Ethnographic States of Emergency

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ROOMS WITH A VIEW

In Hitchcock's film *The Birds,* apocalyptic and often incomprehensible scenes of destruction are shown from the familiar vantage point of the film's human protagonists. In one famous scene, we, the viewers, and they, the film's characters, watch a gas station incinerate from behind the protective windows of a diner. Like the witnesses of the avian terror, the cineast experiences the scene of violence from within a closed bounded social space, diner or theater, and through an aperture, the framing device of the window or camera lens. These frames mold an insulating perceptual interior, and the window-lens-aperture promises perceptual transparency and thus comprehension. The aperture and enclosure provide a distancing visual omniscience by which the chaos outside is rendered pictorial, and they anchor a fixed, stable point of view, a temporary shelter from the destruction beyond. These devices establish positions of perception and narration with which the viewer can readily identify. As we momentarily shelter from the outside violence in the midst of this human-centered vision, all coherence, all supports are pulled out from under the perceiver. The camera lens abruptly shifts perspective, swirling upward like a random feather, imposing an aerial view of the burning gas station. In a decentering movement and in a moment of extreme cultural relativism and antirealism, the camera inflicts historical vertigo on the perceiver: we witness the scene of destruction from the formerly unimaginable perspective of the attacking birds themselves. And in Hitchcock's logic, that means we witness the violence from the point of view of a wounded, disordered, and *postnatural* "nature," that is, from the outside. (The "natural" here being the assumed commonsense presumptions of

everyday life and the "outside" being the same structure of the everyday now defamiliarized and estranged.) It is a humanly impossible optic, and yet it eloquently unfolds the social implications of the scene of violence without offering a reassuring narration or perspective for the perceiver to lean on. Hitchcock visualizes an inhuman prospect that occupies a perceptual space beyond all social conventions and with which *we* must now come to terms as an intimate, if foreign part, of our own story.

The ethnographer of contemporary political violence stands both inside and outside Hitchcock's gas station as civilizational mise-en-scène, the circumscribed zone of social order, interiority, realism, and perceptual convention. Notions of the inside/outside, of the stable narrative endowing frame, and of the centered perceptual aperture are floundering in contemporary ethnographic experience. The ethnographic witnessing of terror asks of us, with or without our intent or consent, to imagine, however briefly, the position of the birds; to search for legibility and empathy outside the historical conditions and securities in which identification, language, and memory are considered to be possible.

However, in the anthropological canon, the strategy for handling the topic of political violence has been to counterpoise the conjectured disorderly, ephemeral, symptomatic, and anarchic character of the aggressive act with enframing and teleological theories of biological, ecological, and economic determinism. This polarity speaks more to a specific cultural imaginary than it does to concrete inquiry into regional practices and codes and other's points of view. Studies of political violence and conflict, in anthropology and other social sciences, have been particularly implicated by the following metatheoretical premises that authorize the above assumptions:

1. A Cartesian dichotomization of political culture into mentalist ideological discourse and symptomatic-irrational or functional, mechanistic, instrumentalist physical violence;
2. An unexamined paradigm of linear and continuous historical time that frequently coincides with the idea of progress of the political movements under study, which is the temporal structure that underwrites the functionalism and utility of their political violence;
3. The silent premise that there is a one-to-one correlation between units of formal ideological discourse and acts of violence; that there is an inherent descriptive adequacy between official ideological representation and the experience of violence. This assumption underscores the utilitarian model of political violence of political agents and the symptomatic model promoted by social scientists. This taken-for-granted descriptive adequacy of formal ideology in relation to

violence implicitly authorized the reciprocal descriptive adequacy of social science depiction of violence.

There has been little critical distance between the analytic logic of social scientists or policy analysts and the ideological logics that legitimize violent political action in modernity; they share the same metaphysical assumptions concerning the determinism of origins, linear-progressive time, and the functional. Both logics assume that violence as the abode of surface effects can be explained by something outside itself, that something being a beginning, which thereby implies an ending. In the social sciences one diagnoses violence-as-symptom to find causes and cures. The discourse on violence is mainly prescriptive discourse. No one asks to what extent prescriptive teleological frameworks are adequate to the description of violence and to what extent they skew any depiction of political aggression. Further, the Cartesian influence is never more apparent than when one "writes" violence, because that act of writing itself supposedly lifts physical violence to a symbolic, nonmaterial level, bringing it to an equally symbolic end that coincides with the conclusive termination of prescriptive discourse.

However, in the last decade, in cultural studies, the subject of violence has loosened its moorings as a result of the destabilization of an inherited Cartesian mind/body dualism, in the aftermath of theories of symbolic efficacy, with the challenge to traditional ethnographic narrative, and as a result of notorious historical experiences of ritualized and chronically irrational instrumental reason. The thematic and theorization of violence now floats like a rumor through unexpected corridors of ethnographic practice and cultural studies, no longer bound to clear-cut origins and causation and therefore detoured from final definitions and prescribed ends. Theory building in the discipline can no longer lay explanatory claim to the stable ground of determinism or static material and ideological structure, while, in turn, acts of social violence increasingly disclose a self-generating organization and internal propulsion that marks the most disruptive and murky practices of destruction with the architecture of cultural construction.

Ethnographers, working in diverse zones of political emergency, have been tackling violence, terror, and death through methods of somatic, sensory, affective, semiotic, symbolic, phenomenological, linguistic, performative, and social historical reconstruction. While duly recognizing the historical and economic frames within which acts of violence and death unfold, many contemporary workers in political emergency zones have rejected reductionist theory and have granted social violence and the meaning and nonmeaning it issues an autopoetic drive, which entails recognizing that violence possesses structuring and enframing effects of its own.

Stanley Diamond's dictum of the late sixties, that the discipline needed to develop a "sociology of horror," has returned with full ironic and predictive force.

This contemporary ethnography of violence constitutes a field site that requires exploration, one that is in transit, in-the-making, an on-the-way reality that has not yet arrived and may already have slipped past, a casualty of a global struggle for memory and meaning against violence and terror. The very existence of a "new ethnography of violence" marks profound shifts in post–cold war and postcolonial historical experience as much as it may refract new epistemological insights. Because of the contingent historical positioning present in this body of work, it is not the task of this ethnography to progress to theoretical closure, to introduce finality or the definitive to its methods or motives. For teleology (willingly or unwillingly) is the province of the agents and victims of violence encountered in the field and/or portrayed in these ethnographies of violence. Nor is it the present task of ethnographic insight to uncover conclusive exits from the world-historical labyrinth of political terror; rather it is to explore the "middle passage" of oppression and to possibly assemble counterlabyrinths and countermemories against the forgetting of terror.

In the spaces of death, and even in low-intensity terror zones, the lenses of analytic and perceptual certitude are irrevocably torn. No person or method at this stage in history can remove the Andalusian dog's razor from the pierced eye of the historical witness. In post-Holocaust modernity, older and customary perceptual edifices undergoing trauma, shock, and disordering penetration issue forth new things to be perceived and new ways of sensing. The loss of older perceptual sureties does not necessarily lead to blindness but can make new things visible. The violent, the dead, the disappeared, the tortured, the dismembered, and the disfigured entering into ethnographic writing force open numerous cracks, rips, and gaps in the graphics that record their entry. It is from the historically necessary descriptive *inadequacy* of conceptual footholds and the historical excess of terror-ridden experience that ethnographic exploration must begin, and we can expect no linearity or continuous paths through the ethnographic state of emergency.

This journey through the labyrinth of violence is also an exploration of the possibility of witnessing and memory in the zone of violence and terror. In the emergency zone, the ethnographer bears witness to the collective struggle of peoples bearing witness to violence and creating novel vehicles of historical memory, an effort that can wander through many cul-de-sacs and circles in which memory, perception, and narrative are self-consumed like an ourobouros, the mythic snake that devoured itself in an unending cycle of destruction and regeneration. Yet I suggest that this is an unavoidable passage for the ethnographer of violence, one that

can be made with the communities where fieldwork unfolds. In the state of political emergency, the ethnographic process is a travail through layers of sensory and narrative distortion, white noise, and surrealistic particularities that not only are the internal product of the space of terror and death but that also arise from the contradictory abutment of the ethnographers' own social contexts and disciplinary dispositions with local situations and knowledge. Making culture in the zone of political emergency is for both the ethnographer and the informants a matter of making contradictions, of mixing knowledge with nonknowledge, narratives with silence, experience with the unacceptable. This is a crucial labor that in some way speaks to the formation of witnessing as a historical process, to historical being as a state-of-witness.

Blunt confrontation with both the perceptual and the narratological structure and antistructure of the political emergency zone will serve to move anthropological theory away from the clichéd posture that states "we" cannot really write violence—that all such attempts to write violence are illegitimate cultural and ideological intrusions and superimposition. This half-truth treats violence, its participants and victims, as passive objects and reciprocally endows our representational drives with exclusive agency that is fated to be foiled by murky death and terror. We return again to a neo-Cartesian dualism. In the very moment that it suggests an equation between ethnographic depiction and violence, this edict against writing bars violence from the ethnographer's social interiority by inferring that violence stands in a relation of pure externality to his or her consciousness and historical being. The dialectical formation of consciousness through apparatuses of esoteric and exoteric violence and coercion is ignored by the iconoclastic imperative. The polarization of writing and violence also ignores the extent to which ethnographic depictions of modern, colonial, and postcolonial violence are invariably confronted by other political apparatuses of writing that organize the violence of the field site, such as juridical, penal, military, economic, and ideological institutions. Modern political violence is born in the midst of organized writing, it can be a continuation of institutional inscription by other means, and it never fails to be legitimized or sanctioned by writing. Contrary to the insulating conceits of numerous academics, writing is not simply a distantiating or aestheticizing practice external to violence, and violence is rarely on the nether side of the political aesthetics of institutional technical rationality, statistical, legal, and penological record keeping, and the material instruments of ideological discourse.

The stricture against writing violence begs another question: what does chronic political violence do to systems of representation, and how are depictive practices and genres altered by the impact of concerted terror and material destruction? This question, which firmly situates epistemology in history, exposes pseudodeconstructionist qualms about the representation of the other as clandestine attempts to preserve residual depictive traditions from the wreckage and ravages of novel historical experience. If writing violence means that we will ultimately reach the ends of writing, then the response is not to cease writing but to explore what lies beyond writing's margins, and whatever that is, it is not solely certain silence.

RUMOR AND INDIGENE HISTORIOGRAPHY

Since the Enlightenment, the writing of history has been conceived as a process by which res gestae (acts) became res factae (facts). Through source-material criticism, this progression supposedly bypassed the fictive "res fictae"; invention was seen to violate the writing of history (Kosseleck 1985). "He who invents violates the writing of history; he who does not violates poetic art" (ibid., 213). However, as the writing of history itself became historicized and infused with the distortions of temporal perspective, the factual limits of representation moved to the fore. The historical text as a creature of time demonstrated the secret life of invention within the factual. Historical perspectivism broke ground for a poetics of history, what Reinhart Kosseleck terms the "fiction of its facticity" (ibid., 215). It was also conceded that the denial of invention frequently excludes the inner probability, the connections that poetics and imagining uncover between events. And Paul Ricoeur (1973) has pointed out that res gestae could not attain historicity without the imaginary both at the time of enactment and at the time of written depiction.

Ethnography stands at the crux of such conflicts over depiction, because quite frequently the ethnographer's immersion in everyday life structures exposes the descriptive limits of official ideology and institutional discourse. Ethnographic recuperation can pluralize and expand what narrative genres and voices are admissible. This is particularly so when ethnography is practiced against monophonic, stratified information cultures and cultures of the state. Such multiplication of historical voice is not merely a matter of textual representation, for whenever the stratification of discourse in a society is interrupted by a previously canceled voice, we are witnessing the active and creative emergence of novel political subjects.

In both academic and spontaneous popular historiographic practices, historical reality is never simulated in totality but only reproduced through encryptment and abbreviation. In states of emergency, practices of abbreviation condense the sensibility and processual components of crisis and not only are molded around particular content but also incorporate, as indispensable to the codifying act, the enabling fictions of facticity and truth.

The appearance of rumor, mythmaking, and other narratives of mystification in many of these chapters speaks to shifts in the social organization of truth claiming which demand ethnographic attention.

Rumor as a type of collective wide-awake dreaming intermingles fact and fiction in such a manner that can only be termed ethnographic. This is so because as popular historiography, rumor addresses not only what has happened but what could happen within the given configurations of disorder. Rumor is prognostic, not in terms of actual prediction, but in terms of a culturally mediated sense of possibility, structural predilection, political tendency, and symbolic projection. It provides a preview of how historical events will be culturally and ideologically negotiated, distorted, transformed, recollected, and rendered into allegory.

The chapters in this volume compel one to consider rumor as a narratological form and practice independent of the specificity of its changing contents. The specific content of individual rumor may appear and disappear, but the emotional and cognitive investment in rumor as narration or historicization permeates these studies. Informed by the terror of rumor, the rumor of terror, the rumor of the ethnographer's end, the informant's death, and society's death, many of these contributions are part-rumor themselves. They are ethnographies *of* rumor, ethnographies *from* rumor, and ethnographies *toward* new rumor (see Marcus 1991 on corridor talk in anthropology). The intractable wall of violence, death, and victimization witnessed, in one form or another, by the authors is attested to by the intrinsic inability of both the authors and the people they met with and write about to fully portray what has occurred. This means that significant segments and depths of experience will drift from and toward fogs of rumor, dream, hallucination, and other arbitrary imagery. Yes, there are unavoidable facts, deaths, and acts of violence here, but the social crises examined in this volume are also crises of facticity.

Fluctuation, randomness, and variability as narrative can be analyzed as the central formal effect of rumor dissemination. Rumor is twinned with violence because the flux of both exhibits an autopoetic structure. Is this to reify rumor as narrative production? I think not. Rumor is not the object of a reifying sensibility, it is its very infrastructure. Rumor reproduces through the defacement of authorship, of agency; while participation in its substance can transfer a kind of historical agency to those removed from a sense of social authorship. In Hegelian/Marxian thought, reification's prerequisite is agency voided and its terminus is human agency fabricated from an external nonhuman source. Reification, despite its association with the rigidity of things, with deathlike states, does not mean an absence of flux or movement. The term was applied to nomadic structures of substitution and surrogation, religious myths, value equivalencies, circulating commodity forms, and sexual desire. Fetishization of the production of the new was considered by Walter Benjamin and Theodore W. Adorno as reification. As formulaic novelty, as practices of mobile and flexible content substitution, rumor and reification are each other's condition of possibility.

Carolyn Nordstrom writes in this volume,

> If people are defined by the world they inhabit, and the world is culturally constructed by the people who consider themselves a part of it, people ultimately control the production of reality and their place in it. They produce themselves. But they are dependent on these productions. (136)

I suggest that it is only in anticipation of violence, or during and after violence and terror, that a sensibility of concerted and at-risk social reproduction comes to haunt everyday life, which is at precisely the moment when replication, getting-on-with-it, becomes impossible. In turn, a public culture of rumors reveals the extent to which the sense of control over reality is finite, and the extent to which control has to be reasserted through exaggeration and imaginative supplementation. But this imaginary intervention does not simply denature what was once experienced as pregiven. Rather it reveals the extent to which this compensation of the imaginary is simply an intensification of an imaginative infrastructure that formerly upheld the existing state of things now fading or decentered (see Castoriadis 1989). Rumor attacks social solidities and appropriates them as further but earlier aspects of the rumor apparatus. Under the regime of rumor everything becomes patchwork; an infrastructure of hidden bricolage floats to social consciousness like a submerged stitched-together body. The causal crudity of rumor is a self-conscious central literary attribute. In emphasizing the constructed, assembled nature of social narrative, rumor draws attention to the fabricated character of all other social narratives whose seams and welding once did not show so clearly.

By turning apparently once-stable social structure into provisional and contingent narrative, rumor becomes the production of a countersociety. The social production of rumor is the social production of collective experience in the absence of wide-scale social credibility. Rumor emerges from, and accelerates, the collapse of official organs of institutional depiction, memory, and information dissemination. Rumor mills ironically counterconstruct society as a discrete and objectifiable entity through the process of documenting its fracturing. As discourse it trails and traces the inability of official social institutions to replicate themselves in time and space. Thus in Somalia, China, and Guatemala, as Anna Simons, Frank Pieke, and Linda Green observe, the state is quick and eager to piggyback on the popular culture of rumor, to recolonize public culture so as to manage and control the collective and spontaneous modalities of depiction.

The in situ spontaneous historiography of social crisis comprehended as *rumor* is a sudden and necessary infusion of mass aesthetics, an extempore poetics of experience, and an aperture-apparatus through which res gestae attain presence and normative visibility. The sequential superimposition of each oral myth on the other is an acoustic effect that responds to and simulates the experience of accelerated waves and floods of historical time itself.

The acceleration of disjunctive temporal experiences, the intrusion of situations bearing multiple, nonsynchronous, and concentrated temporalities accentuates the perspectivist determination of historical perception and truth claiming (Bloch 1988; Feldman 1994; Seremetakis 1994). The appearance, presentation, and apprehension of past and present shifts with each impinging event or with rumor-as-event. Rumor, with its inherent discontinuity, lapses, jerry-rigged compensations, and unstoppable flow, reverberates with incompatible chronic polyphony.

With the proliferation of rumor, multiplicity and discontinuity that were previously unobserved, invisible, or tamed by the official narrative unification of everyday life enter as autonomous historical forces. Retrospective interpretation feeds off the pastness, the absence, of accomplished events and emancipates language from the event, which reciprocally emancipates the poeticized event from the past as a self-contained zone of finished acts. It is frequently from such displacements that postnarrative, postrumor historical action originates. Rumor, as in situ depiction, is a crucial structural element of historicity that expands the gauge of what is admitted as event and thus expands and complicates the presumptions and horizons of historical action.

Rumors are ideologies in search of new techniques of event authentication; thus they fabricate and encompass causality and consequence within the same narrative form as Simons, ethnographer and relief worker in Somalia, concludes of rumors, in this volume:

> In short they stitch together what may well be correct facts but in doing so omit gaps, as if correlations must always be linked by causal arrows, with the strength of detail then proving causality. (50)

Can this not also describe ethnographic analysis in certain circumstances? Can we insist on rigid barriers between ethnographic inference and vernacular structures of inference that become all the more virulent in the political emergency zone? History is frequently made and written with and from rumor to the extent that historical action may be mediated by "illegitimate," informal, provisional, and improvised on-the-ground systems of knowledge. The concept of history itself is a culturally specific form of rumor, particularly when it is positioned by class, gender, and cultural inequities and discontinuities.

Nordstrom describes the conditions that give rise to ad hoc historiographic inferential practice and narrative.

> With the onslaught of excessive violence, the boundaries defining the family, community, and cosmos slip, grow indistinct, reconfigure in new and painful ways. And through the breached boundaries, the substance of each spills out across the landscapes of life in a way that is unstructured, highly charged, and immediate. (135)

She speaks of the local Mozambican concept of *dislocado,* which overtly refers to persons, communities, and population uprooted by the public terror. But the notion of dislocado must also infer the displacement of social knowledge and language and the destruction of systems of reference to which rumor responds. Nordstrom recollects,

> I am reminded of a conversation I had with a young teenage soldier in the bush of north-central Mozambique. I asked him why he was fighting and he looked at me and in all seriousness replied, "*I forgot.*" (137)

Green, writing of her fieldwork in Guatemala, also observes,

> Fear thrives on ambiguities. Rumors of death lists and denunciations, gossip, and innuendos create a climate of suspicion. No one can be sure who is who. (105)

In Mogadishu, Simons notes how rumor as graffiti appears on the built environment, recoding the material surround with counterproposals of the social. There is a transitive movement and a tension between the residual meanings of the older edifices and the graffiti commentary that has been montaged on these social surfaces. This montage encapsulates the unfolding of new forms out of defunct old ones whose still-visible remains anchor the sense of chronological progression. Through the graffiti rumor, public space becomes less solid; official utility is subverted and displaced by unpredictable prospects. Public space is no longer serviceable in accustomed ways; it is now announced and advertised as a zone of accentuated risk taking.

Rumor also renames the field site for the ethnographer. Its whispers enter into field experience like a boundary demarcating murmuring that announces the passage into the state of emergency. The ethnographer is first made aware of wider social disturbance when the usual sources of facts, the channels and flows of information on which his or her work is dependent, are interrupted and broken up by political white noise. Here is Frank Pieke, an anthropologist of Chinese social organization, thrown into the midst of Tian'anmen Square and asking the participants of one of the first demonstrations for their substantive demands.

> Obviously the people here are extremely reluctant to talk to a foreigner. Even a colleague whom I happened to run into treats me like somebody with a contagious disease. (62)

To find out what is happening after the first outbreak of violence in Mogadishu, Somalia, Simons is forced to rely on a Euro-American walkie-talkie network:

> [A]s most people [Western relief workers and diplomats] were located within largely elite neighborhoods, it was never entirely clear what was happening throughout the city. (45)

> [M]ost of the Somalis I knew were extremely reticent about discussing what they thought had occurred and why they thought violence had finally erupted. (46)

Rumor for the ethnographer, and perhaps for the informant, emerges first as silence. It is as if the first wound of violence, the initial and simultaneous damaging of individual bodies and the corporate body, effaces the social capacity for description. Things are thought but not said, and when a speech emerges it is not from that aborted thought but from the intervening gap of the not-said. Rumor begins at this border of silence around the kernel of the absent event, the disappeared body, the silenced name. Terror and pain is all the more effective when it is experienced as an effect with no cause, with no definable place of its own except the locale of one's own body.

MATERIAL DREAMS OF THE STATE

Rumor, as the language of risk, is a lens that identifies possible targets and accesses emerging social and personal needs, a calculus that organizes new relations between chance and necessity. In zones of violence, the terror of everyday life is risk and rumor felt on the body. Rumor somaticized is the dream of the executioner borne within the imputed victim's body. Through rumor and risk perception, embodiment is doubled: expected victimizer and potential victim are intermingled in the same form. The body becomes transitive and historicized by the conjuncture of chance and finality. Torture and assassination frequently are rumor materially enacted on other people's bodies (see Feldman 1991), which are then, in turn, transmuted into rumor as victims are first subtracted by violence as living entities and then frequently made to vanish altogether as both persons and corpses by state silence and/or popular incomprehension.

How do we access the microlanguage of terror that is conveyed by gesture and expression from body to body in the everyday "silent" apprehension that occurs within the rumor of surface normalcy? This is intertextual terror wherein each body is both itself and the other who promises the body's negation. When the state is the primary agency of violence, this haunted and possessed body becomes an artifact of the state. Rumor-

terror is sunk into the person as the embodied rationality of the state. Ted Swedenburg, recently returned from the experience of the Palestinian intifada and Israeli counterinsurgency, emerges under the clear sunshine of a suburban Californian neighborhood to hallucinate a local gardener holding a rake as an Israeli soldier with an Uzi. His vision recaptures the dynamic of inversion and irony in the emergency zone, where normalcy is rendered temporary cover for the turbulent currents of overturning terror. But his perception is also revealed here as being haunted and possessed by the afterimages and aftereffects of the counterinsurgency apparatus.

Rumor aggravates and accelerates the process by which history is consumed by its effects and reemerges as myth, folk knowledge, illness, dreams, ideology, theory, confusion, nerves, and nonmeaning. These forms, in turn, multiply the efficacy of events. Green follows the incarnations of rumor.

> [L]ow-intensity panic remains in the shadow of waking consciousness . . . and so the chaos one feels becomes infused throughout the body. It surfaces frequently in dreams and chronic illness. (109)

Through systematic disappearances, terror transforms the state of personhood into rumor, into dream. As rumor becomes the substance of the social, it derealizes and surrealizes the materiel of experience, which becomes increasingly oneiric. Rumor is the narrative daydream of the social unconscious that has reworked or even jettisoned societal master narratives. Rumor transforms the life-world into a sonar-ridden echo chamber in which sensory signals emitted by the subject's body and voice rebound in distorted and cryptic forms, registering indirect contact with randomness and death.

LOST AUTHORSHIP/FAILED REFERENTS

What happens when the "informant" can no longer narrate or author because all reference has been removed? Nordstrom, commenting on the war in Mozambique, correlates this phenomenon with the disappearance of everyday life itself and the overtaking of ideological rationale by the action of violence (see also Feldman 1991). Loss of reference can also be the abutment of more than one frame of mutually exclusive referentiality. There is a disassociation between "the normal" and the zone of terror and alterity, when each, in its turn, becomes routine and exceptional. People exist in both places simultaneously, and frequently with an anomalous comprehension of their dual existence on either side of the border between the ordinary and the extraordinary. These two territories of the self repeatedly exchange position, each sphere reciprocally becoming exotic

for the person who is divided between them. Nordstrom recalls a torturer who glues photographs of his mutilated victims into an album alongside biographical snapshots of a personal prewar normalcy that no longer exists. Is this his attempt to render his violence understandable to himself and to others by resituating them in older contexts of fact and normalcy?

When we write, we construct a center, an author. But in the rationalized randomness of terror, all authorial functions are put into question and authorial sites are subject to drift. The popular emergence of rumor as public culture and social discourse is the collective, and unvoiced, recognition that even the most generic authorial functions of social actors—their capacity to muster and mobilize resources of the self, relationships, community and institutional roles, and everyday life—have evaporated. Rumor attempts to reinscribe authorship to exert the privilege of narration and the narrator against the burdens of excess experience, surplus meanings, and untellable tales.

Silence is also rumor; it can be the state's production and dissemination of indifference in public culture, but this indifference is not only formalist, rationalized, and procedural, as Michael Herzfeld (1992) claims, but violating, material, and an-archic. It removes the capacity of individuals, kin groups, and communities to name themselves through their historical experience. Thus Antonius Robben, interviewing military officers of the Argentine junta, is shocked by the installed lived rumor-of-normality that is maintained in the aftermath of the state's disappearance of political opponents. Green relates the official denial of the Guatemalan security forces when asked about the fate and whereabouts of the disappeared. Here the feigned ignorance, the incarceration of the state's victims in a zone of indifference, is itself a depoliticizing rumor bureaucratized as official (non-)knowledge.

In the zone of terror, normalcy-as-rumor takes on a trompe l'oeil effect; as a better imitation of itself, it is inserted into the seas of violence as an administrative support, life raft, and temporary shelter, and normalcy persists in this fashion long after. The state uses silence, indifference, public denial, and self-censorship imposed on the masses to fabricate a superimposed normalcy: this is the simulacrum of the routine that is reworked and hastily shoved into place after violence and that becomes increasingly pregnant with the potential of further terror. This is why at certain junctures in the narratives presented, particularly Green's and Nordstrom's, highly naturalistic, Hemingwayesque writing suddenly burst forth in a schizoid and ambiguous attempt by the ethnographer to grasp and author the real, to detail all the more minutely because the apparent solidity and exhaustiveness of the realist description will be betrayed through the eruption of violence, nausea, and weightlessness, as terror rushes in from behind the curtain of the conventional.

THE VICTIM BEYOND

The state of emergency puts forth existentials that exceed, evade, and will not be contained by formulaic techniques and norms of fact setting. Consider how post-Holocaust quantification, no matter how necessary, contributes to the stratification and hierarchical objectification of victims by number and abbreviates and numbs the material-spiritual cosmos of the event. A variant of this is related by Maria Olujic, a "native" ethnographer writing of Croatia. She was told in reference to the killing of five European Community observers by Serbian irregulars, "the deaths of these five observers will mean more to Europe and the whole world, more than all of the deaths of the thousands of Croatians thus far." Facticity is hierarchical, preferential, and culture-bound. Cathy Winkler describes how legal facticity rebifurcates her body as a rape victim, partitioning the objective from the subjective and the sensorial, the jural-medical from the autobiographical. It alienates the material record of rape trauma, rationalizing the automatic recording capacities of the body's nerves and surfaces and fetishizes the genitalia as the axes of the legal personality of the victim.

Centers of historical or factual record like "Europe" or the courtroom are grounded on a partial facticity that attains the holistic. Yet there are facts that elude culturally mediated notions of the factual. This excess is transmitted as violent force on the certitude of both the anthropologist and the "informant" in the emergency zone. There are facts that will not be admitted into existing albums of facticity. Thus Ted Swedenburg, remembering his friend, the assassinated Nabil, is forced to confront, like Joseba Zulaika, the pre-, post-, or extraideological dimensions of political violence. Victims like Nabil exceed the totalizing project of ideology. They encapsulate historical excess by resisting final codification, for they are its casualties. These ideological ghosts consequently embody contradictory historical and cultural messages for the ethnographer. They are the boundaries that the ethnographer of violence (reluctantly) crosses that can place one beyond ideology and public culture. Zulaika, who ruminates on the impact of Basque insurgency on his natal village, meditates on two deceased friends, an ETA activist and an ETA victim. However, these factual assignations can never exhaust the reality of these friends for him. Now deposited in the village cemetery, their full mnemonic is uncontainable by the limits of sociopolitical categorization. Death, memory, and emotional pain render them irredeemably other. One friend was killed by ETA as a rumored informer. However, to die by rumor and then to be definitively named informer by that act is to die twice, by bullet and by political mythmaking; both acts introduce irrevocable closure for personhood. For Zulaika, in the death of this rumored informer who was also his friend, the imputed political fact is to the person what the tombstone and

its few perfunctory remarks are to the well of the grave and the unending process of physical dispersion (see Seremetakis 1991). Here arbitrary political classification materialized in an act of violence assaults deeper social memories and more profound, if personal, facts, turning these materialities into ghostly rumor and illusive recollection.

The victim of violence is, in part, an unrecoverable depth that cannot and should not be definitively represented by ideology and its ordinance of facticity. The victim is an irreconcilable absence. The political victim, deceased or alive, is always partially the disappeared. Something has been subtracted even from those who survive and return, something that can only accommodate symbolic mediation, emotions, and memory, New social networks, microcommunities of pain, are formed around the particularity of the removed, the subtracted, and the returned. These missing parts of community and family and their own missing or disfigured body parts are concentrated vessels of history. It is through this fecund "lack" that remembrance takes place. In public demonstrations, such as those that occurred in Central America and Argentina, the photographs of disappeared children are borne by their parents like totemic, ancestral figures, for it is their absence that introduces qualitatively new time into the survivor's lives, new origins and new ends.

To identify the victim as lack, as beyond final representation, is not to say that victims are negligible or should remain silent. When the victim does speak, this recollection and signifying holds the possibility of subverting public memory and discourse from without by imposing the inadmissible from spaces and experiential strata that public culture cannot occupy or claim to know. However, as Robben points out through his theory of seduction, far too frequently when the victim speaks it is with the very instruments of objectification, fact setting, truth claiming, and other alluring cultural logics that state terror arrayed against the victim in the first place. Something has to dramatically alter within these channels of communication for the victim to emit and hear his or her own voice in its full discordance and difference. The mute victim is both the other side of rumor and a rumor personified. Rumor and victimage occupy the nexus of the crisis in communicative capacity. Rumor and victimage form a couple.

FAILED TOTALITIES: FROM AUTHOR TO WITNESS

By totality, I mean the mythic concept of an inert whole called society in which the parts occupy a fixed position in an unchanging closure. Totalizations are acts, agendas, programs, and political instruments, like terror and violence, that attempt to install the holistic myth onto the dispersion of historical and material experience. Many of the authors here write within the aftershocks and afterimages of the violent attempt to calibrate

ideological agendas on the backs of arbitrary victims. To what extent does ethnography follow through with the composition of totality? Are we complicit in its restoration through textual effects and encompassing analytic reductions?

In the zones of terror there is a risky back-and-forth passage between the dispersal of everyday life and the unifying space of totalization. This is concentrated in Zulaika's gravitation to the metaphor of the priest who quits the Church and the everyday existentials of the former ETA terrorist. Does the ethnographer of violence make similar passages and at what risk? The act of totalization, the summing up of history and society, is a contingent act, only occurring at specific moments and spaces that can evaporate, leaving this finalizing act out of context. Does the ethnographer experience ethnography in that manner? The embarrassment of the book, the finished volume, is the face of the persistence and transformation of social experience after the book. The book totalizes, functions as a ludicrous dam attempting to stop the flow of experience only to be washed away by it, leaving the ethnographer standing on nothing, or everything if that nothing is considered as sheer historicity itself.

Though Zulaika wants to focus on how the "community" defines acts of violence, that act of definition, like the ethnography itself, can be washed away and deflated by the material force of other interpretations—of the state, the media, and the political organization. These forces may make it impossible to define community, which is what his Basque village attempts to do when it exerts moral frames against acts of violence. The autonomy of that act of self-definition is contested by more efficient technologies of totalization. Civil war, counterinsurgency, and terrorism remove the community's capacity for self-definition. For each killing, arrest, assassination, or torture is established as an ever more finalizing act of redefinition and renaming.

The ethnographer writing autobiographical terror must write from the outside in, from the edge of ethnographic coherence, dissolving the center of the ethnographic narrative-optic to the same extent that the edges, the limit experiences of violence and terror, dissolve and disassemble all social centers, anchorages, and agents of final definition. In many of these essays, ethnographic perception, like rumor, moves past itself, beyond the scope of past ethnographic glances, eyes falling out of eyes, as theoretical perception trips from one analytic plane of dissolving social order to another—from economy to social structure to culture to ritual to language—each once, enabling plane of theoretical perception collapsing inward like a house of cards. Within this collapse, each site of social anchorage is revealed as artifice and as rumor to which we have become habituated. During the rebellion in Tian'anmen Square, Pieke witnesses social order literally sliding out from under itself. It trips from a rhetorical edifice in which

the political agent is framed by a preexisting posture in the division of labor and social stratification to a situation in which social actors actively solidify a provisional social structure. In Pieke's contribution, the Chinese work unit attempts totalization by ceasing to be a passive recipient of structure and becoming self-constructing. At Tian'anmen Square, public performances by the work unit's representatives carve out an emerging and novel space of imagined community. This is a shift from the performative—the replication of preexisting, mandated, and prescribed codes—to performance—the active construction of novel social narratives, acts, and spaces without obedient or mimetic reference to preinstituted codes. This sequence can also be found in recent mutations of social theory from structure-centered models to action-, agency-, and performance-centered models of social and political constitution in which society is a project and not a reified predeterminant.

In a number of the chapters, Nordstrom's, Simon's, Green's, and Swedenburg's, the ethnographer conducts fieldwork and writes in the violent aftermath of failed totalization. In Swedenburg's, the intifada passes from totalizing status to the fragmentation and exhaustion of everyday life.

> [T]hey will say that the struggle has entered a new stage. Many people were weary, worn down, introspective, pessimistic about the outcome of "peace" negotiations, preoccupied by the dull grind of economic hardships, alarmed by the growing constraints on the activities of women. The heroic days of intifada on the march are over. (25)

The intimacy between violence, writing, and totalization is quite evident in Jean Genet's depiction of his sojourn with the Palestinian insurgents as cited by Swedenburg. For Genet's descriptions draw on an Enlightenment anthropological tradition that can be traced to a Rousseau essay on theater, the spectacle, and the festival in the letter to d'Alembert. Against the atomization, alienation, and distantiation of eighteenth-century experience, Rousseau reimagined a people's festival where all social relations would become immediate, transparent, and dis-alienated. It would be a festival where, unlike theater, no artifice of representation would mediate meaning and communication, where there would be no division of labor between performers and audience. The Rousseauian festival banishes representation in its political and semiotic sense. It represents nothing outside of itself. It is the utopia of totalization where an enlightenment transparency of social relations unfolds, building on premodern traditions of carnival and world-upside-down. For Genet, the Palestinian revolution is a Rousseauian festival. Genet invokes this imagery when he uses phrases like "idiotic delight" and "happy smiles" and where exhaustion and fatigue and ennui can set in, as in any party that has gone on too long: "It was for *fun* as much as anything." The Palestinians are seen by

Genet through a lens of Durkheimian collective effervescence, which moves between the inversions of festival and "funeral procession." Though Genet also fabricates a doubled totalization. He is a tourist of another culture's festival of totalization. It never engaged "the whole" of himself. Genet holds his self in reserve, as if wary of the same seductiveness that troubles Robben in this volume, and even though Genet extracts enjoyment from the Palestinian festival, he ultimately experiences it from an anti-Rousseauian position "as if from a window or a box in a theatre, and as if through pearl-handled opera glasses."

Genet never seems to experience the fragmentation, the dispersal of identity, the existential death in the field that is part and parcel of the ethnographic breakdown experience and that is aggravated in the spaces of terror. Instead Genet undergoes a loss of particularity in his vocabulary of analysis. In representing the Palestinian cause, he accedes to the universalizing iconography of nineteenth-century nationalist ideology. Sartre and Foucault were also known for this particular habit of abandoning the micrological detail of their customary analysis for the clichés, blandness, and clumsiness of totalizing political generalities. It is this seduction that ethnography cannot afford and must abstain from. Which is why Swedenburg immerses himself in popular memory and there encounters, as I did in Northern Ireland, the chasms between everyday life experience and the aesthetics of official ideological formulations.

In the state of ethnographic emergency, the body and perception of the ethnographer overtake themselves, reaching a societal edge and the far limits of ethnography itself. Recently, anthropologists have become fascinated with borders and border crossings, but at the undomesticated borders bumped against in these chapters there is little fortuitous mixing of styles, little fecund heterogeneity and hybridity, for there is little social glue left at those border crossings-to-the-abject. At these borders history and experience have outstripped society and all its arts and artifices. Ethnographic vertigo conjoins historical vertigo in which all those positioned at the social edge perform and survive through a spontaneous folklore of disappearing everyday life and society. In the zone of ethnographic emergency, where mental maps go akilter, where all things are askew, the ethnographer, like any rumormonger, labors to connect confusions in the absence of totality, conclusion, and closure. Rumor-from-crisis, no matter how eschatological, moves against any sense of an ending through unstoppable regurgitation. The narrative absence of ending refracts the absence of social closure, of sealed social totality that guarantees all narrative terminations, emplotments, and endings in advance. Ethnography, here, links experiences, meanings, and narrative with no transparent sense of their origins, ends, and kinship; the ethnographer lacks a storyboard

guaranteed in advance. In these chapters, and in the situations of violence and terror they abut, to what extent is ethnography rumor stabilized? To what extent is rumor itself a social knowledge that has yet to institutionalize itself, to put forth and legitimize its own pasteboard cutout of the social, its own trompe l'oeil? To what extent is narratable history an accumulation of rumors that have settled into durable form and the tombstone of institutional memory? What are the relations between a social reconstitution that takes place through writing or through institutional practices of public reordering?

Can we deny the anxiety of influence in those analyses ignited by experiences of infiltrating apprehension and societal vagueness? When the ethnographer writes himself or herself out of terror, this writing will issue distortion effects, the white historical noise of the writer's own residual historical situation. These views are layered over the flow of jumbled indigenous events. Simons's description of the walkie-talkie network in Somalia illustrates this. The network attempted, through the electronic centralization of rumor, to restore a Western metanarrative on the events unfolding in Somalia. The walkie-talkie network was the restoration of a solidifying discourse that allowed the Western visitors to firm up their subject positions in relation to the violence unfolding from obscure corners and crevices of the third world. This was cultural self-seduction through technological intimacy and cultural intertextuality.

Swedenburg speaks of being seduced by the fun of resistance, Robben of the language and memory of seduction. But what renders seduction almost efficacious here is the extent to which Robben shares a devolved cultural inheritance with the agents of terror in Argentina: they have committed violence in the name of Eurocentric civilizational values. Both Right and Left turn to European history as the totalizing allegorical frame from which they describe the Argentine fragments of terror, violence, and political reordering. The concentration camp is paradigmatic for the Left, as are rationalized penological detention centers for the Right. The mutual Eurocentric inheritance extends to the analytic vocabulary Robben shares with the leftists he interviewed, which makes the possibility of a Benjaminian barbaric inversion of the civilizational doubly unsettling. Do we witness one such inversion when Robben asks his right-wing informants about the possibility of "more *humane* counterinsurgency methods" (emphasis added)?

This myth of objectivism that animates Western historical inquiry also animates Western policymaking, including the policy of terror and the planning and administration of a "detention center and torture center." Terror silently transformed into culture (instrumental rationality is a cultural form) is the worst terror of them all for it compels the question (implicitly asked above), to what extent is culture terror provisionally stabilized and integrated with everyday life?

Robben argues "that seduction is a dimension of fieldwork that is especially prominent in high-conflict research because the informants and interlocutors have great personal and political stakes in making the ethnographer adopt their interpretations." In Argentina, according to Robben, the foreign (i.e., Western) social scientist is seen as a politically neutral juridical courtroom recorder—an extremely naive and politically mediated image through which the ethnographer is invested as an imaginary object, which is crucial to any act of seduction. His informants position Robben between a mythical conceptualization of Western memory—neutral, objectifying, terminal, and above the fray—and their own seductive and emotional acts of recollection. Here Cartesian dichotomies (discussed earlier) that must have surely animated the in situ enactment and conceptualization of violence now organize the act of constructing the public memory of violence.

What about the self-referentiality of remembering and telling in Robben's interviews? The narrator is not simply outside the performance of oral history, of memory, but is actively constructed and reconstructed in and through that action of recalling, relating, and seducing. This would imply that positioning Robben as the imaginary arbiter of final truth involves wish images, desire, and the dynamics of self-seduction as the machinery of memory. A finality of truth is extracted from the sheer presence of Robben as "European" witness, who symbolically returns its possibility to his informants merely by listening and by supposedly being "seduced." Seduction here is a search for an external guarantee for a totalizing fixation of violence and history. It is the viewpoint that there is no internal structure in Argentina on which to fix the truth of the past, whether that is the truth of the Right or the Left. This seduction of self and other becomes a mode of memorialization drawing on emotional complicity. Seduction and emotion may be the modalities through which people recall the sensorium of violence. Robben implies that seduction comes after the narration, as its effect, that ideological intent is already in place prior to the story. But seduction may also be the vehicle of narration. Is this seduction of a resonant other impression management as Robben claims, or is it memory management? Here Robben is not manipulated and diverted by informants away from cultural depth to flash surface (a temporary state of affairs as evidenced by the penetrating analysis of his chapter) but thrown into the deep end of another historical pool.

Seduction should be located not only in the fieldwork process but after it has been halted as well. When the ethnographer emerges from ethnographic zones of emergency, field notes and personal memory are woven

back into the reassuring seductive murmuring of the discipline. The intertextual environment that the report of terror comes to reside in is akin to the intertexuality of the Euro-American walkie-talkie network in Somalia. Such intertextual reinforcements are also evident within scholarly treatments of violence, in the form of received models and paradigms, gatekeeping-peer-reader bureaucracies, the honorifics of acknowledgment (in articles and books), and the rest of the paraphernalia that attests to the ethnographer's written return to the Same after the discontinuity of the field site.

The thrust of disciplinary form and methods compels one to reduce the particular and novel to that which is already known and considered universal. Consider how recently in anthropology the totalizing categories or fetishes of nationalism, religion, and ethnicity have been too rapidly and too easily deployed as reductive covering concepts in reference to Eastern Europe and elsewhere. However, these very same categories are also indispensable weapons for agents of violence and domination. In contrast, what theoretical language did anthropologists develop for those social movements and activists seeking to create antiessentialist civil societies? For the most part these groups were off the analytic map; anthropology and other discourses, fore-armed with the seductive language and theories of cultural essentialism did not seem willing to distinguish between ethnicity as inheritance, resource and partial habitus from ethnicity as a managed instrument of state policy, as state rationality by other means. Resurgent ethnicity—the Rip Van Winkle return-of-the-repressed and the authentic—was certainly a rumor promoted in the West in reference to the violence in the former Yugoslavia. In this manner emergent violence in this area was theoretically managed through a facile "tribalization" of antagonists without fully considering the role of the modern *culture* of the state in the production and militarization of ethnicity and tribes. Here the explanations and language of the social scientist and the butchers frequently coincided.

Rumor settles on the Other as classification, text, or violence, leaving finished ideological objects, the dead and the depicted, in its wake.

The tendency for rapid totalization is an assertion of the authorial position, whether that position is individual, disciplinary, or cultural. It reveals our historical implication in the culture of the state by ignoring the fact that totalization is never encompassing and exhaustive but always reductive, distorting, and exclusionary. Totalization can only occur through the mutilation of the open-endedness, the horizon, of historical experience; it shuts down history as that which is persistently indicated. Political violence and terror appear from within the crevices of failed totalities, from the gaps between political closure and lived experience. Instrumental violence is the glue by which the totalizing political project and the open-ended

rupture of social experience are to be reconciled. As material practice, violence makes the dispersed parts fit which have been chosen to form the mythic whole. Agencies of violence select those parts by what they do not destroy.

WRITING THE IN-HUMAN

Robben, after considerable conversation with the key figures of the Argentine military junta, asks, how can we establish intersubjective understanding with a person who has violated the very humanity we are trying to understand? The same question can be asked in reference to those who have been subjected to the extremities of violation. How can they be understood and depicted if they dwell on the other side of the border of conventional or known bodily sensory and moral experience? "After Auschwitz" (see Adorno 1973) the chronic violence of the state has introduced a new cultural archipelago of difference and otherness in its efforts to replicate or salvage the state.

The question Robben poses infers another: can we assume that humanity and intersubjectivity are already completed historical projects that promise us a firm ground for such transindividual understanding? History ultimately "dehumanizes" by expanding the scope and gauge of the anthropological. In turn, terror and violence expand the definition of the anthropological by engaging the *in-human,* which is beyond yet intrinsic. This is why ethnographers and others who write about violence from within particularity, who explore the coherence of its non-sense, are frequently accused of dehumanizing their subjects (Zulaika, pers. comm.; Nordstrom, pers. comm.). It is suggested we generate a form of pornography (E. Valentine Daniel, pers. comm.), practice sensationalism, or are simply amoral and perhaps morbid (Seremetakis, pers. comm.). Such charges are not uncommon in the oral culture and review practices of the social sciences. These insinuations frequently culminate in high-minded appeals to the anchor of a commonsensical universal humanity.

The anthropology of violence, the cultural analysis of terror, call up limit experiences that speak to the end(s) of "Man," the historical erasure of residual, circumscribed, and culturally binding definitions of humanity. The "humanist" reaction is to reabsorb death's particularity back into the confines of a global and ahistorical ethical anthropology—an anthropology of continuity. Earlier I suggested that a crucial ethnographic stance salvages the particularity of the victim while systematizing the violence arrayed against the subject: that to do otherwise is to be complicit with other in situ modes of ideological totalization. The victim is at the intersection of multiple forces that form and deform the recipient of violence. But this very violence produces excess historical experience, which I can only term

historicity: historical substance that is beyond existing ideological appropriations; experiences that, no matter how negative, speak to the possibility of postideological countermemory, sensory alterities, and emerging historical horizons. The ethnographic reconstruction of violence must write from and toward a ground that few existing moralities can account for. Writing violence becomes the exploration of moralities that have not yet arrived but that are busy being born from amoral acts.

The appeal to an ahistorical global humanism, the often-hysterical calls for overt precultural moral judgment, interdicts the cultural depth of the victim. This posture serves many utilities but not that of historical possibility. As a deculturalizing reaction it is equivalent to the "Kill-the-Indian-save-the-man" policy once applied to Native Americans concentrated on government reservations. This was the watchword of the educational, linguistic, and religious evisceration of offending Native American culture that took place in the name of global humanistic values, which presumed a universal anthropological substratum of continuity beneath the deviance of "the native."

Violence and terror install their own indigene processes that render presumed a priori humanity unrecognizable. The effects of violence and terror cannot be scratched off the surface of body consciousness, and the resilience and life affirmations of those who experience political abjection are not indicative of the survival of universal and pregiven human essences or commonalities. Rather *identities-of-the-aftermath* are transmuted protean selves, the resymbolized consequences of unerasable terror.

I would propose that it is through an ethnography of sensory particularity, of regional modes-of-being, of disjunctive life-worlds that these postviolence identities can best be comprehended and depicted (see also Seremetakis 1994). An ethics of ethnographic witnessing would acknowledge that no experience of violation can be reduced to another, and yet these acts and events cohere into a chain of the irreducible, a patchwork structure of polyphonic particularity and historicity. To witness and to write the in-human is to encounter boundary-bending situations and impossible anthropologies that are horrific, moving, and abiding. It is to encounter what is left over and discarded when all humanisms and other strategies of homogenization (among which we must include systemic terror) have exhausted their material efforts at ideological distillation.

> In Greek, the concept of *antifonisi* (antiphony) possesses a social and juridical sense in addition to its aesthetic, musical, and dramaturgical uses. Antiphony can refer to the construction of contractual agreement, the creation of a symphony by opposing voices. It also implies echo, response, and guarantee. *In Greek, the prefix anti- does not only refer to opposition and antagonism but also equivalence, "in place of," reciprocity, face-to-face.* These meanings are embedded in the vocabulary of laments. Mourners in their laments claim to "come out as representative" (*na vghó antiprosopos*) of the dead (*prosopo* means face or person, and antiprosopos means representative). A related and emotionally laden phrase is "to witness, suffer for, and reveal the truth about" the dead (*na tíne martirísoume*). The concept embodied here does not necessarily evoke Christian liturgical belief. . . . The term itself has pre-Christian usages that possess antiphonic and dyadic inflections. The term *marturion* (witness) appears in Herodotus and is associated with the oracles of the dead (*nekromanteion*). . . . The *marturion* was also a coded message composed of two incomplete halves, one each in the possession of sender and recipient. Completion and decipherment of the message required joining the two parts. (Seremetakis 1991:102)

Linda Green, writing of fieldwork in Guatemala and looking to the work of Michael Taussig, speaks of the ethnographic need to give terror sentience. But here we can ask, whose sentience?

> Anthropologist as scribe, who faithfully documents what the people themselves narrate as their own histories, that which they have seen, smelled, touched, felt, interpreted, and thought. (108)

But can we assume a common sensorium that would enable such a transference? The mere mention of a division of the senses here is a translation mechanism by which a commonality is constructed, but this is obviously culturally mediated and biased. We concentrate *their* experience into *our compartments* to endow their sensorium with coherence. But what if this historically created sentience challenges the very conditions of sensory experience as the ethnographic witness knows it? What has happened to the senses and perception in the spaces of terror? Do these sensory divisions Green notes still hold true, if they were ever there? In many zones of political stasis and terror, it is clear that violence and terror is directed not only against a political subject or community but also against the structure of everyday life; that is to say, it interdicts that which enables material experience to be reproduced over time and in space. Systemic violence wipes out the material supports of experience, conservation, and memory; it can eradicate the possibility of its recipients recording its effects. There is no coincidence that Nordstrom, writing of the war in Mozambique, speaks of Renamo, whose tactics include severing the noses, lips, and ears of civilians. These symbolic mutilations are acts against the organs of social witnessing, attacks on the individual body that affect the corporate body and its capacity to construct memory. What are the equivalents in the corporate body of mutilated organs of evidence and perception; organs that are transformed by violence into ruins and by social memory into allegorical emblems? Violence that is historically, legally, and politically self-conscious

erases its tracks in its own actions by canceling the cultural sense organs of its victims and reciprocally the social capacity to witness—each mutilated body a message of what is to be forgotten and silenced.

But this is not the only trajectory that representation can take. In the zones of sensory subtraction or fragmentation, the ethnographer can be literally *incorporated* as a witness and organ donor. The ethnographer's vision, audition, tactility, and speech may be asked to complete the incomplete bodies and selves of the dead, the missing, and their survivors. A crucial component of the enculturation process in the spaces of death and the zones of terror is that the ethnographer-witness relinquishes ownership over personal organs of perception that must be reinhabited, expanded, and intermingled to accommodate the material metaphors of a new sensorium. During fieldwork in Belfast, my perception was no longer my own when I ceased to have telephone conversations that lasted more than thirty seconds, when I never used people's names over the telephone, when the back of my scalp itched as I felt the patrolling British soldiers tracking my movements with the barrels of their automatic rifles, when I leaped off the front parlor couch along with my hosts at a car backfiring in the night, when I abruptly terminated conversations because police vehicles were circling the neighborhood streets with more frequency since I had arrived, when I left notes documenting my whereabouts and appointments before going into the night to be picked up by paramilitaries for drinking sessions in obscure private pubs, and when I was able to "tell" who was Protestant and who was Catholic by reading frequently imaginary, microscopic signs.

Sensory acculturation often occurs in small details and everyday events, even in dreams, illnesses, and waking hallucinations, as Swedenburg found out far from the field site. Nordstrom, sitting with a group of women in a war zone of Mozambique, describes one such deceptively mundane moment.

> We were sitting on the ground chewing on the stalk of a weed (I was chewing on the weed because the women had handed it to me; the women did so out of a habit they had developed to appease their appetites when food was scarce). (146)

Through the inedible the women communicate where the history of their suffering is encoded—in everyday material experience—and make a statement concerning at what level of being their experience should be stored by the witness-other.

In Winkler's account of rape, the act is announced in the displacement of the sureties of her everyday life and domestic space. The rape is first chronicled in the minute perceptual disjointedness of her household arrangements, socks set out to dry and the basement window interfered

with. In hindsight, these molested objects become sensorial harbingers of, and inanimate witnesses to, the rendering of her own body as object. Inadmissible shifts in one's social situation are frequently invisible and subtle, and they are first registered in the obscurities of the everyday, in the crevices of unexamined micrological life-worlds such as the domain of objects and everyday speech acts. As Nordstrom confides, "The most silenced stories at war's epicenters are generally the most authentic." This is also to say that the real story of the war, the violence and the terror, is always elsewhere and thus contingent on ever-shifting historical, perceptual, and biographical perspectives that move through silence or screams.

There is also the eerie image captured by Maria Olujic in Croatia, which synthesizes both the bodily passion and the pain of estrangement that can be inscribed on the landscape as material culture and that can eventually organize both the infliction and the reception of violence. Here a returning Croatian awakens his senses and his sense of place through self-inflicted pain-as-sustenance and memory.

> In the warm glow of the sunset on a scorching summer day, I was picking blackberries by a dusty road adjacent to my father's house. From a distance, I could see a white car piled high with suitcases on its roof. Moving at a snail's pace, the car pulled up and stopped next to me. An elderly passenger, clearly a returning emigrant, stepped out of the car, a suit jacket thrown over his forearm. Without speaking, he approached and wrenched a foot-long branch from the blackberry bush and began chewing on it, including thorns and unripe berries. I looked at him in bewilderment, thinking that he would choke on the sharp thorns. In a quick sweeping glance, I looked at the other three people in the car. No one said anything. The man slowly walked back to the car and got in. As the car left, all I could see was the cloud of dust particles shimmering in the afternoon sun. . . . The blackberry symbolized the sweet return, the reuniting, and the thorns conveyed the feeling of suffering, the anguish of a foreign place. (188)

These stories, which locate the structure of events in the structure of things, recount the materiality of witnessing where historically layered experience can be invested in a resonant artifact or substance and the common gesture takes on major cross-cultural and transpersonal significance (see Seremetakis 1994). Sometimes the storage site of historical excess is not a thing or a substance but a person. Nordstrom describes how, in the war zones of Mozambique, certain people become overburdened with the experience and memory of violence. They carry magnitudes of violence within them. Attempts are made to heal them and to expel the stored violence. However, at the same time these repositories of violence personified are themselves, the walking social memory of the collective and empathic storage sites of mass corporeal experience. These figures are

sacrificial emissaries, their perceived dis-ease and their subsequent curing, like the expulsion and rehabilitation of Oedipus, allow the reconstituting community to encapsulate and handle miasma to both codify and dispel it. This healing process, the societal-laying-on-of-hands, is as cathartic for the community as it is for the healed individual. Each rumor of healing is socially therapeutic. These tales anticipate collective reconciliation. Both the conditions of contamination by violence and of intervention by healing are crucial to historicizing a social memory of terror and installing this memory with a sense of ending.

Stories, experiences, and sentience that are relayed to the anthropologist are another and further sacrificial strategy that establishes the witness-emissary as storage site precisely because this figure does not stay but takes the symbolic excess of violence away and outside. If full witnessing across cultures, histories, fears, and pains is a matter of altered sentience, then it is most likely an involuntary process, an experience that moves beyond explicit rationalities of coeval dialogue as they are theorized by the volunteerism of the new ethnography. Green recalls how she was shown the hidden burial sites of the disappeared in Guatemala.

> In Xe'caj, people would point out such sites to me. On several occasions when I would be walking with them in the mountains, women would take me to the places where they knew their husbands were buried and say, "Mira, el está allí" (Look, he is over there). (119–120)

How do we understand this *command* to "look"? At this juncture the ethnographer's moral and perceptual position is radically altered and clarified both through and beyond fieldwork transactions. For this command is not a moment of dialogue or a formal interview; though its punctuation may have gestated there. It is an imperative, one that offers little choice other than to turn away, to not look. This call-to-witness captures in one breath the force of history itself. It encapsulates and replicates a *history of sensory shock,* a history of the lack of perceptual choice. Perceptual choice is the privileged position, and certainly a power of the state that transmutes this power into silence over the disappearance of its victims. The absence of perceptual choice becomes the struggle for memory as an alternate sensory organ—and in Guatemala forgetfulness and remembrance are intermingled in the landscape itself through these secret burials.

The command interpellates the ethnographer and seems to infer, *you are here, you have or should accumulate enough experience to see what is pointed out, and you are now morally and historically responsible for what you see and learn. It is a responsibility for those who live with this knowledge because it can kill us, it has killed us—it can now kill you. Look and experience not only the finitude of those who are buried here but experience your own mortality that is unfolded by the limits of your vision, which no longer distances, objectifies, or empowers but implicates you through its finitude. This place of absent bodies, of the remembered dead with no names, is also the place of the death of your vision.*

By naming and commanding our vision, our perception, this imperative is the act by which the survivors embody the ethnographic witness as a sense organ of *their memory. They* assign *their* senses to the ethnographer without guarantee of reception, recall, or permanence. The same assignment occurs when Nordstrom is handed the root to be chewed in Mozambique. We will never plumb the historical, emotional, and interpersonal depths that reside in this command to look. Why are we finally the recipients of it? For the vision directed by this command must be qualitatively differentiated from any media-inspired voyeurism and from Western photocentrism. How, in the context of our own public culture(s), do we translate the dead, the dying, the terrorized, the disappeared from media-constructed phantasms; rumors, to a condition of historical actuality? For this is a command to be accountable for both full sensory depth and experiential limits. How do we fulfill this account? What is our debt? What organs of cultural intelligence do we owe, what organs of transplant shall we receive, in order to keep faith with the unwritten body of the other?

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