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Drawing a veil

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RICARDS

Drawing a Veil

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Post Tense

> ...is that the secret meaning of the word story, do you think: a storing-place of memories? (J.M. Coetzee *Foe*)
>
> Memories are killing (Samuel Beckett *The Expelled*).

Towards the end of 1995 I had the good fortune to be invited to participate in an exhibition titled *Faultlines: Enquiries into Truth and Reconciliation*. At the time the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was really just beginning its work.[1] For curator and writer Jane Taylor, the TRC begged a cultural response. She conceived of *Faultlines* to do just this. The exhibition opened in early June 1996 in B Block of the Cape Town Castle. Perhaps the oldest habitable colonial relic in these parts, the Castle of Good Hope is still an operational military base.

Some year and half later, Angolan artist, curator and writer Fernando Alvim contacted me, having heard about the installation I had made for *Faultlines*. He was interested in that part of the installation which engaged with South African involvement in the Angolan war. Alvim had devised an exhibition called *memórias intimas marcas*, which sought to establish a cultural dialogue between Cuban, South African, and Angolan experiences of the war. The Angolan war, for Alvim's purposes, began in mid 1975 with the first significant military incursions by South African and terminated with the battle of Cuito Cuanivale in early 1988. This battle effectively signalled the end of direct and open South African military adventurism in that part of the world.[2] *Memórias intimas marcas* opened at the same site as *Faultlines*, the Castle of Good Hope, in August 1997. It then moved on to Johannesburg, opening in April 1998. The show is currently travelling Europe.

I: Blindspots

In a rather piecemeal and personal way, I felt I might best contribute to this book by writing a little about my participation in *Faultlines* and *memórias intimas marcas*. Both exhibitions offered me ways to explore and reflect on hitherto neglected and disturbing aspects of the past in which I had intimate involvement. The pressures of increasingly violent repression and resistance within the country from the late 70's through the 80's, made such exploration and reflection impossible. There was a liberation war to be fought.

These two exhibitions thus made it possible to materialize, explore and reflect publicly what I had consigned to imperfect forgetting. This process of exploration and reflection of which I speak, which includes this writing, has often proved awkward. It raises many questions. Yet, however difficult, such a project feels important, an importance which hopefully extends beyond the merely personal.

I am obviously not alone in such exploration and reflection. In a sense South African culture is normalising, moving from what Njubulo Ndebele (1991) once called the "spectacular representation" (38) and "obscene social exhibitionism" (37) associated with Apartheid to matters

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1. Its first hearings were held in April 1996 and its provisional report was tabled in Parliament in early November 1988. On the Truth and Reconciliation commission itself, see, *inter alia* Boraine, Levy and Scheffer eds (1994), Boraine and Levy eds (1995), Asmal, Asmal and Roberts (1996) and Krog (1998).

2. For a short but useful account of South African involvement in Angola, see *inter alia* Johnson and Martin (1989). See also Holness (1986), Minter (1994) and the war for Namibia, Herbstein and Evenson (1989).

more ordinary.[3] Yet this normalisation (such as it is), this rescue (such as it is) of the imagination in the everyday is in itself something extraordinary.

It is also probably true to say that with normalisation a climate of self-searching has been developing in sectors of South African culture since the first democratic elections in April, 1994[4]. Amongst the reasons for this must count the effects of that complex staging of intricately mixed discourses of redemption, revenge, bad consciousness and conscience that is the TRC. The process of the TRC has encouraged me in this enterprise, for all its difficulties (both the TRC and this enterprise). In the TRC's often painful public choreography of disclosure, we find the serpentine presence of what Sarah Nuttall (1998) calls the "messy activity of memory" (76). We find, through rough images drawn from ruined and ruinous recollection, unimaginable truths and unspeakable lies taking the same stand. We find, on the same stage, the sticky, bruising bile of bitterness and bad faith in collision with scarcely believable acts of human faith, mercy and tenderness. In the thick of such collisions, in the failures, fissures and faultlines of the TRC, I, like many of my countrymen and women - almost no matter how much we knew and felt or thought we knew and felt - have often been struck dumb. Witnesses, speakers and listeners, have frequently found themselves at a loss for words. Language simply breaks down. Silence, petrified thought, paralysed imagination, have come to feel like a form of wounding, a wounding which seeks articulation, words, re-imagining... and sometimes seeks to be left alone in all its dumb inarticulacy...[5]

A second source of encouragement for this enterprise is perhaps entirely more banal. Artists in post-Apartheid South Africa now, as elsewhere across the global artworld, are enjoying increasing cultural latitude to tell stories of a personal kind. While much of this telling (or imaging) remains trapped in quotidian artworld obligations and orthodoxies, not to mention indulgences (there is a veritable memory-industry out there), the loosely autobiographical project - writ small - remains a rich one.

Also, it seems to me that the relation between individual lived experience in all its aleatoric eccentricity fits ill with the macro-structural positioning of ourselves as subjects. If this is so, we need to consider the virtues and vices of telling stories to be position-specific (according to class, race, gender and other co-ordinates) in ever more complex and nuanced ways. Estrangement of

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3. Ndebele quotes T. T. Moyana's idea that "life itself is too fantastic to be outstripped by the creative imagination" (38). Citing Roland Barthes' work on myth, he speaks of the spectacle of social absurdity under Apartheid as characterised by "triteness and barrenness of thought" and "'the emptying out of interiority to the benefit of its exterior signs'" (38).

4. The significance of these elections hardly needs emphasising. For readers interested in collateral material on the elections see *inter alia* Brink (1994 and 1995), Reynolds ed (1994), Bell and deVilliers eds (1995).

5. Silence and its reasons are deeply enmeshed in our recent history. It is a subject which cannot be broached here, save to remind ourselves of the insidious 'culture' of censorship which prevailed in and pervaded Apartheid South Africa. The impact of this 'culture' on the self was profound and probably unmeasurable (see Merret 1995). It is as difficult to overestimate its effects as it is to remember what it was like then. As J.M. Coetzee (1996) has written, "[w]hen certain kinds of writing and speech, even certain thoughts, become surreptitious activities, then the paranoia of the state is on its way to being reproduced in the psyche of the subject" (35). Referring to the excessiveness of language of those writers afflicted by the paranoia associated with censorship, he argues that the "paranoia is there, on the inside, in their language, in their thinking... the rage one hears... the bafflement... are rage and bafflement at the most intimate of invasions, and invasion of the very style of the self, by a pathology for which there may be no cure" (36). Coetzee does not hold himself exempt from such pressures in his writing on censorship, acknowledging as he does that his "very writing" on the subject "may be a specimen of the kind of paranoid discourse it seeks to describe" (37). Beyond this is the relation of silence, trauma and bearing witness is a deeply complex thing; see *inter alia* Laub (1992).

some order is perhaps always with us, albeit in different ways and for different reasons. Its effects, however, distend and exceed that which is macro-structurally entailed or conditioned. In the unpredictable, liquid spaces contingent on the ill fit between subject and structure - between polymorphous desires and rules, laws, customs and conventions - silence and speech, event and action, truths, half-truths and lies all live in uneven, intricate and conflicted relation to each other. The 'truth' of an autobiographical project however modest, is sometimes important for reasons we least expect. As J. M. Coetzee (1992) has written, "[t]he only sure truth in autobiography is that one's self-interest will be located at one's blindspot" (392).[6]

II: A Bad Memory

A few remarks on memory might be useful before I touch on some historical connections or associations and aesthetic sources which produced, sometimes contingently, sometimes with intent, the set of mnemonics out of which my *Faultlines* and *memórias* installations were drawn. Mnemonic suggests memory. Memory lies at the heart of the project for both exhibitions. Deception, distortion, defence and desire are implicated in the work of memory. In a sense the lie - shaped and vivified by all of these - is made and unmade in memory. To say that my contribution to these two exhibitions is deeply entangled in ideas of what is true and authentic and what not, is not to put it too strongly.

Personal memory is deeply unstable. What memory throws up often suffers not only the insults of passing time but the disfiguring pressures of present needs. Our spoken and imaged recollections are probably no more innocent of self-serving revision and manipulation than our waking expressions. Writing of authenticity, myth and the "spirit of our life stories" Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson (1990) observe, after Freud, that

> memory is inherently revisionist, an exercise in selective amnesia. What is forgotten may be as important as what is remembered. Some relationships will be retrospectively inflated in importance, others devalued. Chance meetings turn into epic encounters which have become momentous in later years. As in a dream, whole sequences of events may be telescoped into a single moment, or conversely the exceptional translated into the habitual. Personal time is notoriously at odds with that of public history, and in a life history the disjunction is widened by the fact that one is faced, for the early years, with the changing time-scales of different phases of childhood... Notions of social space are no less subject to the processes of condensation and displacement.... Like myth, memory requires a radical simplification of its subject matter. All recollections are told from a standpoint in the present. In telling, they need to make sense of the past. That demands a selecting, ordering, and simplifying, a construction of coherent narrative whose logic works to draw the life story towards the fable" (7-8).

A fable may then just be a more-or-less productive form of lying. And we probably lie in our remembering much as we elide in our willful forgetting. If we do not remember, we find what we would forget shadowing our every waking step, looming up as we grow somnambulent... Yet, in remembering too vigilantly, we risk becoming embalmed in, impaled by the past. And, as Beckett (1967) intimates in the rest of the short epigraph above, do we not want remember the better to forget? To put it all behind us?;

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6. For Coetzee, "[a]ll autobiography is storytelling, all writing is autobiography" (391). But, for Coetzee, "[w]hat sets autobiography apart from other biography is, on the one hand, that the writer has privileged access to information and, on the other, that because tracing the line from past to present is such a self-interested enterprise (self-interestd in every sense), selective vision, even a degree of blindness, becomes inevitable - blindness to what may be obvious to any passing observer" (391).

> So you must not think of certain things, of those that are dear to you, or rather you must think of them, for if you don't there is the danger of finding them, in your mind, little by little. That is to say, you must think of them for a while, every day several time a day, until they sink forever in the mud. That's an order (9).

Whatever the case, our haste or slowness to do either marks us, indelibly stigmatising our historical relation to past, present and future. There seems little space for a coherent self poised between the points of this temporal triangle of past, present and future, little balancing of the equivocal Scylla of remembering and Charybdus of forgetting. Art may effect a provisional rescue from the vicissitudes of mental memorialisation.[7] But the fluid and deep duplicities of memory insofar as they infiltrate art undercut whatever consolations art might offer. Art is itself part of being disillusioned.

III: Telling Tales

The illusion of authenticity and the artful vanities of illusionism informed my choosing a particular icon to anchor my installation in *Faultlines* and then *memórias*. This icon is the image of a cloth; the veil of Veronica. Veronica's veil offers an entry to, amongst other things, deeply disputed matters of truth, the covering and uncovering which seem so much part of our histories. I am inclined here to return (at the risk of missing important steps) to the trope of the veil and revelation, the contours of which can be seen in in Njubulo Ndebele's (1998) comments on history, story and truth in the TRC;

> What seems to have happened is that the passage of time which brought forth our freedom has given legitimacy and authority to previously silenced voices. It has lifted the veil of secrecy and state-induced blindness. Where the state sought to hide what it did, it compelled those who were able to see what was happening not to admit the testimony of their own eyes. In this connection, the stories of the TRC represent a ritualistic lifting of the veil and the validation of what was actually seen. They are an additional confirmation of the movement of our society from repression to expression (20).

My interest in this particular image of the veil stems from a passion for the work of Samuel Beckett on the one hand and an affection for 17th century Spanish visionary painting and artistic traditions from early 16th century Northern Europe on the other. These passions and affections are avowedly 'European' and as such deeply implicated the peculiarly religious barbarisms of Western colonialism. This kind of referencing inevitibly stains current struggles for the rootedness in dispersal, struggles to come to terms with the migration of symbols (often under the rubric 'hybridity'), and struggles to engage temporal and spatial conflicts between symbol and location. These struggles are perhaps most dramatically felt in the current dynamics of post-Apartheid nation-building and conflicting ideologies of identity.[8]

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7. There is a bigger question of art as redemption here, on which I touch at the end of this paper.

8. It is important perhaps to point to both a personal and general dimension here. My childhood was marked by quite resolute churchgoing, mainly involving a rather vapid methodism (my father's father being from Cornwall, a miner and a methodist) but contaminated once or twice by holiday 'camps' with virulent baptist sects. The Dutch Reformed Church (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk) also figured through events in my mother's Afrikaans family, which was extensive. I was never confirmed as was customary for my peers, and have always been ill at ease with formal religion. This disease and skepticism doubtless comes partly from deep dislocations and contradicitions in what was said and what was done in 'Christian' South Africa while I was growing up, both on an individual and collective level. It was also doubtless shaped by the fact that I was a mostly indifferent and sometimes reluctant beneficiary of State Christian

The Veronica is an instance of indexical signification. It belongs to a group of images (indices) which Rosalind Krauss (1985), for example, lists as including "palm prints, death masks, cast shadows, the shroud of Turin, or the track of gulls". While the Veronica is less notorious than the Turin shroud (with which it is associated), the claims made for it and the passions it fires would be hardly less profound. The Veronica draws no less discursive blood than the shroud of Turin.[9]

Very briefly the Veronica cloth is linked to the christian Jesus of Nazareth's forced removal to Golgotha. At the sixth station on his long walk, Christ's feet allegedly give way beneath his burden. A woman approaches with a cloth and wipes the man's bloodied, sweating, and probably tearful face. The imprint of that divine face remains on the cloth (Duchet-Suchaux and Pastoureau 1994:338),[10] becomin the first 'true' image of the christian God incarnate. The Veronica belongs to the category of privileged relics in Christian (mostly Catholic) dogma, what Ewa Kuryłuk (1991) terms

> The so-called 'true' images - known under the Greek name *archeiropoietos* (not made by hand) and under various Latin and Latin-Greek hybrids (*vera imago, vera icon, veronica*) - as well as to a broader group of traces and relics testifying to Jesus' actual presence on earth: 'the marks on his knees' on the stone on which he prayed, the 'last prints in the dust of our Lord's feet' on that spot on the Mount of Olives from which he ascended to heaven, or the blood-covered column of flagellation (1).

The origin of the story of this 'true image' is itself shrouded in mystery, the subject of much

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National education. Hindsight has helped make better sense of all these experiences. Up until well into my adult years, round the time of my final operational military camp in 1976, my dissidence (such as it was) was piecemeal, incoherent and regarded as a failure of character. My encounter with liberation theology in the late seventies and early eighties, however, gave me pause to think. While I could appreciate liberation theology's social utility, the courage and comfort it afforded its adherents, my own attitude to organised religion remains unchanged. For some interesting accounts of Christianity and colonialism see *inter alia* de Kok (1996), and, Chidester (1996). The Christian 'bias' of the TRC, often seen as embodied in the person of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, has aroused soem local debate, especially around religiously inflected notions of justice, atonement, confession and forgiveness and related issues; see *inter alia* Botman and Petersen eds (1996). Anthony Holliday (1998) sees the matter differently and argues that "the conception of justice that informed the TRC's proceedings could scarcely be called 'Christian'. Indeed fe [his] preceding analysis is even tolerably close to the mark, those proceedings were wholly uninformed by any religious conception of justice whatsoever" (55).

9. For a fascinating account of indexicality in the stained detail of a 'wound' in the Turin Shroud, see Didi-Huberman (1985). See also Louis Marin (1995), pp.122-124, for an equally provocative account which addresses space, surface and illusionism in Domenico Fetti's *Veil of Veronica* (1613-21) and Philppe de Champaigne's *Veil of Saint Veronica* (n.d.).

10. A popular account (Rev. Daniel A. Lord, S.J, under the imprimature of Francis J. Spellman, D. D. Archbishop, New York) reads: "*Saint Veronica* on the way of the cross. We know of only one important incident in the life of Saint Veronica. This took place on the terrible day of our dear Lord's Passion. Jesus was carrying His cross. All around him the people were laughing and screaming. They were throwing mud in His face. They were spitting upon Him. They tripped Him and made Him fall. Jesus looked around and saw no friends. Everyone seemed to hate him. The Veronica came. She just happened to be in the crowd. She was timid and afraid, but she wanted to help him. So she took the veil off her head. She pushed the soldiers aside. She ran through the crowd. She came to Jesus. He had just fallen and He was too weak to stand up. Lovingly, she wiped His face with her veil. Jesus looked up gratefully. He thanked her with a smile. The soldiers pushed her away. But when she got home and looked at her veil, she found a wonderful thing. On the veil was a beautiful image of Jesus. And Veronica kept that as long as she lived. Her feast is on July 9th".

contestation and criticism.[11]

I want to turn now to the second source for the veil of Veronica, which lies in the work of novelist, poet and playwrite Samuel Beckett. There are two references here. The first is oblique, the second more direct. In the first - a story - the eponymous Watt (Beckett 1988) - ever the innocent - is the target of stone thrown by a woman.[12] The stone bounces off Watt's hat, a prophylactic device topping many of Beckett's major characters. Watt's head remains without injury, but a wound in his right side apparently begins to bleed. His response to these events is to staunch the blood issuing from the mysterious wound. This his does with "the little red sudarium' (30) he carries in his pocket. A *sudarium* appears to be a cloth used for wiping of perspiration and has been explicitly associated with the Veronica.[13]

The second Beckettian reference turns on some evidence that Beckett associated the Veronica with the bloody cloth which originally covered Hamm's head in the opening tableau in the remarkable play **Endgame** (see Baldwin 1981:91 and Gontarski 1992:45). This play, if nothing else, allegorises the master-slave dialectic that structures so many of our social and individual relations, articulating a discourse foreign to very few of us. In this image of a shroud or veil, we might discern many of Beckett's literary preoccupations; matters of memory and trauma, of purgatorial infinitude (usually regressive and entropic), of lifting the veil (so to speak) only to find it screens another veil, and another, and another, and so on, never quite done with. Infinite regression *ad nauseam*. The author puts it cryptically and elyptically in respect of painting; "An unveiling to no end, veil after veil, plane upon plane of partial translucence, and unveiling toward what cannot be unveiled, nothingness, matter anew" (in *Peintres de l'empêchement*).

The Veronica is thus allegedly a *true* image, bearing the direct imprint of Christ's face without the mediation of the human hand. In one way it is perhaps the only 'true' image, the first 'photograph' of the first cause. It speaks directly to concern for the authority of first causes, singular origins, and authorises the entire teleology of divine energies and their consequences.[14] Both the Veronica and its more famous comrade cloth the Turin shroud bear the awesome burden

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11. The story is itself suspect. It apparently enters as a Latin interpolation to an apocryphal text by Nicodemus dating from about the fifth century. The name Veronica has itself been the subject of discussion, but most likely bears some relation to *vera icona*, a hybrid phrase - half Latin, half Greek - meaning true image (Duchet-Suchaux and Pastoureau 1994:338; see also Kuryluk 1991:1-2). The Turin Shroud is also a profoundly contested image, see Wilson (1979, 1986) and Kersten and Gruber (1992). One recent account (Picknett and Prince 1994) relates the image (inconvincingly) to art through the figure of Leonardo da Vinci. For the most recent review of the debate see Wilson (1998).

12. Watt seems to take such unwarranted acts of violence as 'natural' and expected, typically absorbing such acts without complaint. This stoning inverts - interesting in the context the TRC with its interweaving of justice and reconciliation - the Biblical injunction contained in the story of the woman taken in adultery; 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her' (St John, 8:7).

13. The first mention of the Christian 'Veronica' occurs only at the beginning of the twelfth century. The Veronica was kept in the chapel of the *Sancta Maria as Praesepe* of St Peter's in Rome, and it was called a *sudarium* (Kuryluk 1991:5), but see also Wilson's (1998:269-270) comments on dating.

14. Apart from the general uncertainty of the authenticity of the cloth, there is in fact an image in which deception and betrayal appear explicitly linked. The image in question is a vernicle painting by Yvon Adolphe (1817-93), titled the *Vision of Judas*. Kuryluk (1991) writes; "Startled by the apparition of Satan, Judas faces the tortured 'true' likeness of his teacher - the mirror and token of his crime - while blood money slips out of his linen sack. Linking the devil and his pupil, the vernicle conveys a pessimistic view of humanity - a collection of suspects requiring supervision. It was donated to the Musée du Havre by the French Ministry of the Interior - a proper police present revealing relations between sacred icons and secular law, and pointing to the sense of shame and guilt at Christianity's core" (142)

of testifying decisively to the existence of an authentic God, and with it a whole panoply of things unshakeably original, authentic, primary, first. We could even hazard that it is upon such sacred imprimatures of primal authenticity, authority and teleology that notions not only of originality but of a meaningful 'self' might be said to root and rest. And it is precisely authority and authenticity that constitute that crisis (however understood) in contemporary postmodern / postcolonial aesthetic discourses.

Writing in **Cool Memories II**, Jean Baudrillard (1996), for example, presents something of the current problematic of such imagery, specifically the Turin Shroud's last scientific undoing, as posing deamonic questions about fakery, faith, truth and authenticity;

> The Turin shroud. Its inauthenticity today is no more certain than its former authenticity. The Church simply had to acknowledge it as such to prove its own good faith. Even if the shroud had been genuine, the Church, having greater need today of a warrant of critical virtue than of the faith of its believers, would still have had to recognize it as a fake. This does not mean it was a fake before. On the contrary, it was, by the same logic, genuine until the last expert examination, since it was faith that gave it its authenticity. It is a fake from this point on, since this last examination was intended to establish it as a fake. You might even say it is doubly a fake because it is acknowledged as such for reasons which have nothing to do with the truth. In a sense, it has attained its definitive truth, where it matters little whether it is genuine or a fake, since it now passes into the fetishism of museums (54)[15]

It is possible to take this kind of thought too far... especially if we remind ourselves (as we must) of the lived relations, experiences and actual bodies which cause such questions to be exercised. Such questions always and everywhere *situated*.

The basic conventionalised, representational form of the Veronica (or *sudarium*) was significant for me. The earliest recorded 'fine art' image I could find of the *sudarium* was in fact a drypoint (sometimes incorrectly identified as a copperplate engraving) by Albrecht Dürer, *Sudarium Displayed by Two Angels* (1513). In an earlier work (*ca* 1985) I carefully redrew this 'original' in drypoint, mindful of the fact that a drypoint engraving, unlike a painting, really has no original as such. Often redrawn from more illustrious painting, engravings were intended for mass-reproduction and popular consumption. What appealed to me about the drypoint technique is that drypoints degrade more quickly than engravings. This degradation accents the difference between the first print and the last. All prints (or pulls) are, however, copies. But each is at a different distance from the 'original', which does not, strictly speaking, exist. Considered critically, both populist consumption and mass-reproduction may be seen to challenge the vainglory of artistic originality aping the gestures of the grand creativity of the first cause.[16]

The Veronica thus embodied for me the manifold conceits and deceptions of pictorial mimesis. The 'truth' of the Veronica appears founded on an admixture of the existential claims of indexical traces betokening physical presence and the 'reality effects' of illusionism which

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15. In one of those apt acts of chance, the following fragment is about laundering, first about Third World debt and then moving on to history, memory... all worth quoting: "Should we wipe out the debt? Cancel the Third World's debt? A new version of the prisoner's remission. The debt is laundered precisely the way the drug trafficker launders money... in laundering the debt, we launder our consciences as whites; we become whiter than whites. [] Laundering money, laundering history, laundering memory by restoring an ambiguous virginity to them; laundering events... launder, launder, launder everything black, illegal, apocryphal..." (54-55).

16. Claude Mellan's engraving **La Sainte Face (Sudarium of St Veronica)** (1649) is perhaps interesting here in its celebration of technical vanity. The work is a feat of virtuosity in being constructed of one unbroken spiral line radiating outward from the tip of Christ's nose.

allegedly 'mirror' the physical world. Its truth claims are themselves based on and authorise a distinctly partisan metaphysics, the theistic imperialism which has had such mixed global consequences. It should go without saying that that metaphysics is, on home ground and abroad, in deep crisis.

Whether one wants to talk vaguely of the dissolution or loss of masternarratives, of precarious ontologies spawning disfiguring epistemologies, of the 'death of God', the outcome, duly historicised, seems much the same. And there is surely something morbid and melancholic in the much proclaimed 'deaths' in Western discourse. This discourse of death in the aesthetic domain is not only a matter of iconography, but also of mode of representation. The Veronica is a species of photograph.[17] Of the photograph, for example, Barthes speaks of "flat death" (Barthes 1993:92).[18]

Intensely illusionistic watercolour is also, I would want to suggest, a form 'dead' painting. Partly because to paint in this way seems pointless in our age of mechanical and digital reproduction. It is perhaps even more pointless given that painting in this way is so demanding and time consuming in a world in which time and labour (the work of the hand) is quantified and valued quite differently than before mechanical reproduction. Doubtless I am also taken with the enfeebled relation between blood, sweat, and tears to authenticity and death. Equally so the apparently very human need for both proof of the ontological presence of the first and most sacred body (however conceived), and its consequent transfiguration through a strategic mutilation into a corpus of holy relics and carnal memorials. All the material for the faithful to love and cherish. There is a profound emptiness at the heart of origins, from heaven to colonial homelands. It has been some time since that old and ill-tempered European Friedrich Nietzsche asked the questions which still seem to cut to the heart of the matter;

> Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon?... Are we hurtling straight downwards? And backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an up and a down? Aren't we drifting through infinite nothing? Isn't empty space breathing on us? Hasn't it grown colder? Isn't night after night closing in on us? Don't we need lanterns in the morning? Are we still deaf to the noise of gravediggers digging God's grave? Has the smell of divine putrefaction not reached our nostrils? (q. in Hayman 1980:238, see *The Madman*, in Nietzsche 1974: section 125, pp.181-182).[19]

IV: Veiled Intimacies

How does all this figure in these two exhibitions? For *Faultlines* I painted, in watercolour,

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17. Rosalind Krauss (1985) points out that "[e]very photograph is the result of a physical imprint transferred by light reflections onto a sensitive surface. The photograph is thus a type of icon, or visual likeness, which bears an indexical relationship to its object. Its separation from true icons is felt through the absoluteness of this physical genesis, one that seems to short-circuit or disallow those processes of schematization or symbolic intervention that operate within the graphic representations of most paintings" (9).

18. According to Marianne Hirsch (1997), Barthes' concepts of *punctum* and *studium* "serve to define and circumscribe, to make safe, the relationship of love and loss, presence and absence, life and death that for him are the constitutive core of photography" (4ff). My thanks to Penny Siopis for drawing my attention to Hirsch's fascinating book. More on this later.

19. It is perhaps of some moment that for the Nietzsche of **The Birth of Tragedy** art comes to provide post-mortem consolation (in the face of the absent God), a position ridiculed by the Nietzsche of **The Gay Science** (see Young 1992:94).

a labour-intensive Veronica's cloth drawn from, as I have indicated, an amalgam of the Spanish visionary tradition as presented by Francisco de Zurbarán's *The Holy Face* (*ca.*1631) (see Stoichita 1995) and Albrecht Dürer's already mentioned *Sudarium Displayed by Two Angels* (1513). This watercolour, the 'original' presented in *Faultlines*, was itself photomechanically reproduced - screenprinted - on a transparent 'curtain' for the *memórias intimas marcas* installation. In the first exhibition I also used the image of the cloth as a model, specifically the way it was folded and hung. In this way it formed a backdrop, or screen, for a set of forensic photographs used in the inquest into the murder of Steve Biko. Two of these - there were eight in all - were later selected and reproduced in the same way as the painting for *memórias intimas marcas*. I will return to this later.

Important for my use of this cloth in *Faultlines* and beyond is the entirely serendipidous reference to a 'veil' in the testimony of the Counsel for the police, Mr Retief van Rooyen, at the Biko inquest. Speaking to one of the doctors called in to examine the dying Biko, van Rooyen stated that "the detainee had the appearance of a man where uh... um... where a veil had been dropped, and no communication was possible." I was struck by this use of the word veil, and with the obsession the investigating officers had with Biko's non-communication as being perhaps faking it, shamming. That is, not only could Biko tell lies, but he could not somehow existentially 'be' the truth (see Bernstein 1978). It is exactly this sort of quandry which in part underpinned my use of the Veronica in these two installations.

More directly critical to my project for *Faultlines* and then *memórias intimas marcas* is a personal connection with forensic photographs associated with the Biko inquest held on 14 November in 1977. My memory of Biko becomes, through this connection, especially disquieting. As the memory became more focused through being stimulated by *Faultlines*, it drew other difficult memories in its wake. All figure in *Faultlines* and *memórias intimas marcas*.

In 1977 I was working as a medical illustrator at the University of the Witwatersrand Medical School. Mostly enjoyably banal, there were some extraordinary moments in this work. I learnt, for instance, intimately about the vulnerability of the body, about my relation to dead tissue, and, most importantly, links between hand, eye, and what we expect and know. I also learned over my time at Medical school that to be 'professional' was not to emotionally involved. To be 'professional' was to be distant, dispassionate; in a sense, not fully human, but technically in control. This was also oddly true of conventional (mostly) formalist art training in my day.[20]

Back to Biko. One routine day at Medical school, a number of photographs of indifferent print quality crossed my desk. I was asked by the ageing forensic pathologist involved to label some parts of the photographs which had for some reason not been labelled. I thought they were probably police photographs, because what labelling there was, like the quality of the photographs, was slipshod. I set about my business, which proved technically demanding in a dumb sort of way. I had to indicate and code swellings, contusions, abrasions and cuts which were not always clearly visible. The lines and arrowheads necessary to indicate these had to cross a range of tones and always remain visible. This proved quite difficult to achieve, as the contrast

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20. Then, as may still be the case in many art schools, it was commonly accepted that to draw something was to objectify it, and this was as it should be. This was dramatised when drawing the nude (female) figure. This 'normal' activity engendered many questions, many of which were rigorously suppressed. The humane and the formal seemed mutually exclusive. I recall being mortified when a respected teacher at art school bruised the sternum of the naked female model (who suffered some mental dysfunction which had her smiling incessantly) to make a point about the hardness of the skeletal armature below the surface of soft, aging skin. He left a wheal on her skin and the drawing I made was a mess.

of a line, the figure-ground relationship, was often constantly changing. Anyway I did the job and thought little more about it at the time. Later that particular day the pictures began to nag. There was something awful and out of the ordinary about the way this body was treated; laid-out, incised, stitched, photographed. The face, although somewhat bloated and bruised and with the expression only the dead achieve, was familiar. It was Steve Biko, about whom I knew a little by then. The pictures were needed for the inquest into his premature and violent death.

The pictures, my initial professional and subsequent personal reaction to them, came at some point since to mark one important stage in a continuum in which I felt confused, compromised, implicated, and ultimately angry about what in shorthand I must call 'Apartheid' and its baleful effect on my private and public sense of reality, and indeed truth.

Faultlines gave me the opportunity to recover this ground, at least in part. *Memórias íntimas marcas* allowed me to consilidate that recovery. I mean 'recover' to be ambivalent here. It involves the sense of getting something once lost back, and then packing it away again - re-covering it. When perusing the archives at the Mayibuye Centre at the University of the Western Cape I was very undecided about what images associated with Biko I might use in the first installation. There were so many, and so many obviously shocking. I decided to stay away from the more gruesome images. I also decided against using the body of Biko itself save for two images. Both of these are unidentifiable; in a sense generically human and radically decontextualised. One appears to be a dissection of the brain to show haemorrhaging (but this might well not be the case). The other shows light cuts in skin to indicate (I think) subcutaneous premortem bleeding or bruising.

In neither of these two images of parts of Biko's body does the context allow for easy identification. This, for good or ill, is what I wanted. In one way dehumanisation proved more appropriate than historical specificity that comes with the familiar and the named, although neither option was easy. To choose the anonymous image of a body must count as yet another violation of the historical specificity of that body. In doing this I thus perpetrated another act of violence and another denial. But in this violent denial, the privacy of that body through anonymity of sorts is respected. The line is thin indeed. The link of the image (which could be falsified) to the historical person Biko is undecideable in the context of showing.

I also decided to (re)label or caption these two images, as well as copy them from the original black and white into colour. One caption is the phrase about veiling from the inquest to which I have already referred (Counsel for the police, Mr Retief van Rooyen's words), that "the detainee had the appearance of a man where uh... um... where a veil had been dropped, and no communication was possible." The other is from a text I have a strong attraction to, namely Karl Marx's *18th Brumaire of Napoleon Bonaparte*, which was part of my unofficial education and a text for which I have great affection. I have played rather fast and loose with the meaning, but that is what affection often does, does it not? The fuller textual context of the selected phrase (which is in italics) reads:

> Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce... [He goes on] Men make their history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. *The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living* (q. in Solomon 1979:54).

It was with ironic pleasure that I discovered this particular text was of such import that it was painstakingly handcopied under who knows under what circumstances by inmates on Robben

Island. I discovered it secreted in a covers of a journal named **Informa** (Vol.XXXIV No.2 March (1987), a sanctioned publication stamped by the Prison Censor Office) when researching the Mayibuye archives of Robben Island at the University of the Western Cape. It seems to have been confiscated at some point in its history. The handwritten text is an extraordinary affair, with the hands changing often. This change is presumably in response to the text being collectively written and being passed around surreptitiously when something interrupted the scribe. Sometimes the hand changes in mid-sentence. At some point certain pages must have got wet, with the writing on the obverse and reverse sides of page interfering with the legibility of the other; very much an inadvertant postmodern allegorical palimpsest. This text itself is actually one of Marx's most allegorical, deepening the connection. And this brings us back to notions of truth and the conservation of truths, as allegory and history are uneasy bedfellows (see Honig 1959, Fletcher 1964, Benjamin 1977, and Owens 1980).

I also uncovered other signs of culture from the Robben Island archive, including a well-used, brown paper covered (is not a brown paper cover the epitome of the illicit text?) copy of Ernst Fisher's **The Necessity of Art: A Marxist Approach** (London; Pelikan, 1963). It was dogeared, fragile, with many passages underlined. Belonging to prisoner number 550/74 certain phrases had been underlined in blue ink long since dissolved in the yellowed pages: "increasing isolation and denial of the individual"... "'What joy it is to be alive!'", and this highlighted paragraph;

> Either of the two elements of art may predominate at a particular time, depending on the stage of society reached, sometimes the magically suggestive, at other times, the rational and enlightening; sometime dreamlike intuition, at other times the desire to sharpen perception. But whether art soothes or awakens, casts shadows or brings light, it is never merely a clinical description of reality. Its function is always to move the *whole* man, to enable 'I' to identify itself with another's life, to make its own what it is not and yet is capable of being (14).

In neither *Faultlines* nor *memórias íntimas marcas* was I able to picture the whole man that Biko was, but only signs of his end. To this end I selected four police photographs of his cell (cell number four). Three showed the north, east, and south wall. One is another shot of the north wall, with the caption: "Alleged blood spots found on North wall of cell no 4 on 20/10/77" For all that one might say here, I want to note just two things. In all my reproductions of the police photographs (themselves often reproductions) I purposely included peripheral or incidental visual information. In a sense the photographs were treated as objects rather than images cropped of extraneous information. Hence the punch holes, staples, misspellings in the typewritten captions all figure in the visual field.[21]

Apart of the four images of the cell, two additional images were of the plan of cell block B2 and the North end of the jail. The caption of the last (with misspelling) - in which the position of the prisoners' body was found was ironically 'staged' by a white policeman - reads; 'Possision (*sic*) in which deceased was found by Warders Wood and Koen on 11/9/77 at 07h05. Point C on Plan 3 refers". All six images were then lazer printed on white cotton cloth. The original cloth, which I tore into sections, was an aging domestic bedsheet from our household, material with its own wrinkled and stained history of intimacy. Each cloth, with its printed image, was then hung in the form of the Veronica and box-framed in black. The image of the 'plan' was one of the two selected for *memórias íntimas marcas*. The other was the image of the body captioned by Counsel

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21. I asked a work colleague, artist Walter Oltmann, to type the captions for the two images - the skin incision and the exposed 'brain' - to simulate the typestyle of the police captioning.

for the police, Mr Retief van Rooyen's words.

This brings me to the three watercolours on *Faultlines* which are fairly straightforward. The mode of representation being time-consuming is, as I have said, very important. The three watercolours were arranged with the central Veronica flanked by two sleeping dogs. I photographed and drew these two dogs while on a first trip to India.

The brown dog was lying in dust on the Island of Elephanta some ten kilometres north-east of the Gate of India in Bombay. It dozed indifferently during a hot day under the huge ancient and beautiful granite sculptures on Elephanta (which recorded history seems to date from *ca* 635 AD), near an almost identical dog suckling puppies. Not far away lay the knawed, half rotting corpse of one of the litter, the object of some interest of yet another dog. I remember thinking this one, the dead one, at least was spared the fate of its mother, destined to be fucked forever, making more dogs to be fucked forever...[22]

The white dog was from New Delhi. It too dozed in the sun, but this time along the imposing avenue of India Gate and its Government buildings constructed by the colonial British administration, architecture the echoes of which may be discerned in our own Johannnesburg Art Gallery.[23] At first I thought this dog was dead, as some children were stoning it. But when I approached to draw and photograph it I could see it was breathing, impervious to the stones, me, and the groans of a performing camel being flogged into action nearby, bells ringing. Near the camel, a muzzled bear danced to the prods and curses of its conjuror. I recalled words by Aimé Césaire I had by then virtually consigned to memory:

> And more than anything, my body, as well as my soul, do not allow yourself to cross your arms like a sterile spectator, for life is not a spectacle, for a sea of sorrows is not a stage, for a man who cries out is not a dancing bear, (quoted Fanon 1991:187)[24]

Both paintings were titled '*Sleeping Dogs Lie*' which needs little elaboration, with or without Césaire's words. At the risk of being obvious, the title 'Sleeping Dogs Lie' plays on the aphorism 'let sleeping dogs lie'. The lie here is less about being supine than false, and the implication is that

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22. It was on Elephanta that I bought a souvenir of the head of Christ "hand painted in oil colour on real skeleton papal tree leaf, India". The skeletonized leaf is heart-shaped, and these souvinirs are in mass-produced abundance in this Hindu (Saivist) holy place. The head on the leaf bears a resemblance to that on de Zurbarán's *The Holy Face (Veronica)*. What is odd about all the painted representations of the cloth is the presence of the thorns 'illusionistically' represented.

23. Like all such institutions the Johannesburg Art Gallery has something of a fractious history. A tender for the completion of the central block and two wings of the Gallery was accepted in early 1913, the year the catastrophic Native's Land Act of 1913 and two years after the notorious Mines and Works Act was passed. These Acts and their catastrophic legacy of dispossession, forced removal and exclusion, can still be felt by those who now populate Joubert Park which abuts the Gallery. Its Southern façade, the central entrance portico, is modelled on that of Inigo Jones's at St Pauls's, Covent Garden in London, and overlooks the main City railway lines, and beyond that, teeming bus and taxi ranks which service the hundreds and thousands of mainly black workers living in the urban sprawl on the outskirts of the city. The major architect of the Gallery, Sir Edwin Luytens, also designed, amongst others, the Viceroy's House in New Delhi, India. The recent postmodern additions to the Gallery somewhat self-consciously continue Luytens's original project.

24. In a paper yet to be published titled 'Drawing a Veil: Art in the Age of Emergency' (*ca* 1992-3) I included two versions of these words, the other being from Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989); "And most of all beware, even in thought, of assuming the sterile attitude of the spectator, for life is not a spectacle, a sea of griefs is not a proscenium, a man who wails is not a dancing bear (15).

if left to sleep, truth will lie.[25] These dogs did not migrate to *memórias intimas marcas*, only the Veronica painting.

Adjacent to this set of three paintings, set into the wall, was a small tableaux. I want first to focus on the image which hung here, a fragment of past experience which will forever remain a source of distress for me. Like so many other white boys of my group and class during those years, I was conscripted into the South African Army after school (1972), in my case the South African Infantry Corps.[26] At 18, I served a year in national service and then became liable for call-up for periods ranging from three weeks to three months for a period of ten years. In response to the deepening crisis within and without the country in the seventies the laws relating to conscription changed quite a bit. At any rate I was called up for a three month 'border' camp in late 1975. In four texts written specifically for *memórias intimas marcas* I describe some aspects of this experience, which include something about which I wrote nothing; the untimely death of my father.[27]

At any rate in this small, boxed tableau there are three objects on a field. The field is a photomechanical reproduction of the Cape Town castle wall itself. Of the three objects, one is a brace of 303 cartridges I lifted from clothing stripped from dead 'enemy' soldiers which had been dumped in transport trucks at Grootfontein airport in then South-West Africa (now Namibia).[28]

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25. I might add here that I have always been taken by the particular way dogs have of 'curling up' to sleep. The most significant example in art known to me is the attenuated dog in Albrecht Dürers engraved **Melancholia I** (1514) and also the sleeping dog in his **St Jerome in His Study** (1514).

26. This was before the spread of the anti-conscription consciousness which led to the founding of the End Conscription Campaign (ECC) in the early eighties (see **Out of Step** (1989)). Neither my domestic background nor my schooling were conducive to the sort of 'liberal' notions of conscientious objection I encountered years later at University.

27. Our family was riven by political and personal conflict, with my mother being Afrikaans (and a South African family of many generations) and my father English. His father was, as I mentioned earlier, a miner from Cornwall in England, and his maternal grandmother - I was told - from the cotton mills in Lancashire. Many of my Afrikaans relatives rejected my mother after her marriage to a 'rooinek'. They saw this as a betrayal. Her own grandmother had been at Kolliefontien, a notorious British concentration camp during the second boer war, and feelings ran deep. A number of these relatives (including those who kept contact with my mother) will still refuse to speak english. A few belong to extreme right-wing movements such as the neo-Nazi Afrikaner Weerstand Begweging (AWB). On my father's side the political complexion is perhaps best described as english conservative or neo-liberal, much along the lines of the old United Party. Their racism was by and large passive, but extended to distaste for Afrikaners. I have never considered myself a liberal (something I considered the luxury of the wealthy english), although it would appear many of the values I might be inclined to uphold are 'liberal'. 'Liberal' remains something of a dirty word in South African political culture, often seen as synonymous with white and english (see, *inter alia* Johnson and Welsh 1998).

28. I remember desperately collecting and concealing objects taken in Angola and the operational area. We were explicitly forbidden by the military authorities to take any material which might be linked to our activities in Angola. Amongst the items I eventually managed to smuggle out were a Cuban army jacket, two shotgun rounds stamped as made in Luanda, the clasp of bullets I have already mentioned, and a pair of leather ammunition pouches. Many of my compatriots also collected material, much of which was eventually confiscated. Just before we left the operational area our battallion was woken up and mustered without warning on a deserted airfield just before dawn. We were forced the unpack every item of kit on our groundsheets. This was then randomly but thoroughly examined by Permanent force military police and any suspicious object was duly confiscated. Anyone found with live ammunition could be detained and charged under military law. As I recall we all considered to have signed something called a DD1112, which dealt with the official secrets act. It was very important then to some of us to secure physical proof of having been in Angola on clandestine operations and military adventurism routinely denied by the authorities back home. I managed to get my material out by simply wearing the jacket, putting some live rounds in my water bottle and sewing some in the lining of the poncho I wore over my jacket. For local accounts of this period of the Angolan war, more or less ideologically

One of the duties of our platoon section was to sort this clothing into uniform piles. The smell was a mixture of diesel, hot tarmac, and human decay. Many of the garments and webbing were stiff with dirt, sweat and blood. There were bad moments. Once I lifted a helmet by lining cemented together by what looked and smelled like clotted blood, hair, flesh and bits of bone. Piles of empty coffins were being unloaded from a huge transport aircraft nearby.

The central object in the tableau is a metal flame broken off an old catholic relic of the burning heart. This came from a much later trip to Venice. On the other side was the '*Pro Patria*' medal I and in fact all soldiers received for completing active service in Angola. This tableau was included in *memórias intimas marcas* in the form of a transparency on a lightbox, the light from which allowed most of the imagery in the instalation to be legible.

Many things occurred during this time, and in my army experience generally. Many unspeakable acts make up a man's world. When writing my texts for *memórias intimas marcas* I took the opportunity to include much of this material, some taken from diaries written mostly after the fact. Only four of these accompany the installation.

One memory which now shames me in memory occurred when a group us were detailed to guard women and children refugees in a camp in either Northern Namibia or Southern Angola (between lies and poor maps one sometimes never knew quite where one was). On this occasion we were strictly forbidden - under threat of court martial - from feeding or even communicating with these refugees. The refugees comprised black women and their children. Many appear to simply have been abandoned by their white male partners. A rumour was about that the men had been separated because of the South African Army's insistence on maintaining the racist laws of Apartheid even outside South Africa. The men were thus interned elsewhere. Another rumour had it that the men, the white men, had simply abandoned their common-law families and evacuated to Portugal.

A number of us broke the order not to feed or communicate with the refugees, but for very different reasons. I and friends shared some of our condensed milk and 'dog biscuits' (dry ration army issue biscuits reputed to be exceptionally nutritious) with a 'family' whose single claim on our attention was the white child they had in their midst. A child with sharp blue eyes and blond hair. True to my background, it seemed particularly disturbing that this little girl - not much older than my own infant daughter at home - was in this situation, with strangers, unprotected... or so my normalised white South African paranoia told me. Two of us helped this 'family' of several children and two 'mothers' virtually only because we identified with this child. I helped no others. Some of my comrades-in-arms also 'helped' these abject and vulnerable people, but in exchange for sex, often brutal and bestial sex, and for valuables they may have saved in flight. It rained for much of this time, and when we left the camp, with its poor ablutions, the mud had gone sour. The rancid smell clung to our clothes for what seemed like forever.

The blue eyes (placed on the blond, broken wing of a funerary angel) and the condensed milk (to which I will come) were are also included in the *Faultlines* exhibition, but not carried over into *memórias intimas marcas*. A number of accounts by especially women to the Truth Commission recall, as I recollect, torturers, rapists, tormentors, as 'blue eyes'. Blue eyes

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suspect, see Steenkamp (1976) and du Preez (1989). For a general account of the Namibian conflict see Herbstein and Evenson (1989).

(perhaps like blond hair) are a metonym for the oppressor, and associated with whiteness.[29] The vandalised angel wing comes from close to my home, from the Brixton Cemetary opposite the police quarters. I frequent this particular graveyard, relishing the engraved texts, the varied funerary sculpture, and the exquisite little Hindoo crematorium secreted amongst non-indigenous blue-gums in one corner. The air in the graveyard always seems insolently fresh and bracing.

The ceramic, marble, and granite funerary sculpture in Brixton cemetary is routinely vandalised. The broken bits are then mostly collected up and, as I understand it, buried on the grounds. I have collected these fragments over the years, particularly heads, hands, books, and lambs. These often end up in my work. The heads I have collected over the years were arranged in the *Faultlines* space to form a memorial of sorts. In some way this arrangement references similar 'piles' of heads emblematic of historical or current social catastrophes (like the killing fields of Cambodia or Bosnia). One of these heads were selected for *memórias íntimas marcas*, where it was backlit so as to make viewing difficult.

In the Cape Town Castle part of the space of my installation suggested a crypt, which is how I saw it. Again, in a self-reflexive consolidation of internal references, I pasted a photograph of this cryptic space at its entrance. Not much needs to be said about this space, save for the naked bulb, a scapegoat in a niche (a broken lamb from the cemetary), a gesture of conventional grief from an angel in the recess, an 'oath' watercolour (broken hand on chipped book), and finally more cloths. These were 'duplicate' cloths, upon which were laid the results of a self-imposed project of writing out, by hand, the King James version of the bible in full. I ritualised this process, spending a specified portion of the day completing the task, for which I often had no appetite. The odd, sometimes sinister spaces of the room which housed the installation were also significant. These included a closed well, and a tunnel going nowhere. I marked the well (potentially a place of immolation as well as sustenance) by pasting a photograph of it open on adjacent paving stones.

This brings me to the invalid cups and their contents which made up the rest of the installation, but which did not figure in *memórias íntimas marcas*. In most cases the associations I wanted to stimulate by these cups and their contents were simple. Of the transparent set, one contains water taken from the well in the room and fertile soil taken from the castle garden. Both water and arable land were crucial for establishing a colonial foothold on this part of the continent. A second cup contains smoke, mirrors, and urine. Urine has medical significance, and was a feature in the Biko Inquest. We smoke things out, there is no smoke without fire, smoke and mirrors allow us to be deceived and so on. The third contained condensed milk and honey. The condensed milk obviously recalled the exchanges with the refugees, while milk and honey is obvious. Same for the fourth, which contained tar and feathers.

Each of the green invalid cups contains a variety of different types of mielie seed (mieliemeal being staple food for many South Africans), each embedded in cotton wool moistened with water from the ornamental pond in the Castle and enriched with fertilizer. While the exhibition was on these seeds germinated and grew. Being watered only at the early stages, all the seedlings eventually withered and died.

V. Petite Sincerities

Most my work - the paintings especially - is small, even diminutive. By today's standards,

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29. I recall here a reference to an enarly, perhaps the first novel of Toni Morrisen, in which 'blue eyes' and whiteness figure (need to track the reference). As I remeber a young friend of the protagonist wished for 'blue eyes', and all would be well... this aroused harsh judgement from the protagonst.

miniature. I miniaturise advisedly. Susan Stewart (1993) puts this desire best, invoking as she does memory, distance, second-handedness, and the rather pathetic illusion of mastery;

> Even to speak of the miniature is to begin with imitation, with the second-handedness and distance of the model. The miniature comes into the chain of signification at a remove: there is no original miniature; there is only the thing in 'itself', which has already been erased, which has disappeared from this scene of arriving-too-late... The miniature typifies the structure of memory, of childhood, and ultimately of narrative's secondary (and at the same time causal) relation to history. It is true that, like all objects, the miniature locates a version of the self, but our attention must be drawn to the particular versions of the self invented by such particular objects. From the privatised and domesticated world of the miniature, from its petite sincerity, arises an 'authentic' subject whose transcendence over personal property substitutes for a strongly chronological, and thus radically piecemeal, experience of temporality in everyday life. The narcissistic, even onanistic, view presented by the miniature, its abstraction of the mirror into microcosm, presents the desiring subject with an illusion of mastery, of time into space and heterogeneity into order (171-172).

From the work of both exhibitions it seems obvious I am exercised by the treacherous linking of art with truth and art with redemption. The photograph is the truth of sorts. Photography, for Roland Barthes (1993), "has something to do with resurrection: might we not say of it what the Byzantines said of the image of Christ which impregnated St Veronica's napkin: that it was not made by the hand of man, *acheiropoietos?*" (82).

The 'fit' between art and so-called lived experience remains difficult to articulate, riven as it is by insincere sleights of hand and a garrulous gaggle of illusions, amongst which we must include artistic illusionism. So many cultural conceits flow from these matters, image as 'truth', as 'testimony', as 'consolation', as 'communication', image not as mute, as brute, as dumb, as compulsive, as cruel, beside the point, as the pitiful efforts of an invalided humanity. T.W. Adorno (1984) argues thus;

> Central to aesthetics... is the redemption of illusion... Illusion is not a formal but a substantive characteristic of works of art. Illusion is the vestige of the injury that art seeks to undo... if art... acts as though it were what it appears to be, it becomes a fraud of the *trompe l'oeil* type: art is victimised by the very same moment it wants to cover up (157).

And what is truth here? I know and I don't. But for Theodore Adorno "[w]hat truth may objectively be is difficult enough to determine, but we should not, in our dealings with people, let this fact terrorize us" (69). What role can art play in post-Apartheid South Africa? Is art best left to its own devices? I know it does violence to compare (as often has been done) the Nazi genocide in World War II with the genocide attendant on colonial adventurism, and indeed Apartheid[30], there is something in this comparison. In their book **The Inability to Mourn** (1967/1975), Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich write that working through loss (whether of an ideologue, an ethos, a faith, a loved object, a set of sacrosanct beliefs) is a prerequisite to experiencing guilt and remorse and finally, some sort of moral, intellectual and emotional self- and other coming to terms. In post-war Germany, these authors suggested that,

> No such working-through has occurred. Instead, the recollection of a whole segment of national history soon faded; and naturally on the individual level that meant losing segments from one's own life from memory - how one had thought, acted, hoped... Blanks developed in the autobiography of

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30. Gita Sereny (1995) actually makes the connection a couple of times, making specific reference to Steve Biko on page 168. The notion of a South African 'Fourth Reich', the emblems, regalia and ideology of the AWB (see Kemp 1990, esp. p.19) is well known. See also Coetzee (1988)

> the individual... this sort of self-serving manipulation of reality is an attitude that proves astonishingly resistant and inaccessible to critical revision (xvii).

Is there anything we, that is (most) white South Africans, might recognise in this? Is this of any use to us, in our process of 'truth and reconciliation'? Does the TRC make a difference that makes a difference? What role might art play precisely here? Antjie Krog (1998) writes

> No poetry should come forth from this. May my hand fall off if I write this. So I sit around. Naturally and unnaturally without words. Stunned by the knowledge of the price people have paid for their words. If I write this, I exploit and betray. If I don't, I die (49).

Should we take such sentiments seriously? How can we do so without amputating our imaginations, letting silence exploit and betray? Memory and the stories we fashion in its name are, as I suggested, certainly very complex affairs.[31] It might be useful to return to the words of Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson (1990) to whom I referred near the beginning of this paper;

> What we [they mean historians I think] have begun to learn is to listen more acutely. We are more likely now to notice the silences in memory, the conscious or unconscious repressions... We can see how it is precisely where memory diverges most clearly from fact that 'imagination, symbolism, desire break in'. The idealization and demonization of characters become clues to unrealized hopes or hidden fears; the fantasy of reconstructed events contributes to the dynamic influence of myth and rumour in social movements. We can learn to spot in these accounts the typical tricks of 'dreamwork': the condensations, reversals, substitutions, metaphors, and word-play through which symbolic messages are conveyed, not only in dreams, but also in social customs like rough music, in jokes, in classic traditional myth, or in contemporary personal storytelling. (7)

To acknowledge these complexities is *not* to demean - rob meaning from - the narratives, often so unspeakably painful, presented to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission over the past years. Yet these complexities must have a bearing even on those harrowing stories.

We can ask of representation the same questions we ask of art. Can representation, whether through language or visual art, bespeak the truth? And then these particular truths? And as far as art goes, should it? Some things, or rather experiences, quite resist or indeed elude representation, for all that they are obsessively the subject of representation. Amongst these, according to Elaine Scarry (1985, 1994), are things like labour - the body in toil, pain - the body in distress, and death - the body bereft of life.

This last, death, is perhaps the most disconcerting figure in this pantheon; in the decanted second-hand affect of conventional figures of grief and mourning, in the bluntly cropped corpse of Biko, in so much else. Kenneth Burke writes that death "lies beyond the realm of such images

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31. A fascinating account of the responses in selected postmodern aesthetic practices to historical catastrophe has been developed by Irit Rogoff (1995). Her essay, while taking a German perspective, has much which is relevant and challenging for us. In particular Rogoff takes issue with what she calls 'moralizing discourses'; "The discourses of memory and commemoration within German cultural life entail questions regarding historical practice, responsibility and testimony which are linked to certain moralizing positions, all of which claim that to produce some concrete manifestation that marks loss, even in a negative form, is the appropriate response. I would like to take issue with such moralizing discourse... [which] result from the perception of such moralizing as an essentially comforting discourse which identifies right and wrong positions with great ease and rapidly suggests an appropriate gesture of response and reconciliation. These gestures serve to reproduce the binary structure which has for so long dominated Western modernist consciousness and in which trauma, manifested as loss, is forever addressed by processes of concrete objectification. Victims are faced with perpetrators, ruins with some form of (even partial) reconstruction, silence with narrativity, and erasure with reinscriptions" (115).

as the body knows" (quoted Godwin and Bronfen 1993:4) And death is intimately about power. For Godwin and Bronfen (1993),

> Representations of death necessarily engage questions about power: its locus, it authenticity, its sources, and how it is passed on... Governments know that to manipulate public reaction to violent events they must maintain control over information about deaths. People want to know: How many died? How did they die? Who has power over these deaths? What do these deaths signify, what do they represent? What power can I/we exercise over them? (5).

I don't really know how to make headway with such large questions of representation, art, and its functions. What I do know is that art might well have something to do with mourning (see Moorjani 1992 but cf Mitscherlich above),[32] and art might even be seen as a symptom of not dying (see Pajaczkowska 1995).[33]

Roland Barthes (1993) perhaps best described the relation between death and the image, here specifically the historical photograph, most pungently. For Barthes the photograph always carries the sense of death by implying an anterior future. Concerned with time and its passing, and with the temporary paralysis in the *punctum*, Barthes is here writing of the young Lewes Payne photographed in his condemned cell, waiting to be hanged,

> The photograph is handsome, as is the boy: that is the *studium* [the cultural field]. But the punctum is: *he is going to die*. I read at the same time: *This will be* and *this has been*; I observe with horror an anterior future of which death is the stake. By giving me the absolute past of the pose, the photograph tells me death in the future. What *pricks* me is the discovery of this equivalence. (96).

In more intimate vein, Barthes continues; "In front of the photograph of my mother as a child, I tell myself: she is going to die: I shudder, like Winnicot's psychotic patient over a catastrophe which has already occurred. Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe" (96). The Veronica and the Biko photographs seems to hold just such a catastrophe captive.

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32. Moorjani (1992) writes; "In melancholia and abnormal mourning... the lost one, with whom he mourner identifies, is permanently incorporated into an ego divided from itself... This 'encrypting' in the self of a phantasmatically double object (good/bad) repeats threatening and idealising positions of early relations... this cryptic space is an artificial unconscious, a closed off place of exile marked out within the ego. Held permanently within this crypt, the incorporated living dead, with whom the mourner identifies, block the subject's detachment from the captive image. Encrypting or abnormal mourning thus entails a simultaneous deathlessness and lifelessness suspended between libidinal and destructive forces" (9).

33. Claire Pajaczkowska (1995) writes "It may be that art s more closely aligned with the pre-symbolic, as visual representation is generally less abstract, less removed from the body and fantasy than verbal, literary and scientific representations. If that is so then we might find in art a representation of the experiences of losing love, of dying and being reborn, experiences which give space and form to the first losses in life inaugurated by weaning and the loss of the mother. If it is a sublimation, and facilitates the symbolic representation of the death of desire and the birth of acceptance, art is one valuable form of recognition of the loss that might otherwise become hysteria or perverse regression. When art is used as the imaginary repository of sensibility, or as a refuge from the demands of more difficult losses, renunciations, sublimations, we find all the fears that are characteristic of superstition, magic and religion. A compromise between illness and health, able neither to love nor to work, art then offers us a way of simply not-dying" (88). For his part Michael Camille (1996), in in a recent study, suggests that for "late twentieth-century Parisian philosophers and poets like Maurice Blanchot, Georges Bataille and Jacques Derrida... the artwork is the emblem of death, and artistic production takes place in a crypt, both for the creator and for the viewer mourning the lost object of desire" (6).

Seen differently, art - generically speaking - is often regarded as at least the place where can try and work through the lapses, hesitations, failures, ill-kept faiths, disappointments and tyrannies of lived experience. There are those who would claim it can relieve our rages and contain our more impetuous passions. More vainly (in both senses), a redemptive power is claimed for art, and the move from this sort of claim to that of reconciliation is but a short one. Art is good for you, art helps, art is necessary for a full life...all that. If one looks at the rationales in the various arts documents currently in public circulation in South Africa some idea of 'art as healing' is widely held. While I am deeply sceptical of the more overblown of such claims, I am less so of the actual power of the visual image. People still idolise and mutilate images, are moved to pray to artifacts, collect them, burn them, pointing to the power of the image (see Freedberg 1985, 1989, Gamboni 1977, and Goody 1977).

And perhaps culture in general plays its part in this. We can, for example, perhaps agree with Bronfen and Godwin (1993) that culture "could be an attempt both to represent death and to contain it, to make it comprehensible and thereby diffuse some of its power" (4). But success is inevitibly limited. We need to remember that the picture of culture underpinning such views is perhaps a whole lot bleaker, with art not only not up to task of redemption (see Bersani 1990, Bersani and Dutoit 1993),[34] but indeed complicit with the darker forces of history. Francis Barker (1993), for example, writes that "culture does not necessarily stand in humane opposition to political power and social inequality, but may be profoundly in collusion with it, not the antidote to generalised violence, but one of its more seductive strategies" (iix).[35]

It is perhaps better to ascribe to art, quietly, modestly, almost as an afterthought, the role of critical interrogation, affective, cognitive, somatic working through. In this way art might beg questions we might want to overlook, even while it cannot excuse itself from such questioning.[36] All this seriousness of purpose about art does not, of course, mean that art is not about pleasures, simple or not, cheerfully deviant or not, or about what touches us, or about what moves us, or what helps us envision things differently.

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34. Bersani and Dutoit (1993) write: "The argument for the epistemologically of morally superior nature of art, or even of its redemptive value... is a pervasive current in our culture... Yet, however complex and shaded the argument may be, it is essentially reductive and dismissive about both art and life. On the one hand art is reduced to a kind of superior patching function and is enslaved to those very materials to which it presumably imparts value; on the other, the catastrophes of individual experience and of social history matter much less (thereby making active reform and resistance less imperative) if they are somehow 'understood' and compensated for in art" (3-4).

35. For contending views, of which there are many, see *inter alia* Rose 1987, Bersani 1990, Bersani and Dutoit 1993, McNiff 1992.

36. And perhaps we need to acknowledge with Walter Benjamin (1973), that "there is no document of civilisation which is not at the same time a document of barbarism" (258). Civilisation and 'culture' were of course once taken by some as interchangeable. The crimes of colonialism put paid to this particular fantasy (see Williams 1983:57-60, 87-93).

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