

# TECHNOLOGIES OF TRAUMA

CULTURAL FORMATIONS  
OVER TIME

YASMIN IBRAHIM



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# Technologies of Trauma: Cultural Formations Over Time

BY

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United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited  
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2022

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**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80262-136-5 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-80262-135-8 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-80262-137-2 (Epub)



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*To Fuzz and Nabs – Remember that standing up is part of ‘unwounding’. So do.*

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# Foreword

## Where Goes the Afterlife of Trauma?

In 2019, a toddler, Sujith Wilson stuck in a borehole in Tamil Nadu, South India, became the object of media spectacle. The tiny body of the two-year-old toddler wedged inside the borehole possessed public imaginary for days. Trapped inside an abandoned 180m deep well, Sujith was consumed through his unfortunate entrapment as a mediated event unfolding through media gaze in real time. The incident ended when his decomposed and dismembered body was retrieved through a 'special equipment' (BBC, 2019) after five days. The eventual retrieval of his body and the rescue operations were reported in intimate detail over media with every new information shared widely to a hungry public on social media. The tragic event orchestrated a media theatre of curiosity and in the process it ignited debates over an array of social and environmental issues such as the dangers uncovered borewells posed to the public to the government's lack of governance, the need to invent special equipment to rescue people trapped in boreholes including the kinds of hydraulic drilling machines that would be required to extract the trapped toddler. These incessant flows of discussions and accounts produced a mill of content that kept the tragic event in circulation and in public consciousness. These articulations in the public sphere conjoined media narratives with user-generated content online, fusing the traumatic predicament of the toddler wrangling with death with the agitated discourses on how best to save the young life. His heart-breaking plight igniting mass prayers from the public from different religions sutured this mediated trauma with sacred rituals of salvation and public expressions of pity. Trauma as adjoined to rituals of redemption and its repetition as a socio-cultural format assigns technologies as implicated in the production of a social order and sensemaking as evidenced through the sacred rituals coalescing with the profane imminence of death as a possibility that would cut short the young life. Trauma as indoctrinated through the ordering and disordering orientations of technologies is secured through this spectacular economy in which the minutiae of the suffering child is conveyed through non-stop tweets and the re-telling of the tragic event through multi-media formats. The tragic predicament of Sujith as dually entrapped inside the borehole and within the media machinery produces an invocation to understand the construction of this trauma aesthetic and its 'afterlife' within a moral economy in which technologies re-pathologize trauma through an interplay with human curiosity and affectivity but most importantly in its ability to reproduce social relations through the spectacular afforded through its technicity. Sujith's parents who are poor farmers became backdrops in which a whole public imaginary of the best clever

techniques to rescue the toddler re-modulated trauma as owned and co-produced by technologies with a connectivity and consciousness to the event, and an insatiable public enmeshed in the accounting of the trapped life. Sujith Wilson's trauma and premature death remain as trauma's afterlife in the digital sphere co-located with information on boreholes as death traps and the boreholes as a symbol of water scarcity and the visceral politics of water in India (Sirur, 2019). Sujith's trauma is drowned out through the landscape of 27 million borewells in India, with many abandoned as they no longer supply water.

The interface of technologies with trauma produces an afterlife enlarging it within a public sphere of distribution and equally through the capacities of technologies to re-work trauma and to re-distribute affect as part of its storytelling modes. The reworking, re-making and the enlargement of trauma through the technicity of technologies is the emphasis of this book, moving into its uncertainty in the digital age when the subjects of pathos and trauma are resurrected and transacted through the user-generated economy such that images and narratives are recombined with disruptive creativity of consuming audiences. Moving from oral societies to literate communities which archive, record and replicate stories and narratives, our bind with the technological is an ongoing trope effacing the distinctions between the public and private, and between the primal and intimate. Beyond second-hand witnessing and testimonials through technological forms, the co-relationship between trauma and technologies enacts trauma as residing within the everyday as narratives, stories and events which draw us to feel with others, for others or to withhold or perhaps even suspend our affectivity in view of trauma as a resonant genre saturating our newsfeeds with its banality. Through time trauma as re-populated through technologies which abstract it consigns trauma as both disembodied and extracted from the psychological, affective and experiential to be transferred onto the bowels of technical terrains. With both the distributive and disruptive as part of its technicity, the technological interweaves trauma as a bricolage of the spectacular, enmeshing public consumption, human suffering and gaze constituting these as modes of transgression in their right. The transferability of affect and the ability to store, record and archive trauma produces an afterlife of trauma such that trauma remains amenable to abstraction between projects of memory, in instilling the sacred and the potential to invoke the profane through acts of violation as violence.

With the coronavirus pandemic and social distancing, the shifting of offline lives to online platforms witnessed new rituals including virtual funerals, make-shift mass graves and the live-streaming of death ceremonies. COVID-19 produced excess deaths such that trauma and technologies intertwined with our secluded lives, re-staging them through technological platforms with the screen as the interface of orientation with the external world occupied by the virus. Technical architectures and their modes of interface hence remodulate trauma through new norms which emerge, and with the pandemic the sanitization of death, disease and dying as part of our modern human condition were further virtualized and re-curated as images and live-streamed events emphasizing the loss of a tangible tactile world of contact, a non-proximate screened world of virtual

humanity. Trauma streamed through conference platforms and death presented through screened cultures revived trauma through the spectre of the screen orifice as imperceptible and visible through technologies which capture and project, importing the stark reality of loss and human touch and death marked through the disappearance of bodies. Trauma as a pervasive condition of the pandemic played out through fallen bodies and inaccessible bodies in hospitals and care homes. Here again the interplay between trauma and the violence of the virus revealed the deep-seated social and economic inequalities in societies, the trauma of the virus revealing the colour line of those in the front line and equally the violent targeting of the Other as those responsible for unleashing the virus (Ibrahim, 2020). If the virus marks out the human respiratory system for attack, bodies in trauma as asphyxiated by the virus are intertextualized with violent and brutal imagery in the 'Blackened' gasp 'I can't breathe'. The struggle to breathe within the pandemic is refracted against the breathlessness of the trauma of racism. There is a vaccination for the former. But sadly not yet for the latter.

Technologies of trauma reveal the social arrangements within which trauma is arranged and co-produced through social relations. Equally our engagements with mediated trauma beyond the recognition of human vulnerability as a universally shared attribute (Butler, 2012) reveals who is constituted as the human subject and how our orientations and affectivity to feel for the other may be mediated through this conjecture, invoking a longer trajectory of how our gaze has been ideologically patterned over time. The digital sphere and the flow of the subjects of trauma into its terrain are not about the complete breakage between the past and present but its co-location with a multitude of agenda which can ahistoricize the present without entirely truncating the historical formulation of bodies as destined for the sacrificial or ordaining some as flesh. New regimes of misogyny, mirth and subversion await the subjects of trauma online simulating new modalities of violence with digital gameplay. The re-mixing of temporalities through features such as live-streaming invests trauma through technologies of speed and turbulence in the digital age, in which both trauma and violence coalesce, targeting flesh and affect without obliterating the distinctions between real and the simulated.

Yasmin Ibrahim

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## Chapter 1

# Introduction: Mediated Trauma and Modernity

The notion of ‘technologies of trauma’ interrogates the entanglement of technologies and their transmutation of trauma within modernity; or trauma as archived, disseminated, distributed and re-released through technologies transfiguring it through technical capacities and temporalities to re-produce it as a cultural artefact for the consumption of Others and perhaps publics far removed from the original encounter of trauma. The mediation of trauma and its modes of consumption through technologies have immense potential to disrupt trauma intrinsically, in reifying it, in ascribing materiality to the experiential and in terms of its disembodiment signifying a transcendence of the intangible to the tangible and its symbolic as well as its aesthetic re-articulation within public spheres and communities of affect. Modernity and its insatiable bind with this ‘trauma-aesthetic’ recode trauma through simulated forms such that trauma straddles between the forbidden and fiction igniting new modes of social imaginary invoking a moral imagination that can be open-ended yet ideologically governed through projects of memory and commemoration. Trauma as a site of consumption and the everyday is about relocating its moral economy through its reproduction of social relations and the configurations of power. The co-location of trauma, technologies and spectacularization as a mode of consumption and morality tethers trauma within an invidious state of being constantly abstracted in form and function imbuing it through a pervasive turbulence and instability. Additionally, trauma’s intimate promiscuity with technologies in modernity reinvoles the vulnerability of the human condition and our woundedness as the human subject in which modernity’s valorization of rationality and reason alongside the abstraction of trauma as a popular cultural form produces degrees of dissonance in trauma’s interplay with the subject of modernity and in the technological age transcending into the intensity of the digital sphere. In the latter the speed of travel of content, its dissemination, the formation of publics and the consumption of content disaggregated from its origins within repeat modes alter our empathic relationship with trauma. Despite rationality as a patriarchal bio-political control of the emotional human subject in modernity (Grossberg, 1992), the role and rule of emotions as part of the media-saturated world recombines trauma as an immanent aspect of sense-making, communion, place making and equally alienation, distanciation and Othering or as compassion

## 2 *Technologies of Trauma*

fatigue instilling trauma as part of the popular within a consumption economy of instant gratification. For Grossberg (1992), certain ideologies resonate through affective engagements enabling the internalization and naturalization of ideologies. Jaggar (1989, p. 150), in the discussion of 'emotional hegemony', locates emotions as positioning individuals within relations of power or structures of dominance yet requiring the need to review the ways in which we define emotions in the present day context through the cognizance of its relevance as an ideological construct that is 'pre social'. It does the work of Butler's (1993) notion of 'interpellation' to denote the ways in which the subject is constructed by being positioned into socio-cultural relations to constitute the grid of cultural intelligibility. Within this assemblage is the role of technologies in their ability to enforce through repetition whilst concealing the ideological terrain. Raymond Williams (1975, p. 47), in his discussion of 'structure of feelings', assembles it as public consciousness guided through emotions such that it constitutes the 'the felt sense of the quality of life at a particular place and time' or the cultural consciousness of living within a socio-cultural context as the relations of experiences to institutional and social structures. The structure of feelings pointed to the 'lived and felt' dimensions which sat beyond the articulated values and belief systems. The fusing of the technical with signs and signification of the symbolic and the generative mobilization of the affective is a distinctive element of technologies of trauma. Its transformation of consciousness of the subject through its technical substrates defines its intrinsic quality.

Berlant (2001, p. 43) defines trauma as the indefinable thing, 'an event beyond the eloquence of history or the literal, unsymbolizable mark of pure violence, or its opposite, violence congealed in an intensified representation'. As physical injury to the body or conceived as a wound, trauma encompasses psychological and emotional distress of the individual to a collective encounter as a socio-cultural phenomenon and equally our responses to events which ignite loss, violence, grieving and mourning. Trauma can induce a temporal breakage, shock, rupture and dislocation such that it is not experienced in its immediacy of occurrence in terms of space and time (Caruth, 1995, 2001), neither is it foreclosed through an embodied encounter with a capacity to produce affectivity without the bodily encounter. Trauma as dispossessed of time and space is able to transcend spatially and temporally to occupy human consciousness through its interplay with human and mnemonic memory. Trauma is entwined with repetition, recall, prosthetic memory, amnesia and erasure, underscoring its promiscuous and unstable relationship with technologies which are pledged to the performative, in making the private public and releasing trauma through its circulatory circuits of sentimentality. While the distinctions between private and public are historically and culturally relative, what is at stake in the definitional boundary between the two and the regulation of social order (Kuhn, 1984). The transcendence of emotions from the private into the public can further compound the distinction between the two spheres. Campbell (1998) evidences this through the death of Princess Diana in which the public outpouring of private grief mobilized an agentic public to be in dissonance with the Royal Family as an act of outing the 'establishment' as unfeeling and out of touch with public sentiment. Trauma

adduces this permeability between the public and private and equally its ability to collapse the event through its fetishizing tendencies.

## The Transfiguration of Trauma

If trauma is about the recognition of human vulnerability as a universal, it is equally about the construction of who we perceive as human, particularly in extreme modes of trauma which fictionalize the encounter of the Other when an encounter crosses the limits of our perceptibility or ethical and moral boundaries. Trauma repressed through media technologies has been a constant mode of fascination for broadcasting and its potential for event-making converging through the tragic and pathos of the human condition as a recurring obsession. Through time print capitalism, particularly newspapers, realized the social capital adduced through trauma in the guise of human-interest stories. Combining these with crimes, violence and unimaginable horror print then, later, broadcast technologies socialized audiences into trauma as a popular genre. The rule of emotions through the tragic predicament of Others is a familiar trope. The mediation of popular culture and its co-location with mass media, re-produced the domain of trauma as distinctly re-imagined through the mediation of technologies. The transfiguration of the trauma through technologies as opposed to trauma in its own right is the emphasis here. Moving beyond the reading of trauma as feelings, it emphasizes the role of trauma as part of a wider cultural architecture of mediated distribution in which the domestication of trauma through technologies implicates our co-production of violence, subjugation and equally in the production of who we construct as subjects deserving of empathy, who we classify as the subjects adduced through victimhood and how trauma can ‘fix’ interpretation of events, encoding trauma within the extraordinary bracketing out of the trauma of the everyday. The circulatory power of media to distribute trauma inserts trauma as part of the banal despite its obsession with the event-based hermeneutics of trauma. Technologies of trauma concern the consumption rituals which legitimate trauma as a form of authentication of an event or phenomenon or the legitimation to feel, grieve and mourn *en masse*. Trauma entrapped through the disaster event is elongated as part of the risk society in which the reporting of the disaster event is enlarged through broadcast technologies. Trauma can mediate the creation of a political community, invoking a sense of us and them (Hutchinson, 2013). Hence trauma as a cultural repetition of the media equally constitutes part of this ritual. Caruth (1995, pp. 4–5) observes that repetition is associated with the structures of trauma. Within this is the non-visible that is an immanent part of trauma such that technologies cannot completely capture retaining a blindness even in the visible (Phelan, 2001, p. 33). Technologies of trauma pledged to the spectacular are equally intrinsically bound with the invisible and violence which spectacularization imbues in its interface with trauma. The power to gaze and accord pity are then part of the relationality of power and subjugation in society. Trauma produces its own innate codes of bio-political control through its rule of emotions and equally in the withholding

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of sentiment. Intrinsically pegged to forms of knowledge production (Berlant, 2001), trauma coalesces with the logic of technological formats. In the process, trauma is constantly remade through technology which amplifies trauma through its technical capacities. This dialectics of the ordinariness of trauma and media's reformulation as the exceptional situates trauma within the nexus of bounded reality and its unbounded fantasies of loss and quest for recovery. Trauma is both devoid of language yet 'overflowing with meaning' (Berlant, 2001, p. 43).

Trauma conjoined with technologies becomes an altered form infused through the tangible/intangible, and equally in terms of the visible and invisible in which the imperceptible prevails despite trauma's mediated sharing. It imposes its own temporality of seemingly weaving in the historic into a linearity of events, which Feldman terms as the 'medicalized syllogistic structure' (2004, p. 170) in which trauma-tropes are subsumed through complex horrors into linear history. Mediated theatre of representations entails the construction of the incomprehensibility of the event as temporary and narrated towards the recourse of breakthrough, and in the process, rationalizes the irrationality of violence, smoothening out the rupture of the trauma event. The object of intimacy, in this case the trauma subject as the 'object of desire' (see Berlant, 2007), presents problems in the poetics of attachment in the act of consumption when the trauma can be chipped away in objectifying the subject. The fetishization of mediated trauma, rather than lending to the identification, leads to self-repetition and habituated banality (Berlant, 2001, 2004).

Trauma's designation of travel and receptivity pressed through technologies opens up our relationship with trauma in modernity as a cultural phenomenon in its own right; its manifest re-articulation as an artefact when re-appropriated through technologies which re-distribute it invoke commodification and marketization of emotions such that it can ignite new political and socio-cultural consciousness but equally apathy. Trauma's intimacy with technologies and its potential to co-habit in public spheres implore the need to constantly reassess the ethical limits of the transcendence of trauma into public spheres, its commodification, and now its reconfiguration into different formats in the digital economy, including memes, GoPro cameras offering experiences akin to first-person shooter perspective, and insider humour which can repossess the tragic through the ludic, or the sacred through the profane or perhaps the extraordinary and ordinary click-bait content. The unbounded co-existence of pity and perversity for the wounded re-drafts trauma's unsafe passage into the digital economy.

If modernity is imagined through technological developments and if we understand the industrial age as one of machines reconfiguring work and leisure (Thompson, 1995), of connecting remote communities through transportation links or creating consuming communities through mass media, the relationship between media technologies and its re-distribution of emotions and its modes of re-imagining the world and the woundedness of Others opens up additional challenges in the digital economy in which new rules of sentimentality emerge. Yet the consumption of trauma as a complex phenomenon may come to reside on the appropriation of content as commodity without a necessary reflexive engagement with the subjects of suffering and in specific terms one's own

emotional or affective involvement with it. Trauma as part of the materiality or the commodification of content and its technological formation again illuminates the incoherence of trauma's bind with technologies.

## Producing the Subject of Trauma

If mass media has been implicated in the production of imagined communities (Anderson, 2006) or in narration or social construction of a national imagination (Bhaba, 1990), the role of mass technologies in transmuting and distributing trauma is involved in the ethics and hermeneutics of the production of the human subject, particularly the gendered or racialized subject and whether they are amenable to the politics of pity. If broadcasting technologies like television, radio, cinema or mass technologies such as print are implicated in creating communion, solidarity, connectivity or perhaps disenfranchisement, the prowess of technologies to distribute emotions and rule through sentiment and affectivity re-grounds the need to understand the interplay between technologies' capacities to distribute and disseminate the affective, particularly trauma. The relationship between modernity, technology and the curation of space and time or sense of community invokes the intrinsic capacities of technologies to mediate human senses, particularly trauma as a mechanism which can configure us as human or otherwise. If media and its constant production of the extraordinary is projected through disasters, tragedies and catastrophes of the modern world, its socialization of our senses to anticipate the next 'event' and to saturate our senses with the pathos of the vulnerable human sutures trauma as both part of media socialization and the ways in which we mediate our lifeworlds through capacities for simulation and to be simulated through trauma. Hence media consumption, as Ravenscroft (2004) argues, is intimately implicated in the production of subjectivity whereby the act of consumption 'was part of the processes through which we were brought into our white subjectivities'. This point was made in his discussing of the imagery of the Vietnam War and the production of the racialized subject. Trauma bound with the dramaturgical platforms of media consumption works through capacities of vision and sound, and today in terms of the immersive, simulated and the mnemonic as part of a viral configuration.

Trauma as a private, individual or collective experience when repressed through technologies is reformulated through the architecture of sentiment on which mass media thrives. To move the masses, to commune through the emotive and to mourn in technicolour re-grounds trauma within an affective, mediated and technological architecture in which truth, testimony and witnessing assume the primacy of the second-hand gaze. Rituals of legitimation through consumption and aesthetic gaze are such that trauma is articulated through its ontological paradigms as an interstitial aspect between human cognition and emotions. Mass media and its rule of sentiment as a mechanism of interface with the public converts lived trauma, witnessing and testimony, re-articulating them as artefacts which archive, distribute and transform through its formats. This constitutes a disruption in its own right further compounded through its co-habitation with

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permutations of power and ideology in the institutionalization of memory, reifying trauma as a cultural commodity and producing its own modes of interpretation and meaning making. These further coalesce with institutions of memory such as archives, museums and projects of national commemoration, valorizing some forms of trauma whilst actively pledged to the erasure of Others. Hence coupling with media as technologies of trauma, these sites are involved in the ‘fixing’ of traumatic memories. Young (1998, p. 5), in his exegesis of Holocaust memorials, posits that in assigning a monumental form to memory, ‘we to some degree divested ourselves of the obligation to remember’. Arguing that the colonial memory is a haunting within the postcolonial epoch, O’Riley (2007) argues that the contemporary contexts function in relation to colonial memory, weaving in an intertextuality which naturalizes the relationality of power despite the contested nature of cultural memory. Ahmed (2007) articulates this as a particular orientation to the world where familiarity or distance is pre-constituted.

Given the speed with which digital technologies distribute text and images or convert them through their multiple formats, technologies are invested in the remaking of trauma in the post-digital age in view of technologies as deeply enmeshed in our daily lives. New modes of technologically mediated phenomena such as envisioning and bombing targets through drones, or violent digital games which represent first-shooter perspectives, rebound with livestreaming as an affordance of new digital technologies which reverse the vantage point to that of the perpetrator (Ibrahim, 2020). The capturing of our daily lives, the profiling of our fears and insecurities, our ailments and illnesses, resurrects trauma as situated through the sharing economy and as its virtuous constitution, with capital’s enforcement of ‘shareability’ as part of its primitive accumulation of value (Ibrahim, 2021). Similarly, Berlant (2011, p. 10) contends that trauma as not exceptional to history or consciousness and situated through the pervasiveness of precarity and sustained vulnerability is in effect ‘crisis ordinariness’. Hence the ordinariness of trauma discourses which saturate our contemporary lives tends to obscure the structural violence and collective exposure to it, retaining trauma as an important aspect of modernity. Approaching trauma as an affective form of knowledge opens up the need to understand trauma within this affective economy in which identities can be negotiated or engender a community to violence in the name of trauma (Coddington & Micieli-Voutsinas, 2017).

### **Eurocentric Master Narrative**

The gaze over others, the Other as a renewed target of our obsession, and the means with which we witness the pathos of tragic and wasted lives, open up ‘technologies of trauma’ in our contemporary economy as an unstable open-ended theatre historically bound with Eurocentricity and coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000). Dipesh Chakrabarty (1992) posits the intransigent character of European History, which means that all other histories fall within its master narrative, locating relationality of space-time through its axis of configuration. The sharing of sociality is equally about the exclusion of some as part of

this enterprise of sharing. If contemporary envisioning of life yields through the digital sphere with bystanders viewing and validating our experiences, trauma as life theatre online is an ambient project in which uncertainties of gaze coalesce with human vulnerabilities as a universal proposition (Butler, 2004) and woundedness of the human condition such that it ingests the digital architecture of the platform economy and its ability to act as a 'leaky container' (Lyon, 2003). Ahmed (2004), in *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, articulates emotions as a complicit category conjoined with violence in circumscribing who is perceptible as the human subject and as part of the organizing process which induces exclusion of certain subjects, imposing a boundary between the human and non-human and, tangentially, who we can feel for empathetically. Similarly, Butler's (2004) delineation of whose lives are grievable aggregates the politics of trauma as bound through the frames of who we position within the domain of humanity. If the contemporaneous landscape of life shared online is uncertain, fluid and always in the process of forming and dissolving through the gaze and validation of Others, trauma and its transmutation through technologies is further destabilized in this proposition. It is historically abstracted through time with its residues forming and consolidating through new technologies which can record, amplify and transform trauma through these retentive tendencies whilst conjoined with the ideological which privileges some to record Others or speak for the trauma of Others (Spivak, 2003).

In positing the notion of national sentimentality, Berlant (2000) situates a liberal rhetoric in which a nation avows to be affected by the trauma and suffering of Others through empathic identification and to feel the pain of Others. Our intimacy and distance with the trauma of Others has been shaped through technologies which provide access to feel and grieve as an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 2006). Our sense of belonging is equally shaped through how we process the trauma of another. By emphasizing the notion of 'imagination', Anderson lays the focus on culture and creative processes, and his treatise celebrated the role of the collective imaginary and its fluidity, re-igniting the imagined social construct of a nation and the means by which cultural flows produced a social bind. The role of artefacts in producing a national consciousness fuses with the mass media and its ability to distribute emotion and its mechanisms for affective bio-political and ideological control over time. In highlighting the role of the national press and its relationship with the imagination of a national identity, it provides a means to think through the modalities of 'us and them'. Castelló (2016, p. 62) points out that Anderson's print capitalism work through the idea of screen capitalism such that communication performs as part of capitalism's symbolic reproduction. The psycho-dynamics of this symbolic economy opens up a complex domain of sense-making, mediated through technologies' affective capacities. Luc Boltanski, in speaking of suffering and distance, articulates that:

...when suffering is shown to you at a distance, you cannot react. You cannot verify whether the suffering really exists. And in any case, you cannot do anything to alleviate it. Rather, this is where feelings come into play. Although the regime of action is not that

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of love as agape (*régime d'amour comme agape*), it is no longer part of the issue of justice; the issue is actually one of pity.

(cf. [Basaure, 2011](#), p. 363)

Here the distance is not physical but one between 'classes', making a distinction between the fortunate and unfortunate ([Boltanski, 1999](#), pp. 4–5) where the politics of suffering is based on a spectacle or the 'observation of the unfortunate by those who do not share their suffering' ([Boltanski, 1999](#), p. 3). Hence technologies do not just represent social divisions but re-produce them ([Solomon-Godeau, 1991](#)), positioning subjects of suffering and trauma within power hierarchies and within shadow archives ([Sekula, 1981](#)). [Butler \(2004\)](#), in employing Levinas' concept of 'the face', contends that the precariousness of Others and ourselves prompts reflections into our mutual interdependence with one another in terms of ethical responsibility. Our bodies as sites of vulnerability and desire in our interface with Others expose us both to potential loss and violence. The politics of pity has the potential to reinforce the very patterns of political and economic subordination as the source of suffering in the first place ([Spelman, 1997](#)). Trauma and its over-representation present a detriment to the Others such that their trauma can be surmounted only when others feel for them. As such socio-economic relations can structure affective responses to trauma ([Ahmed, 2004](#)).

If discourses of enlightenment and modernity invoke a rationalist paradigm as part of our ontological reality, these associations are often projected onto technologies, particularly in the production of science wherein technologies appropriate a neutral mode of revealing scientific knowledge as 'objective'. Modernity itself conceives technology through its progressive tendencies. Technological innovation and its discourse of technological breakthrough often truncates its tryst with power and coloniality through time. Technology renews itself as a modern construct, and its newer iterations and developments are often a seduction to foreclose its historicity of violence and subjugation of Others in imperial and colonial expansion from the North to the Global South. The realm of technology as an area of study is re-imagined through its renewed sanitization in modernity. Whilst it is subsumed in the critique of labour exploitation, reconfiguration of work and leisure or the production of surplus value through Marxist critiques of capitalism, its symbolic role in the elongation of the symbolic reproduction of coloniality of power in its ability to rule through sentimentality is less explored. Racial capitalism's architectural conjecture entails a symbolic and cultural flow and circulation of the representations of humanity and its legitimization of emotions as 'strategic formations' ([Foucault, 1980](#)). For Foucault, the operation of modern power as strategic formations entails discourses, institutions and technologies, invoking both explicit assertions and silence or 'the said as much as the unsaid' ([Foucault, 1980](#), p. 194). Media technologies are then tightly entwined and implicated in this assemblage and hence trauma and its authentication of who are subjects of trauma or subjected to trauma are then reconfigured through the value systems of media platforms including the 'trial by media' and its puerile gaze as a form of legitimization. The right to trauma is distilled through the