9.

meaning to what is individual pain, survivors often tell that they then struggle to free what becomes trapped by language; 'the emotional self'[25] that has been shaped and constrained by the linguistic orthodoxies through which it has been expressed.

If trauma truly 'resists representation'[26] it could be claimed that not only is it incomprehensible but also that as a phenomenon it is unable to be shared.[27] Since individuals can never adequately describe their own pain, how is it that they can feel another's? Trauma and the suffering it solicits appears to be beyond collective knowing, in the sense that it is experienced in a profoundly subjective and incommunicable way.

The problem of representation I present here is of central importance to how one thinks about the collective dynamics of trauma. If trauma is ultimately ineffable, how can it so powerfully construct and maintain forms of community—national, cultural or ethnic, familial or otherwise? How can trauma occupy a space beyond representation, while at the same time soliciting a range of social discourses that inspire individuals to evaluate themselves in relation to others? If trauma induces a crisis of representation how, then, can and does one make sense of it? Is there something other than or beyond language, an 'other of language' as Julia Kristeva suggests, which words can only ever partially represent?[28]

Although trauma may be without a voice, in the end it finds one, regardless of how inadequate. It is this voice that narrates trauma, somehow telling of its terror and its pain, and in doing so weaves it into the fabric of both individual and collective conceptions of being and knowing.[29] Speaking of trauma—either by victims or witnesses—is a search to find the expressions considered to be the most appropriate measures of trauma and

25   Deborah Lupton, *The Emotional Self: A Sociocultural Exploration* (London: Sage, 1998).

26   Elaine Scarry, *Resisting Representation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 3.

27   See Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, pp. 91–2; Cynthia Halpern, *Suffering, Politics, Power: A Genealogy in Modern Political Theory* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), p. 9; Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, pp. 5, 12, 13, 42–5.

28   Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); and Julia Kristeva, 'New Maladies of the Soul', in *The Portable Kristeva* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

29   Richard Kearney likens trauma testimony to stories we tell in order to bestow life with a sense of continuity and coherent meaning. See Richard Kearney, *On Stories* (London: Routledge, 2002).

its pain. This is how trauma gathers meaning, socially, by appropriating social symbols and linguistic patterns that are specific in time and place.[30]

Representing trauma is therefore not solely a task of trying to find expressions that adequately represent one's feelings. Expressing trauma prompts one to view practices of representation as part of a socio-culturally (and thus politically) embedded process of meaning making. They give trauma the ability to be expressed, and as a consequence translated into something that can be meaningful to many.[31] At issue here is that processes of representation ultimately displace the reality of trauma's suffering, replacing the shock and sublime horror of trauma with something socially and communally meaningful.

'REGIMES OF PITY'? REPRESENTING TRAUMA AND THE POWER OF AFFECT

Whether one can comprehend, or feel for, or even as some suggest identify with another's trauma has much to do with the way it is presented. 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 more public meaning, from the way it is represented and the messages such representations are perceived to convey. Indeed, like all representations, those of trauma are stories, spun in a particular way, with a particular narrative—similar to a light that illuminates only the parts one wishes others to see. Such stories are inevitably bound by historically entrenched ways of seeing, perceiving and telling, and bestow trauma with socially specific meaning. Put differently, representational practices tell a story about suffering, and they do so in a socio-culturally and historically constituted way. As such these processes prompt the particular events or experience to be considered—and thus responded to—in a way that is often consonant with more established social connections and concomitant feelings of solidarity.

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30 For more on the relationship between language and traumatic meaning, see Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, pp. 7, 8, 11, 32–3; Fierke, 'Whereof We Can Speak', pp. 481–2.

31 For interesting comment of how potentially meaningless traumatic events are made meaningful, see Simon Critchley, 'Di and Dodi Die', *Theory and Event*, 1(4) 1997.

Understanding that knowing and feeling is bound up in how trauma is represented and portrayed is necessary in order to provide meaningful insight into how individual experiences of trauma can help to inscribe community boundaries. Alfonso Lingis suggests that it is 'when one exposes oneself to the naked one, the destitute one, the outcast one, the dying one', that community can be built.[32] Distinct here is the ability to imagine the pain of another. Such imaginings are thought to inspire some form of emotional and, in turn, ethical response—even if the latter takes the minimal form of a conversation at home.[33] David Morris even contends that the imagining of an other's pain can 'link us together in a chain of feeling'.[34]

Many scholars, in a variety of disciplines, have sought to unpack the various ways that representational strategies can align and re-align individuals (and thus the configuring of community) in the wake of violence and trauma.[35] Luc Boltanski and Lilie Chouliaraki examine the affective impact of gazing upon distant trauma.[36] They begin with the seemingly simple assumption that particular affective sensibilities—that is, emotions, feelings and moods—inevitably influence how people see. For 'those more fortunate'— to be witnessing rather than experiencing catastrophe directly—Boltanski suggests that such sensibilities generally involve emotions such as sympathy or pity.[37] Chouliarkai also writes of the feelings of 'sympathy',

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32 Alfonso Lingis, *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common* (Indiana: Indianapolis University Press, 1994), p. 12.

33 Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media and Politics*, trans. Graham Burchell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. xv–xvi, 20–1, and for reflections on the power of imagination in relation to witnessing and responding to the needs of suffering, see pp. 38–9.

34 Morris, *The Culture of Pain*, p. 207.

35 See, for instance, David Campbell, 'Geopolitics and Visuality: Sighting the Darfur Conflict', *Political Geography*, 26(4) 2007, pp. 357–82; David Campbell, 'Horrific Blindness: Images of Death in the Contemporary Media', *Journal for Cultural Research*, 8(1) 2004, pp. 55–74; David Campbell, 'Salgado and the Sahel: Documentary Photography and the Imaging of Famine', in François Debrix and Cynthia Weber (eds), *Rituals of Mediation: International Politics and Social Meaning* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp. 69–98; Jenny Edkins, 'Exposed Singularity', *Journal for Cultural Research*, 9(4) 2005, pp. 359–86; John Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, 'Public Identity and Collective Memory in US Iconic Photography: The Image of Accidental Napalm', *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 20(1) 2003, pp. 35–66.

36 Boltanski, *Distant Suffering*; Lilie Chouliaraki, *The Spectatorship of Suffering* (London: Sage, 2006).

37 Boltanski, *Distant Suffering*, p. 11.

'anger', 'protest' and 'loss' that accompany witnessing. Emotions such as this may seem straightforward, or given that they may help procure humanitarian actions, perhaps they are even welcomed. However, such emotions are not as simple as their first appearance may seem. Tracing the historical contingency of such a response, Boltanski and Chouliaraki concur that a 'politics of pity' has become almost routine-like in the relationship between victim and witness. Rather than an ethic of care, responsibility and action being implicit with such feelings, emotions such as pity and sympathy are a part of the process of making 'the spectacle of suffering not only comprehensible but also ethically acceptable.'[38] They highlight that this is particularly so for Western societies accustomed to witnessing 'distant' catastrophe and trauma through the media. Still, Boltanski and Chouliaraki remain optimistic, not entirely shying away from such 'regimes of pity', but instead arguing that such emotion may be cultivated in ways (namely, via a kind of 'empathetic identification')[39] that lead to the 'practical action' needed to alleviate distant pain.[40]

Boltanski and Chouliaraki's line of argument is, on the one hand, highly contested. Scholars have long critiqued the way the Western world seems to ambivalently play 'spectator' to suffering in the developing world. Ann Kaplan argues that rather than feelings of empathy and pity being ingenuous, invoking not merely a sense of despair or indignation but also responsibility and action, such emotions may instead be 'empty'.[41] Arthur and Joan Kleinman similarly claim that the widespread—yet utterly ineffectual—representation of distant trauma can only be considered with dismay.[42] Carolyn Dean goes so far as to argue that the so-called empathy with which one takes in another's trauma can be likened to pornography, since the soliciting of such emotion seems to fundamentally rely on the persistent representation (and thus for Dean, the exploitation and commodification) of an

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38 Chouliaraki, *The Spectacle of Suffering*, p. 3.

39 Boltanski, *Distant Suffering*, pp. 90–2; Chouliaraki, *The Spectatorship of Suffering*, pp. 157–83.

40 Lilie Chouliaraki, 'The Aestheticization of Suffering on Television', *Visual Communication*, 5(3) 2006, pp. 261–85, at p. 277.

41 E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Loss in Media and Literature* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), pp. 93–4.

42 Arthur Kleinman and Joan Kleinman, 'The Appeal of Experience; The Dismay of Images: Cultural Appropriations of Suffering in Our Times', *Daedalus*, 125(1) 1996, pp. 1–25.

unknown other's pain.[43] International relations scholars similarly caution against such 'sentimentality', showing that in reality emotions such as pity tend to generalise (rather than sensitise) onlookers to cultural difference, in turn perpetuating the selectivity towards those needing to be 'saved'.[44] To varying degrees these thoughts are also shared by scholars who write of 'compassion fatigue' or an 'exhaustion of empathy'.[45]

Criticisms such as these do not go wholly answered by Boltanski and Chouliaraki. Indeed, the tension between 'the spectacle of suffering', the emotions such spectacle supposedly solicits, such as pity, compassion or even empathy, and how to translate both into action lies at the crux of their projects. However—and despite their validity—I suggest that such debate obscures important insights that one can derive from examining the concept of representation, and more specifically the particular affective responses that representations can solicit—even if they are as ineffectual as the above scholars claim.

More broadly significant in the kind of affective politics that Boltanski and Chouliaraki identify is that sensibility and emotion are presented as important sites of not only personal but also political experience. Mediating trauma through selectively representing it produces discourses that either attach or un-attach one to the world. Such attachments are made possible at least partially through the emotional responses solicited by witnesses—even if, that is, such witnessing is via the television or newspaper, and from the comfort of one's couch. Put differently, representing trauma solicits affective responses—such as feelings of sympathy and pity—that help one to distinguish the ways one is (emotionally) connected in the world.[46] Feminist

43   Carolyn J. Dean, 'Empathy, Pornography, and Suffering', *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 14(1) 2003, pp. 88–124.

44   See, for instance, Patricia Owens, 'Xenophilia, Gender, and Sentimental Humanitarianism', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 29(3) 2004, pp. 285–305.

45   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); and Keith Tester, *Compassion, Morality and the Media* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 2001).

46   For a general articulation of the relationship between representation and emotion, see Stuart Hall, 'Introduction' and 'The Work of Representation', in Stuart Hall (ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage in association with the Open University, 1997), pp. 1–12, 13–75.

scholars have elsewhere intimated so much. They point out that representations of violence, such as photographs or testimonies of trauma, can become 'iconic artefacts' that prompt private grief to become public.[47] By providing an emotional object of identification, such representations allow one to work through feelings within a wider community of mourning. Private and essentially inimitable emotions are in this way collectively anchored. Inversely, then, representations of trauma therefore also help to distinguish whom one fails to feel connected with. Chouliaraki's research emphasises that the emotions felt in response to witnessing an other's catastrophe and pain not only bind witness and victim in what she calls a 'regime of pity', but also such feelings come to reconstitute the shared meaning and purpose needed to bind together those who witness. Here we can see that emotions felt in response to trauma have a decidedly social and political role. Emotions are inherently linked to how one portrays and interprets external experiences, to how one defines themselves and is connected in the social world, and to how community is situated or in the process of construction.

William Connolly's reflections on the intersection between affect, perception and thought may help to clarify the role affect and emotion play in both forming and interpreting representations of trauma.[48] Connolly draws attention to the power and significance of affect by demonstrating the influence emotion plays in underpinning all social and political behaviour, from voting to policy formation to the waging of war. He himself draws upon trauma—that of the European Jews through the Holocaust—to highlight the multi-layered dimensions of human experience. Dispositional and somatic responses, such as 'gut feelings', permeate what scholars and politicians often consider higher-order rational and 'deliberative thinking'.[49] Rather than compartmentalising politics into a reason-filled, a-emotional sphere, Connolly suggests that much can be learnt from recognising how

47 See Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), pp. 9–10, 156–8; Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), pp. 19–25; Jane Kilby, *Violence and the Cultural Politics of Trauma* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007); Christine Sylvester, 'The Art of War/The War Question in (Feminist) IR', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 33(3) 2005, pp. 855–78, at pp. 872–7.

48 William E. Connolly, *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

49 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

visceral and corporal feelings ubiquitously filter through intellectual capabilities.[50] Constitutive or constructivist approaches to the philosophy and psychology of emotion also help here, in that they have long recognised that emotions cannot be separated from social context.[51] Andrew Ross and Paul Saurette forward similar theses, suggesting that scholars need engage the social potential of what have been long considered 'private emotions'.[52] Ross, for instance, considers that an appreciation of emotion is an important step towards more holistic theorising of international politics. Unravelling how individual emotions are interwoven with social structures of knowledge and belief may facilitate a deeper understanding of how identities and collectives can be constructed. Examining what he calls 'affective connections' can, Ross suggests, help to 'illuminate how political identities are reproduced and how people become intensely committed to them'.[53] Important to such a study is an examination of how such 'affective energies'[54] can be both purposefully cultivated and inscribed into representational and narrative structures that shape social and political realities.

The connection between affect and trauma is important when considering the cultural (and collectivising) dynamics of trauma's various representations. Immediately following catastrophe in the Western world, 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 for those witnessing, at 'home'—representational

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50 *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 63–6, 74–6.

51 See, for instance, Lila Abu-Lughod and Catherine A. Lutz (eds), *Language and the Politics of Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Jack M. Barbalet, *Emotion, Social Theory and Social Structure: A Macrosociological Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Gillian Bendelow and Simon J. Williams (eds), *Emotions in Social Life: Critical Themes and Contemporary Issues* (London: Routledge, 1998); Rom Harré, *The Social Construction of Emotions* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); Lupton, *The Emotional Self*; William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

52 Andrew A. G. Ross, Affective States: Rethinking Passion in Global Politics, PhD Dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 2005; Andrew A. G. Ross, 'Coming in from the Cold: Constructivism and Emotions', *European Journal of International Relations*, 12(2) 2006, pp. 197–222; Paul Saurette, 'You dissin me? Humiliation and Post 9/11 Global Politics', *Review of International Studies*, 32(3) 2006, pp. 495–522.

53 Ross, Affective States, p. 11; 'Coming in from the Cold', pp. 212–3.

54 Ross, Affective States, p. 45.

practices prompt trauma to be considered in a way that appeals emotionally to many. Claudia Aradau comments that it is in this way that individuals may be 'emotionally affected and experience solidarity with victims'.[55] Carefully mediated by mass or collective representation, 'popular imagination'[56] can thus translate individual and distant trauma into discourses that shape and define a community. Affect—feelings, sensibility, mood and emotion—sinks into how one represents the abstract and unspeakable, and how one transcribes the incomprehension of trauma into comprehensible patterns of words and indeed, pictures. A kind of social connection between victim and witness can be summoned in this way.[57] Feelings of sympathy and also solidarity may emerge between witness and victim, and processes of mourning can in turn solidify communal connections.[58] Although forms of collective identity and community can be constructed and reconstructed 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.[59]

COLLECTIVISING TRAUMA THROUGH NEGOTIATING EMOTION: ON THE REPRESENTATION OF THE BALI BOMBING

To render my reflections on trauma and political community more concrete, I now turn to a specific example: the Sari bar bombing in Bali. I am not trying to provide a comprehensive account of the event and its political implications. Neither am I making absolutist claims about the kinds of emotions the bombing solicited. Doing so would be impossible in the context of a brief essay. My aim, rather, is to illustrate how representational practices can (either consciously or not) help to forge emotional (and thus social) linkages between trauma and a wider community that bears witness. I focus in particular on the effect of media representations, paying attention to how editorials and images published

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55 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, pp. 251–77, at p. 255.

56 Ross, 'Coming in from the Cold', p. 213.

57 Chouliaraki, 'The Aestheticization of Suffering on Television', p. 264.

58 See J. R. Martin, 'Mourning: How We Get Aligned', *Discourse and Society,* 15(2–3) 2004, pp. 321–44.

59 See Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, pp. 21–39; Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, pp. 229–33.

in Australia's sole national newspaper, *The Australian*, draw a very particular and concrete link between individual suffering and the nature and fate of the Australian national community.

Before I begin my analysis it is necessary to stress that media representations of the bombing were explicitly affective, emotional ones. Both images and stories brought forth the injury and terror of victims. They also sought to communicate the brutality of the bombing's perpetrators. Headlines and the language of stories discussed individual damage as deeply wounding Australia, as a nation. Visual aids were no less candid. Purgatory-like realities presented themselves through front-page images, and as the suffering of so many Australians was made visual, captions gave testimony of compatriots wanting to flee for 'home'. As such, representations of the bombing may be linked with concomitant notions of pity (or compassion)[60] and solidarity. They negotiated feelings, explicitly representing the event in ways that called upon a sense of collective grief and solace. In so doing, individual emotions of witnesses were linked, implicitly, with those of both survivors and the political figures that were said to be working desperately toward an official response. Arguably the solidarity of what Richard Rorty calls a 'we-group'[61] was swiftly summoned. Indeed, gauging the media, it certainly seemed that the processes of grief and the emotions of outrage were collective ones. A sense of shared meaning, purpose and identity was articulated in what became an 'us'/'them' type of rhetoric. Outwardly reflective of this were both the publicly respected calls for collective remembrance and commemoration, and the discourses of retributive justice that subsequently emerged.

Underpinning the various representations and subsequent discourses that surrounded the tragedy was, I suggest, the interweaving of individual and collective emotion. How the media and other representative outlets captured the crisis not only told a story about what happened, but inevitably they also made one feel. This was accomplished in a way that sought to align individual emotions with the wider emotionally charged social discourses that ultimately narrated and gave meaning to the catastrophe. Notions of national loss, public commemoration and political security helped to guide

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60   See Martha C. Nussbaum, 'Compassion and Terror', *Daedalus*, 132(1) 2003, pp. 10–27.

61   Richard R. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

apparently individualised emotional responses. They sought, either purposefully or naively, to smooth over feelings of discontinuity—the shock and terror—and to unite individuals in a spirit of shared experience and bereavement. This was achieved as much through the journalistic and testimonial accounts of the trauma as it was the images that appeared adjacent to them.

Textual interpretations of trauma: The role of editorial comments in the media

One editorial in particular illustrates the combined affective and (attempted) collectivising potential of patterns of speech. Published in *The Australian* one week after the bombing was an anonymous editorial entitled 'Australians United Share the Sorrow of Bali'. The editorial is an evocative yet also surprisingly prescriptive meditation on the tragedy of the bombing and how wider Australians should (and ultimately did) respond. Taken in context of the previous week's commentary, the editorial sums up much of what was said, by survivors, journalists and politicians alike. The editorial begins like this:

> It used to be said that no town in Australia lacked its war memorial to young men who had given their lives for the defence of our freedom. Today, as many homes and schools and sports clubs echo to the sobbing of distraught families, friends and lovers of Australians caught in the front line of terror. The front line is everywhere. No longer are we immune. Even though Bali is beyond our shores, it had become almost an extension of our lifestyle. Holidaying at Kuta beach and soaking up the sun, surf and party scene was almost a rite of passage for young Australians.[62]

In a number of ways this passage works to contextualise the trauma for Australians who witnessed from home. It tells of the social and emotional impact of the bombing. Readers are told that broader social institutions (i.e., 'homes and schools and sports clubs') mourn the catastrophe alongside victims' families and friends. And in another less explicit way, the lives of those lost or directly affected by the bombing are paralleled with those who look on; Bali is represented as not only a place symbolic of Australian lifestyle but also one that most Australians have holidayed in. Indeed, according to the author, 'soaking up the sun, surf and party scene' in Bali is a distinctly—almost ritualistic—Australian activity.

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62 'Australians United Share the Sorrow of Bali', *The Australian*, 19 October 2002, p. 18.

Significant to portrayals such as these may be the feelings of sympathy, care and solidarity that scholars consider crucial to the collective reckoning with trauma.[63] By representing the bombing in ways that promote common or shared (or at least comprehensible) meanings, as well as the power of cultural identification, the passage also diminishes distance. The trauma is pushed into and made relevant to the lives of Australians more generally. Compounding this are notions of collective insecurity and fear. It is claimed that the 'front line' at which victims suffered is now 'everywhere', and moreover, that Australians are no longer immune to acts of atrocity. Statements such as this prompt one to ask, should readers fear for their lives as well? If the possibility of terror is pervasive—indeed, if it is 'everywhere'—where is secure? Likening the trauma of the bombing with that of state-sanctioned war is still another way the editorial contextualises the catastrophe. Beginning with a comment upon war memorials, and also in using the distinctly war-like term 'front line', the editorial traverses the trauma in a way that reinforces the notion of it being a national (if not nationalistic) one. Patriotic language such as this arguably reinforces the idea of the nation as a hub of social well-being and political community.

Most of the themes examined in this short passage are reiterated throughout the remainder of the editorial. Continuing, the editorial makes comment that:

> It has not been the general lot of Australia's young people to have to face the scourge of wholesale terrorism, or to be in places where danger remains. By bringing personal accounts, the uttered dying words, and the sentiments of sorrow which might have been suppressed, the journalists and photographers covering this tragedy have empowered us to reach out as a nation. For the outrage was not just against a building but to extract maximum harm to people whose only fault was having a relaxed and happy time.[64]

This passage makes further reference to how the bombing impacts Australia, both as a community of mourning and as an 'empowered' nation. An emphasis is placed both on a sense of collective outrage and what the author considers the previously diminished danger young Australians have

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63   See Boltanksi, *Distant Suffering*; Butler, *Precarious Life*, pp. 19–50; Chouliaraki, *The Spectatorship of Suffering*; Fiona Robinson, *Globalizing Care: Ethics, Feminist Theory, and International Relations* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999); Maureen Whitebrook, 'Compassion as a Political Virtue', *Political Studies*, 50(3) 2002, pp. 529–544, esp. pp. 537–42.

64   'Australians United', p. 18.

(until now) been privileged with. Assumptions about the victims are also presented here. Faulting them only with the desire to relax and be happy harps back to a kind of lifestyle that is considered distinctly and traditionally 'Australian'. The most nationalist and explicitly emotive passage in the editorial does, however, come later:

> If it is true that death defines us, many of us have suddenly had to realise our mortality. We will ponder this during tomorrow's national day of mourning. Even though our participation in many wars has already conditioned us, this new type of war brings us face-to-face with a new situation nationally. But as a nation we have every right to respond strongly. Fundamentalist terrorism is a threat to our way of life. The people of Australia need to resist any notion that anything other than a fierce defence of our values is warranted.[65]

Here, one can see most clearly how representational practices (here, it is language and patterns of speech) attempt to shift individual trauma into that of a wider, distinctly national community. Couched within this passage are many different emotions, and also, I suggest, an implicit attempt to share or collectivise them. Although these emotions are embedded within the individual reflections of one author, the passage is written with a kind of collective authority—a collective voice even. Death is represented as something that the bombing has prompted many Australians to now consider. It is additionally claimed that one's own death is something to be reflected upon whilst mourning the trauma of others. This pulls the reader—she/he who witnesses—into the trauma. Invoked here is both a sense of authenticity and identification. It prompts one to imagine, and to perhaps fear, the possibility (and inevitability) of their own pain, and the direction that readers are to do so alongside the trauma of the victims seems key to the possibility of an empathetic emotional response. Emotions of grief and loss are thus represented as that of a society; private processes of mourning are depicted as a distinctly collective activity, one with which many Australians identify and will indeed take part in. Moreover, one can see the editorial again drawing upon contemporary discourses of terrorism and collective insecurity. Implicit here is not only a sense of collective fear, but also the call for retribution and the defence of wider Australian societal values. What is striking is that although the bombing took place in Bali, Indonesia, the attack is here represented as emblematic of a threat to Australia's collective 'way of life'.

[65] *Ibid.*

Other responses to the bombing also reflect the attempt to connect the event and ensuing trauma with a much wider sense of collective (distinctly national) injury and emotions such as fear. Initially, the bombing was presented as shocking not only for direct victims, but also for the 'throngs of Australians'[66] whom either holidayed in Bali or watched dumbstruck at home. Through the weeks that followed private mourning was presented, quickly becoming that of the Australian public. A national day of mourning was called and Australians were urged to wear a native blossom—wattle— in tribute and remembrance.[67] As memorial services took place, Australian survivors openly claimed that the Bali bombing has irreparably changed the shape of their nation.[68] Discourses of terrorism and ensuing themes of collective insecurity, fear and panic also seemed to pervade the media more than ever before.[69] Then Prime Minister John Howard also reminded Australia that the 'barbarity' of the Sari bar bombing 'can touch anybody, anytime and in any country'.[70] Political editor Dennis Shanahan went so far as to comment that 'no one is safe anywhere, Australia as a nation and Australians as a people can't hide'.[71] Reviews of domestic security and counter-terrorism legislation were immediately ordered and the Defence Department even went so far as to label their white paper 'Fortress Australia'.[72] Fear invoked from the bombing was represented as the product of a potentially wider threat and representations of the bombing evoked a corresponding sense of societal terror. Interestingly—as with the above editorial—packaged with such fear were calls to defend so-called 'Australian' values and way of life.[73]

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66   Don Greenlees, 'Terror Hits Home', *The Australian*, 14 October 2002, p. 1.

67   See Mark Metherell, 'Sprig of Wattle for Mourning', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 October 2002, p. 2.

68   Hewett, 'Amid a Nation's Pain, a Call to Stand Defiant', p. 1.

69   One reflection of this was that four out of the five most-circulated state broadsheets packaged their coverage under themes that unambiguously drew upon a wider sense of wounding and panic. For an overview of these, see Sally Jackson and Stephen Brook, 'Death in Bali – How Australia's Media Reacted When Terror Hit Our Doorstep', *The Australian*, 17 October 2002.

70   John Howard, quoted in Greenlees, 'Terror Hits Home', p. 1.

71   'Deaths Will Not Sway PM on Iraq Stand', *The Australian*, 14 October 2002, p. 4.

72   Defence Minister Robert Hill, referenced in Dodson, 'The Week the PM Felt a Nation's Pain', p. 17.

73   'Australians United', p. 18; Greg Sheridan, 'A Threat We Ignore At Our Peril', *The Australian*, 14 October 2002, p. 11.

One can thus see the collectivising potential of representing trauma. Many of the emotions either explicit or couched beneath these kinds of representations have been widely discussed as instrumental to community construction. Feminist scholars, for instance, write of the direct links between emotions such as anger and fear and the constitution of identity and community.[74] Indeed, it is the proliferation of fear that is often attributed with drawing distinctions of inside and outside—of where is 'safe' and where is not. Other scholars add that it is precisely by alluding to such danger—through various representations of the world 'outside'—that fear becomes a response to violence that is able to align individuals and affirm community limits.[75] These reflections on fear are echoed by international relations scholars who work on the production of 'cultures of insecurity'.[76] As with representations of the Bali bombing, the fear that can be invoked by seemingly ordinary patterns of speech and writing can come to reinforce prevailing forms of political sovereignty—and thus community.[77] Moreover, by both explicitly detailing the injury and terror, and by implying that Australia is the 'home' to which survivors simply wish to return, the language employed to depict the bombing can be seen as an attempt to guide individual emotions towards the comfort and sanctity of a wider (again national) community—ideationally as well as geographically.[78] Many of the expressions employed can also be distinguished as those of 'membership categorisation'.[79] Terms such as 'our way of life' and the 'barbarity' of the implied

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74 Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, pp. 62–81; and Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 52–76.

75 David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, 2nd edn (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

76 See Jutta Weldes, Mark Laffey, Hugh Gusterson and Raymond Duvall (eds), *Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities, and the Production of Danger* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

77 On language, fear and the 'securitisation' of community in world politics, see Michael C. Williams, 'Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics', *International Studies Quarterly*, 47(4) 2003, pp. 511–31.

78 For an account of how representational practices employed by both the media and politicians after the Bali bombing were used to construct public support for government foreign policy, see Matt McDonald, 'Constructing Insecurity: Australian Security Discourse and Policy Post-2001', *International Relations*, 19(3) 2005, pp. 297–320.

79 See Ivan Leuder, Victoria Marsland and Jiří Nekvapil, 'On Membership Categorization: "Us", "Them" and "Doing Violence" in Political Discourse', *Discourse and Society*, 15(2–3) 2004, pp. 243–66.

enemies draw 'us'/'them' type distinctions, which in this case essentially group victims together within a wider conglomerate of Australian society.

In sum, textual representations of the trauma can be interpreted to have enabled—yet paradoxically also limited—the boundaries of political community. Evidenced by the above editorial, mainstream representations of the bombing reinstated power structures traditional to the nation-state, which, while seeming to strengthen the Australian national community, simultaneously silences alternative discourses through which new configurations of community can be generated.

Visual representations of trauma: The role of images in the media

Images of the bombing and subsequent acts of mourning reinforced the affective undertones of the trauma's linguistic representation. Initial images portrayed the devastation and carnage that the bombs had reaped. The front page of *The Australian* on the first day of full media coverage that followed illustrates this.[80] The newspaper devoted half the page to a photograph of survivors as they staggered from the burning hull of the buildings.

The photograph captures two Australian survivors, injured and helping one another. They are alone; no other victims or rescue workers are in sight, struggling forward as if escaping the depths of a truly traumatic situation. Around them the building burns in a tangled mess. What's normally kept inside—the hardware of wires and plumbing—lies exposed. Whether consciously done or not, the image creates a vivid visual metaphor, one that sums up the bewilderment and upside-down world of those directly affected by the bombing.

Images such as this are instrumental to the expression and collectivising dynamics of the trauma.81 By graphically presenting the horror and pain of unknown others, the image stops viewers short. It seems to present things as they really are. Distinct here is the feeling of authenticity, of being there and

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80   *The Australian*, 14 October 2002.

81   See Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002); Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005); Kaplan, *Trauma Culture*; William J. T. Mitchell, 'The Unspeakable and the Unimaginable: Word and Image in a Time of Terror', *ELH: Journal of English Language History*, 72(2) 2005, pp. 291–308.

too experiencing the horror. Forcing one to look at the image may not only prompt one to imagine the victims' trauma, but also in doing so it may engage emotions generally associated with witnessing: shock, incomprehension, fear and the guilt of looking on. Yet in the sense that it portrays Australian survivors, this image can be seen to bring the catastrophe and its devastation into focus in a culturally identifiable—as well as emotionally directive and collectivising—way.

One way to highlight the collectivising role of images of the Bali bombing is to examine how—over the course of one week—the publicly available images created a particular narrative, or story. First presented was the aforementioned image, one of arresting intensity and visual power. By representing the unpresentable the image confronts viewers with confusion and many unknowns. As quickly as the following day, however, front page photographs markedly changed. They were full of the meaning that this initial image lacked. Significant here is the contrast of images—the replacing of shock with images that provide solace and grounds for understanding.82 What followed were the smiling faces of the young Australians who were either missing or pronounced dead. These photographs were generally taken from family albums. Young Australians were presented drinking beer with their mates, cradling infant children, and sitting on beaches soaking up the sun. Photographs such as these locate a wider sense of societal or cultural meaning. Emotions associated with witnessing are guided as well. The images 'fill in' many of the unknowns—who was affected by the bombing and how—and in so doing provide points of commonality that help viewers distinguish how and for whom they should feel.

The same could be said of the public photographs of those in private mourning. A common image was of families—heads bowed and weeping—at church and public memorial services.83 These types of images appear as a normal and perhaps even apolitical visual depiction of the reality of mourning. However, it is precisely in its commonality that such an image

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82   For a substantial discussion of this theme see Debrix, 'The Sublime Spectatorship of War'.

83   See, for instance, *The Australian*, 21 October 2002, p. 1.

gains representative power.[84] It presents 'ordinary' families expressing grief in ordinary ways. Certainly many—if not all—who saw these pictures would be able to recall similar experiences themselves or (empathetically) imagine how this process might be.

Survivors, families and Australians who themselves bear witness through the media's representations were also featured in visibly emotional stages of grief: families greeting their returned loved ones, the hundreds who rallied together at national commemorative services, and the flowing tears and embraces of children as they look unbelievably on. Politicians were also shown expressing their condolences, presenting honours to those who died. Foremost, then Prime Minister Howard was pictured in front of hundreds of people paying tribute to those who lost their lives.[85]

As temporary and fleeting as these images may seem, they play an important role constructing a collective vision of individual trauma. By harnessing the 'rawness' of the event and ensuing processes of grief the photographs provide a social space conducive to the collective acknowledgment and reckoning with trauma. They resonate emotionally with viewers and can (in often unrecognised and possibly even unintentional ways) act to pull people together with what seems to be their power to authentically represent and create meaning. In showing seemingly ordinary Australians and how they were working through the immensity of loss and grief, photographs of the bombing implicitly parallel the experiences of victims and their families with those of Australians who were bearing witness through the television and newspapers back home. In turn—and together with the powerful verbal narratives accompanying them—visual representations of the bombing may therefore be linked with feelings of sympathy (or empathy or compassion) and solidarity, feelings that are often seen as instrumental to the social attachments needed to reinforce a sense of national identity and community.[86]

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84 For further insight into the relationship between photographic representation and power, see John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Houndmills: Macmillian, 1988), pp. 21–2.

85 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 October 2002, p. 1.

86 See Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, pp. 8, 131–3, 193–5; Kate Nash, 'Cosmopolitan Political Community: Why Does It Feel So Right', *Constellations: International Journal of Critical*

CONCLUSION

This essay has sought to contribute to the study of trauma in politics and international relations in two distinct ways. The first contribution lies in expanding on how scholars consider—and then study—the social and political influence of trauma. The essay has focused on examining precisely how trauma, isolating as it is, can also gain wider political influence. In doing so, I have probed the limits of contemporary trauma theory, demonstrating that even though trauma may be an experience that is very individual and defies adequate expression, processes of representation can produce ways of feeling about and understanding trauma that help to constitute political identity and community. My second contribution consisted of demonstrating the central but all too often ignored role that emotions play in this process and, indeed, in international relations in general. A thorough understanding of emotions is critical to appreciating how trauma is intertwined with the politics of identity, community and by extension, security.

I began this essay by drawing from literatures that conceptualise trauma as a solitary, lonely encounter; a dive into unknown depths that reveals fragility and fear. For these studies, trauma severs victims and witnesses from their ordinary moorings and sets them adrift. It breaks narratives rather than recreates them. And at the crux of the particular traumatic encounter is the paradox of remembering but not understanding. An inability to adequately express how this feels—either physically or emotionally—may plummet victims further into what seems their own private abyss. Distinct here are the profound difficulties of comprehending traumatic events at both an individual and social level. Indeed, an enduring theme within trauma theory is that events are known as traumatic precisely because they cannot be reconciled and dealt with in a normal manner. After trauma, therefore, the damage to one's sense of security and community is correspondingly severe.

This approach to conceptualising the impact of trauma is compelling. Numerous studies from a variety of disciplines have observed these characteristics in traumatised individuals. At the same time, however, this prevailing approach opens important questions for socially and politically

orientated studies of trauma: if traumatic events only ever exist as a gap in knowing or understanding, how it is possible to establish—let alone comprehend—trauma's political significance? If trauma can never be wholly understood or reconciled from outside of it, by bystanders, how it is that extreme events can powerfully cohere and fragment the landscapes of local and global communities? Suggestive in these questions is that although such an understanding of trauma helps to conceptualise the impact of trauma to individuals, it falls short in helping scholars appreciate the political limits and possibilities that emerge after trauma. This is why I have sought to reconsider the individualistic politics that trauma seems often reduced to. I have done so by demonstrating that trauma is never only 'owned' by immediate survivors, since modes of representing it (however inadequate) are inevitably social—and thus political. And I have suggested that we can speak of—and analyse—the political impact of trauma insofar that the various public attempts to represent and narrate trauma have important political consequences.

This essay has thus told a story about trauma that is somewhat unusual. By analysing representations of trauma, I have demonstrated that traumatic events can be mediated and attributed meanings that enable political identity and community. Discourses and narratives associated with traumatic events—those that express the shock as well as subsequent processes of grief and commemoration—can help to produce a sense of communal solidarity. Emotions play a particularly important role in the ensuing dynamics: they help to shape political configurations, particularly in the wake of crisis and trauma.

I have illustrated the collectivising and emotional dynamics of trauma by showing that representations of the Bali bombing positioned Australia as a national affective community. Politicians and the media often invoked a sense of shared experience and understanding. These representations explicitly or implicitly sought to draw Australian citizens together around expressions of shock, terror, outrage, anger and confusion. This was achieved in broadly two ways. First, articles and accompanying photographs sought to take witnesses through emotions similar to those experienced directly by victims: the shock and terror of the event and the outrage and anger that followed from confusion. They highlight the event's 'unimaginable' nature and seek to communicate the disorienting and unbelievably harrowing feelings that accompanied it. They prompt one to imagine the event and how it must have been endured. It is almost as if they

seek to authentically represent the trauma and to take witnesses on a journey through emotions similar to those who endured the bombing directly. The second was through effectively communicating how the trauma itself has been 'managed'. Politicians often called for commemorations that invoked a sense of collective solace—the communal 'cushion' that sociologist Kai Erikson writes about.[87] The headlines that captured the public imagination read like this: 'we lost them', 'Australian mourns', 'we must prepare ourselves'.[88] The next step inevitably consisted of politicians calling on Australians to unite and 'stand together,'[89] to emphasise with victims who were only guilty of enjoying Australia's 'way of life'.[90] Personal experiences of trauma and the loss of loved ones were thus made into social—and politically constitutive—phenomena as well.

Paying attention to how representation and emotion are linked to the constitution of community highlights that trauma continues to shape politics long after the initial event. Expressed in other ways: emotions have a history and future; they are individual and collective. Emotions and the dispositions that accompany them can be passed down, through generations and across cultures, constituting traumatic legacies that stretch far into the past and future.

All too often the type of solidarity that is constructed after trauma only creates new conflicts: it tends to focus on keeping perceived 'dangers' or even generates belligerent and aggressive steps at retaliation or revenge. At best, communities become centred around similarly disingenuous inside/outside dichotomies,[91] which can serve not only to segregate communities, but also in so doing tend to suppress social, cultural and political difference.[92] This is

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87 Erikson, *A New Species of Trouble*, p. 234.

88 Prime Minister John Howard, quoted by John Shaw, 'Australia Waits, Fearing a High Death Toll', *New York Times*, 14 October 2002, p. 10.

89 Hewett, 'Amid a Nation's Pain, a Call to Stand Defiant'.

90 Journalists and politicians both discussed the attacks in these terms. See an editorial by political correspondent Greg Sheridan, 'A Threat We Ignore At Our Own Peril', *The Australian*, 14 October 2002, p. 11; and the words of the then Opposition Leader Simon Crean, quoted in John Kerin and Patricia Karvelas, 'Howard Orders Security Review', *The Australian*, 14 October 2002, p. 5.

91 See R. B. J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

92 See, for instance, Ghassan Hage, *Against Paranoid Nationalism: Searching for Hope in a Shrinking Society* (Annandale: Pluto Press, 2003).

why a thorough conceptual engagement with the relationship between trauma and representation can increase understanding of how exactly catastrophe so powerfully underwrites the emotional dynamics of political communities. Central here is how emotions can at least partially constitute the social forces that then lead to political configurations and actions. During times of crisis, insights into the collectivising potential of affect become particularly relevant. Such insights help scholars and politicians to appreciate how the trauma of today can gain collective momentum and in turn inspire (and also limit) the forms of agency that shape the social and political world for generations to come. At minimum, a more thorough understanding of the links between trauma, emotions and political community will provide hints about how to develop different strategies for interpreting and perhaps even managing conflict and political violence. At best, such forms of engagement may lead to the construction of political communities that are less hostile and less prone to generate internal and external conflicts.

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