1   Interdisciplinary perspectives on violence and trauma[1]

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The purpose of this volume is to broaden the dialogue between psycho-analysis and anthropology. We do so by focusing on a set of empirical and theoretical issues around the study of violence and trauma in comparative perspective. Can psychoanalysis and anthropology develop and sustain a mutually intelligible and fruitful conversation around the enduring problem of collective violence and massive trauma? How can this conversation negotiate the fact that psychoanalysts apply their craft to the intra-psychic level of analysis while anthropologists focus on the socio-cultural level? What are the necessary parameters for such conversation?

This book is based on the claim that for a variety of empirical and theoretical reasons an interdisciplinary dialogue on large-scale violence and trauma can indeed lead to the mutual enrichment of both anthro-pology and psychoanalysis. First, large-scale violence takes place in complex and over-determined socio-cultural contexts which intertwine psychic, social, political, economic, and cultural dimensions. Secondly, collective violence cannot be reduced to a single level of analysis because it targets the body, the psyche, as well as the socio-cultural order. Thirdly, the understanding of trauma cannot be restricted to the intra-psychic processes of the individual sufferer because it involves highly relevant social and cultural processes. Fourthly, the consequences of massive trauma afflict not only individuals but also social groups and cultural formations.

The twentieth century brought us some of the most barbaric episodes of large-scale violence and trauma. The Holocaust, the Cambodian killing fields, the unprecedented state terror generated by the Latin American counter-insurgency campaigns, the organized ethnic cleans-ings and sexual assaults in the former Yugoslavia, and the carefully

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[1] We thank Carola Suárez-Orozco for her insightful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

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orchestrated inter-ethnic bloodbaths in Rwanda and Burundi are recent examples. They suggest a unique and enduring human capacity for highly elaborate *collective forms of violence and destructiveness* which cannot be reduced simplistically to either 'natural' or 'cultural' causes.

This book does not engage the old-fashioned binary 'nature–nurture' polemic. The tired old claim that it is the nature of our genetic blueprint to be efficient killers is as irrelevant to the present effort as the counter-claim that to unlock the secrets of our darkness we must keep our gaze on social institutions and cultural formations – such as on genocidal 'cultural models' of eliminationist racism (Goldhagen 1996).[2] The reductionism of the first variety collapses under the weight of ideology, religion, ethnicity, gender, and class – cultural formations that chisel the human capacity for destruction into seemingly endless designs. The 'culturalists' in the nature–nurture coin often face the trap of circular reasoning as well as the formidable task of having to account for the overwhelmingly diverse sets of cultures and levels of social organization managing stunningly destructive feats (see Ingham 1996:196–221; Edgerton 1992). The space worth cultivating, we claim, is somewhere between those two analytical dead-ends.

Although aggression is hardly the monopoly of the human species, humans alone have developed the higher-order neocortical capacities – the very capacities that separate us from other species in the animal kingdom – for efficient, systematized, and over-determined acts of collective violence. In the eternal words of Freud, 'Man is a wolf to man. Who in the face of all his experience of life and of history will have the courage to dispute this assertion' (Freud 1930:111). In the more technical words of psychological anthropologist John Ingham:

Organized violence has occurred, and continues to occur, at every level of social complexity. Murder and feuding were frequent among hunter-gatherers, peoples sometimes thought to be relatively peaceful. Headhunting and murderous retribution against suspected sorcerers were common among horticultural societies. Many tribal societies were warlike. Most preindustrial states were militaristic, and some even ritualized their hegemony with human sacrifice. And wars between states and, increasingly, terrorism and ethnic violence are commonplaces in the modern world (Ingham 1996:196).

This volume examines a variety of manifestations of organized violence and massive trauma reflecting a commitment to interdisciplinary dialogue. How are cultural identities implicated in and reshaped by

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[2] Goldhagen, for example, in his best selling book reduces the Holocaust to German culture. He writes 'many Germans willingly brutalized and killed Jews and did so because they grew up in a culture where a virulent form of anti-Semitism was commonplace' (1996:38).

large-scale violence? How are collective violence and mourning encoded into cultural narratives and how are such narratives psychologically implicated in the transgenerational workings of trauma? How do second-generation survivors cope with the inherent 'radioactivity' of massive trauma? How are cultural formations, including symbols, folk models, and rituals mobilized to inscribe, resist, and heal trauma? What psychocultural processes are involved in children's responses to violence? How are gender differences played out in the sequelae of violence?

There is of course a history to the relationship between psychoanalysis and anthropology – a history that is too complex to summarize here (see Suárez-Orozco 1994). Many leading psychoanalysts since Freud have had enduring interests in cultural formations and the comparative record. Freud himself, for better or worse, read with great gusto the leading social theorists – including the proto-anthropologists of his day – and articulated various theoretical constructs on a variety of ethnographic matters – including totemism, magic, and ritual.

While previous interdisciplinary conversations between anthropology and psychoanalysis proved uneven – with dismal failures (remember the 'swaddling hypothesis'?) as well as exciting developments (such as the Linton–Kardiner seminar at Columbia) – the dialogue has been rather focused on a handful of themes. Ubiquitous among them have been (1) the debate over the Oedipus complex; (2) the relationships between the cultural patterning of childrearing, personality, and social institutions; and (3) culture and mental illness. While a number of prominent psychological anthropologists have worked on issues of aggression (see, *inter alia*, Hallowell 1940; Kluckhohn 1962; Spiro 1978; and Edgerton 1997 and 1992) our objective is to expand the dialogue systematically to include issues of large-scale violence and trauma.

Why be interdisciplinary? Interdisciplinary efforts interrupt the taken-for-granted practices that can bureaucratize disciplinary work. Interdisciplinary work imposes certain mutual calibrations of theoretical models, methodological strategies, and analytic perspectives. By definition interdisciplinary work subverts the reductionistic impulses common to many disciplinary enterprises. Furthermore, the different professional practices of anthropologists and psychoanalysts have direct effects on the interdisciplinary study of violence and trauma, which should be mined for the enrichment of both disciplines.

As in other fields of inquiry in the human sciences, some observers – among them victims of massive trauma – have questioned the validity of *any* outsider's analytical perspectives – let alone interdisciplinary efforts. These observers have argued that only 'first-hand' experience can lead

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to authentic knowledge. While from the vantage point of the late
twentieth century most social scientists are well aware of the problem of
positionality in scholarship of this sort, we make a plea for the comple-
mentary significance that is a *sine qua non* of interdisciplinary work. We
therefore reject mono-causal explanations and advocate the use of
processual, multi-levelled approaches grounded in solid understandings
of the inner psychic processes as well as the social and cultural contexts
of large-scale violence and trauma (Mays *et al.* 1998; see also De Vos
and Suárez-Orozco 1990).

In the next section, we examine the ways in which trauma and
violence have been conceptual meeting grounds for earlier generations
of anthropologists and psychoanalysts. This is not intended to be an
exhaustive review of interdisciplinary approaches to large-scale violence
and massive trauma. Rather, it serves to place the chapters in this book
in a genealogical conceptual history.

The historical development of the concept of massive trauma from
'shell shock' to 'post-traumatic stress disorder' reveals remarkable
periods of cross-fertilization between the disciplines of anthropology
and psychoanalysis. There have also been moments of considerable
distancing, mutual neglect, and basic distrust.

We hope to demonstrate how several path-breaking concepts such as
those emerging from studies of the Holocaust can be applied to the
interpretation of large-scale violence and massive trauma in other
societies. The work on second-generation Holocaust survivors is par-
ticularly important for a theoretical understanding of one of the funda-
mental problems in the study of trauma: its transgenerational
transmission from parents to children to grandchildren. We highlight
the social practices and cultural models that are relevant to the under-
standing of such transgenerational processes.

After examining some of the critical contributions to the study of
trauma, we turn to the study of large-scale violence. Our point of
departure is Freud's complex, multi-faceted, and often contradictory
explanations of human aggression and violence. The Freud of *Civiliza-
tion and Its Discontents* presents a somewhat different hypothesis on
human aggression and violence than the Freud of *Beyond the Pleasure
Principle*. Much of his work of course has been superseded by more
sophisticated psychoanalytic interpretations and falsified by superior
ethnographic knowledge. Nevertheless, Freud's ideas deserve attention
because they have inspired many students of violence and trauma. We
then proceed with a critical appraisal of various disparate psychoanalytic
interpretations of aggression and violence – from Melanie Klein's innate
theories of aggression to Erich Fromm's interdisciplinary approach to

human destructiveness. We critique these works on empirical and theoretical grounds. Next, we discuss some more recent psychoanalytic ideas about the 'reactive' nature of human aggression. These ideas require still further theoretical development in the area of violence and trauma, but are promising new avenues of inquiry which find an implicit resonance in anthropological studies.

The chapters in this volume are organized into two parts. Part I addresses *the management of collective trauma*. Part II discusses *cultural responses to collective trauma*. The chapters in this book suggest that social violence continues to pursue its victims long after the slaughter ends and the peace treaties are signed. The work of Robben, Gampel, Apfel and Simon, Luhrmann, de Levita, and Volkan and Itzkowitz examine the various ways violence continues to shape the inner, interpersonal, and socio-cultural worlds of victims and their children. And because social violence always aims at a multiplicity of fields it, in turn, generates multiple sequelae. On the physical and psychic level, the work of healing most often includes some effort to restore some semblance of basic trust. The data in this book suggest that this work is quite complex, open-ended, and far from always successful. While the work of de Levita and Apfel and Simon suggest that massively traumatized children may, under certain conditions, make significant progress, the transgenerational data (see Gampel) suggest a cautious interpretation of long-term outcomes.

Luhrmann, Ewing, and C. Suárez-Orozco suggest that, on the socio-cultural level, the work of healing also involves the issue of 'basic trust' – this time reconstructing trust in the social institutions and cultural practices that structure experience and give meaning to human lives. Large-scale violence and massive trauma disintegrate trust in the social structures that make human life possible. Institutional acknowledgment – in the form of 'truth' commissions and reparations (monetary and symbolic) – and justice – in the form of trials of perpetrators – can begin partially to restore the symbolic order that is another casualty of the work of violence.

This volume does not draw a firm line between what might be called 'hard' violence (physical) and 'soft' violence (symbolic or psychological). Like the lines in many maps, such division would be artificial, arbitrary, and even dangerous. Physical violence may be easier to identify, name, and quantify than psychic or symbolic violence. We can always do a body count, discern patterns in the amputation of limbs, or explore a torturer's agenda by the marks he leaves in his victim's body. On the other hand, the workings of psychic and symbolic violence are often more elusive but may be equally devastating in the long run.

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Towards an interdisciplinary dialogue on violence and trauma

Why have entire nations collapsed and consumed themselves with hatred and destructiveness? How are we, at the start of the twenty-first century, to think about the recurrence of rape camps, torture camps, and ethnic camps? Just what *is* the answer to Einstein's famous question: 'Is there a way to liberate mankind from the doom of war?' (Einstein 1978:1)? In the last decades of the twentieth century we have witnessed the resurgence of systematized torture, forced disappearances, group rapes, and ethnic massacres and 'cleansings' as organized practices for dealing with historical and cultural *chagrins,* political dissent, ideological orthodoxy, and ethnic and gender difference.[3] Interdisciplinary explora-

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[3] Systems of organized violence are anchored in various ideological structures. We use the term 'ideology' to refer to the 'doctrines, opinions, or ways of thinking of an individual or class' (Webster 1983:902). Ideologies of hatred and terror may include pseudoscientific notions of biological inferiority and fear of pollution (Nazism).

Some recent ideologies of hatred have developed intertwining pseudo-sociological notions of 'cultural inferiority' (the new anti-immigration and racist movements in Europe and the US), or ethnic incompatibility and hatred (such as in the former Yugoslavia and in the Hutu–Tutsi case). Neo-nazi anti-immigrant groups in Europe share a cultural narcissism: there is a fear that somehow the foreigners will pollute and injure Europe's 'culture' (language, mores, way of life). The logic of pollution remains but no longer based on pseudo-biological arguments. Ideologies of hatred leading to massive social violence have fixated on historical fictions of lost privilege, or cultural narcissistic injuries (Germany after Versailles; the Greek–Turkish disputes explored by Volkan and Itzkowitz; the suicide bombers described by Apfel and Simon). A great deal of ideological hatred has been grounded on deadly political obsessions over orthodoxy (Stalinism, Pol Pot, and various recent anti-Communist regimes in Latin America). Religious scripts have fed ideologies of hatred (the Jews as Christ-killers). If rage in loss, endangerment, and mourning offers the psychological framework to systematized violence, ideology offers it an intellectual and moral framework.

Organized systems of terror always are guided by an intellectual framework. The Nazis operated with European fantasies of biological superiority by claiming a link to the Aryans, the upper caste conquerors of the Indic subcontinent. They updated and refined ancient European hatred of the Jews ('the Christ-killers': Fromm 1973:305) with pseudo-scientific claims of superiority. Biological purity had to be guarded by eliminating biologically inferior groups.

In the recent Argentine 'dirty war' (see Robben, in this volume), the so-called 'Doctrine of National Security' gave the Generals an intellectual framework for their actions. The anti-communist ideology of the Cold War offered the theoretical framework that led to the creation of a state-operated Dantesque machinery of illegal kidnappings and torture, and the deaths of thousands of innocent non-combatants.

Ideological frameworks may be laced with messianic fantasies and harsh moralistic dictates: the end of our way of life is near, everything must be done to prevent this. Sagan's (1988) notion of the 'corrupt superego' is particularly relevant here: in a terrorist system it is the corrupt superego that dictates that a group must be eliminated in the name of a grand cause.

During the Cold War, communism and anti-communism served as powerful ideologies for the organization of hatred and for structuring violence. Paradoxically, the terror of a nuclear holocaust served as an effective force to keep in check hatreds based

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tions of psychological, social, and cultural frameworks can generate important answers to such unsettling questions.

How can we do analytical justice to collective violence and trauma, without unduly distorting the shattering experiences of the victims? Is Elie Wiesel right when he argues: 'The truth of Auschwitz remains hidden in its ashes. Only those who lived it in their flesh and in their minds can possibly transform their experience into knowledge. Others, despite their best intentions, can never do so' (Wiesel 1990:166)? Are we condemned to succumb to the executioner's victory over truth, understanding, and imagination? Is, paraphrasing Adorno's famous words, to write social science after Auschwitz barbaric? How can we create a space where the urgency for action and the necessity to inscribe and understand do not overwhelm each other?

While Adorno's warning does not preclude the scientific analysis of genocide, mass extermination, and large-scale violence, it does highlight the unbridgeable gap between the theoretical models at our disposal and the unfathomable depths of human suffering. On the other hand, Raul Hilberg, in his monumental three-volume *The Destruction of the European Jews*, has argued that, although the suffering is unique to each individual, the testimonies of many survivors are indeed remarkably similar. Hilberg's claim – a claim we share – is that the professional duty of the social scientist is to analyze those patterns and attempt to (re)construct the past, without pretending to have grasped the horror in its myriad manifestations (Hilberg 1988). Furthermore, victims, perpetrators, eyewitnesses, writers, and scientists alike are all condemned to the restrictions of representation. Understanding surely depends on which events are remembered, how these memories are given form, and through which perspective they are analyzed (Young 1988:1–3).

Perhaps the most serious paradox we face is an awareness that massive trauma is in important ways inherently incomprehensible. Cathy Caruth (1995, 1996) has wisely argued that traumatic events are by definition incomprehensible because partial forgetting is a defining characteristic of trauma. This inability of the traumatized to recover fully the traumatic event, and the failure to integrate the 'uncanny' experiences into consciousness (see also Gampel, in this volume), may be logically extended into literature and science. The refusal to force the inexplicable into interpretational schemata and, instead, to bear witness, to listen, and to allow testimony to unfold itself with all its contra-

on religious and ethnic differences. With the demise of the Soviet Union as a viable political project, and with the collapse of the Soviet Union as a broker in the balance of nuclear terror, ideologies of hatred are once again thriving along cultural, religious, and ethnic lines.

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dictions and enigmas, is an alternative way of communicating massive
trauma to the world.[4]

The essays included in this volume share a vision that the complexities
of large-scale violence and trauma – their origins, structures, and
consequences – are best approached from interdisciplinary and multi-
layered perspectives. Although psychodynamic variables, such as narcis-
sistic injury and pathological mourning, may be critical for under-
standing violence, it is unwise to underestimate the role of social,
economic, and institutional factors in organizing the human capacity for
destructiveness into powerful cultural forms.[5] Reducing organized
violence to the 'death instinct', or to group frustration leading to

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[4] See Felman and Laub (1992) on the affective and epistemological difficulties of bearing
witness to testimonies of massive trauma.

[5] We must keep in mind the economic foundations of violence. Economic forces may be a
powerful instigator of social violence. Certainly, terror often yields significant wealth.
The lavish lifestyle of the Nazis and the shady dealings of Swiss World War Two bankers
come to mind.

A number of scholars have been interested in outlining the economic motives behind
systems of violence. Chomsky, for example, has pointed out the extraordinary gains
often associated with social violence and domination. Chomsky has claimed that a
principal mission of US diplomacy has been to guarantee a steady flow of natural
resources and a favourable business and investment climate in the Third World.
Preferably, these goals are achieved in a democratic climate. However, if state terror and
dictatorial rule are needed to secure US interests, then so be it (1993:30). Chomsky
argues that: 'In the post-World War II era, the US has been the global enforcer,
guaranteeing the interests of privilege. It has, therefore, compiled an impressive record
of aggression, international terrorism, slaughter, torture, chemical and bacteriological
warfare, [and] human rights abuses of every imaginable variety' (Chomsky 1993:31).
For Chomsky economic greed is a most powerful force for human destructiveness.

Taussig (1987) has likewise highlighted some of the economic foundations of violence.
Taussig explored the terror which flourished in the Anglo-Peruvian rubber plantations in
the Putumayo districts of southwestern Colombia at the turn of the century. Taussig
relates terror to the political economy of the colonial 'encounter' (crush might be a more
appropriate word) between 'capitalism' and what Taussig calls (others reject his claims)
'pre-capitalist' forms of production. Terror, Taussig argues, was employed to 'recruit'
the Indians through debt, into an economic system of commodity fetishism which they
resisted as foreign to their hearts. According to Taussig, the capitalist process of ever
expanding commodification is so destructive and inhuman that a 'culture of terror'
emerged where torture and other obscene rituals of depreciation became the idiom
mediating the clash of two worlds in the colonial enterprise. The violence in the
Putumayo was, according to Taussig, only a local version of a global movement. Terror
is inevitable in the 'global stage of development of the commodity fetish; think also of
the Congo with its rubber and ivory, of the enslavement of the Yaquis for the sisal
plantations of the Yucatan in Mexico, of the genocidal bloodletting in tragic Patagonia –
all around the same time' (Taussig 1987:129).

There are, of course, some limitations to an economic approach to social violence.
Reducing organized violence to economic motive tends to ignore the vastly irrational
and counter-productive (from a cost–benefit perspective) aspects of terror. It has been
noted, for example, that the energy and resources the Germans devoted to the Holocaust
may have indeed fatally weakened their war effort against the allies.

aggression, simply neglects the axiomatic fact that *it is only in the context
of over-determined socio-cultural climates* that violence becomes organized
and evolves into death camps, rape camps, and torture camps.[6]

The questions we ask in our conversations avoid 'silver bullets', single
origins, and mechanistic causation. None of the authors involved in this
volume believes in a single explanation or a single origin of human

[6] As Apfel and Simon explore in their chapter, social institutions provide the tools, the
know-how, and the psychological support for the conduction of systematic atrocities.
There is a 'bureaucracy of terror' required to build and operate concentration camps,
rape camps, and torture camps. Such institutions might be special units like the SS,
death squads such as in El Salvador and South Africa, military schools such as the
ESMA in Argentina (see Robben, in this volume; CONADEP 1984; Timerman 1981),
and so forth. The Nazis counted on the efficient participation of talented German
engineers to construct their monstrous death apparatus. These were men who were
'concerned with improving the performance of the equipment they modified for the
purpose demanded by their Government: rapid and efficient cremation of human beings
killed in gas chambers' (Fleming 1993:19).

Professional torturers, camp guards, and suicide bombers are not born but made (see
Apfel and Simon, in this volume; see also Waller 1993:34–7). Social psychologists have
made significant contributions to the psychology of the implementation of terror.
Studies by Milgram (1974) on 'obedience to authority', by Zimbardo (1972) on
imprisonment, and by Staub (1989) on 'learned disinhibition', reveal how under certain
conditions of institutional authority and rigid hierarchy it seems frightfully easy to order
individuals to commit atrocious acts.

Torturers, death squad members, and suicide bombers typically work in teams. They
go to instruction camps where they learn who the enemy is and how to destroy it. Many
US observers were shocked that 'almost three quarters of the Salvadorean officers
accused in seven other massacres [in addition to the massacre of the six Jesuit priests at
the Central American University] were trained by the Fort Benning school' (Waller
1993:34). Also known as the 'School for Dictators', the School of the Americas at Fort
Benning in Georgia has 'trained more than 56,000 Latin soldiers in combat and
counterinsurgency skills' (Waller 1993:34). Some of the School's most notorious
graduates include Manuel Noriega (class of '65 and '67), the Panamanian general-
turned-drug-trafficker; Leopoldo Galtieri (class of '46), an Argentine 'dirty warrior',
and architect of the disastrous invasion of the Malvinas/Falklands Islands; and Roberto
D'Aubuisson, the reported intellectual father of the Salvadorean death squads (Waller
1993:34).

Institutions of terror provide not only the technical support but also the *psychological
support* required to conduct organized terror. Members of such institutions must develop
a sense of righteousness about their cause. There is a sense of brotherhood sealed by the
blood spilled together. New members may be sent for special assignments (tortures,
massacres, etc.) to gain entry into the group. These groups may be sealed off from other
groups with less brutal tasks. There is a sense of common purpose and destiny. Non-
group members may be seen as inferior, weak, or lacking the courage required to
accomplish the momentous crusade.

According to some scholars, institutions of terror play an essential role in generating
forms of power (see Scarry 1985; Taussig 1992). Elaine Scarry (1985) in her book on
torture and war has argued that the terror manufactured in state-operated torture rooms
is critical to creating forms of state power. The electricity discharged through cattle-
prods in the torture chambers 'generates' much of the power in highly unstable regimes.
The Salvadorean death squads and torture chambers working under the control of the
armed forces (see Waller 1993) seemed to be busiest when the regime was being
critically challenged by the insurgency.

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violence. Nor do we believe that collective violence can be explained in a
mechanistic paradigm. No hydraulic models are offered in this volume
(Lorenz 1966).

Our specific questions are grounded on experience-near 'thick de-
scriptions' of violence and trauma in a variety of social settings. We ask:
How do cultural formations mediate violence and the work of mourning
(Robben)? How do institutional contexts affect the psychocultural
mechanisms children deploy when facing terror and violence (Apfel and
Simon; and de Levita)? How is gender implicated in the experience of
violence and trauma (de Levita; and Ewing)? How are identities,
specifically ethnic and cultural identities, involved in the incubation of
hostility and conflict leading to violence and trauma (Volkan and
Itzkowitz)? How are cultural identities shaped and reshaped by the
experience of trauma (C. Suárez-Orozco; and Luhrmann)? How does
'memory' – personal, historical, and cultural – relate to the intergenera-
tional forces that perpetuate trauma (Gampel)?

The papers rely on a variety of data sets, including interview materials,
the psychoanalytic encounter, the ethnographic encounter, and histor-
ical, archival, and media sources. The materials have been gathered, in
all cases first hand, in a variety of settings, including Slovenia, Cyprus,
Greece, Israel, Turkey, the United States, India, and Argentina.

All papers engage issues of violence and trauma on a scale that
involves large social groups. While a number of psychoanalysts have
examined the individual and familial dynamics in violence and trauma
(see for example Klein and Riviere 1964; Kohut 1972; Kernberg 1992;
and Mitchell 1993), only a few have explored violence and trauma as
large-scale socio-cultural formations involving groups of peoples – com-
munities, ethnicities, or nations. Large-scale violence engenders dy-
namics that are unique and in some ways incommensurable with
individual violence.[7]

Large-scale violence targets social bonds and cultural practices as
much as it targets the body and the psyche. It is often carefully scripted
to destroy elemental culturally constituted expectations and functions.

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[7] Psychoanalysts have had much more to say about *some* forms of violence – including
family violence – than about other forms of violence. An important theoretical issue in
our conversation is whether the tools of the psychoanalytic project, best deployed to
approach conscious and unconscious processes on an individual and small-group level,
serve us as well to explore larger formations such as in ethnic, national, or post-national
violence. And, if they do apply, and all of the authors involved in this project seem to
agree that they do, what are the special problems of moving the psychoanalytic scalpel
away from the consulting room to the refugee camp? The essays by Gampel, and Apfel
and Simon in this volume explore these and other questions.