Review of International Studies (2011), 37, 1837–1855 © *2010 British International Studies Association*
doi:10.1017/S0260210510001130 *First published online 13 Oct 2010*

Acting out and working through: trauma and (in)security

KATE SCHICK*

Abstract. Trauma, the silenced aftermath of violence, has been largely neglected by international security studies, which perceives trauma as having little relevance to global politics. However, this article contends that trauma profoundly influences global security. Unless traumatic events are worked through, they can heighten insecurity not only in the immediate aftermath of violence but decades and even generations later. The article is divided into three parts. The first section examines trauma in general terms, noting its individual, social and political dimensions. The second section examines *acting out* in response to trauma, with a particular focus on the meaning-making narratives adopted in order to make sense of traumatic experiences: the heroic soldier, good and evil, and redemptive violence. These narratives serve to secure the state by shutting down questioning and showing strength and decisiveness in the wake of traumatic shocks. Section three examines the notion of *working through* trauma. Working through involves a process of mourning, in which past atrocities are acknowledged, reflected on, and more fully understood in all their historically situated complexity. It is a deeply *political* process that struggles to understand and challenge those structures and practices that facilitate traumatic loss.

Kate Schick is a Lecturer in International Relations at the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. Her research focuses on the ways in which contemporary political theory and International Relations theory deal with trauma and suffering in world politics. She draws on a wide range of disciplinary sources including psychology and psychotherapy, historical trauma studies, cultural studies, and political theory. She is currently working on a monograph entitled *Gillian Rose: A good enough justice*. This book will emphasise the contribution Rose's speculative Hegelianism can make to debates in contemporary radical political theory.

Trauma, the silenced aftermath of violence, has been largely neglected in global politics, where the traditional focus on managing observable collective violence precludes attention to its hidden antecedents and effects. Trauma is perceived as *personal* rather than political, as being irrelevant to the operation of world politics. However, trauma profoundly influences global security and must be taken seriously. Unless traumatic loss is worked through, it poses political dangers that operate not only in the immediate aftermath of trauma, but also decades and generations later. Approaches to security that adopt rational, forward-looking analyses can have only a limited understanding of violence and its fall out. In order

* The author wishes to thank Nicholas Rengger, Brent Steele, Megan MacKenzie, Karin Fierke, Ben Thirkell-White, and the anonymous reviewers for their comments and advice.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510001130 Published online by Cambridge University Press

to reach towards a deeper understanding of the cycles of violence and suffering, social and political analyses must also consider the emotional and psychological undercurrents operating in the lives of communities and the ways in which their histories influence their current realities.

Traditional notions of security, which reify the state, have been challenged in recent years by the emergence of the (multifaceted) concept of human security, which places individual rights and development at the centre of security. However, despite this emerging global norm about the limits of sovereignty and a responsibility to value human life equally, regardless of state membership, the liberal State continues to be reified and protected against threats to its modern incarnation.[1] Where traumatic events challenge accepted social arrangements, such as post-September 11 and in cases of ongoing war, the response to such events is to protect the state, first and foremost, shutting down questioning and truncating mourning prematurely in order to show strength and decisiveness in the face of security breaches. The pressure to respond quickly and decisively in the wake of challenges to state sovereignty preserves 'politics as usual' and shuts down alternative ways of thinking and acting outside the given political order in ways that are counterproductive. In psychoanalytic terms, these actions fall under the rubric of *acting out* and are extremely problematic, encouraging simple narratives and knee-jerk responses that perpetuate the cycle of violence.

This article advocates an alternative response to trauma in global politics, which has largely been overlooked in International Relations (IR): *working through*. I argue that working through takes trauma seriously: it involves a work of mourning for past and present suffering whilst also insisting on a struggle to understand and challenge the social and political arrangements that facilitated that suffering. Working through stands in stark contrast to acting out: it is a politically engaged response that refuses to be seduced by simple stories about trauma, with their easily identifiable villains and victims, but that takes time to understand an inevitably more complex reality. Furthermore, it recognises the political dangers of unmourned loss:

> [The] impotence and suffering arising from unmourned loss do not lead to a passion for objectivity and justice. They lead to resentment, hatred, inability to trust, and then, the doubled burden of fear of those negative emotions [. . .] It is the abused who become the abusers, whether politically as well as psychically may depend on contingencies of social and political history.[2]

My contention that a failure to work through traumatic loss can end up reproducing insecurity is explored in this article by an examination of political and communal responses to historical trauma. I draw on a number of empirical examples gleaned from academics and practitioners who write about trauma: these are drawn from history, literature, cultural studies, psychiatry, and peace

[1] This is especially the case for developed Western states, which paradoxically reinforce their own sovereignty even as they undermine other states' sovereignty by waging war in the name of human rights and democracy. See, for example, Vivienne Jabri, 'Solidarity and Spheres of Culture: The Cosmopolitan and the Postcolonial', *Review of International Studies*, 33:4 (2007), pp. 715–28. Such interventions, of course, also serve a particular kind of state sovereignty, evidenced by the rush to construct liberal States in the wake of violence.

[2] Gillian Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law: Philosophy and Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 51.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510001130 Published online by Cambridge University Press

studies.[3] These varied sources paint a coherent picture about the process of working through traumatic experiences: a process that is not visibly present in theoretical or empirical IR literature on violence and trauma. In considering the influence of trauma on security, this article is situated within a growing literature that questions the rationalist framework of traditional security studies and that points to the role of emotion in world politics.[4] The article is divided into three sections. In section one, I examine trauma in general terms, noting its individual, social and political dimensions. In section two, I examine *acting out* in response to trauma, with a particular focus on the maladaptive meaning-making narratives that individuals and groups adopt in order to make sense of their traumatic experiences: the heroic soldier, good and evil, and redemptive violence. In section three, I examine the notion of *working through* trauma. I argue that working through encourages individuals and communities to mourn past and present suffering, and that a political work of mourning leads actors to consider how things might be different and to take the risk of acting to challenge the *status quo*.

Trauma: socio-historical reflections

Consideration of trauma and its ramifications has largely been ignored in the field of IR. This is in part because trauma is perceived as being experienced by individuals first and foremost, and as having little relevance at an international level. However, as we shall see, trauma also has social and political dimensions.

[3] See, for example, Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (London: Pandora, 1992); Imre Kertész, *Fatelessness*, trans. Tim Wilkinson (London: The Harvill Press, 2005/1975); Rena Moses-Hrushovski with Rafael Moses, *Grief and Grievance: the Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin*, trans. Tim Wilkinson (London: Minerva Press, 2000); Siegfried Sassoon, *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937/1972); Vamik Volkan, *Blood Lines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1997); Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Carolyn Yoder, *The Little Book of Trauma Healing: When Violence Strikes and Community Security is Threatened* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2005).

[4] International Relations theorists have been challenging realist assumptions about international security for some decades, highlighting the political and socio-psychological dimensions of security that exist alongside the more readily observable and measurable material dimensions. See, for example, Ken Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* (London: Croom Helm, 1979); Barry Buzan, *People States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1983), and Carol Cohn, 'Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals', *Signs*, 12:4 (Summer 1987), pp. 687–718. More recently, within the genre of critical security studies, there has been growing interest in investigating role of trauma and emotion in world politics. For an overview of critical security studies, see K. M. Fierke, *Critical Approaches to International Security* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007). For writing specifically on trauma and emotion, see Duncan Bell, *Memory, Trauma and World Politics: Reflections on the Relationship between Past and Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006); Neta Crawford, 'The Passions of World Politics: Propositions on Emotions and Emotional Relationships', *International Security*, 24:4 (2001), pp. 116–56; Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Karin Fierke, 'Whereof We Can Speak, Thereof We Must Not Be Silent: Trauma, Political Solipsism and War', *Review of International Studies*, 30:4 (2004), pp. 471–91, and Vanessa Pupavac, 'Pathologizing Populations and Colonising Minds: International Psychosocial Programs in Kosovo', *Alternatives*, 27:4 (2002), pp. 489–511.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510001130 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Cathy Caruth describes trauma as broadly encompassing 'an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena'.[5] She points to the paradoxical and unknowable nature of trauma, whereby an event is not assimilated at the time of its occurrence, but later returns to bear delayed and repeated witness to the wound.[6] *Not knowing* is an inherent element of trauma: the traumatic event is so overwhelming that it is not fully experienced in the moment and it is not until later that the enormity of what has happened begins to sink in. Trauma 'simultaneously defies and demands our witness'.[7] It defies our witness in that it is never able to be fully known or understood; memory does not and cannot record the event in full. Alongside this defiance, however, is a demand: the suffering that attends trauma cries out to be acknowledged and given voice.[8]

Trauma also affects larger social groups, particularly where individuals experience political violence or natural disasters. Kai Erikson's study of survivors of the Buffalo Creek disaster in the US points to the social dimensions of trauma. He observes that trauma simultaneously creates and destroys community. Paradoxically, 'estrangement becomes the basis for communality'[9] as those marked by trauma seek out others who have had similar experiences and thus understand one another's numbness and pain. Erikson refers to this as a 'gathering of the wounded'.[10] However, the overwhelming effect of trauma on a community is one of profound damage. The communality that brings survivors together is not a positive or therapeutic community; it is 'corrosive'.[11] Its members are united by a sense of being set apart from those who have not suffered, sharing a distinct set of perspectives as a result of their experiences. Erikson notes '[t]raumatized people calculate life's chances differently [. . .] they can be said to have experienced not only a *changed sense of self* and a *changed way of relating to others* but a changed *worldview*'.[12] They expect danger, feeling out of control and at the mercy of an uncertain world.

Trauma is not only experienced in the aftermath of single, dramatic events; it can also be ongoing and structurally induced as, for example, in the case of extreme poverty or ongoing civil war, where day-to-day life is a struggle for security and survival. Martha Cabrera, a psychologist who heads a team that works towards community reconstruction throughout Nicaragua, describes her

[5] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 11.

[6] Ibid., p. 4.

[7] Ibid., p. 5.

[8] This aspect of trauma is captured well by Theodor W. Adorno, who is torn between the insistence that we cannot express horrific events in words ('To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric') and that suffering must be expressed ('The need to lend a voice to suffering is a condition for all truth'). See Theodor W. Adorno, *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1981), p. 34; and Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1973), pp. 17–8. For reflections on the relevance of Adorno's work on suffering for international political theory, see Kate Schick, '"To lend a voice to suffering is a condition for all truth": Adorno and International Political Thought', *Journal of International Political Theory*, 5:2 (2009), pp. 138–60.

[9] Kai Erikson, 'Notes on Trauma and Community', in Cathy Caruth (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University, 1995), p. 186.

[10] Ibid., p. 187.

[11] Ibid., p. 189.

[12] Ibid., p. 194. Emphasis in original.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510001130 Published online by Cambridge University Press

country as 'a multiply wounded, multiply traumatized, multiply mourning country'.[13] This 'multiple wounds phenomenon' has consequences on a variety of levels: individual, social, and political. Another example of ongoing trauma is where unhealed trauma is passed down generationally; this can happen on a small scale, for example, where a parent has been sexually abused, or on a larger scale, such as in the aftermath of the Holocaust.[14] Such trans-generational transmission of trauma can occur regardless of whether the next generation knows of the trauma of the elder generation or not.[15] Other forms of trauma include secondary trauma, where people in a helping or observational role experience second-hand trauma because of what they see and hear, and participation-induced trauma, where the perpetrators of trauma suffer in the wake of harming others.[16]

Alongside the individual and social dimensions of trauma are disturbing political dimensions. Karin Fierke argues that we cannot isolate psychological and political considerations in the aftermath of war. She maintains that '[p]olitical trauma is larger than the sum of traumatised individuals in a context'[17] and as such it must be considered separately. She illustrates this with reference to the trauma that followed World War I. The shame and sense of betrayal that the German population felt in its aftermath and the widespread physical and psychological trauma due to the horrors of trench warfare and the loss of lives combined to produce political trauma. This was then manipulated by Hitler to create 'a solipsist Germany, ever vigilant in its relations to a dangerous external world and equally dangerous internal enemies'.[18] Psychological trauma and political humiliation brought into being a revenge-seeking political solipsism. As well as prompting 'acting out' behaviours, such as the pursuit of revenge, trauma can also prompt 'acting in' behaviours, such as political withdrawal. Cabrera points to the political consequences of trauma in multiply-wounded Nicaragua, where citizens are uninterested in political involvement:

> When a person does not or cannot work through a trauma right away, its social consequences, the most frequent of which are apathy, isolation and aggressiveness, are only revealed over time. We understood that there's a close connection between so many accumulated wounds and traumas and the behavior that can be seen today in the large number of Nicaraguans who insist they 'don't want to know any more about politics', or 'don't want to get involved in anything'. Unprocessed traumas and other wounds and grief explain much of the current lack of mobilization.[19]

Contrary to mainstream conceptions within International Relations, then, widespread trauma takes on a life of its own that is greater than individual suffering, and can profoundly influence the course of global politics.

[13] Martha Cabrera, 'Living and Surviving in a Multiply Wounded Country', {http://wwwu.uni-klu.ac.at/hstockha/neu/html/cabreracruz.htm} last accessed on 15 September 2010.

[14] Literature on 'children of the Holocaust' or 'second generation' Holocaust survivors has proliferated in recent years. See, for example, Zygmunt Bauman, 'The Holocaust's Life as a Ghost', in Robert Fine and Charles Turner (eds), *Social Theory After the Holocaust* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), pp. 7–18; Hannah Starman, 'Generations of Trauma: Victimhood and the Perpetuation of Abuse in Holocaust Survivors', *History and Anthropology*, 17:4 (2006), pp. 327–38.

[15] Volkan, *Blood Lines*, pp. 43–4.

[16] Yoder, *Trauma Healing*, pp. 14–5.

[17] Fierke, 'Trauma, political solipsism and war', p. 482.

[18] Ibid., 487.

[19] Cabrera, 'Living and Surviving in a Multiply Wounded Country'.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510001130 Published online by Cambridge University Press

In the remainder of this article, I examine responses to historical trauma, drawing on Dominick LaCapra's broad distinction between acting out and working through. LaCapra states that acting out occurs where sufferers become 'stuck' in the past and live a restricted life characterised by hypervigilance and a desire for security. It is normal and adaptive in the immediate aftermath of trauma; however, prolonged acting out becomes pathological and prevents a healthy working through of trauma. Such behaviour is seen not only in individuals, but also in larger social groups.[20] Working through is a much more difficult response to trauma; it does not paint the world in stark black and white or good and evil, as acting out tends to do, and it requires *work*. It does not prescribe easy answers or a linear progression through pain, but instead involves self-examination, struggle, and critical engagement. I examine acting out and working through in turn.[21]

Responses to trauma: acting out

Acting out involves a compulsive and repetitive re-living of the trauma; individuals who act out have difficulty distinguishing between the past and the present and struggle with notions of future. They are haunted by their experience and trapped in the past that wounded them.[22] This is unavoidable following trauma; however, in order for traumatised individuals to negotiate their way through the constriction that characterises their lives and to re-engage with life in the here and now, they must begin to work through their traumatic experience. They must give voice to their trauma if they are to move beyond its most debilitating symptoms; these include hyper-arousal, where the traumatised individual lives in fight-or-flight mode; intrusion, where she experiences flashbacks and nightmares; and constriction, where she withdraws from normal social engagement, living a greatly restricted life.[23]

Just as whole communities experience trauma, so too do whole communities fail to work through that trauma. People search desperately for meaning in the wake of disaster; this leads to the construction of 'meaning-making narratives'[24] in order to explain what happened and to bring comfort. Unfortunately, these narratives often take refuge in simplistic explanations that both prolong existing suffering and beget further suffering. Three common narratives are the traditional heroic-soldier

[20] LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. See also Yoder, *Trauma Healing*, for an accessible introduction to different responses to trauma. In this model, what LaCapra terms 'acting out' is referred to by Yoder as 'reenactment', encompassing both acting out, where trauma energy hurts others, and acting in, where trauma energy hurts oneself, for example, with anxiety and depression. LaCapra's notion of acting out encompasses both these maladaptive responses to trauma.

[21] As mentioned above, I draw on a variety of different literatures to illustrate acting out and working through: history, literature, cultural studies, psychiatry, and peace studies. There is a broad consensus on ideas about trauma – the effects of traumatic experiences on individuals and communities and the ways in which these change over time – across these literatures. My examples are chosen for illustrative purposes, and are necessarily a partial representation of a much broader range of possible examples that could have been included had I had more space.

[22] LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*.

[23] For a thorough delineation of the symptoms of trauma, see Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*.

[24] Yoder, *Trauma Healing*, p. 37.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510001130 Published online by Cambridge University Press

narrative, which allows only a truncated form of mourning that shuts down the questioning of self and other; the good versus evil narrative, which leads to a demonisation of the other; and the redemptive violence narrative, which prompts revenge-seeking behaviours. I examine these in turn.

Meaning-making narratives: the heroic-soldier

People often search for meaning in the losses they suffer in an attempt to attenuate the pain and bring comfort. Jay Winter examines the loss that attended World War I and its aftermath and how the vast number of those affected by the war dealt with their grief.[25] He notes that traditional forms of mourning dominated: forms that drew upon classical, romantic, and sacred sources. These forms allowed a search for meaning among the chaos and wreckage the war left in its wake. State-sponsored mourning encourages this search for meaning, particularly in the wake of war; it has a vested interest in its citizens accepting and supporting its armed engagements, despite the cost in lives. In his semi-autobiographical novel, *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, Siegfried Sassoon remarks that during World War I the media colluded in this portrayal of war as heroic and glorious: 'somehow the newspaper men always kept the horrifying realities of the War out of their articles, for it was unpatriotic to be bitter, and the dead were assumed to be gloriously happy'.[26]

However, the mourning that the state encourages is generally a truncated form of working through that prioritises memorialisation. It allows very little room to tell one's story and does not encourage social re-engagement outside the orthodoxy. Jenny Edkins argues that the medicalisation and normalisation of traumatised individuals from armed forces results in de-politicisation and the preservation of the *status quo*. They are returned to service as soon as possible or, if they are unable to be reintegrated into the armed forces, they are labelled as suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. In both scenarios, individuals are discouraged from engaging politically. Edkins maintains: 'In contemporary culture victimhood offers sympathy and pity in return for the surrender of any political voice.'[27] Vanessa Pupavac also warns against the de-politicisation of entire populations in the wake of conflict, arguing that labelling whole societies as traumatised can strip them of the right to govern themselves and legitimise 'indefinite international administration'.[28]

Meaning-making narratives: good and evil

A second meaning-making narrative that people employ to make sense of trauma is the narrative of right and wrong, good and evil. Individuals and societies

[25] Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*.
[26] Siegfried Sassoon, *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, in Sassoon, *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston*, p. 364.
[27] Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, p. 9. The phenomenon of 'labelling' resulting in loss of agency is also discussed in Karin Fierke, *Critical Security Studies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p. 125. For a personal account of medicalisation and de-politicisation during WWI, see Sassoon's autobiographical novels, *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston*.
[28] Pupavac, 'Pathologizing Populations and Colonising Minds', pp. 489–511.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510001130 Published online by Cambridge University Press

perceive themselves as innocent victims and the perpetrators as evil. In the wake of the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York on 11 September 2001, President George W. Bush immediately began to employ the rhetoric of good and evil. In the first speech he made in the wake of the attack, he used the word 'evil' four times, setting the tone for subsequent foreign policy rhetoric.[29]

The trauma in the wake of September 11 affected not only those individuals who suffered loss of family and friends; it affected whole communities and, indeed, the wider American public, many of whom perceived the attacks as being perpetrated on American values such as freedom and democracy. However, the mourning that took place was truncated prematurely: there was no official or media space for questioning, or for telling stories that did not mesh with the administration's chosen response to the attacks. The binary division of the world into good and evil does not allow for self-examination. In his reflections on the events and the aftermath of September 11, Slavoj Žižek points to subtle media censorship in the days that followed:

> [. . .] when firefighters' widows were interviewed on CNN, most of them gave the expected performance: tears, prayers [. . .] all except one who, without a tear, said that she does not pray for her dead husband, because she knows that prayer will not bring him back. Asked if she dreams of revenge, she calmly said that that would have been a true betrayal of her husband: had he survived, he would have insisted that the worst thing to do is to succumb to the urge to retaliate [. . .] there is no need to add that this clip was shown only once, then disappeared from the repetitions of the same interviews.[30]

This unacceptability of expressing alternative viewpoints, such as that expressed by the firefighter's widow, only intensified as the War on Terror progressed.[31]

Judith Butler also discusses the rise of censorship in US in the post-September 11 environment.[32] She notes that Bush's bald black-and-white statement – 'Either you're with us or with the terrorists' – left no room for the rejection of both statements and meant that those who did not support the war were seen by the administration as terror sympathisers. Similarly vilifying of those who dared to question the War on Terror was the (liberal Left) *New York Times*' labelling of those who sought a broader understanding of events as 'excuseniks'.[33] Butler argues that this was 'tantamount to the suppression of dissent' and that one can (and should) both condemn the violent attacks on September 11 and ask what the historical, social, and political antecedents were that facilitated the attack.[34] Žižek is similarly critical of the polarisation of rhetoric post-September 11. Those who

[29] Singer, *The President of Good and Evil*, p. 143.

[30] Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real! Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates* (London: Verso, 2002), pp. 13–4, fn. 8.

[31] At this early stage of the War on Terror, any questioning took place largely underground. Bush's assumptions created a clear political agenda that did not allow for official alternatives, but in civil society individuals and groups did begin to question the US administration's response. One such organisation is Peaceful Tomorrows, founded by people who lost family members in September 11, and who advocate non-violent alternatives to the Bush administration's response. See: {http://www.peacefultomorrows.org/index.php} last accessed on 14 July 2010. See also Underground Zero, a collation of independent filmmakers' responses to September 11: {http://www.jayrosenblattfilms.com/undergroundzero/} last accessed on 14 July 2010).

[32] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), pp. 1–18.

[33] Butler, *Precarious Life*, p. 9.

[34] Ibid., p. 15.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510001130 Published online by Cambridge University Press

unconditionally condemned the attacks were perceived as supporting a position of 'American innocence under attack by Third World Evil' and those who pointed to socio-political facilitators for Arab extremism were seen as labelling America as a deserving victim. Žižek maintains that we must resist the temptation of taking either position: 'The only possible solution here is to reject this very opposition and to adopt both positions simultaneously; this can be done only if we resort to the dialectical category of totality: there is no choice between those two positions; each is one-sided and false.'[35]

Meaning-making narratives: redemptive violence

The silencing of dissenting voices and a refusal to allow questioning truncates the mourning process. Caroline Yoder, director of Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR), maintains that incomplete mourning at a societal level can lead not only to a feeling of victimhood but also to aggression:

> Regardless of the reasons for incomplete mourning, the resulting grief thwarts healing and keeps populations more susceptible to acting out of low-mode brain states. Normal fear can morph into panic and paranoia, pain into despair, anger into rage, humiliation and shame into an obsessive drive for vindication. The quest for measured justice can be confused with retaliation and revenge.[36]

Such aggression was certainly in evidence in the wake of the September 11 attacks. Bush made it perfectly clear that he would make no distinction between the perpetrators of terror and the nations that support and give refuge to terrorists, a doctrine he elaborated over the next weeks and followed with action when the US began bombing Afghanistan on 7 October 2001. Singer describes Bush's actions as 'the most aggressive choice among a range of options that had not been adequately explored [...] A peace-loving president would have been more convincing in trying all other options. That would have been emotionally and politically difficult in the days immediately following September 11, but it was what Bush ought to have done'.[37]

Meaning-making narratives are not only deployed in the wake of single traumatic events, such as September 11, they are also employed in situations of ongoing trauma. In her reflections on grief and grievance in the wake of Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, Israeli psychoanalyst Rena Moses-Hrushovski examines the ongoing Israeli-Palestine conflict and the complex trauma that so many suffer as a result. In a situation of ongoing trauma, each new loss triggers past losses and old wounds are reopened. In the case of Rabin's assassination in 1995, the murder of a man who had given his life to work for peace and freedom from terror served to reinforce the deeply held belief that Israel could not trust anyone, that justice was unachievable, that the unthinkable had happened once again.[38] Moses-Hrushovski uses the term 'deployment' to describe the recurring attitudes and patterns of behaviour exhibited by her multiply-traumatised patients, and argues

[35] Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!*, pp. 49–50.
[36] Yoder, *Trauma Healing*, pp. 36–7.
[37] Singer, *The President of Good and Evil*, pp. 152–3.
[38] Moses-Hrushovski, *Grief and Grievance*, p. 12.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510001130 Published online by Cambridge University Press

that such patterns are also exhibited on a broader social scale in the Arab-Israeli conflict. She summarises the characteristics of deployed individuals and groups as follows:

> deployment entails a rigid self-organisation into a system of attitudes, roles and behaviours aimed at protecting one's self-esteem and dignity, at consoling or compensating oneself for what one has experienced in the past as unfair, painful, and humiliating; and, [*sic*] all this rather than deal with the hardships involved, mourn the losses and disappointments experienced and adopt adaptive and self-realising patterns.[39]

One of the maladaptive patterns of behaviour that those embedded in the Israeli-Palestine conflict employ is that of violence. 'Hatred and accusation'[40] were soon substituted for mourning after Rabin's assassination. In the ensuing months, the people of Israel elected a Likud government that opposed peace, and clashes with the Palestinian police soon followed.[41] Although there was partial mourning after Rabin's assassination, it was truncated prematurely. Moses-Hrushovski believes that this was in part due to Shimon Peres's decision to bring the Israeli elections forward and to refrain from capitalising on the assassination in the Labour Party campaign: this 'cut off the expression of grieving and mourning'.[42] Another contribution to the premature end of the mourning process was the defensive reaction by Orthodox and right groups in response to the hurling of accusations by those non-religious and left groups. She explains:

> Their guilt – and indeed the guilt of Israelis from all parts of the political spectrum – for having contributed to, or having done nothing to prevent the outrageous libels hurled against Yitzhak Rabin caused many Israelis to forget, repress or at least not think enough about the tragic event itself. Hatred and accusation took the place of real mourning, which would have had to involve the examining of the problems surrounding the murder, the admission of direct or indirect responsibility for what had happened and the commitment to deal courageously with lessons learned from the tragedy.[43]

The uncomfortable suspicion that they were somehow complicit in Rabin's assassination was repressed; rather than engage in critical self-reflection, many Israelis took refuge in the less disruptive (to their own sense of self) strategy of finger-pointing and hatred. This, combined with a rapid switch of focus in the build-up to a new election, truncated the process of mourning and working through.

One of the dangers of prolonged acting out after traumatic events is that a failure to work though the traumatic experience often perpetuates further violence. This happens not only in the immediate aftermath of trauma, but also decades and even generations later. Vamik Volkan argues that the trans-generational transmission of trauma plays a significant role in violent conflict. He notes that a refusal to mourn a twelfth-century defeat kept a sense of victimhood alive in the Serbian community that was later mobilised by Slobodan Milosevic in the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict: 'The "defeat" of June 28, 1389, became the shared loss that could not be mourned but that had to be recalled continually [. . .] The Serbs held on to their victimized identity and glorified victimization in song'.[44] Volkan

[39] Ibid., p. 44.
[40] Ibid., p. 115.
[41] Ibid., p. 163.
[42] Ibid., p. 113.
[43] Ibid., p. 115.
[44] Volkan, *Blood Lines*, p. 64.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510001130 Published online by Cambridge University Press

describes such traumas as 'chosen trauma': 'Adopting a chosen trauma can enhance ethnic pride, reinforce a sense of victimization, and even spur a group to avenge its ancestors' hurts'.[45] If we are to arrest such cycles of violence and aggression, we must learn how to *work through* trauma. It is to a consideration of working through that I now turn.

Responses to trauma: working through

Imre Kertész, in his (semi-autobiographical) narrative about a young boy who survived the Nazi camps in World War II, recounts an extraordinary conversation between the young boy and his family once he returns home.

> 'Before all else', [the old boy] declared, 'you must put the horrors behind you'. Increasingly amazed, I asked, 'Why should I?' 'In order', he replied, 'to be able to live'[. . .] 'one cannot start a new life under such a burden', and I had to admit he did have a point. Except I didn't quite understand how they could wish for something that was quite impossible, and indeed I made the comment that what had happened had happened, and anyway, when it came down to it, I could not give orders to my memory. I would only be able to start a new life, I ventured, if I were to be reborn or if some affliction, disease, or something of the sort were to affect my mind, which they surely didn't wish on me, I hoped.[46]

The narrator is astonished at the obtuseness of his family in their pragmatic insistence that he must put his experiences in Auschwitz behind him and look to the future. He could not just take off his experiences and dispose of them like he did his prison garb; they were a part of him. He would only be able to move forward by taking 'steps' he could neither start a new life with a blank slate, nor continue his previous existence as if nothing had changed. He needed to work through his experiences, to attempt to make sense of what had happened: 'I now needed to start doing something with that fate, needed to connect it to somewhere or something [. . .]'.[47] This process of 'doing something' with the experiences of suffering is the process of working through, a process the narrator begins by trying to describe his experiences in the camps to his family.

Working through is rarely discussed in IR literature, critical or otherwise. However, unless trauma is worked through, it is likely to beget further pain and suffering that could well have political consequences – be it hatred expressed in further violence or political disengagement. LaCapra describes working through as an 'articulatory practice' that gradually enables one to make distinctions between past, present, and future. It is not a linear process, nor can binary distinctions be made between acting out and working through; on the contrary, the process of working through is complex and is never tidily resolved:

> [Working through] requires going back to problems, working them over, and perhaps transforming the understanding of them. Even when they are worked through, this does not

[45] Ibid., p. 78. See also his chapter in the same book entitled 'Chosen Trauma: Unresolved Mourning', pp. 36–49, and Fierke's analysis of acting out in Germany post-World War I and its facilitation of the horrors that ensued in World War II in 'Trauma, Political Solipsism and War'.
[46] Kertész, *Fatelessness*, p. 256.
[47] Ibid., p. 259.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510001130 Published online by Cambridge University Press

mean that they may not recur and require renewed and perhaps changed ways of working through them again. In this sense, working through is itself a process that may never entirely transcend acting out and that, even in the best of circumstances, is never achieved once and for all.[48]

Central to the notion of working through is a form of mourning that is inherently political. Such mourning facilitates – and indeed necessitates – re-engagement with those social and political dimensions of life that are so vastly restricted in the immediate aftermath of trauma. Individuals who have undergone extreme suffering have experienced the horrific underside of existing social and political arrangements and are in a unique position to enlighten Enlightenment, to challenge the *status quo*. Part of mourning is this relating of particular suffering to broader social forces. But what does this mourning look like? What kinds of political risk should we take? How can we work through our losses in the real world? Mourning takes many different forms and is expressed differently by peoples from different cultures.[49] However, the process of working through grief entails three broad tasks: expressing grief, reconstructing events and history in narrative form, and critical judgment. These are inherently political tasks, and facilitate further political risk-taking. I examine these tasks in turn; however, it is important to note that the process of working through is non-linear and that the tasks overlap in practice.[50]

Mourning: (creative) expression

Part of mourning is expressing grief at the pain and loss that one has suffered. This can be enormously difficult for traumatised individuals and groups; part of the experience of trauma is that one's feelings become difficult to access: individuals feel wooden and severed from reality. In particular, it can be difficult to use words to express feelings. At this early stage of mourning, creative, often non-verbal, expression can be helpful. Yoder points to a variety of modes that may help to express grief in the wake of trauma, including: 'art, music, dance, drama, writing,

[48] LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, pp. 148–9.

[49] In suggesting this framework of 'working through' as a means of dealing with trauma, I am not suggesting that the version I present here is the only possible framework. My research draws on a Western psychoanalytic tradition that is extremely well developed; however the framework is broad enough to allow for local versions. My point is that some sort of working through is important; its form will inevitably vary from culture to culture. In some cultures, there will be less emphasis on the narrative form and more on bodywork and ceremonial forms of dealing with trauma. See, for example, the emphasis on traditional American Indian healing ceremonies in Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart and Lemyra M. DeBruyn, 'The American Indian Holocaust: Healing Historical Unresolved Grief', *American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research*, 8:2 (1998), pp. 60–82. For a discussion on the problems encountered with the top-down imposition of Western psychotherapeutic notions of healing to other cultures, and particularly in relation to the truth and reconciliation commissions, see Rosalind Shaw, 'Rethinking Truth and Reconciliation Commissions: Lessons from Sierra Leone', *US Institute of Peace Special Report 130* (2005), {http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr130.pdf} last accessed on 14 February 2008.

[50] Before the broad stages of working through I have outlined can take place, some degree of safety should ideally be established. However, this is not always possible, for example in situations of ongoing conflict. For an excellent chapter dealing with the establishment of safety in personal recovery, see Herman, 'Trauma and Recovery', pp. 155–74.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510001130 Published online by Cambridge University Press

prayer, meditation, cultural rituals, and cleansing ceremonies'.[51] Body-work such as movement and dance can also be helpful.[52]

The Harvard Program on Refugee Trauma uses the healing power of the arts to help refugees work through trauma. Richard Mollica, director of the programme, maintains that artistic beauty can help people come to terms with pain: 'The embrace of beauty by the survivor and healer restores a sense of interconnectedness, well-being and meaning'.[53] He argues that one aspect of the violence perpetrated against refugees has been the destruction of beauty and culture and that part of the process of recovery is reconnecting with that which was lost. Trauma survivors can access and express their experiences by rediscovering the artistic expressions of their culture: expressing pain through drawing and painting, and telling stories through drama and puppets.[54] In the wake of Rabin's death, various forms of creative expression played a part in Israeli society's working through. The square in which he was assassinated became a 'temple of art': masses gathered there to light candles, sing songs, write notes, and weep.[55] Music became a focal point for the nation's grief, with the communal singing of songs such as the 'Song of Peace' and the moving performance of Shlomo Gronich at the memorial service that closed the seven days of mourning.[56]

Expressing pain and loss in the wake of traumatic experience is an important part of working through; it is also difficult. Creative expression, both alone and in concert with others, can help individuals and communities begin to explore the impact of that loss and to make connections between the aspects of themselves (emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual) that are often fractured following extreme suffering. It also prepares the way for a narrative reconstruction of what has happened; a reconstruction that should be communicated to those who did not experience the trauma(s) in order to facilitate reflection on accepted social practices.

Mourning: narration

Telling the story of a trauma is central to the mourning process. Psychiatrist Judith Lewis Herman describes story-telling as a 'work of reconstruction' that transforms the traumatic memory and enables it to be incorporated into the traumatised individual's life story.[57] Yoder maintains that story-telling helps with the healing process because it 'counteracts the isolation, silence, fear, shame, or "unspeakable"

[51] Yoder, *Trauma Healing*, p. 54.

[52] For example, Jayne Docherty, one of Yoder's STAR colleagues, notes how much more relaxed a man from Uganda was than the other participants in one of the workshops she was running. When she asked him about it, he replied that one of the methods his people used to mourn was dancing, and that he utilised the technique to help him process his grief and cope with stress. (Personal communication, International Studies Association Annual Convention, Chicago, February 2007).

[53] Richard Mollica, 'Why Stories?', *Harvard Program on Refugee Trauma*, {http://www.hprt-cambridge.org/Layer3.asp?page_id=25} last accessed on 14 July 2010. See also, Mollica, *Healing Invisible Wounds*.

[54] The HPRT website has various examples of art as a healing tool, including a comic book about a Cambodian brother and sister who survived the Khmer regime: Svang Tor and Richard Mollica, 'Sun and Moon: A Khmer Journey', downloadable from {http://www.hprt-cambridge.org/Layer3.asp?page_id=28} last accessed on 14 July 2010.

[55] Moses-Hrushovski, *Grief and Grievance*, pp. 8, 18.

[56] Ibid., p. 19.

[57] Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, p. 175.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510001130 Published online by Cambridge University Press

horror'.[58] However it is also difficult: it is a part of the work of mourning that requires communication with those who (often) do not want to hear; it also depends upon the creation of safe spaces in which communication can take place.

The story-telling process is communal: without an audience, be it one person or many, it loses much of its power. In his writings on Holocaust survivor testimony, Michael Nutkiewicz argues that oral testimony is 'communal, didactic, and therapeutic' and that it is precisely because it is not privatised but made public that it is able to be all these things.[59] He argues that survivors can and should speak of the horrors they have witnessed, both for the sake of the survivor and for the wider community. Indeed, the element of public testimony has become an integral part of some programmes designed to help victims work through their trauma. Nutkiewicz tells of the founding in 1995 of the Project on Genocide, Psychiatry and Witnessing, saying that it was established 'because traditional psycho-pathological approaches were obviously not getting at the heart of the victim's trauma. The missing element was narrative – allowing the survivors to tell their story in the context of public retelling'.[60]

What should a trauma story communicate in order to promote working through? Drawing on his work with refugees, Mollica argues that for a trauma story to aid recovery and healing, it should comprise four elements.[61] First, the story recounts factually what happened, communicating the series of events that triggered their trauma. Second, the story communicates broader socio-cultural elements, portraying the history, traditions, and values that underlie the narrative. Individuals from different cultures will place varying meanings on events, and different responses may be necessary for working through.[62] Third, the story involves 'looking behind the curtain' of daily life and reflecting on the deeper (personal and societal) implications of their suffering. This may involve rejecting beliefs once held to be true, such as traditional views on sexuality in the wake of sexual abuse, or belief in the infallibility of political leaders. Lastly, the trauma story involves building a relationship with a listener – public testimony is healing not only for those who share their stories, but also for those who listen. Storytelling is a reciprocal relationship: the listener values the person who is sharing their story and this influences both lives. Listening to trauma survivors has much to teach society; their stories point to the fragility of accepted social arrangements and pervasive global insecurity, reminding us of our own vulnerability as well as the vulnerability of others.

Storytelling can take place in public speech and in written (historical or literary) form: the public has a responsibility to listen and to consider institutional and legal arrangements in the light of these narratives. Mari J. Matsuda argues from a legal

[58] Yoder, *Trauma Healing*, p. 53.

[59] Michael Nutkiewicz, 'Shame, Guilt, and Anguish in Holocaust Survivor Testimony', *The Oral History Review*, 30:1 (2003), p. 17.

[60] Nutkiewicz, 'Shame, Guilt, and Anguish', pp. 18–9. For details of the Project on Genocide, Psychiatry and Witnessing, see: {http://www.psych.uic.edu/research/genocide/index.htm}, last accessed 12 September 2007.

[61] Mollica, *Healing Invisible Wounds*, pp. 34–48.

[62] For example, Mollica tells of the Khmer Rouge practice of forbidding proper burials and Buddhist ceremonies for their victims. He notes that an important part of working through for those who lost loved ones in this way is to conduct a traditional ceremony that remembers those who have died. See, Mollica, *Healing Invisible Wounds*, pp. 41–2.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510001130 Published online by Cambridge University Press

perspective that the public needs to hear the stories of those who experience racism, hate and violence in order to challenge existing laws and precedents that fail to address these problems. She notes that a typical legal inquiry omits 'the particularity of a victim's time and space as well as the experience of a victim's group over the course of time and space'.[63] She advocates instead a 'deep historical consciousness' in order to 'lift us out of the neutrality trap'.[64] Public reception of people's trauma stories prompts reflection and can bring about legal response. Speaking to a legal audience on the matter of racist speech, Matsuda offers a challenge: 'before we abandon the task of devising a legal response to racist speech, we should consider concretely the options available to us. The legal imagination is a fruitful one'.[65]

Alongside public spoken testimony, there is a place for historical writing in coming to terms with historical trauma. LaCapra suggests that a nuanced account of the traumatic event(s) may help to counter melancholy and promote working through. Such writing exposes both the writer and reader to *empathic unsettlement* that encourages practical ethical response while remaining open to utopian ideals and hope.[66] This need not be done by an outsider, who pieces together events and antecedents after the fact; some of the most powerful historical writings have been literary accounts by those who experienced the horrors of war. Sassoon's semi-autobiographical trilogy of an officer during World War I describes the frustration that attended attempts to describe the torment of war to those who had not experienced it and did not want to hear. His poetry and the trilogy were a way of engaging politically and working through his own pain by putting it in narrative form as well as a way of eliciting a response from others.[67] Similarly, Kertész's *Fatelessness* is a powerful fictionalised account of his own experiences in a series of Nazi concentration camps including Auschwitz during World War II: a searingly personal and provocative account that profoundly unsettles.[68] Listening to others' pain challenges our own firmly held preconceptions about the way the world works, it points to the limitations of current political and social systems, and it indicates the lack of an easy way. However, it also points to hope: a fragile, painful hope, but a hope nonetheless. Those who have suffered have survived and have much to teach us; although our learning will inevitably be partial and fragile, we must take the risk of listening and responding.

Mourning: critical judgement

A third interrelated aspect of mourning loss in the wake of trauma is critical reflection on the 'objective conditions'[69] that allowed the suffering to take place.

[63] Mari J. Matsuda, 'Public Response to Racist Speech: Considering the Victim's Story', *Michigan Law Review*, 87:8 (1989), p. 2373.
[64] Ibid., pp. 2320–81.
[65] Ibid., p. 2380.
[66] LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, p. 42.
[67] Sassoon, *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston*.
[68] Kertész, *Fatelessness*.
[69] Theodor W. Adorno, 'What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?', in G. Hartman (ed.), *Bitburg: In Moral and Political Perspective*, trans. T. B. and G. Hartman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 124.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510001130 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Moses-Hrushovski terms this aspect of mourning 'soul-searching': challenging accepted practices and modes of being that may have facilitated the suffering.[70] She notes that self-examination often gives way to other-examination and to pointing a finger of blame, but that soul-searching must take place both within groups and also between groups if understanding of the 'whys' of extreme suffering is to grow. In her examination of Israeli society and the social and political antecedents of the violence of Rabin's assassination, Moses-Hrushovski points to three facilitating aspects of Israeli culture: male chauvinism, which leads to violence on the roads and in homes; ethnically-related grievances of Jewish immigrants, who have failed to be integrated into Israeli society and who experience systematic discrimination; and political deployment, where a focus on past traumas precludes consideration of the future.[71] Reflection and insight into those practices that facilitate violence and trauma is crucial; with enhanced understanding, we may be able to challenge the damaging knee-jerk reactions that perpetuate the cycle of violence.

Butler also speaks provocatively of the need for political reflection in the wake of injury. She argues that '[t]o be injured means that one has the chance to reflect upon injury, to find out the mechanisms of its distribution, to find out who else suffers from permeable borders, unexpected violence, dispossession, and fear, and in what ways'.[72] She maintains that in the wake of violence, we should ask the following questions:

> What role will we assume in the historical relay of violence, who will we become in the response, and will we be furthering or impeding violence by virtue of the response that we make? To respond to violence with violence may well be 'justified', but is it finally a responsible solution? Similarly, moralistic denunciation provides immediate gratification, and even has the effect of temporarily cleansing the speaker of all proximity to guilt through the act of self-righteous denunciation itself. But is this the same as responsibility, understood as taking stock of our world, and participating in its social transformation in such a way that non-violent, cooperative, egalitarian international relations remain the guiding ideal?[73]

Responding to violence with an emphatic denunciation of the perpetrators and a promise that they will be punished has popular appeal; large sectors of the public demand strong leadership and clearly defined boundaries between right and wrong. This was the path walked by the Bush Administration in the wake of 9/11. However, it is irresponsible to react primarily on the basis of political expediency; it only perpetuates the cycle of violence and serves to feed security fears. Space must be made for the expression of mourning and anger, but also for reflection and self-awareness. Grief and anger, no matter how great or how justified, must never drown out public debate and criticism.

Mourning: political risk

Working through is inherently political. The process of telling one's story, particularly if this is done in a public way, is political. So, too, is the process of listening

[70] Moses-Hrushovski, *Grief and Grievance*, pp. 36–43.
[71] Ibid., pp. 67–91.
[72] Butler, *Precarious Life*, p. xii.
[73] Ibid., p. 17.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510001130 Published online by Cambridge University Press

to others' trauma stories.[74] The critical assessment of one's own closely held assumptions, the questioning of one's own and larger group actions, and engaging in dialogue with the 'other' are also courageous political acts. However the political work of mourning particular losses also points to the need to take political action that addresses the underlying structures of power that facilitated those losses. Gillian Rose terms such action 'political risk' and speaks of the need to 'act, *without guarantees*, for the good of all – this is to take *the risk* of the *universal* interest'.[75] Taking the risk of the universal requires listening to particular pain and suffering and reflecting upon what these might mean more generally for institutions and law. In this sense, it implies a radical democracy where groups of people challenge settled norms at various levels: sub-state, state, and supra-state. It requires giving voice to those who are dispossessed and ignored within current systems of power. It challenges tidy liberal categories and forces rethinking rather than blind acceptance of what has gone before. It does not throw out existing laws and institutions; it works both within and without these existing structures to hold them accountable to those ideals they profess to uphold and to advocate change where they marginalise and discriminate. Bonnie Honig proffers a radical account of democratic agency with political risk at its core. Drawing on Freud's depiction of Moses as the foreign founder of Israel in *Moses and Monotheism*, she sketches a model of agency where democratic subjects are always sceptical of their leaders and institutions. For Honig, radically democratic subjects who engage in political risk are:

> subjects who do not expect power to be granted to them by nice authorities with their best interests at heart; subjects who know that if they want power they must take it and that such taking is always illegitimate from the perspective of the order in place at the time; subjects who know that their efforts to carve out a just and legitimate polity will always be haunted by the violences of their founding; subjects who experience the law as a horizon of promise but also as an alien and impositional thing.[76]

These subjects live in an agonistic relationship with their law, institutions, and leaders. They see glimpses of promise in the law but do not expect that it is perfect or complete or that it will be wielded wisely by those who adjudicate it. These subjects are also ready to *act*, to engage in political risk, knowing that any action will have imperfect results and that no system will ever be complete. These subjects do not expect to 'mend diremption in heaven and on earth',[77] nor do they indulge in an endless melancholy. Instead, they 'nurture some ambivalence regarding their principles, their leaders, and their neighbors and [...] put that ambivalence to good political use'.[78]

Conclusion

International security studies is centrally concerned with the persistence of violence and insecurity in global politics. However, mainstream approaches to security skim

[74] See, for example, Nutkiewicz, 'Shame, Guilt, and Anguish', on the issue of the risk involved in telling one's trauma story and the risk in listening to the story.
[75] Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, p. 62. Emphasis in original.
[76] Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 39.
[77] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, p. xv.
[78] Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*, p. 118.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510001130 Published online by Cambridge University Press

too quickly over the ways in which past and present trauma heighten insecurity in the wake of violent shocks and in situations of ongoing violence. The response most often embraced by global elites and the international community in the wake of traumatic events is the traditional response of securing the state. This is politically expedient in the short term and helps to restore some semblance of stability in the immediate aftermath of violence. However, it is a short-sighted response that shuts down questioning of accepted social arrangements that may have facilitated the violence. Human security approaches shift attention from states to individuals, in recognition of the fact that states themselves can engender insecurity and that the insecurity of human beings threatens global security. But even human security approaches fail to deal with the traumatic losses engendered by political violence, prioritising rational and forward-looking solutions such as respect for human rights and the promotion of liberal democracy.

In this article, I have examined responses to trauma in the wake of collective violence, and argued that elites and societies take refuge in maladaptive meaning-making narratives to make sense of their pain. These narratives – the heroic soldier, good and evil, and redemptive violence – allow those whose worlds are disrupted to find comfort in simple formulas, formulas that do not require *work* or challenge deeply held presuppositions about the world. They secure the state, preventing questioning of those policies or structures that may have facilitated the suffering and encouraging the adoption of strategies such as scape-goating and revenge-seeking that distance the state and its citizens from their own implicatedness in the violence. In psychoanalytic terminology, such responses to trauma fall under the rubric of acting out. More difficult, but less damaging, are responses that fall under the rubric of working through. Failing to work through trauma leads to political consequences; those who suffer can go on to inflict suffering if wounds are allowed (or, indeed, encouraged) to fester, prolonging and compounding insecurity.

The process of working through trauma is part of and implies a more radical politics. It embraces a politics of mourning that refuses to gloss over past and present pain, but that sits with suffering and allows it to challenge our deeply held assumptions about social and political arrangements. Working through is a multifaceted and demanding process: it involves expressing grief in the aftermath of violence, telling the story of what took place, reflecting on the conditions that allowed the suffering to take place, and engaging in political risk. These processes allow traumatised individuals and communities to do several things: to work towards a less fractured existence, integrating those aspects of themselves that were shattered in the wake of trauma; to work towards a better understanding of what took place and why, and to communicate this with others; to engage in a process of soul-searching that questions accepted practices and structures that are implicated in violence; and to take the risk of acting politically to revise those practices and structures.

Working through is not an easy path. It involves slow steps, painful questioning, and frequent failure. But the alternative is an alternative of easy answers and glib responses that does nothing to address the underlying structures that perpetuate violence and suffering. It takes courage to work through trauma, to take the difficult path of mourning and political risk. It is not a popular path; it is disturbing and unsettling. It must be walked by courageous groups and

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510001130 Published online by Cambridge University Press

individuals who are willing to go against settled norms and to advocate a different way of thinking and being. It requires reflection on the societal and historical antecedents of suffering, but knows that these insights will rarely be welcomed by those in power. It challenges the structures that perpetuate inequality and exclusion, but realises that any progress will be fragile and reversible. It knows that the deep brokenness that attends modern life can never be fully mended, but clings to the promise of a measure of healing, despite this.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510001130 Published online by Cambridge University Press