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Memory and Photography: Rethinking Postcolonial Trauma Studies

Katherine Isobel Baxter

Recent scholarship in trauma and postcolonial studies has called for more wide-ranging and at the same time more specific paradigms in trauma theory, to accommodate the complexities of trauma evidenced in postcolonial writing. The work of sociologist Kai Erikson provides a useful model for unpacking the diachronic nature of postcolonial trauma, and for acknowledging the multiple social fractures that trauma inflicts. In a case-study demonstrating Erikson's applicability, I show how common tropes of trauma narrative are used as more than an adherence to convention in Marinovich and Silva's memoir, *The Bang Bang Club*, which recounts the experiences of white South African photographers covering Soweto's hostel war in the early 1990s. These narrative strategies produce a space of non-resolution in which the trauma of violence and witnessing can appear.

Keywords: South Africa; trauma theory; postcolonial studies; photography; narrative; *The Bang Bang Club*

In 2008 Stef Craps and Gert Buelens edited a special edition of *Studies in the Novel*, whose focus was "Postcolonial Trauma Novels". The various essays of this collection provide an interesting snapshot of how contemporary trauma theory and postcolonial studies have been mapped onto each other in recent scholarship, and of some of the problems with such mapping. One key issue identified in the volume, as Michael Rothberg points out in his concluding essay, is the "need to supplement the event-based model of trauma that has become dominant over the past fifteen years with a model that can account for ongoing, everyday forms of traumatizing violence as well" (226). This is not new. As Rothberg and others point out, Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), had already recognized the reality of trauma in response to ongoing

experiences of colonial war. However, Rothberg indicates that despite Fanon's delineation of "ongoing, everyday forms" of trauma, trauma theory has, in recent years, failed to respond to the problem sufficiently.

Another issue identified in Craps and Buelens' volume is the failure of critical models to account for the variety of experiences of, and responses to, traumatic events, whether singular or ongoing. Critical assumptions about how responses to trauma manifest themselves and how they can be addressed have been similarly limited. Ana Miller, for example, in her analysis of Achmat Dangor's *Bitter Fruit*, draws attention to the difficulties of applying "generalized models of trauma" to individual and collective experiences (147). She highlights the situation of the novel's character Lydia, who chooses not to testify to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (T.R.C.) about her rape by a white policeman because she sees no value in such testimony. Lydia's choice challenges the common assumption upon which the work of the T.R.C. in part rested: that recounting events to an audience is therapeutic. Miller reads this choice more specifically as "an act of resistance against the appropriation of her personal trauma: Lydia refuses to allow her experience to be subsumed into institutional frameworks that deal with the past in superficial and problematic ways" (148).

The problematic assumption that trauma can be modelled in generalized ways is echoed by certain structural assumptions about how trauma is figured in literature. Robert Eaglestone, in the same volume, provides an essentially formalist comparison between holocaust literature and contemporary African trauma literature. He points out the similarities in the tropes of narration that characterize the two groups of texts. In doing so Eaglestone indicates the paradigmatic position of holocaust literature in the field of trauma literature more generally, showing how African trauma literature conforms to the formal tropes of holocaust literature. Eaglestone suggests that, consciously or not, the formal techniques of trauma narrative, exemplified in holocaust literature, have influenced the shaping of African trauma literature, particularly that which markets itself to "a Western audience" (77). Eaglestone does

not challenge the application of this structural paradigm *per se* but his discussions point out the ways in which both psychoanalysis and European trauma literature have prescribed acceptable modes of presenting trauma within literary and therapeutic frameworks. This prescription potentially closes off other modes of presenting trauma, a limitation which can be as problematic as the limited assumptions, noted above, about how trauma manifests itself.

Implicit in many of these discussions is a tension between a desire for greater specificity in the use of the term “trauma” on the one hand, and broader temporal and contextual applications of the term on the other. Although these two desires may seem contradictory they in fact reflect the conflicted experience of trauma itself that trauma theory seeks to articulate. Mairi Emma Neeves presents the example of E. Ann Kaplan, who initially experienced a flourishing of communality in the United States in the aftermath of 9/11, only to feel an increased alienation from media coverage of that communality and resultantly from her own responses to the event themselves (110; Kaplan 17). Neeves explains that “Kaplan highlights how the collective response failed to encapsulate all the different subject positions, particularly ‘forgetting’ to address the perspectives of those who did not fit with the specific idea of national identity being projected at that time” (110). “Kaplan suggests”, Neeves continues, “that the fiction of a unified response separated different people rather than bringing them together and that this contributed to an identity crisis within the nation” (110; Kaplan 18). The desire for media journalism to present a more inclusive and differentiated account of the variety of responses to trauma corresponds to the desire for more wide-ranging and at the same time more specific notations in trauma theory that we find expressed in many of the essays gathered in *Postcolonial Trauma Novels*.

Rothberg is more accurate than he perhaps realizes in his claim that little has been done to address these needs in the past fifteen years. In 1994 Kai Erikson’s *A New Species of Trouble: Explorations in Disaster, Trauma, and Community* addressed many of these same issues. Erikson goes unmentioned in the essays considered here; however, his analysis of communal trauma is particularly pertinent.

In *A New Species of Trouble* Erikson presents various cases of social trauma ranging from the anxiety that followed the nuclear emergency of Three Mile Island, to the long-term impact of commercial chemical spills in First Nations regions, to the position and exclusion of the homeless in US society. Erikson explains that there is a significant difference between “those disasters that can be understood as works of nature and those that need to be understood as the work of humankind” (19). This has particular pertinence to discussions of postcolonial trauma literature where the designation “postcolonial” almost invariably infers manmade trauma as opposed to a natural disaster of some kind. Furthermore, Erikson asks what would happen if “instead of classifying a condition as *trauma* because it was induced by disaster, we would classify the event as *disaster* if it had the property of bringing about traumatic reactions.” (20) Under such a rubric, Erikson continues, “we would be required to include events that have the capacity to induce trauma but that do not have the suddenness or explosiveness normally associated with the term” (20).² Once again this realignment of trauma and disaster bears particular relevance for the kinds of diagnoses that Rothberg and others read in Fanon’s critique of the colonial wars in Algeria, and for the consideration of trauma in colonial and postcolonial contexts more generally. Here the evidence of trauma is read back onto its cause to diagnose the nature of that cause. This allows for larger events, even infrastructural systems such as apartheid, to be considered as causes of trauma in terms that go beyond specific instances of mental or physical assault. Thus, long-term endurance of racial segregation or long-term exposure to the threat of abuse could also be classified as traumatic.

Elsewhere, Erikson singles out four principle findings in his study over the past thirty years of disaster and its resultant traumas. The first is that within communities there are collective and individual traumas that occur as a result of disaster, whether that disaster is a specific event, such as a particular act of violence, or something more ongoing, such as the outbreak of disease or a toxic leak. The second is that disasters caused by something unseen (such as a toxin) make the

experience of trauma more severe. Thirdly, he reiterates the point that the experience of trauma is conditioned in part by whether or not the cause of the disaster is deemed natural or manmade. Moreover, he notes that the experience of trauma increases for those who feel they are perceived as overreacting or responding in an unreasonable way (as when, for example, “companies responsible for an emergency are called upon to defend themselves [...] but try to belittle the claims of the plaintiffs” [Convery, *et al.*, xiii]). Finally, and relatedly, he notes that a resulting sense of betrayal can lead to a “traumatic worldview”, which perceives the world suspiciously as operating “in ways of which we have no knowledge and over which we have no control” (Convery *et al.*, xiii).

Erikson’s second and third features are particularly applicable to postcolonial conditions of trauma. As already noted, his differentiation between natural and manmade disasters contributes helpfully to our understanding of colonial and postcolonial traumas. Indeed, one way in which colonizers often attempted to mask the destructive effect of their presence was by naturalizing the discourse of colonial enterprise along Darwinian lines. Such naturalized discourse continued through decolonization in the twentieth century where the incapacity for self-governance was cited as something inherent rather than the product of divisive colonial infrastructures of governance. Erikson’s attention to the acute trauma of an invisible threat also returns us to Fanon and his critique of internalized racism in *Black Faces, White Masks*. For Fanon, the trauma of such internalization comes about when the subject becomes aware of it. This awareness results in self-alienation: a distrust of the self, caused by a disjunction between external and internal experience. Such self-alienation, which unsettles the stable self-image of the traumatised subject, comes to operate like an invisible threat, in that its source is no longer identifiable. Both act in undetectable ways to inflict a trauma of anxiety on an individual’s sense of self-identity. The category of invisible threat might also extend to the experience of random violence, such as that fomented by the South African authorities in the final

years of apartheid as a way of supporting the argument of inherent incapacity for self-governance noted above.

While these connections may at first seem tenuous, further consideration of Erikson's discussions of the trauma of the invisible threat demonstrate the similarities between the experiences of those in his study who are exposed to, or fear exposure to, invisible toxins, and those who suffer from the various comparably invisible traumas produced by colonialism and its aftermath. Noting that "technical experts seem to assume that increased experience and familiarity will act over time to reduce the dread and sense of mystery", Erikson counters that "toxic emergencies really *are* different [...] their capacity to induce a lasting sense of dread is one of their unique properties", because, among other things, toxic emergencies "are not bounded, they have no frame" (146, 147). This is in contrast to the more usual Aristotelian perception of disaster as something with a plot, which has a beginning, middle and end (147). Whilst the toxic disaster may have a beginning, the ending never comes because there is a dread that toxic levels remain, or that the damage done by the toxins may still emerge in the future, resulting in a feeling of contamination (149). He refers to the suspected presence of the toxin in terms of "stealth" and "deception", echoing the ways in which its potential victims perceive a willed malice in its presence (151). In his explanation, it is not the toxin itself that traumatizes so much as the continuous state of uncertain suspicion and anxiety that its threat induces. When nothing can put a stop to that suspicion and anxiety – when it becomes prolonged and without an end in sight – it becomes traumatic.

This situation parallels that of the colonial subject in Fanon's model, whose powers of self-determination have been removed at the social level through colonial governance and at the individual level through the internalization of the coloniser's racism. Moreover, as Fanon indicates, for the colonial subject or community it is the duration of experience as much as the experience itself that traumatizes. He refers to the cumulative effect of "harmful nervous stimuli" overstepping "a certain threshold", at which point "the defensive attitudes of the natives give way and they then find

themselves crowding the mental hospitals” (201). Fanon suggests that from the colonizers’ perspective this is not a wholly undesirable situation: “There is thus during this calm period of successful colonization a regular and important mental pathology which is the direct product of oppression” (201). One reason why such a situation is not wholly undesirable is because the violent responses of such trauma tend to be contained within the communities of the colonized rather than aimed at the colonizers directly (247-49).

This leads us back to Erikson’s differentiation between individual and communal trauma. While Miller and Neeves in their respective articles argue that current models of trauma fail to accommodate the variety of individual responses to trauma that novels like Dangor’s *Bitter Fruit* present, Erikson has shown that in fact this variety of responses is a key element in characterizing trauma itself. For Erikson, this variety is less a challenge to theorising trauma and more a crucial symptom by which trauma is diagnosed within the community. In fact, this variety of response can itself be traumatic, in that the disparities of feeling and reaction within communities create another kind of alienation and isolation. Schematising the kinds of experiences that Kaplan testifies to in her account of the aftermath of 9/11, he explains that rather than creating what Martha Wolfenstein refers to as a “post-disaster utopia” (where communities are united by shared experience), manmade disasters “seem to force open whatever fault lines once ran silently through the structure of the larger community, dividing it into divisive fragments” (236).³ Furthermore, he suggests that as such, despite the fissure of communities in response to traumatic circumstances, in time this divisiveness comes to characterize the community, supplying a “prevailing mood” and dominating the community’s “sense of self” (237). The experience of division and alienation becomes a shared one, without being a unifying one.

Erikson’s model recalls Fanon’s delineation of communities divided against each other under colonial rule. Fanon speaks of how members of colonized communities “tend to use each other as a screen, and each hides from his neighbour the national enemy [i.e. the colonizer]” (248). He continues that for “a colonized man,

in a context of oppression like that of Algeria, living does not mean embodying moral values or taking his place in the coherent and fruitful development of the world. To live means to keep on existing” (249). This bracketing out of the colonized from “the coherent and fruitful development of the world” is a traumatic one that places such development not only indefinitely on hold, but also outside of their control. This situation corresponds to Erikson’s summary of the “traumatic worldview”, which perceives the world as operating “in ways of which we have no knowledge and over which we have no control”, and which he sees as stemming from the divisions in communities that follow disaster (Convery, *et al.*, xiii). Indeed, Erikson himself points out that this situation is one that can happen “to whole regions, even whole countries”, where “sustained dread and dislocation” can damage “a whole people” (237).⁴

Erikson’s explorations of trauma, in *A New Species of Trouble* and elsewhere, clearly present possible ways to bridge the apparent impasses facing studies of trauma in postcolonial literature today. By reading Erikson alongside Fanon we can see how these models allow us to interpret the traumatic impact of colonialism in ways that go beyond the Aristotelian requirements for trauma to be event-based, specifiable, and coherent in effect. In what follows I intend to show how this model provides a useful paradigm for reading a more recent publication, Greg Marinovich and Joao Silva’s memoir *The Bang-Bang Club: Snapshots from a Hidden War*. The book serves as a useful case-study for several reasons: as a work of non-fiction it displays little pretence to literary aestheticism, however it still exhibits the four main tropes that Eaglestone proposes as common characteristics inherited from Holocaust literature by contemporary trauma writing: “the use of discourse usually seen as historical, diverse and complex narrative framing devices, moments of epiphany, and confused time schemes” (79). These characteristic tropes enable authors of trauma literature to convey the emotionally disruptive experience of trauma as historical reality. Furthermore, as a work that recounts in a documentary style the documentary work of photographers, it challenges Dominick LaCapra’s prioritisation of fictional methods

over documentary ones in conveying the affect of trauma to a reading audience (13). Indeed, what I draw attention to is the fact that the alienating effect of documentary reproduces the very sense of social fracture and alienation inherent in the experience of trauma, to which Erikson draws attention. As such the book provides a useful example of how literary works, whether fictional or non-fictional, respond to and reflect the characteristics of trauma that Fanon and Erikson explore. In demonstrating this I hope to indicate ways in which to rethink and to resolve the current tension between a desire for greater specificity and for broader application in theoretical approaches to trauma in postcolonial literature.

I noted earlier that one source of Kaplan's sense of alienation following 9/11 was the homogenizing of responses to the disaster presented by the media. These representations fed back to their audience a distorted view of themselves: one which told them that they were united and yet which presented only a partial image, notably excluding the presence of Arabs and Muslims (17-18). Kaplan's experience highlights not only the problems for those who found themselves reflected in this distorted and alienating representation, but also gestures towards the place of the media in the mediation of trauma more generally.

The representation of traumatic events by media journalism is ubiquitous and yet attention is rarely given to the experiences of journalists themselves. Their role is often one of silent mediation so that, even when a journalist writes or speaks, the common demand placed upon them is for a self-effacing stance of objectivity. This self-effacement allows them to become proxies for their audience so that whilst their witnessing-as-proxy makes these events more immediate it also allows their audience to remain at one remove from the witnessed events. Such self-effacement is all the more complete for photojournalists, who do not speak and are, necessarily, *behind* the camera.

This role as proxy for the viewing audience is a fraught one: the photographer is caught between an ethical and a financial obligation to supply apparently objective

images to his or her audience (who after all buy these images), and a humanitarian obligation to the subject of their photography. Objectivity is what allows the story to be told but this frequently relies upon a suspension of the impulse to intervene. The photographer, for example, refrains from intervention in order to shoot a picture that may inspire others to intervene. However, confusion occurs when the audience, moved by the potency of the image, is then angered by the apparent detachment of the photographer, despite the fact that such detachment is what has given the photograph its potent effect. What remains unexamined in this mediation is the potential trauma that such witnessing inflicts on the mediating journalist. However, recent research concerning the psychological effects of war reportage on journalists working in conflict zones indicates that they are at far greater risk of suffering from P.T.S.D. (post-traumatic stress disorder) than journalists operating outside conflict zones, and that of the various professions of journalism, photographers are more likely than any other to suffer from P.T.S.D. (Feinstein and Owen 51).

In their memoir *The Bang-Bang Club: Snapshots of a Hidden War*, Greg Marinovich and Joao Silva recount the events and traumatic impact of their time as photographers covering the violence known as the Hostel War, which engulfed townships in the years leading up to South Africa's 1994 elections. Their account attests to the ways in which the remit to witness but to refrain from engagement induces a sense of inadequacy that takes its toll on journalists exposed repeatedly to violent or dangerous situations.⁵

Erikson points out that the term trauma has evolved a double meaning. In strict medical terms it refers to a blow that inflicts some disturbance either to the body or the mind; it is the act of violence itself not its effect. Yet in common usage trauma refers to the response to such a blow: what it subsequently does to the person who is its victim (288-89). It is clear that these two uses of the word are equally applicable to the memories that persist for Marinovich, Silva, and others in their profession. Feinstein notes that many of the interviewees in his studies of P.T.S.D. among war correspondents can recall specific events "with little hesitation, from a decade-long

catalog” (Feinstein 21, 22). Such events fall into three categories: a near-death experience (the most common); the loss of a colleague; or an image of “the plight of the distraught”, that is to say the traumatized survivors of violence (Feinstein 21). These events when they occur are moments of experience that break in upon the journalists’ previous sense of inviolability, showing up the vulnerability and impotence of the journalists’ status. The continued sense of that vulnerability and impotence becomes a symptom of the trauma that the journalists endure as a result of their experience.

Marinovich links this sense of powerlessness to the mechanics of photography itself. Remembering his work with Silva in 1992 covering the famine in Somalia he recalls: “I had felt utterly impotent as I took pictures of a starving father as he realized that his last living child had died on his lap, watching him through the lens as he closed her eyes and then walked away” (153). The success of the picture, as Marinovich implies, relies upon a mechanization of the photographer, his ability to switch off his humanity and see through a lens. The camera here has the capacity to decontextualize not only those captured as an image but also the photographer who is made impotent by the mechanics of his job. He concludes that, “there is a price extracted with every such frame: some of the emotion, the vulnerability, the empathy that makes us human, is lost every time the shutter is released” (153).

As I have already noted, although *The Bang-Bang Club* does not make any claims for its own literary merit, as a memoir it fulfils many of the formal characteristics that Eaglestone sees as the legacy of holocaust literature to trauma literature (79). Taking the use of historical discourse first, *The Bang-Bang Club*, like holocaust literature, offers various metatextual addenda that both establish historical context and in the case of *The Bang-Bang Club* make evident the volume’s status as non-fiction. These include a “South African Timeline” starting in 1910 with the formation of the Union of South Africa; a glossary of terms and acronyms; a bibliography; an index; and a Forward by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. These addenda aim to situate the main body of the text in historical, geographical and social context.

In doing so they modulate the “I” of the text’s narrating voice, placing it within a larger web of information. Within the main text, further dates and facts are given that tie the narrative into various national and personal histories. For example, chapters regularly open with a specific date, allowing the reader to synchronize the events narrated in the main body of the text with those given in the “South African Timeline”.

Recalling Eaglestone’s second criterion, these dates are just one of the narrative framing devices that mark the opening of each chapter, and the main body of the text more generally. These devices create a polyphonic effect that once again relativizes the authority of the first person singular of the main narration. Following Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s Forward, each chapter takes a title heading. Many of these are quotations representing voices from both the communities they photographed and the community of photographers with whom they worked.⁶ The chapters are also given epigraphs taken from traditional Acholi funeral songs, press photograph captions, fiction, township and hostel residents, as well as quotations from other photographers. These insertions operate paratactically to indicate the direction that the chapters will take. But this parataxis also creates polyphony by presenting several perspectives at once. This polyphony operates synchronically through the juxtaposition of voices at the opening of the chapters. However, it also operates diachronically as words spoken in one context or timeframe take on new resonances through acts of recollection or by being intentionally juxtaposed with accounts of future or past events.

This polyphony has the effect of drawing attention to the authorial voice. Highlighting the first person singular narrative voice as one amongst many, the text gestures towards other, potentially conflicting versions of, and responses to, the events described. In their Preface, the authors discuss their need to accommodate multiple voices, and to acknowledge the contradictions of narrating the memories of multiple lives, including those of the dead. They note the “complexity inherent in telling the story of four people who [...] had very different lives and experiences”,

and admit, “We can never hope to know what goes on in the minds of even the closest of intimates” (xiii). Although the book is ostensibly narrated by Marinovich, he and Silva explain that “One person never sees enough to be able to pull together a book of this nature”, concluding that their collaboration was essential (xiii).

Both Miller and Neeves highlight the way recent South African fiction, such as Dangor’s *Bitter Fruit*, employs “multiple characters as focalizers” for narrative (Neeves 116). Miller suggests that such imaginative juxtapositions allow fiction writers to articulate the sort of “ex-centric” perspectives that Ato Quayson argues are needed to re-evaluate the normativities of postcolonial history (147).⁷ She goes further to suggest that these imaginative representations give “a ‘feel’ for the subjective, intersubjective, and cultural dimensions of trauma and memory that factual accounts are less able to capture” (148). Miller’s description here consciously echoes LaCapra’s evaluation of fiction as capable of “giving at least a plausible ‘feel’ for experience and emotion which may be difficult to arrive at through restricted documentary methods” (13). Both Miller and LaCapra imagine an empathetic connection between reader and fictional character that cuts across the potentially alienating objectivity of facts. However, what both overlook is the mimetic power latent in the alienating qualities of documentary methods. The alienation of empathy that documentary methods can entail reproduces in the reader an experience that parallels the alienation inherent in experiences of trauma. LaCapra is right to suggest that the reader does not, indeed cannot, necessarily empathise with the subject’s experience of alienation caused by the trauma that the documentary records. This failure of empathy, however, creates an experience for the reader which mimics that of the traumatised, alienated subject, since the reader is excluded and alienated from the pathos of the subject. As a result, this quality of the documentary genre, in fact, ensures the “empathic unsettlement” which LaCapra insists upon from the start (xi). The reader’s “unsettlement” or alienation is not that of the subject’s, but it enables an appreciation of the subject’s alienation *and* the reader’s distance from it.

Whilst Marinovich and Silva do not present the kind of formal historiography with which LaCapra seeks to contrast fiction here, their memoir, like their photography, is essentially documentary. Interiority is limited to their own experiences or what they can reasonably extrapolate from conversations, diaries, and memories of the individuals they present. Furthermore, the authors frequently draw attention to the limitations of their knowledge of their peers; the narrator states at one point: “I would catch myself looking at Gary [Bernard] and wondering what was going on in his mind [...] it was only later that we understood the full effect that the accumulated trauma was having on him.” (54) This emphasis on limits reflects their interactions with, as well as isolation from, each other. For example, the suicide of Gary Bernard prompts Marinovich to recall his decision, following an earlier suicide attempt, to withdraw from him: “I had decided that I would not help Gary any more, I could not do any more for him” (216). Hearing of Bernard’s death Marinovich finds that whilst “in that make-believe rehearsal [of a response to a successful suicide attempt by Bernard] I felt I could justify my withdrawal [...] I still felt like shit.” (216)

The experiential qualities of the events that Marinovich and Silva narrate are governed by a disconnectedness that both inflicts trauma, by dissociating them from their environment (their family, friends, homes, workplaces, and photographic subjects), and is symptomatic of that infliction. The limitations of documentary methods thus come to mirror the disconnectedness that they document. Indeed, such mirroring reproduces the protagonists’ experience of disconnection for the reader. The multiple perspectives that the chapter headings and epigraphs give voice to do not, in the end, provide a more complete view of the events and experiences described. They remain “ex-centric”, competing and unresolved, but as such they are paradoxically more able to communicate the trauma of disconnection that the book attempts to convey.

The confused time schemes that Eaglestone notes as another recurrent motif of holocaust literature are also evident in *The Bang-Bang Club*. These disruptions in the

otherwise linear chronology of the book correspond with the psychological ruptures of time that characterize flashbacks and other symptoms of trauma. Following the book's Forward and Preface, the first chapter opens on 18 April 1994, with Marinovich looking through his camera at a terrified National Peace-Keeping Force soldier firing into a hostel: "I wanted to capture that fear. The next minute, a blow struck me – massive, hammer-like – in the chest. I missed a sub-moment, a beat from my life, and then I found myself on the ground" (1). The moment in which Marinovich and Ken Oosterbroek are shot, with which the book opens, sends the authors back to the morning of the same day and then, in the following chapter, to August 1990 when they started to work on covering the Hostel War. The book thus spirals out from the moment of Marinovich's wounding, a moment in which he feels suddenly he can finally "atone for the dozens of close calls that always left someone else injured or dead, while I emerged [...] pictures in hand, having committed the crime of being the lucky voyeur" (2). This sense of atonement for the crime of luck underpins the book and is embodied in this moment when he finally catches a bullet.

This moment also comes to act as the book's initial narrative denouement in Chapter 14. However, once again an ex-centric force throws the narrative back out into a spiral of return through the final six chapters. The book ends, not in 1994, but in 1999 when Silva and Marinovich visit the home of one of the National Peace-Keeping Force soldiers who had been present on the day that Marinovich and Oosterbroek were shot. The frustration caused by the failure of an inquest into Oosterbroek's death to confirm that he and Marinovich were shot by the peacekeepers is finally laid to rest when the soldier, talking to them in the privacy of his car, stiltedly admits: "I think somewhere, one of us, the bullet that killed your brother – it came from us" (225).

The narrative recurrence of the shooting acts as a structuring focal point around which temporal events circle. The book's chronology is made to loop back to this moment as something both in and out of time; a moment whose significance changes through its repetition. This structural device is echoed in the book's use of

photographs. Although a result of standard book binding techniques, the disjunction between these photographs, bound in sections sporadically through the book, and the relevant narrative passages disrupts the book's chronology. Narrated events recur in visual form several pages later and vice versa. Moreover, the clustering of these images reinforces the tension between their similarities and differences: each is distinct, and yet a cumulative force emerges from their very distinctness. These visual clusters act as further framing devices, presenting yet other, unvoiced perspectives on the events of the text.

One might also read these images as standing in for the moments of epiphany that Eaglestone presents as his third characteristic of Holocaust literature (79). They offer an instantaneous vision that seems to bring to life the events documented. But they also freeze these events: they are not lively but static. They capture a moment and imprison in two dimensions what was temporal and three-dimensional. Thus they also record the moment of trauma itself and act, like memories, as persistent markers of a past that persists troublingly into the present. The image isolates the visual elements of the moment from those beyond the frame, detaching them, and reproducing them in new and potentially unrelated contexts. This recalls the P.T.S.D. symptoms identified by Feinstein amongst photographers and other journalists for whom images return unsought.

Marinovich remembers a recurrent nightmare that haunted Kevin Carter's dreams:

In the dream, he was near death, lying on the ground, crucified to a wooden beam, unable to move. A television camera with a massive lens zoomed closer and closer in on his face, until Kevin would wake up screaming [...] It was all that he imagined our subjects must feel towards us in their last moments as we documented their deaths. (55)

In a variation of the dream Kevin was the photographer and the victim would grab for

him, “holding him captive with bloody hands” (55). Kevin’s dream telescopes the horror of the photographer and his subject, in a moment of traumatic recognition and isolation. Kevin’s dream can be read as an epiphany but it is not one that can herald change. Like photographs, these unsought recurrences of moments past reappear disruptively without necessarily imparting any redemptive understanding.

The act of photography in Kevin’s dream becomes a nightmarish version of what LaCapra refers to as “empathic unsettlement”, whereby the witness put himself “in the other’s position while recognizing the difference of that position and hence not taking the other’s place” (78). In his dream Kevin over-identifies with those he photographs but this occurs against his will. We might understand this in LaCapra’s terms of “acting out” (70). However, this does not negate the ambiguous quality of “empathic unsettlement” that clings to the act of photography and the photograph itself. When Marinovich claims, at the opening of the book, that he “wanted to capture that fear” that he senses among the peace-keepers, he does not imply that he wants to feel that fear himself. The camera interposes itself between him and the soldiers’ fear, a mediator, as it were, of empathic unsettlement. The camera and its photograph appear to erase and yet actually ensure the difference of position, the inability to inhabit the other’s place, which LaCapra demands.

LaCapra’s demand for an observance of difference is all the more loaded for the four white photographers at the centre of *The Bang-Bang Club*. As white South African males, their social and political privilege is evident. Although witnessing the same events as the black South Africans of the Soweto townships where they worked, their responses are, and are expected to be, different as a result of that privilege. Of course, there is also the significant difference that they were, at least in theory, witnesses of, as opposed to willing or unwilling participants in, the violence they photographed. Implicit in at least some of the criticism that the book received on publication is a judgment that, as white professional males, their trauma counts for less than, or can only count as part of, the larger national trauma of the final violent days of Apartheid.⁸ Indeed, the book incorporates an example of such a critique in the

comments of Distance, a member of an A.N.C. self-defence unit who they meet in an area where a fellow photographer had been shot a month earlier. When they mention him, Distance replies: “I am not sorry your friend Abdul was killed. It is good that one of you dies. Nothing personal, but now you feel what is happening to us every day” (129). There is no answer to this, but the acuteness of Distance’s words does not undo the reality of the photographers’ own trauma that results from their experience of witnessing.

If the authors are separated from their subjects by the privileges of their skin colour, they are also separated from their neighbours and even from their loved ones by the experiences of their work. Marinovich recalls a regular Sunday morning in which he and his neighbours engage in the familiar ritual of cleaning the car. But whilst his neighbours are sprucing up their cars for the weekend, Marinovich is “grimly trying to wash someone’s brain out of the cloth upholstery of my back seat” where a man had died the day before as Marinovich tried to rush him to hospital through the Soweto streets (52). Marinovich’s resentment of his neighbours and the “simple dirt” of their cars recalls Erikson’s description of how trauma can divide communities: “The sense that others do not fully appreciate what is happening to one can easily ripen into a feeling of having been let down, of having been left out of the human community, even of having been betrayed” (Convery, *et al.*, xiii). Explaining the emergence of formerly hidden fault lines within communities, he notes that these usually “divide the people affected by the event from the people spared” (236). Marinovich feels as if his neighbours “were occupying a different planet”, because he is unable to explain to them that he is cleaning brains from his car upholstery: “when we tried to discuss those little telling details from incidents in the townships with people who had never experienced them, the usual response was either disgust or uncomprehending stares” (53). This frustration is matched by the realization that, “despite our attempts to tell the truth, through our reporting and in our captions, our pictures played an unwitting part in the deception” of the South African government: while these pictures showed the uniformed white policemen apparently investigating

the violence, they could not show “that they had arrived hours after the emergency call for help [... and] the absolute certainty of the survivors” of the security force’s involvement (58-59). The shared sense of frustration and alienation creates a corresponding sense of fragile community between these photographers, of the kind that Erikson outlines in his conclusion to *A New Species of Trouble*. These men remain divided, willingly and unwillingly, from each other and from the communities around them. The experience of this division is alienating yet that experience of alienation is one that is held in common, one that creates a tentative bond of understanding.

In their book Marinovich and Silva utilize the kind of formal tropes that Eaglestone proposes are common to holocaust literature (“historical, diverse and complex narrative framing devices, moments of epiphany, and confused time schemes” [79]), not because they are consciously or unconsciously borrowing from this literature but because these particular tropes allow the authors to convey a sense of the disruptive affect of traumatic experience. At the heart of their presentation lies the issue of disconnection, which appears both as trauma-inducing and as a consequence of trauma. This disconnection operates at various levels within what we might see as a matrix of trauma, even contributing to LaCapra’s concept of “empathic unsettlement” and its need for a recognition of difference. Indeed, in the light of Erikson’s discussions, this disconnectedness, the multiplicity of experiences and responses, need not be seen as somehow undermining theoretical frameworks for comprehending trauma. This disconnectedness is demonstrably an implicit part of the matrix of trauma and as such, its recognition within trauma scholarship allows us to speak of trauma both more comprehensively and more precisely.

Notes

¹ See also Schaffer, Kay and Sidonie Smith. *Human Rights and Narrated Lives: The Ethics of Recognition*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. 19-23.

²Erikson is quoting here from his earlier book, *Everything in its Path: Destruction of Community in the Buffalo Creek Flood*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976.

³ Wolfenstein, Martha. *Disaster: A Psychological Essay*. Glencoe, Ill: Free Press, 1957. Cited in Erikson (236).

⁴Erikson gives the example of Communist Romania.

⁵ We might note similar feelings expressed by those bearing witness to victim testimonials. See Krog, Antjie. *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa*. New York: Three Rivers Press. 51.

⁶ For example, Chapter 2 bears the title “Ah, A Pondo – He Deserved to Die”, and an epigraph from a “traditional Acholi funeral song”, “Death has killed the happiest / Death has killed the happiest / Death has killed the great one that I trusted” (4); Chapter 14 is called “Show us your Dead”, and has an epigraph from Ken Oosterbroek’s diary, “I hope I die with the best fucking news pic of all time on my neg. – it wouldn’t be worth it otherwise . . .” (154).

⁷ See Quayson, Ato. “Symbolisation Compulsions: Freud, African Literature and South Africa’s Process of Truth and Reconciliation”. *Cambridge Quarterly* 30.3 (2001): 191-214.

⁸ For example see Creen, Mike. “Snapshots of a Hidden War”. *The Christchurch Press* (23rd February 2002): 16.

Notes on Contributor

Katherine Isobel Baxter is a Lecturer at Stanford University. Her main research interest is twentieth century and contemporary literature from and about West Africa, and in particular, the interplay between literature and law during the late colonial and early postcolonial period. Previous publications include *Joseph Conrad and the Swan Song of Romance* (2010), and, with Richard Hand, *Joseph Conrad and the Performing Arts* (2009). In 2004 the Joseph Conrad Society of America honoured her with the Bruce Harkness Young Conrad Scholar Award.

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