The Puzzle of Extra-Lethal Violence

Lee Ann Fujii

This article proposes the concept "extra-lethal violence" to focus analytic attention on the acts of physical, face-to-face violence that transgress shared norms about the proper treatment of persons and bodies. Examples of extra-lethal violence include forcing victims to dance and sing before killing them, souvenir-taking and mutilation. The main puzzle of extra-lethal violence is why it occurs at all given the time and effort it takes to enact such brutalities and the potential repercussions perpetrators risk by doing so. Current approaches cannot account for this puzzle because extra-lethal violence seems to follow a different logic from strategic calculation. To investigate one alternative logic—the logic of display—the article proposes a performative analytic framework. A performative lens focuses attention on the process by which actors stage violence for graphic effect. It highlights the range of roles, participants, and activities that contribute to the production process as a whole. To demonstrate the value of a performative approach, the article applies this framework to three very different extra-lethal episodes: the massacre at My Lai during the Vietnam War, the rape and killing of two women during the Rwandan genocide, and a lynching that took place in rural Maryland. The article concludes by sketching a typology of performance processes and by considering the policy implications of this type of theorizing and knowledge.

How one dies is important here, as it is elsewhere.

—Liisa Malkki, *Purity and Exile*

In the photo, a man holds a decapitated head by the ears. The head faces the camera, its features clear and sharp—eyes half-closed, beard half-formed, cornrows fat and loose. The caption refers to the exploits of Chucky Taylor, the American-born son of former Liberian president Charles Taylor. Chucky Taylor commanded his father's notorious Anti-Terrorist Unit (ATU). "For five years," the caption reads, "the ATU waged a campaign of terror, often beheading victims and executing them in plain view."[1]

If Chucky Taylor's favored practice was decapitation "in plain view," in a different time and place, some of Chucky's fellow Americans preferred immolation to beheading, piecemeal mutilation to quick execution. Burning victims alive under slow fire was a technique used in lynchings. By the early twentieth century, lynchings were taking place in nearly every region of the United States.

What explains these very brutal and public forms of violence? And what kind of violence do these acts represent? In everyday parlance, burnings and beheadings constitute atrocities. The term "atrocities," however, is too broad to be of analytic use, for the term can cover nearly every type of violent act, from individual abuse to mass slaughter. I propose the term "extra-lethal violence" to refer to face-to-face acts of violence that transgress shared norms about the proper treatment of persons and bodies.

The central puzzle of extra-lethal violence is why it occurs at all. If the point is to kill the persons at hand, why take the extra time and effort to make victims sing and dance before killing them or pose their dead bodies after killing them? If the goal is to terrorize or subdue, why terrorize through sexual torture or burning victims alive? Why risk further consequences in the form of prosecution, imprisonment, or public disapproval by using extra-lethal violence when there are alternative terrorizing acts—sniper attacks, reprisal killings, mass shootings, disappearances[2]—that do not transgress shared norms so brazenly?[3]

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Studies of political violence have become increasingly sophisticated and nuanced.[4] Recent work in political science has expanded our notion of what constitutes political violence and demonstrated the value of disaggregating actors, groups, intentions, and the logic of violence itself. We now know that violence not only varies over time and place, but also shifts and even "shape-shifts" over time and place.[5] We also know that during large-scale organized violence, such as civil war, other logics besides strategic calculation operate with equally deadly effect.[6]

Yet, despite these important strides, most work in the field cannot fully account for the puzzle of extra-lethal violence. The reason may be the rationalist assumptions that undergird much of the literature, more specifically, the assumption that violence has uniform effects, that each incident of homicide is equivalent to the next,[7] and that severity is simply a matter of how many are killed and not *how* people are killed.[8] These assumptions leave little room for violence that appears to be almost a-political or largely gratuitous—that is, acts that fit the concept "extra-lethal." The goal of this article is to investigate extra-lethal violence and the logics that drive these episodes.

To probe this logic, I use a performative analytic framework. Unlike rationalist understandings, a performative approach does not focus on the interests of leaders and the factors that constrain or enable their actions,[9] but on the ways in which actors stage violence for graphic effect. To demonstrate the value of this framework, I apply a performative lens to three episodes of extra-lethal violence. One is well-known and two lesser-known, but together, they yield important insight into how extra-lethal violence unfolds in different contexts. The first is the massacre of civilians at My Lai during the Vietnam War in 1968. The second is the rape and murder of two women during the Rwandan genocide in 1994. The third is a lynching that took place in 1933 in the Maryland Eastern Shore. Each illustrates a different type of performance process. I liken My Lai to carnival, the Rwandan episode to a one-man show, and the Maryland lynching to spectacle.

Because these examples are exploratory, I draw from a wide range of available data, including interviews, field notes, primary documents, journalistic accounts, memoirs, and relevant secondary literatures. The aim is to generate theories and refine concepts, not to test hypotheses. I conclude by sketching a typology of performance processes and discussing the policy implications of studying a form of violence that is pervasive, but little understood.

Examining Extra-Lethal Violence

Scholars have long recognized that certain forms of violence stand out among others. Descriptions of violence as "excessive," "unlimited,"[10] "gratuitous," "barbaric," "baroque,"[11] "exaggerated,"[12] and "savage"[13] all evoke the notion that certain acts of violence go beyond the pale—beyond what is acceptable even in settings of sanctioned violence, such as war. At the same time, scholars have long recognized the communicative power that inheres in particularly gruesome acts, such as leaving heads on doorsteps[14] or cutting off people's arms and hands,[15] but they have yet to *conceptualize* what these acts are and from where they derive their power to shock and awe.

Definition

To bring conceptual clarity to such acts, I propose the term "extra-lethal violence." I define extra-lethal violence as physical acts committed face-to-face that transgress shared norms and beliefs about appropriate treatment of the living as well as the dead. The term is contextually rooted and intersubjective. Which practices fit the concept depend on shared understandings of what are, and are not, excessive ways to kill or subdue. The concept is thus elastic, not rigid. People might view the same act as transgressive in one context, but less so in another. At one time in history, for example, beheading a person in public would have been an unremarkable method of execution;[16] in modern times, it constitutes a highly dramatic form.

Because transgression can be social as well as physical in nature, extra-lethal violence includes acts that are physically injurious as well as non-injurious, lethal as well as non-lethal. An example of a physically non-injurious act is a father forced to watch the rape of his daughter. An example of a physically injurious but non-lethal act is the RUF's (Revolutionary United Front) practice of cutting off the arms and hands of villagers during the civil war in Sierra Leone.[17]

Defined as face-to-face physical violence, the term excludes instances of bodily disfigurement that are the unintended by-products of technology. Autopsies, for example, disfigure the body but their purpose is not to transgress (even if the practice does violate the beliefs of certain cultures).[18] Similarly, cluster bombs, atomic weapons, and landmines are designed to kill and disable, but not to transgress norms against mutilation of live and dead bodies. Disfigurement occurs as a side effect when actors deploy this machinery to achieve larger military or political ends.

Excluding certain technologically-enhanced forms of destruction does not imply that some forms of violence are more reprehensible than others. It is only to note that some forms of physical violence offend our moral sensibilities more than others. The term extra-lethal violence also does not assume a setting of war, the way terms like "civilian" or "war crimes" do, leaving open the possibility that extra-lethal violence can occur during peacetime. The term is also agnostic about the nature of the violence, whether the violence is instrumental (used to achieve some greater end), expressive (communicating some message or meaning), pre-meditated, or spontaneous. These are empirical questions as a given episode may feature some or all of these dimensions.

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Variation

Extra-lethal violence is a prominent feature in different types of organized violence, from wars to riots. Like wartime sexual violence, it comes in different varieties, involves different perpetrator formations, utilizes different targeting criteria, occurs in both closed and open spaces, and varies in frequency, mood, and duration.[19]

One of the most notorious episodes from World War II was the Rape of Nanking. In December 1937, Japanese Imperial forces descended on the besieged city of Nanjing and proceeded to kill, rape, and rampage for six to seven weeks. The soldiers targeted Chinese and left the few Europeans and Americans who had stayed in the city (after all other foreigners had evacuated) mostly untouched.[20] The soldiers also did not turn on their own officers or fellow soldiers. This pattern of targeting suggests that the violence was controlled and had clear limits.[21]

While the Rape of Nanking may have marked the Japanese army as particularly vicious, it did not typify patterns of conquest by the Japanese. There are few, if any reports, about similar levels of extra-lethal violence when Japanese forces invaded Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, or the Philippines.[22]

In Malaya, Japanese forces did engage in extra-lethal violence during a "clean-up" campaign called *sook ching,* which targeted Chinese men. The most notorious operation took place at the village of E-Lang-Lang. One survivor recalls that soldiers engaged in violence reminiscent of Nanjing, such as killing babies by throwing them up in the air and "catching" them on the ends of their swords and bayonets. The magnitude of extra-lethal violence, however, did not match that of Nanjing.[23]

American soldiers also partook of extra-lethal violence during World War II. One regular practice was stripping body parts for souvenirs. American soldiers collected body parts throughout all the major wars of the twentieth century,[24] but during World War II, the practice was limited to the Pacific theatre.[25] In the European theatre, there were far fewer reports of mistreatment of enemy dead.[26] The practice was also restricted to the American side. Despite instances of "atrocious mutilation of American dead," Japanese soldiers did not strip body parts as trophies.[27]

Though widespread in the Pacific during World War II, the practice of taking body parts as souvenirs is nearly absent in other wars. Wars in Rwanda, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) also featured high levels of killing and numerous instances of extra-lethal violence, yet there are few reports of any armed groups collecting body parts as souvenirs. The absence of this particular practice in these wars suggests that extra-lethal violence not only varies by theatre and armed unit within the same war, but also in frequency across wars.

Extra-lethal violence also occurs during episodes of genocide and mass killing, though levels of extra-lethal violence do not seem to co-vary with levels of lethality. As Donald Horowitz argues, the ratio of atrocity to overall deaths is lower in "more methodical genocides."[28] The case of the Rwandan genocide supports Horowitz's claim. While perpetrators managed to kill at least 500,000 people in less than 100 days, the levels of extra-lethal violence seem to be low by comparison (as a ratio of overall deaths). To be sure, many incidents of extra-lethal violence did occur,[29] but in the majority of cases, *génocidaires* seemed to have killed in fairly straightforward manner. During the Cambodian genocide, by contrast, the killing of suspected "political enemies" at the notorious S-21 prison began with elaborate torture sessions designed to extract lengthy written "confessions." Only after confessions were obtained did the guards kill the prisoners.[30] Killings of civilians in the countryside also featured extra-lethal violence at times, including mutilation and at least one instance of cannibalism.[31]

Patterns of mass killing during the Holocaust were mixed. After Hitler and Stalin signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in August 1939, German soldiers encountered religiously observant Jews for the first time as they entered Poland. These encounters featured public humiliations, such as the cutting off of Jewish men's sidecurls.[32] Once the Final Solution got underway, however, the emphasis seems to have been on efficiency. In the East, most Jews died in mass shooting operations, while in the West, most were gassed.[33]

The only mass killing of Jews that seemed to feature high levels of extra-lethal was in Romania. Hannah Arendt reports that German SS were so taken aback by the brutality Romanians exhibited toward Jews that they "often intervened to save Jews from sheer butchery, so that the killing could be done in what, according to them, was a civilized way."[34]

The main sites of extra-lethal violence outside Romania seem to have been ghettos and prison camps. Both men and women were subject to an array of acts. In the Minsk, Belarus ghetto, drunken police (both German and local) mutilated women's bodies, posed live and dead victims in obscene positions,[35] and forced women to strip naked and dance.[36] These broad patterns from the Holocaust are consistent with those from the Rwandan genocide: where efficiency was the priority, lethality dominated, but some actors still found opportunities to put on extra-lethal shows.

Patterns during the Bosnian War reveal yet another type of variation. The killing of some 7,000 Muslim men near Srebrenica occurred in two waves. The first was characterized by "triumphant, bullying, and humiliating killings" near the Dutch peacekeepers' headquarters in Potočari, the same peacekeepers who had just handed over the refugees to Ratko Mladić, the Bosnian Serb commander. The second wave involved "methodical mass killings at mass collection points."[37] This episode suggests that extra-lethal violence may vary with mood, not just opportunity.

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Extra-lethal violence also occurs during riots and lynchings, two forms of organized violence that are associated with peacetime.

According to Horowitz, mutilation is "pervasive" in ethnic riots,[38] though targeting can be highly selective with regard to gender and ethnicity.[39] Targeting in race riots in the US, by contrast, can be highly indiscriminate. White rioters in East St. Louis, for example, did not discriminate when they began attacking black people on 2 July 1917. They went after men, women, and children, and even clubbed and stoned corpses.[40]

Lynchings can also feature extra-lethal violence, though the type and magnitude varies by race of victim and perpetrator. White mobs rarely tortured white lynching victims before killing them[41] (though cases of post-mortem mutilation of white victims did occur[42]). In the few cases of black-on-black lynchings, the mobs also refrained from extra-lethal acts, viewing execution as "punishment enough."[43] In cases of white-on-black mob executions, the extent of extra-lethal violence varied. Though extensive in some cases, it was minimal in others. Fitzhugh Brundage, for example, estimates that only one in three black lynching victims in Georgia (accused of sexually assaulting a white woman) were subject to castration; in Virginia, the number was one in ten.[44]

Explaining Extra-Lethal Violence

What explains the varying intensity, form, and formations of extra-lethal violence across time and place? Strategic approaches have shown that even the most "wanton and senseless" violence can be rational, but much of this work leaves aside the question of why certain acts are so terrorizing.[45] Ethnographic approaches address this question not by ignoring strategic logics, but by embedding them in the local knowledge and cultural forms that invest violence with meaning.[46] Sociological approaches also view violence as a strategic, meaning-making practice, but focus more on the social dynamics that shape perpetrators' interests and actions.[47] Performative analysis adds to this array by embedding strategic calculation, meaning-making, and social dynamics within a particular kind of social process—the process of putting violence on display for gruesome effect.

Why Performative Analysis?

The use of concepts relating to performance and dramaturgy is not new to political science. Murray Edelman and Richard Merelman were incorporating such ideas in work from the 1960s. These scholars viewed politics as contests over meaning, enacted through public performances and self-presentation.[48] While this early interpretive scholarship failed to make inroads in the discipline,[49] other scholars incorporated concepts from theatre, anthropology, linguistics, and performance studies in a variety of ways to explore relations of dominance,[50] contentious politics,[51] nationhood and identity,[52] truth commissions,[53] terrorism,[54] war,[55] and power.[56] There is no common thread linking these works other than a shared intuition about how words and deeds—said and done in particular ways in front of specific audiences—construct reality, turning an assembly of people into a trial or wedding, a street corner into a crime scene or landmark, and a moment in time into a day-long celebration (4th of July) or a minute of silence (9/11).

The analytic framework that I propose is therefore one possibility among many. It draws from Peter Burke's notion of "occasions." For Burke, "the basic point is that on different occasions (moments, locales) or in different situations (in the presence of different people) the same person behaves in different ways."[57] Special occasions, for example, warrant special ways of doing, speaking, and behaving. The occasion of a military funeral, for example, calls for bugle playing, wearing black, donning dress uniform, saluting, and eulogizing. Many of these activities also take place outside military funerals, but during a military funeral, they unfold in a specific way. This specificity marks the moment as special and constitutes those taking part as certain kinds of people—patriots, citizens, and grieving family members.

When applied to violence, performative analysis reveals how actors' words and deeds also mark a moment as special, and how, in turn, special occasions call for people to talk and act in ways they may never have imagined until the occasion presented itself.

What is a performance? Richard Bauman defines performance as "an aesthetically marked and heightened mode of communication, framed in a special way and put on display for an audience."[58] Bauman emphasizes three elements relevant to analyzing extra-lethal violence. First, a performance is "aesthetically marked and heightened." There is a certain "look and feel" to the show and an emotional tension and excitement about what is to come. Second, a performance pre-supposes an audience whose presence is critical to turning an occasion into a happening. Third, a performance involves the intentional display (or staging) of meaningful actions; performance makers do not communicate through non-sense, but through words and deeds that have meaning for both senders and receivers.

Bauman also points out the unique character of performances—the fact that "no two performances are ever exactly the same."[59] Because performances are unique and do not happen all the time, there may be a special urgency to attend. When organizers announced a lynching that was going to take place, for example, hundreds, even thousands, strayed from their normal routines and made special arrangements to attend.[60]

The performative approach I propose is focused on process. Rather than viewing performances as discrete events as scholars of contentious politics tend to do,[61] this

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framework focuses on the *process* of putting on a show. Examining this process involves disaggregating the violence into its specific modalities to understand how a range of acts and actors contributes to the production as a whole. From a rationalist standpoint, much of this activity is tangential to the violence, such as the screams of spectators or the mock confessions perpetrators force victims to make before killing them. From a performative perspective, these actions are crucial to turning an ordinary moment into an unforgettable show.

The process of putting on a show is dynamic and contingent. It offers actors multiple opportunities to inhabit new roles. These roles may confer instant status, power, or visibility. As Kirk Fuoss writes, for example: "Manhunts and lynchings make it possible for obscure and irresponsible people to play the roles of arresting officers, grand jurors, trial jurors, judges, and executioners." Once cast, people change their comportment to fit the role.[62] Eichmann, for example, became a completely "new" man when he was promoted to an executive position in Austria. As one German Jewish leader who knew Eichmann well recalled, "I did not know whether I was meeting the same man. So terrible was the change."[63]

The production process also involves staging the action for maximum effect. Staging is about intentional display; the goal is to make people look and take notice. A clear example of staging is a recently circulated video showing four US Marines urinating on several dead bodies (allegedly those of slain Taliban fighters).[64] Though the camerawork is unsteady, it is clear that the men positioned themselves so that the camera could capture the whole scene—not only the men urinating, but also "what" they were urinating *on*. In other words, the men staged the scene for the camera.

The idea of drawing attention assumes that there is an audience whom performance-makers seek to impress. One audience consists of the spectators who are present on the scene. From a performative standpoint, spectators are not passive onlookers, but rather active participants who shape the performance through their interactions with actors and one another. The line between spectator and actor can be quite fluid, such that in a given moment, spectators can become actors playing specific roles and actors spectators. In gang-rape, for example, those gawking while others take their "turn" help to turn a series of individual rapes into a raucous show.[65]

Spectators are not the only audience that matters, however. Performance-makers may also wish to communicate with more distant audiences as well. The leaders of the RUF, for example, used extra-lethal violence to communicate their version of what the war was about not only to elites in Freetown but also the international community at large.[66]

A performative approach does not assume that any element of the process—roles, spectators, audience, and staging—is static and stable. "Live" performances, after all, are filled with unpredictability.[67] Trial witnesses stray from rehearsed testimony; politicians deviate from scripts; stage actors drop lines. This unpredictability creates tension and excitement that heightens the moment. Heightened moments amplify people's experience of the show. It increases the titillation, exhilaration, and excitement people feel, whether they are committing the violence themselves or watching others do so.[68]

In the following section, I apply the proposed framework to three different episodes of extra-lethal violence: the massacre of civilians at My Lai during the Vietnam War; the rape and killing of two women during the Rwandan genocide; and a lynching that occurred in rural Maryland. Each example illustrates a different kind of performance process. I liken My Lai to carnival, Rwanda to a one-man show, and the lynching to spectacle. In each analysis, the focus is on the range of participants and activities that contribute to the production of the show.

Massacre at My Lai

There is no more strategic setting than war, where violence (or the threat of violence) becomes the principal means for achieving larger aims. The puzzle of war is therefore not why violence occurs, but rather why violence occurs that seems unhinged from any larger goal.

The massacre of civilians at "My Lai" was one of the most infamous episodes of the Vietnam War. The notoriety of the incident was arguably less about the numbers killed—some 400–500 people[69] in a war that killed two million—and more about the way that Charlie Company slaughtered the people of Son My.[70] Journalistic accounts based on interviews with soldiers from Charlie Company, the findings of the Peers Commission, a blue ribbon panel charged with investigating the incident, and scholarly research based on the Army's own archives and 20,000 pieces of documentation that the Peers Commission generated provide consistent accounts of what happened on 16 March 1968.

At approximately 7:30 that morning, three companies from Task Force Barker took off from LZ Dottie for a nearby sub-hamlet marked My Lai 4 on military maps.[71] The company's captain, Ernest Medina, had briefed the men the night before about the mission. Medina told his men they would finally have the chance to engage the crack Viet Cong (VC) battalion—the 48th Local Force. According to Army intelligence, the 48th was regrouping at My Lai after suffering heavy losses during the Tet offensive. Striking the battalion while it was down could inflict a final blow.[72] Medina primed his men for heavy fighting.[73]

The men differed in their interpretations of Medina's instructions. Some believed Medina had given them license to shoot and kill everything and everyone in sight. Others recalled his instructions were to destroy the village but not the villagers.[74] However they interpreted Medina's

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instructions, many spent an uneasy night, some stayed up late talking, drinking, and getting high.[75]

When the men of Charlie Company landed in the thick foliage just outside My Lai, they noticed they were receiving no enemy fire.[76] Just before landing, the area had been pounded with artillery—the most "severe" pounding one soldier had ever heard.[77] The men nevertheless approached the village firing, the closer they came, the more wildly they let loose.[78]

Once inside the village, the men broke off into squads of five to eight men.[79] Some of the men began searching huts, torching them with zippo lighters, then shooting people as they ran out.[80] Other soldiers started to gather people in a central location. At first, there was confusion over what to do with the assembled civilians. Lt. Calley approached his men and said, "You know what to do with them, don't you?" Paul Meadlo assumed that Calley meant for the men to watch over the group, but Calley returned a few minutes later and asked why the men had not yet killed the villagers. Calley then stepped back and opened fire. The other men joined in.[81] This scene was repeated throughout the morning. The largest mass execution involved one hundred and seventy people along a drainage ditch on the eastern end of the village.

Other soldiers went searching for young women to rape. They roamed individually or in pairs and when they found a woman, they would take her into a hut, then come out a few minutes later buttoning their pants.[82] Soldiers also raped children and very young girls.[83] Some engaged in gang-rape; still others in sexual torture. In every instance, the men killed their victims after raping them.[84]

In addition to rape, some men began to kill by slitting throats and cutting off heads. Some slaughtered animals with similar levels of cruelty and viciousness.[85] Others took souvenirs—ears, heads, fingers, and scalps. Others left souvenirs of their own, a "C" carved on dead bodies or an ace of spades stuffed in victims' mouths.[86]

The violence was controlled and steady. Some soldiers later describe it as "business-like."[87] The business-like manner did not preclude sounds of enjoyment and even "hysterical laughter."[88] Some of the men turned killing into sport, kneeling and aiming at their targets like marksmen at shooting practice.[89] Others held contests to see who could kill the most people.[90]

By 10:30am, Charlie Company had ceased fire.[91] The men then broke for lunch. A couple of soldiers sat down near the irrigation ditch where a pile of bodies lay. One of the soldiers went over to finish off those still moaning, then returned to continue his lunch.[92] At the command center, the scene was practically bucolic. One soldier brought over two young children he had found. The other men began giving the children piggy-back rides and sweets.[93]

What explains the high levels of extra-lethal violence unleashed that morning and its abrupt end three hours later?

A strategic explanation might tell us why killing the villagers was necessary. The military viewed the entire region as a hotbed of VC and VC sympathizers. In such cases, it is sometimes necessary to drain the civilian-sea to expose the insurgent-fish.[94] But why would draining the sea require killing babies, scalping heads, and torturing women before killing them?

One possible answer is that commanders tacitly sanctioned such violence. The main concern of officers was "to encourage aggression and reward violent actions."[95] The night before the operation, the company's captain "primed" the men for a hard fight. After the operation, the unit was uniformly praised for a job well done. General Westmoreland even sent his congratulations.[96] Much of the encouragement from the top, however, was for racking up high body counts, not engaging in extra-lethal violence. Thus, an incentives-based argument would predict that the men would kill more, not less, efficiently.

Another possible explanation is that many of the men were opportunistic recruits[97] or thugs,[98] for whom the point of war *was* to abuse civilians. Nothing in the company's past, however, supports this argument. The company had an outstanding record. At training camp, it stood out as the best in its battalion and was assigned to Task Force Barker because of its excellent reputation.[99]

Randall Collins offers a very different explanation. For Collins, My Lai was a classic case of "forward panic," or the explosion of prolonged and pent up tension after the source of fear or threat has receded.[100] Many patterns do indeed fit Collins's theory: men running from bunker to bunker and hootch to hootch throwing grenades, spraying automatic fire, and laughing hysterically.[101] Yet, others do not. Bernd Greiner estimates that "about half of C Company belonged to the group of culprits and the other half comprised onlookers."[102] But the so-called onlookers were not passive witnesses. Among this group were men who actively evaded or refused orders to kill. The group also included men like Meadlo, who followed orders while sobbing, and men like Torrez who, in the midst of firing, stopped and threw down his weapon in disgust.[103] Shirking, sobbing, and walking away in disgust are hardly evidence of a forward panic.

Another way to explain what occurred at My Lai is to look at the violence in its variety rather than as a whole (like forward panic). Viewed performatively, My Lai was not one scene of violence, but many. The scenes varied in duration, outcome, number of men involved, mood, and type of activity. The process began as soon as the men landed and began firing. It continued as they approached the village and began firing even more wildly. The process continued as the men broke into small groups and began to play out smaller, individual scenes. The cumulative effect of the initial firing and subsequent scenes was to create an atmosphere of carnival—a time and place marked off from everyday life in which roles and rules become inverted.

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The world of carnival is a world turned upside down, where right is wrong and wrong is right; where those with guns are victims and those without are threats; where babies are the enemy and murderers are your friends; where orders are ignored and fighting is for "fun." As Alessandro Falassi explains, "At festival times, people do something they normally do not; they abstain from something they normally do; they carry to the extreme behaviors that are usually regulated by measure; they invert patterns of daily social life."[104]

A world of carnival invited the men to do things they would not normally do and to do "normal" things in extreme ways. It offered plentiful opportunities to join in. Roles were numerous and scenes were fluid. Players and spectators could move in and out of different scenes at will. The line between spectator and star was thus moveable and elastic.

How men played out this inverted world varied. For some, it meant killing, raping, and torturing with more abandon than usual. Soldiers had raped women before but this time, they killed and mutilated their victims after raping them. For others it meant trying out new behaviors. Fred Widmer shot a small child in the neck at point-blank range just to see what it felt like to kill a human being.[105] Others turned violence into a game, holding contests or just showing off.[106] As one soldier told a reporter, "Some of the guys seemed to be having a lot of fun. They were wisecracking and yelling, 'Chalk that one up for me.'"[107]

Despite the permissive atmosphere, there were lines that some soldiers would not cross. Some felt the mass executions went "too far."[108] More than once, soldiers ignored Calley's orders to shoot into a group of villagers. Calley picked on Meadlo because he was the weakest of the group but Meadlo did not take any pleasure in shooting large groups of unarmed civilians. Some like Grzesik, Dursi, Carter, Maples, and Stanley refused to obey Calley's orders,[109] while others like Conti, a notorious rapist, simply left the scene.[110]

In an atmosphere of carnival, Calley was the outlier. He tried to run the show and steer it back to the mission as he saw it (killing the enemy) and away from what the men were making it out to be—a carnival. As Calley explained when he came across one of his men forcing a woman to perform oral sex, "Why was I being so saintly about it? Because: if a GI is getting a blow job, he isn't doing his job. He isn't destroying Communism . . . "[111] In a world of carnival, Calley was a poor reveler and given the occasion, his behavior was more laughable than threatening.

The only person who threatened to undo the atmosphere entirely—to bring the show to a halt—was not Calley, but helicopter pilot, Hugh Thompson. Thompson was flying his plexiglass "bubble ship"[112] at low altitudes to draw enemy fire, but since there was no enemy fire, Thompson used his aerial position to mark spots where he saw wounded civilians in need of help. It was only when he doubled back to some of the spots he had marked that he realized something was terribly wrong.[113]

Thompson, aloft in his helicopter, was never part of the carnival on the ground, and thus never became caught up in the world of inversion and reversal. Once he realized there was no enemy, he focused on rescuing those in need. At one point, he landed his chopper near a group of huddled villagers to rescue them from approaching soldiers. As he ran toward the villagers, he instructed his door gunners to aim their weapons at the approaching Americans and shoot them if they tried to prevent him from saving the group.[114] As one of the gunners told his wife later: "We had to do this [the rescue] while *we* held guns on our own troops—other Americans."[115]

For whom were the men performing? They were performing for multiple audiences. One was the enemy—both the unseen enemy, which had recently killed and maimed so many of their friends, and the "immediate" enemy, all those My Lai denizens cast in the role of enemy. For some, the opportunity to demonstrate to the enemy not just the men's lethal, but also their *extra*-lethal, power was irresistible. Extra-lethal violence gave the men total control over an elusive foe and a forbidding terrain, even for a brief moment. As Greiner puts it, "It was the proof that they could create an effect."[116] Every act of extra-lethal violence broadcast their new-found power in the most graphic terms possible. It left a "trace of their own power" that was a thousand times more emphatic than disciplined fighting could ever do.[117]

Another audience was the military brass—those who had put the men in a position to kill unarmed civilians or risk court-martial. Two of the commanders—Lt. Col. Frank Barker, the Task Force commander, and Col. Oren Henderson, the Brigade commander—watched the scene from reserved air space.[118] The men on the ground could have had no doubt that their commanders were monitoring their actions from on high. As Richard Hammer describes:

> This chaotic dance of death was not enacted before an empty auditorium. There were spectators, an audience viewing the drama like ancient Romans at the martyrdom of the Christians. These spectators had a panoramic view.[119]

Army commanders, from Westmoreland down, were obsessed with generating high body counts, the only sure metric in a war of attrition. Yet, the reality on the ground made high body counts of actual VC a chimera.[120] The men suffered long stretches of boredom punctuated by moments of harrowing terror where the company could not see—let alone engage—the enemy. The violence of My Lai was a graphic rebuke of the brass's singular focus on high body counts and its willingness to turn a blind eye toward how the men achieved such absurd ends.[121] The men finally gave their commanders what they wanted—and much more.

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The soldiers were also performing for one another. They were performing rage and vengeance, power and powerlessness, invincibility and vulnerability—all at the same time. The company had lost nearly fifty of its men (a third of the company) by 18 March 1968[122] without ever once engaging the enemy in actual combat—the kind of combat they were trained to do and the kind that was sure to bring them honor and pride. Instead the men kept watching their closest friends die in terrible agony inflicted by an enemy they could never find. Sunday, February 25, was the worst day of all when the company became caught in a minefield and lost thirty-two men.[123]

Extra-lethal violence obliterated the line between "justified" and "unjustified" violence and in so doing, obliterated previous doubts about what was right and wrong, what the men were fighting for, why they were there, and who the real enemy was. Performing extra-lethal violence freed the men from themselves and righted the terrible imbalance between their orders and the unforgiving reality on the ground.

When the cease-fire order came, the carnival ended and the men reverted back to normal. They played with children instead of blowing their heads off and allowed those villagers who had managed to hide to come out and bury the dead. In the months following My Lai, the men would go on many more search and destroy missions; they would abuse many more Vietnamese civilians, but never again on the same scale or with the same intensity as that morning in March at a place they called My Lai.[124]

Rape and Desecration in Rwanda

Genocide, like war, is a means to achieve larger ends, but unlike war, the objective is to exterminate the enemy, not defeat it. Leaders usually pursue a policy of genocide after exhausting all other options and overcoming all sources of restraint.[125] The puzzle is not why leaders choose this policy, but why some *génocidaires* enact forms of violence which seem to stray from the task of extermination.

In Rwanda in the early 1990s, extremists in President Habyarimana's regime feared losing their monopoly on power. To derail efforts toward power-sharing, the extremists identified all Tutsi and anyone in the opposition as enemies to be exterminated. Their opportunity came on the evening of 6 April 1994, when unknown assailants shot down the plane carrying the president, killing everyone aboard. The assassination triggered massacres in the capital.[126] In the rest of the country, the genocide proceeded unevenly, with violence starting at different times in different regions.[127]

In the central *préfecture* of Gitarama, most leaders did not support the genocide or the extremists who took over the government after the assassination of the president. The *préfet* was a moderate as were most of the *bourgmestres* under him.[128] Together, these officials worked tirelessly to keep the violence at bay, even in the face of increasing pressure from the genocidal regime.[129] At a meeting on 18 April 1994, regime leaders made it clear that killing Tutsi was "the order of the day"[130] and that whosoever refused this order would become targets themselves.

Some bourgmestres, like Jean Paul Akayesu, quickly succumbed to the pressure; others resisted, but a few needed no prodding. Like many bourgmestres across the country, Joseph[131] was an ardent extremist from the beginning.[132] Even before the genocide, his dislike of Tutsi was clear to everyone and yet, as was common throughout the country, Joseph still had Tutsi friends with whom he socialized on a regular basis.

These friendships, however, did not stop Joseph from stepping up activities in preparation for violence. On the contrary, these prior relationships became the basis for luring local Tutsi to his home under the guise of protecting them; instead of protecting them, however, Joseph had them taken away and killed.[133] Joseph also held meetings late at night where he issued orders to those working under him. Once the violence began, he directed the killings himself, driving around in his government-issued vehicle to make sure that the genocide was going according to plan.[134]

Joseph also targeted a few victims for extra-lethal violence. In one incident, he lured two young Tutsi women to his house under the pretext of protecting them, then orchestrated their daily abuse. Each day, men came to the house to rape the women. Joseph, too, raped them. After a few days, he had the women killed and their battered bodies displayed nude and splayed in the town center "to show how Tutsi girls are 'made,'" one witness recounted.[135]

What explains the elaborate torture of these two women during a campaign of violence whose sole objective was to exterminate Tutsi?

One possible explanation is that the episode was meant to deter the local community from defecting to the RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front), the rebel group that was fighting for control of the country. This seems unlikely, however. To cross behind RPF lines would have been quite difficult and many ordinary Rwandans had little idea who or what the RPF was.[136] There was also little need to terrorize a community already unsettled by war, a nearby refugee camp filled with Burundian refugees who had a reputation for brutality,[137] and a bourgmestre known to label anyone who threatened him as a traitor, Tutsi and Hutu alike.[138]

Another possibility is that the violence was a form of punishment aimed at these two particular women or at Tutsi women as a whole.[139] In the context of genocide, however, it is unclear why simply killing the women was not punishment enough.

Yet another possibility is that Joseph was simply following orders from above. But orders to kill all Tutsi do not explain the orchestration of daily rapes and the subsequent display of their dead bodies.

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Viewed performatively, this incident was not about following orders, punishing wrong-doers, or deterring defection. It was about amplifying Joseph's *personal* power through a one-man show of extra-lethal force. As bourgmestre, Joseph already occupied a position of high social standing in his commune.[140] By supporting the genocide, he positioned himself to rise even higher in the new hierarchy. Under the new regime, killing became the sole criteria for advancement, enabling the most ambitious, like Joseph, to leapfrog over superiors.[141]

The genocide did not simply make for quick advancement, however. It also enabled supporters like Joseph to take on new roles, replete with costumes and props. Residents recalled that Joseph sported military garb and carried a gun, as if he had become a soldier fighting a war, rather than a civil servant enforcing policy.[142] Joseph was not unique in his sartorial display. Other prominent génocidaires also dressed the part. After deciding to support the genocide, Jean Paul Akayesu also began sporting military fatigues[143] as did Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, former Minister of Youth and Family Affairs, who incited mass rape in a neighboring province.[144]

The genocide thus provided participants with new roles that signified their newly anointed *political* standing as genocidal leaders. Extra-lethal violence, however, provided additional opportunities. It enabled Joseph to play God—dictating not only who would die, but also how they would die, and how their bodies would be treated in death.

In this display of personal power, Joseph controlled the staging and casting. By making the rapes public, he magnified the women's humiliation and degradation and by allowing different men to rape the women, he brought untold shame to the women's families.[145] By luring the women to his house, located close to the town center, Joseph forced the whole community to become spectators. He gave residents no choice but to hear—and hear about—the daily rapes taking place at his house and to see the men coming and going from his home.

Making the violence public also allowed Joseph to cast men in the show and to demonstrate his dominance over them as well. He could monitor which men came to the house and which ones did not. He could reward those eager to demonstrate their loyalty by allowing them to rape the two women and send a warning to those who stayed home.

The daily rapes, however, were not the highlight of the show. It was merely prelude to the final act—the display of the women's nude, battered, and splayed bodies for everyone to see. Joseph did not simply "leave" the women's bodies unburied (a transgressive act in itself), but rather staged their bodies in a way that would maximize visibility and visual effect. By displaying them nude and splayed in the town center, passers-by could see what should never be seen.

Even by the standards of the genocide, this display was extreme. It made a mockery of the value Rwandans place on modesty in women, especially unmarried women. It constituted a graphic rebuke of the stereotype that Tutsi women were more beautiful than other women. It played cynically to the fascination some harbored about Tutsi bodies, particularly women's bodies, as being different from other bodies.[146] Only the most powerful kind of person could have enacted such desecration—even during genocide.

That Rwandans view any ill treatment of the dead as morally wrong is clear from the stiff penalty for spoliation. The sentence is thirty years, much longer than many sentences for killing.[147] When I asked people why the penalties were so stiff, the answer was always the same: because taking items off a dead body was a sign of disrespect and dishonor. As one man explained, it is "unhuman" to take clothes off a dead body especially when such removal exposes their sexual organs.[148] By displaying the bodies so obscenely, Joseph not only dishonored the women, he forced others to dishonor them as well.

Joseph was not just playing to local residents, however. He was also playing to more distant audiences. Those who did not see the show with their own eyes would hear about the incident from those who had. These multiple retellings would extend the life of the episode[149] and broadcast Joseph's power throughout his commune and, perhaps, beyond. To political opponents and potential rivals, the display sent a graphic warning for it demonstrated Joseph's capacity to go beyond the dictates of genocide to enhance and consolidate his personal power. To higher-level authorities, Joseph could communicate not only loyalty, but also his larger ambitions. Showing his willingness to violate the most fundamental moral code Rwandans shared, he demonstrated his ability to rewrite the code to fit his personal needs.[150] Extra-lethal violence thus elevated and enhanced Joseph's status in ways that mere killing could not.

Lynching on the Eastern Shore

Lynchings of black people in twentieth century America are perhaps the most obvious example of perpetrators putting violence on display. The puzzle is not simply why lynchings occur, but also why some feature extensive extra-lethal acts.

On Monday morning, 16 October 1933, a road crew came upon Mary Denston, a 71-year old white woman, lying near a country road not far from her house. She explained to officials later that day that someone had tried to rape her.[151] George Armwood, a young black man who resided in the area, was accused of the assault. A large manhunt for Armwood ensued.

The posse included not only police officers, but also a large number of ordinary people who jumped in their cars and atop farm vehicles to join in the hunt. Police found

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Armwood hours later, hiding in the house of a white family some twenty miles away from where Denston had been found. State police arrested Armwood and drove him to the jail in Baltimore (several hours away) for safe-keeping.

The following day, the State's Attorney for Somerset County, where the alleged crime took place, asked Baltimore authorities to return Armwood to Princess Anne, the Somerset County seat. Though under no obligation to do so, Baltimore authorities acceded to the request and drove Armwood back to Princess Anne that night. They arrived in the early morning hours of Wednesday, October 18, 1933.[152]

Later that day, talk of a lynching began circulating. Rumors were so widespread that teachers in both the black and white schools dismissed their students early.[153] By late afternoon, talk of a lynching had spread as far as Annapolis, the Maryland state capital. This prompted Governor Ritchie to call the State's Attorney to ask if everything in Princess Anne was under control. The State's Attorney assured the governor that Armwood was safe and that all was calm.

By late afternoon, a few hundred people had assembled in front of the Princess Anne jail. Every now and then, a few in the crowd tried to break through the police lines but without success. As the crowd continued to grow, Robert Duer, a local circuit judge, stopped by to try to persuade people to go home and let justice takes its course. The crowd listened but stayed in place.[154]

Around 8 o'clock that evening, some men in the crowd went around the block to a lumber yard and brought back some large beams. The crowd used the beams to bust through the front door of the jail. With little resistance from the officers inside, those in the lead proceeded upstairs to the second floor Negro section. They found Armwood and dragged him down the winding, metal staircase. Shortly after emerging from the jail, a boy jumped on Armwood's back and cut off his ear. It would not be the last act of mutilation meted out on Armwood or the worst.[155]

The crowd then put a rope around Armwood's neck, tied him to a car, and dragged him through town to the home of Judge Duer. Hanging Armwood in front of the judge's house was the crowd's response to Duer's earlier request that everyone go home. A woman inside the house pleaded with the crowd to hang Armwood elsewhere; the crowd obliged and hung Armwood from a tree at a neighboring house.[156]

One eyewitness claimed that Armwood was already dead by the time they hung him.[157] It is impossible to know whether Armwood was dead at that point or merely unconscious. What does seem clear is that those who made a special trip into town that night did not come to see Armwood simply die; they came to see a show.

After hanging Armwood near Judge Duer's house, the crowd pulled him down and dragged him back to the courthouse, three blocks away. There, they doused his body with gasoline, lit it on fire, and hung it from a cable. Early the next morning, a young reporter for *The Afro-American,* a black newspaper based in Baltimore, would find Armwood's body where it was eventually dumped—in the same lumberyard that provided the battering ram used to break open the jail.[158]

Why did the lynching of Armwood feature such high levels of extra-lethal violence? Why did the crowd not simply shoot Armwood?

One possible answer is that the lynching was intended to punish Armwood for his alleged crime and to deter others from attempting similar crimes. But what need was there to lynch a man who would have been tried, convicted and executed in two weeks' time, if not sooner? A local jury would have needed less than five minutes to convict him. His execution would have followed immediately afterwards.

A better answer, perhaps, is that the lynching was intended to terrorize the black community into more compliant or docile behavior. If this were the case, it is unclear why high levels of extra-lethal violence was necessary to achieve this end. Jim Crow already regulated public space[159] and social norms dictated the scope and nature of everyday relations between black and white. Black and white children played together but attended different schools. Black and white families belonged to the same religion but went to separate churches. Black and white patrons watched the same movies but sat in different parts of the theatre. Somerset County, moreover, was not known for its embrace of new ideas. The motto of the community (still in place today) was *semper eadem*—"always the same."[160]

Viewed performatively, the lynching was not only about executing a man for having violated a criminal code and social norms. It was also about the opportunities the lynching afforded large numbers of people to see and do things they would not normally do.

First and foremost, the lynching enabled all kinds of people to take on new roles; many conferred instant status and privilege. The manhunt, for example, turned several hundred ordinary citizens into members of a posse. So determined were people to get in on the chase that one vehicle struck and killed a seven-year old girl.[161] No investigation ensued, which suggests that being part of a posse also meant being above the law.

Those who made it a point to drive to town that Wednesday night (not the usual evening for people to come to town) could be assured that they were part of the process of "dispensing justice" and avenging a gross violation of community norms that proscribed any sexual contact between white women and black men. The lynching also gave starring roles to the ring leaders and crowd pleasers, such as the men responsible for breaking open the jail and those holding the rope as Armwood hung from a tree.

Second, the lynching afforded the crowd of spectators ample opportunity to be part of the show. The presence

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of the crowd was critical to the production of violence. The sheer number of people (estimated at 1,500 to 2,000 people—enough to fill several streets in the small downtown) set the scene. It lent weight to the "proceedings" and increased excitement. The crowd's actions and verbalizations—the milling, talking, cheering, and yelling—heightened the moment further and helped turn a gathering into a show.

Third, the lynching gave people license to go beyond normal behaviors and stage the violence for dramatic effect. The goal was to keep the crowd engaged. One of the first acts was placing a rope around Armwood's neck and dragging him nearly five blocks through town. The crowd could have transported Armwood any number of ways, but chose this method.

The crowd also did not stop with hanging Armwood once, but hung him several times in two distinct places—near Judge Duer's home and in front of the courthouse—both sites chosen specifically for their symbolic meaning. The second time the crowd hung Armwood, the lynchers ratcheted up the visual effects by dousing Armwood's body with gasoline and setting it ablaze. An officer near the scene saw Armwood's body go up and down "three or four times." At first, the officer did not understand what was happening, but as he got closer, he began to make out the scene.

> Just as I got to the side of the crowd I saw them pull him up once more, and this fellow Jack Walloper was pulling on the rope, and he gave one pull with the rest [of the four men holding the rope] and they seemed to have the body in the position he wanted it.[162]

The sight of a blazing body hanging from a cable in front of the town's courthouse against the dark of night would have indeed been a sight to see.

The spectacle continued into the next day as children, both black and white, walked past Armwood's burnt, mutilated, and lifeless body on their way to school.[163] Some white children got into the excitement by yelling threats to other black children. One black woman who was in her early teens at the time, recalls white children yelling at her from the school bus: "We lynched a nigger last night and we're going to come back and get you."[164]

The process of turning Armwood's murder into a spectacle was a dynamic, innovative, and highly social affair. It generated non-stop excitement, thrill, and titillation precisely because of the extra-lethal acts perpetrated during the murder. In the Eastern Shore of the 1930s, the murder of a black man was not out of the ordinary; but murdering a black man by cutting off his body parts, skinning him alive, and setting him ablaze—that was something special indeed. It was extra-lethal violence that turned the murder into a community spectacle. It was extra-lethal violence that people came to see and it was extra-lethal violence that kept them glued to the show from beginning to end.

Theorizing Extra-Lethal Violence

What types of theorizing do these examples suggest? One possibility is a typology of performance processes. As the My Lai episode suggests, for example, carnival consists of multiple scenes of revelry and inversion occurring at the same time. Attention is dispersed and fragmented. People's mood and activities can change quickly, suddenly, and often. Opportunities to join in emerge at a rapid pace; people can follow others or experiment on their own. Other incidents that resemble carnival are the East St. Louis race riots of 1917, the Tulsa race riot of 1921,[165] the RUF's attack on Freetown in January 1999, and the Rape of Nanking.

Spectacle takes the opposite form to carnival. Whereas attention is dispersed in carnival, spectacle features a single point of focus. All the action takes place front and center. People come with the expectation of seeing and being part of something they have never been a part of before. The sheer number of people heightens the excitement. Besides specific lynching cases,[166] other possible examples of spectacle include public executions in the US, which also drew large and sometimes boisterous crowds before states began making them private affairs.[167]

A "one-man show" refers not to the idea that a single person performs all the violence him or herself, but that a single person directs and controls it. In a one-man show, the violence is a direct expression of the director's power, so much so that the incident may become closely tied to that individual. One well-known example of a one-man show is the torture-execution of Liberian president Samuel Doe by Prince Johnson, who was then an aspirant to the presidential throne.[168] Another possible example comes from the Bosnian War when Ratko Mladić ordered the murder of all male refugees at Srebrenica after he forced the Dutch peacekeepers to leave.

The designations "carnival," "spectacle," and "one-man show" work more effectively as ideal-types rather than pure categories, as a single episode can shade off into different types of performance processes and multiple processes can overlap within a single episode.[169] As with all ideal-types, what is theoretically interesting is the way that a given episode deviates from a particular ideal-type.

In addition to theorizing, we might also try to draw out the policy implications of the foregoing analysis. The most powerful implication is the need to recognize that some violent acts shock and terrify by what they *mean,* rather than what they do. These acts seem more likely to occur whenever actors put violence on display in order for others to cheer and gawk. Consider the alternative. Would a lone executioner have dragged, mutilated, and hung Armwood multiple times to "punish" him? Would a single GI have scalped and burned people alive? Would a single perpetrator have displayed his victims' bodies if there was no one else to look at them? Though solo actors can and do enact scenes of

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extra-lethal violence, it seems more likely that social logics drive most episodes.

If the logic of display does indeed produce extra-lethal violence, then policymakers and practitioners can begin to identify situations when this logic is more likely to predominate. The evidence thus far suggests that extra-lethal violence is more likely to occur when perpetrators can exercise overwhelming force over victims and act with autonomy and impunity. Outside monitors during war might therefore take note of spaces where perpetrators can express unlimited power through the backs, limbs, fronts, and sides of their victims with little interference. Spaces closed off to outsiders are obvious candidates, as evidence from Abu Ghraib attests.[170] The same logic of display may also be operating whenever armed actors try to show off for one another. One sure indication of attempts to "show off" is when actors tape, film, or snap pictures of violence "for fun," for why else record such activities if not to make others stop and look?

For militaries and military trainers (both at home and abroad), the message is clear. Commanders at every level need to treat any personal display of violence as serious breaches of professional norms, rather than as harmless pranks. This effort could include stiffer enforcement of existing regulations, but also protections for interveners or those "who want do right when everything is going wrong."[171] The goal should be to reconstruct the meaning of extra-lethal violence so that such acts bring shame rather than status to the perpetrators.

At the community level, civil society groups might find ways to begin talking about the past, for silence carries its own costs. Journalist Cynthia Carr, for example, ties long-term economic stagnation and distrust between blacks and whites in her hometown of Marion, Indiana to the 1930 double lynching of Tommy Shipp and Abe Smith, an event that people refused to talk about openly, if at all.[172] Bringing to light *local* narratives can help to dispel long-standing rumors; reveal little-known stories of resistance or rescue; restore humanity to the victims; and create a shared history, which communities can continue to debate in different venues. Such ongoing, public debate is at the heart of democratic practice[173] and can thwart efforts by political actors to "rewrite" history to fit their own narrow interests.

Performative analysis can enhance efforts to understand the processes that lead to extra-lethal violence and minimize its terrible costs by highlighting the ways in which actors make a moment "special" through their own words and deeds. If actors create scenes of revelry, inversion, or spectacle by what they do and say, they can also create scenes of dignity and respect. The men and women who worked at Abu Ghraib were working inside a physical structure called a prison, but what they made of that physical setting was not pre-ordained. Nelson Mandela spent decades in prison as a political prisoner in South Africa, but even in the contentious period of apartheid, guards never made Mandela strip naked so they could parade him on a leash or make him take part in a "human pyramid."

By focusing on how actors make a moment "special," a performative approach allows us to investigate the logic of display—or people's desire to be seen and heard above the noise of war, the orderliness of genocide, and the strictures of Jim Crow. Such displays are not about efficiency, but about reconstructing reality through extra-lethal acts. By understanding this potent form of violence, we can begin to lessen its deadly reach.

Notes

1 Dwyer 2008, 90.
2 A particularly terrorizing case of sniper shootings occurred in the Maryland-Virginia-Washington DC area in the Fall of 2002. The shooters used stealth to target random victims in busy, public areas. An example of reprisal shootings comes from Nazi-occupied Poland, when Germans seized men at random off the streets for public exectution in an effort to defeat the resistance. Snyder 210, 294. Examples of mass shootings include the shootings at a packed movie theatre in Aurora, Colorado in July 2012 and a Sikh Temple outside Milwaukee, Wisconsin in August 2012. The practice of disappearing featured prominently in Argentina's Dirty War. Taylor 1997. It was also prominent in Stalin's Great Terror. Snyder 2010, ch. 3.
3 Cohen 2010 (35) makes this same point about wartime rape and Straus 2012 (349–51) about genocide—that these forms of violence are costly, not costless.
4 See, for example, the June 2012 issue of *Perspectives on Politics,* including Jeff Isaac's introduction.
5 Verdeja 2012; Staniland 2012; Straus 2012; Wood 2006, 2009b; Kalyvas 2003, 2006; Cohen 2010.
6 Kalyvas 2012.
7 I thank Jay Lyall for this point.
8 Lacina 2006, for example, measures severity in civil wars by the number of combat deaths.
9 Straus 2012; Gagnon 2004.
10 Greiner 2009, 11, 13–14, 24, 124.
11 Kalyvas 2006, Ch. 3.
12 Juergensmeyer 2000, 120.
13 Caputo 1977, xvii; Collins 2008, 289.
14 Kalyvas 1999.
15 Richards 1996.
16 Garland 2005, 796.
17 Richards 1996.
18 I thank Todd Hall for this example.
19 Wood 2006.

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20 There were geopolitical reasons why the soldiers did not go after the foreigners, who were mostly Americans and Germans. Japan at the time was trying to appease the US and Japan had just signed the Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany. Baker 1995, 126.
21 Collins 2006.
22 Shawn McHale, personal communication, 9 October 2010.
23 Kheng 1980, 78–80; 2003, 20–24.
24 Bourke 1999. The practice continues in recent wars as well. McGreal 2010 and Zucchino 2012.
25 Weingartner 1992, 56.
26 Weingartner 1992, 67.
27 Weingartner 1992, 62, fn31.
28 Horowitz 2001, 122.
29 See, for example, Hatzfeld 2000, Des Forges 1999, and African Rights 1995.
30 Chandler 1999.
31 Hinton 2005.
32 Snyder 2010, 123.
33 Snyder 2010, 223–25.
34 Arendt 1963, 190.
35 Burds 2009, 45.
36 Snyder 2010, 230.
37 Klusemann 2010, 289.
38 Horowitz 2001, 117.
39 Horowitz 2001, 73, 122.
40 Rudwick 1964, 46–48.
41 Clarke 1998, 281; Brundage 1993, 91–92.
42 Pfeifer 2004, 47.
43 Brundage 1993, 67.
44 Brundage 1993, 65–66.
45 Kalyvas 1999, 2006; Grossman 1995.
46 Kapferer 1988; Finnström 2008; Hinton 2005; Taussig 1986.
47 Collins 2006, 2008; Huggins et al. 2002; Tolnay and Beck 1995.
48 Edelman 1971, 1988, 1964; Merelman 1969.
49 The reason was largely due to US and British government funding agencies which soon backed positivism as the methodology constituting real "science". King 1998.
50 Scott 1990.
51 McAdam et al. 2001; Tilly 2008; Tarrow 1998; Benford and Hunt 1992.
52 Wedeen 2008; Guss 2000.
53 Cole 2010.
54 Juergensmeyer 2000.
55 Taylor 1997; Andreas 2008.
56 Adler 2010; Alexander 2011.
57 Burke 2005, 36.
58 Bauman 1992, 41.
59 Bauman 1992, 42.
60 See, for example, Wood 2009; McGovern 1982; Downey and Hyser 1991. My own data from the Maryland Eastern Shore also support this claim.
61 Tilly 2008.
62 I thank Jennifer Brinkerhoff for clarifying this point for me.
63 Arendt 1963, 64.
64 I found the video with little trouble on YouTube.com.
65 Cohen 2010; Sanday 2007; McCall 1995; Theidon 2007, 472.
66 Coll 2000; Richards 1996.
67 Cole 2010.
68 Verkaaik 2003.
69 Greiner 2009, 16, 216; Hersh 1970, 22–23. The numbers killed at My Lai also pale in comparison to the number of civilians killed between November 1968 and April 1969 during Operation Speedy Express. Nearly 11,000 died in that operation, of which half were civilians. Greiner 2009, 23.
70 In administrative terms, Son My was the village and the two communities that absorbed the brunt of brutalities by Americans were sub-hamlets (Xom Lang and Binh Tay) marked "My Lai (4)" on American military maps. For simplicity's sake, I refer to residents of both Xom Lang and Binh Tay as My Lai villagers.
71 Hersh 1970, 45.
72 Greiner 2009, 202; Bilton and Sim 1992, 70.
73 Greiner 2009, 208; Gershen 1971, 19; Hammer 1970, 109–10.
74 Hersh 1970, 40–42; Bilton and Sim 1992, 17.
75 Gershen 1971, 18; Greiner 2009, 211.
76 Hersh 1970, 45; Bilton and Sim 1992, 107–9; Hammer 1970, 119.
77 Greiner 2009, 212.
78 Greiner 2009, 219.
79 Hammer 1970, 120; Greiner 2009, 220.
80 Hammer 1970, 124.
81 Gershen 1971, 23–24; Hammer 1970, 134.
82 Gershen 1971, 35, 43.
83 Hammer 1970, 131–32.
84 Greiner 2009, 224–25.
85 Hammer 1970, 137.
86 Greiner 2009, 222.
87 Greiner 2009, 221.
88 Gershen 1971, 26; Hammer 1970, 128.
89 Greiner 2009, 221.
90 Hersh 1970, 81; Greiner 2009, 221.
91 Greiner 2009, 212.
92 Hersh 1970, 73; Greiner 2009, 229.
93 Greiner 2009, 228.
94 Valentino 2004, 199.
95 Greiner 2009, 196.
96 Bilton and Sim 1992, 181.
97 Weinstein 2007.
98 Mueller 2000.

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99 Bilton and Sim 1992, 52, 65.
100 Collins 2008, ch. 3.
101 Greiner 2009, 223–24.
102 Greiner 2009, 230.
103 Gershen 1971, 38.
104 Falassi 1987, 3.
105 Greiner 2009, 224.
106 Hersh 1970, 81.
107 Hammer 1970, 126.
108 Greiner 2009, 230.
109 Gershen 1971, 26; Hersh 1970, 66; Greiner 2009, 230.
110 Olson and Roberts 1998, 22.
111 Greiner 2009, 222.
112 Olson and Roberts 1998, 23.
113 Greiner 2009, 231–32; Hersh 1970, 64–66.
114 Hammer 1970, 139–49; Greiner 2009, 231–32; Hersh 1970, 65.
115 Greiner 2009, 240.
116 Greiner 2009, 139.
117 Greiner 2009, 139.
118 Hersh 1970, 47.
119 Hammer 1970, 138.
120 Turse 2008.
121 Greiner 2009, 131.
122 Greiner 2009, 194.
123 Gershen 1971, 258.
124 From this single example, it is not possible to explain why Charlie Company did not follow this episode with more like it. Answering this question would require looking at negative episodes, incidents that could have turned out similarly but did not. I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for pushing me on this point.
125 Mann 2005; Straus 2012.
126 Des Forges 1999; Prunier 1995; Fujii 2009.
127 Straus 2012, 53–64.
128 Des Forges 1999, 270.
129 Des Forges 1999, 263.
130 Des Forges 1999, 270; Neuffer 2001, 279. The quote is from Straus 2006.
131 Joseph is a pseudonym to protect the identities of interviewees.
132 Interview, 22 December 2011.
133 Field notes from conversations with a former commune employee, August and December 2011.
134 Interviews, 16 June 2004; 8 August 2011; 22 December 2011.
135 Field notes from a conversation with former residents, 3 December 2011.
136 Fujii 2009; Prunier 1995; Kabagema 2001.
137 African Rights 1995, 1015–16; Des Forges 1999, 261.
138 Interview, 11 June 2009.
139 Wood 2006, 331.
140 Wagner 1998; interview, 13 December 2011.
141 Des Forges 1999, 222.
142 Interviews, 3 and 11 June 2009; 21 December 2011.
143 Neuffer 2001, 280.
144 Landesman 2002, 84.
145 Landesman 2002, 89.
146 Baines 2003, 489.
147 Interviews, 3 August 2011; 18 July 2008.
148 Interview, 17 June 2009.
149 Fuoss 1999.
150 I thank Ingrid Creppell for this point.
151 Original handwritten notes by John B. Robins, former Somerset County State's Attorney. Papers obtained from John B. Robins, IV and are available from the author by request.
152 Ifill 2007.
153 Interviews 19 May 2010; 21 June 2010.
154 "Supplemental Statements of Members of Maryland State Police" 1933, 324–27, 331, 334, 348, 400–402.
155 Player 1933; Spencer 1933.
156 Player 1933.
157 Interviews, 10 December 2009, 10 October 2011.
158 Mitchell 1933.
159 Smith 2008.
160 Wennersten 1992, ch. 6.
161 Jolley 1933.
162 "Supplemental Statements of Members of Maryland State Police" 1933, 336.
163 Ifill 2007.
164 Interview, 18 June 2010.
165 On East St. Louis, see Rudwick 1964. On Tulsa, see Hirsch 2002.
166 See, for example, McGovern 1982 on the Claude Neal lynching and Downey and Hyser 1991 on the Coatesville, Pennsylvania lynching. Note not all white-on-black lynchings in the US took the form of spectacle. Tolnay and Beck 1995. References list Tolnay and Beck 1995.
167 Wood 2009a, 27.
168 Ellis 2007, 5–13.
169 I thank Jeff Isaac for this point.
170 Danner 2004, 820.
171 Personal communication with Will Ferroggiaro, 15 August 2012.
172 Carr 2006.
173 Payne 2008.

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