

## **Violent Seductions: The Mnemonics of the Body in Post-Apartheid South Africa**

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### **1. Foreword**

"Eschatological euphoria." Susan Van Zanten Gallagher's phrase for the spectacle of Nelson Mandela's inauguration in Pretoria as President of the reconstituted South African on May 10<sup>th</sup> 1994, conveys something of the exuberant and reconciliatory passing of judgment on the apartheid past which accompanied that inauguration (Gallagher 2002: 107). Fully a decade after Mandela's invocation there, however, of "a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world" (in Gallagher, *ibid.*), the voiced incantation, the conjuration as Jacques Derrida would perhaps have it, has still not brought forth what "[*was not*] there at the moment of the appeal" (Jacques Derrida 1994: 41).<sup>1</sup> Today the phrase sounds brittle, a talisman lost to the eschatological—that is to say, literally death-oriented—dysphoria of the post-apartheid moment.

As 1995 succeeded 1994, according to the statistics cited by political scientist Pierre du Toit, 26 637 people were murdered in South Africa, while 47 506 cases of rape and 120 952 cases of robbery were reported (2001: 47).<sup>2</sup> But I did not come here today to trade statistics illustrative of "criminal" violence in post-1994 South Africa, however current such statistics remain, still less to invoke standard explanatory models for post-apartheid violence (state weakness, the permeability of South Africa's borders to transnational criminal organizations, the illegal regional trade in small arms conducted throughout the entire southern subcontinent of Africa all included, see du Toit *ibid.*: 18-22, 50, 134-40). I have come instead, to ask you to consider for a moment, the extent to which this "culture of violence" is *political*, that is to say, *is still* political, given the intractable economic divides which brand the "new" South Africa as heir to the "old": four-hundred years of colonialism, half-a-century of intensely coercive economic exploitation or apartheid as "racial capitalism" as struggle-era analysis had it, disguised as "separate development." So before I approach

my stated subject, the better in fact to approach it, I ask you to remember *this* bitter legacy, to place post-apartheid violence in the context of the "long duration" that I have just outlined. This is also to say that my modality here today is performative, mnemonic before it accedes to, or concedes, the analysis of the mnemonics of the body that is the stated subject of my talk.

I have come, in short, as an eschatologist might, to recall the dead: the white man named and memorialized on the handout in front of you (see appendix), and a young black man, dead in Soweto in 2002 at the age of 19, a *tsotsi*—a thug, an armed robber, murderer even—whom I cannot permit myself to name out of respect for the fear-unto-death of my black South African informant.

When 19-year-old youths die of gunshot wounds in Soweto, certain established social practices are suspended, and still others initiated. Faced with the refusal of bus companies to rent them vehicles to transport mourners to the cemetery, given the *tsotsi's* notoriety, the members of his family resigned themselves to conducting the funeral procession on foot. But it was not only family members and friends who joined the long procession. Very soon, the coffin was claimed by the dead youth's fellow gang members who prized open its lid, hoisted the corpse onto their shoulders and proclaimed the dead man: "The President of Tsotsis." Would that I could transfix you with this phrase as my informant's voice transfixed me. It is not so much that she faltered in the telling, although she had wept earlier on in her narrative. Rather she seemed to fill with revulsion. Her reiteration of the word, "Pres-i-dent," (heavy emphasis on the first syllable, a rising intonation on the "i," and final decent), signaled a profound, perhaps even compulsive, unease. My informant's recall of contact with the abject, and related disgust at the contamination of the boundary between the living and the dead through the violation of the sanctity of the rituals of burial, seemed to coexist with an awareness of the uncanny (*unheimlich* [Freud 1919]) violation of the "home" of the coffin. But there was more to it. There was anguish, the anguish of this black woman, so recently vote-less, rightless, at the mobilization of a quintessentially political category to dignify the lawless. The President of Tsotsis, epitaph then, but equally epigraph to the dysphoric social text of post-apartheid South Africa that forms one of the official subject of my address.

Retain your sense of its power to channel illicit flows so that the "criminal" and the "political" deterritorialize and reterritorialize one another (Félix Guattari 1972: 164, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari 1977 [1972]), and you will not be surprised by the irruption of the corpse into the "space of memory" constituted by the contemporary South African literary canon.

## **2. Suffer, baby, suffer**

Representations of the abject body are widely diffused in the post-apartheid literary corpus, particularly (but by no means exclusively) in works by white writers. Time after time, the reader of post-apartheid fiction by South African authors is made to confront the suffering or sexualized white body in narratives that demonstrate an exhibitionist investment in such themes as murder (Nadine Gordimer 1998, Damon Galgut 2003), alcoholism and domestic violence (Anne Landsman 1998), rape and incest (Marlene van Niekerk 1999 [1994]), rape and pedophilia (Mark Behr 1995), rape and bodily violation (J.M. Coetzee 1999), mutilation (André Brink 2002), or—in a very different register—the ecstatic transcendence that sex affords (Gordimer 2001, Henrietta Rose-Innes 2000, Behr 2000).<sup>3</sup> Ivan Vladislavic's novel, The Restless Supermarket, set in Johannesburg of 1993, begins with the depiction of a salesman sodomizing a pink plastic elephant, an opening sequence that satirically fuses the trajectories I have just outlined. "[The salesman] slumped down on the elephant's back and spoke passionately into one outflung ear: 'Suffer, baby, suffer'" (2001: 4). This sight arrests the narrator who expends his gaze in much the same way as the salesman expends his passion, on "rapture" (ibid.) that is literally all surface and no depth. The libidinal "chaos" (ibid.: 6) of inner-city Jo'burg on the eve of democracy conceals little, it would seem, in need of interpretation.

Not so the body that seals the opening sequence of the novel. "One Sunday morning not too long ago, on an overgrown plot in Prospect Road," the narrator recounts, "I saw a body in the weeds under a shroud of pages from the Sunday Times. I saw it from the window of my own flat, where I stood with a carton of long-life milk in my hand, and I could almost smell the pungent scent of the kakiebos crushed by its fall. It lay among the rusted pipes, blackened bricks and outcrops of old foundations that marr every bit of empty land in this

city, as if a reef of disorder lay just below the surface, or a civilization had gone to ruin here before we ever arrived" (ibid.: 6). Whereas the scruffy perversity of the salesman is somehow over-specified, the unidentified body seen from the window is perversely underspecified, and thus compelling. Unwilling (but as we shall see, not unable) to provide the referential details that would mitigate the enigma of this curiously neutered body, devoid as yet of all overt markers of identity, the narrator speculatively reconstructs the moment of, or after, death, as the body's fall instead.

Part of the affect of this fall for the narrator, I would suggest, derives from its temporal suspension: it is a fragment of past action curiously sustained into the present as the almost tangible pungency of the weed we call "kakiebos." But if the space of this interim is oriented to the persistence of the past in the present, it also points to the contamination of the present by the future. The white observer, caught in the "cusp-time" between the old apartheid South Africa and the new (Elleke Boehmer 1998), registers not only the anticipatory *frisson* of individual death, *his own, not his own*, but more significantly the belatedness and transience of the colonizer, *himself, not himself*, as if *a civilization had gone to ruin here*. Thus the neutered or "unstoried" body becomes proleptic of the imminent passing of Afrikaner nationalism. The narrator's discursive reach<sup>4</sup> translates the materiality of the body, dislodging it from its "proper" emplacement in the discourses, say, of biology and repositioning it in the discourse of, say, urban archaeology. Flesh is, to put it bluntly, transposed into history. But given this transposition, it is ultimately now with respect to the axis of time—synchronicity and diachronicity ranged as the temporal equivalents of horizontality and depth—that the spatial coordinates of the passage (*under, just below, above, alongside*) are pungently, are allegorically s(c)ent.

### 3. The Secret (of the) History of the Body

It is very much part of my argument, however, to insist that the body's historicity, its violent becoming-memory, is not contingent on the localized transpositions that I have shown to be at work in this passage. Admittedly, the decaying body in this depiction of it appears to be the site of a certain rivalry--a tug of war among competing metonymies, if you like--between those constituents of the scene that seem to announce the body's immediate kinship with the natural (*overgrowth, weeds, kakiebos*) and those that enact its affinity with the reified detritus of the social--the latter, superimposed, as it were, on a corporeality that is itself pre-given, originary, fundamentally "natural." But I would like to recommend vigilance here. The juxtaposition that appears to propel the body from nature into history for the narrator, and for the critic in his wake, is precisely part of a kind of occulted knowledge that needs now to be taken into consideration: a knowledge that we might register as the *secret of the history of the body*.

Much recent work in gender theory has engaged precisely in the de-naturalization of the body. Theorists as differently positioned as Jacques Lacan (1977), Michel Foucault (1990 [1976]), and Judith Butler (1990, 1993), among many others, have repeatedly foregrounded the constructedness of the body. Impressive consensus exists in the theoretical humanities with regard to the claim that hegemonic discourses on sex and gender conceal the genealogy of the body, presenting it as a pre-given "natural" entity, possessed of fixity, stability and materiality. Against this view, contemporary queer, gender and psychoanalytic theory stresses the manner in which normative injunctions, performative practices, and socially produced grids of intelligibility operate on the body to form an embodied subject possessed of an identity that may be specified with reference to coordinates of ethnicity, race, gender and class (see especially Butler 1993). The embodied subject constantly confronts and is interpellated by forms of governmentality that presume certain (contingent and changing) understandings of its constituent corporeality or, if you like, materiality. Social and cultural constructions, deeply embedded in the political, ideological and historical contexts of their

production, contour and define the body, which is consequently both more historical and more phantasmatic than claims about its "irreducible" substance (see Butler 1993: 28) would concede.

The body, any body, is thus, in my understanding of it, always already embedded in history, and in South Africa that history is a pretty thoroughgoing one of violence. But the body under scrutiny in our text is also embedded in a very specific micro-history, the history of South African literature in English. The topos of the corpse, the wrong corpse, the missing corpse, the unidentified corpse, the *black* corpse wronged, unidentified, has been an extremely enduring one in South African literature, surfacing—because *that* is often the crucial term—in writers as different as Herman Charles Bosman ("Unto Dust," 1987 [1949] ) André Brink (*A Dry White Season* 1980 [1979]), Nadine Gordimer ("Six Feet of the Country," 1953, *The Conservationist* 1974) and Ann Landsman (*The Devil's Chimney* 1998). The raising of the black corpse in Gordimer's *The Conservationist* is probably the most paradigmatic instance here. In a well known argument, Stephen Clingman claims that the black corpse which is unearthed in *The Conservationist* represents both an oppressed black world in white South Africa as well as a site of repression in the minds of white South Africans, a repression "bound to return to consciousness in threatening and subversive ways" (1986: 209, see also 157-69). Given the overdetermination of the topos, the assumed blackness of our corpse ("I'd taken a good look at the Prospect Road corpse through my opera glasses: black male, fortyish, fifteen stone," Vladislavic 2001: 117) is plausibly as much the result of a situated intertextual genealogy as it is a matter of statistical probability.

But the specifically South African literary historicity of the depiction of the unidentified corpse does not end here. Facing the corpse, the white narrator is also heir to the scopic drive of literary realism in its habitual English-language South African guise. Tearle sees through the window of his apartment, and we "see" him through the window of the realist sign, seeing through this /window/ Tearle *seeing through the window* in order to raise to representation the corpse of an anonymous (black) body partially shrouded by pages of newsprint. The evidentiary, typified and mimetic dimensions of this depiction (John Tagg

1988, see also Allen Feldman 2000 [1997]: 55)—disrupted by my deliberate casting *en abyme* of its codes—establish its authority, its intelligibility, as well as its truth claims and facticity within the coordinates of the fictional world.<sup>5</sup> In South Africa, as I have argued elsewhere (Bethlehem 2001), realist representation (already heavily indebted from an epistemological point of view to the notion of the transparent adequation of the linguistic sign to extra-linguistic referent, Catherine Belsey 1980, Rosemary Coward and John Ellis 1977: 34-44, 45-60, Terry Eagleton 1984 [1976]: 85-86, Stephen Heath 1974, Pierre Macherey 1978), mobilizes its supposed transparency in the service of a moral discourse which strains to effect a secular closure between the word and the world, the better to safeguard the ethical claims of South African writing. Read against the backdrop of a specifically South African literary realism, the white narrator's gaze intersects, however tangentially, a kind of revelatory optic that is both politicized and moralized such that, in the words of one of its prominent scholars, "(t)he picture alone indicts the society which permits such inhumane conditions to exist" (Bernth Lindfors 1968:17).

#### **4. The Imaginary Anatomy of the Post-Apartheid Subject**

One thrust, then, of my reading of Vladislavic's text has been to show its (partial) collusion in the codes of literary realism that, historically, were held to responsible for the revelation of truth in the face of the mendacity of the apartheid state. But it is entirely salient to note that the literary production of truth, in this as in other instances of post-apartheid memorialization, has come to (w)rest its claims *as body*. In the most general terms, the privileged status of the body in the relay of representational truth-effects, stems from its apparently self-evident materiality, a stance vigorously challenged by Judith Butler's anti-essentialist critique (1993, 2001). In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler points out that it is possible to read appeals to the "materiality" of the body (such as the one I shall immediately be citing) as a form of nostalgia for what she terms a grounding and constitutive extra-discursive principle of *necessity*. "For surely," Butler writes, reconstructing such appeals in the voice of her opponents, "bodies live and die; eat and sleep; feel pain, pleasure; endure illness and

violence; and these 'facts' . . . cannot be dismissed as mere construction. Surely there must be some kind of necessity that accompanies these primary and irrefutable experiences" (1993: xi). For Butler, it is crucial to counter the trope of necessity with claims concerning the performativity of the discursive body. One means of countering the referential anchor seemingly provided by the material body would be to argue that the body is part of language but is, despite this containment, not fully exhausted by it, a view that constructs the body as a surplus exceeding the signifier. While conceding that there is such an "outside" to discourse, Butler nevertheless calls upon us to exercise caution in apprehending it. Instead of conceptualizing the beyond of discourse as pure exteriority, as "an absolute 'outside,' an ontological thereness that exceeds or counters the boundaries of discourse" (ibid.: 8), she would have us see it in far more relational terms. The outside—"sex" for the purposes of Butler's discussion, "the material body" for mine—needs, Butler claims, to be conceptualized as a "constitutive 'outside': it is that which can only be thought—when it can—in relation to that discourse, at and as its most tenuous borders" (ibid.). Thus she will repeatedly stress the indissoluble trace of signification that adheres to the body even though the body seems, under certain philosophical constructions; in certain institutional contexts, the torture chamber for instance (Scarry 1985), or in certain political dispensations, present-day Israel, let us say, to efface discourse in favor of sheer materiality. Crucially for Butler's purposes, as well as for my own, "there is no reference to a pure body which is not at the same time a formation of that body" (ibid.: 10).

The occulted representational charge of the body no doubt accounts for the seductiveness of the mutilated, abject or sexually violated body in post-apartheid South Africa. Nowhere is this more evident than in the proceedings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, itself. A kind of "machinic assemblage" in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's sense (1977 [1972]) oriented towards the production of a particularly purified form of national memory (see Adam Sitze 2003), the TRC may productively be thought of as a stratified interface comprising human agents, caught in the process of their becoming the subjects of the "new" South African nation, in complex and dynamic interaction with the media technologies integral to its staging and coverage.<sup>6</sup> At its most abstract, the TRC's

program of reconciliation ("healing") through the ritualized production of "truth" was mobilized through a rhetoric that depended on seeing the nation as a physical body, "a generically South African (that is, not generically human) individual," in Richard A. Wilson's words, "projected onto the national scale" (2001: 14). But the violated national body took on distinct contours, time after time, in individual testimony, as any number of passages in Antjie Krog's Country of My Skull attests:

'They forced us out of the bus. They let us lie down on our stomachs. They trampled on us. They trampled mostly on me, because I was pregnant. They said women are breeding the enemy.'

'I heard these men speaking in Zulu. "Let's kill these dogs of Mandela." She jumped over the fence of our backyard. She was wearing pink cloth. They disemboweled her—she was eight months pregnant.'

'This burning ball on the dining-room floor, I see it was my daughter. . .'

'Mommy they shot me. . . I saw the biceps hanging from her arm.' (Krog 1998: p.188)<sup>7</sup>

The materiality of the South African body, the space of embodiment it occupies in its ongoing mutilation, or once occupied under the disciplinary apparatus of the apartheid state (prison-cell, torture chamber, mass grave), constituted a central preoccupation of the TRC.

Corporeality, whether thematized in testimony or evident, in evidence, as material residue on display before the Commission, was central to what Gary Minkley, Ciraj Rassool and Leslie Witz have analyzed as the ocular politics and the realist epistemology of the Commission.

Despite a seeming lack of visibility regarding the submerged dimensions of the apartheid past, Minkley, Rassool and Witz argue that a visual past was indeed composed by the Truth Commission as "revelations, and tellings [were] cast into a framework of exposure, witnessing and seeing" (1996: 8). At the visual core of the TRC hearings, the authors claim, were "descriptions, representations and conflicts around bodies in various states of mutilation, dismemberment, and internment within the terror of the past. Again and again, witnesses made claims in respect of body parts and human remains, making their visibility, recovery and repossession a metaphor for the settlement of the pasts of apartheid" (ibid.: 9).

Viewed against this extra-literary continuum of discursive and non-discursive practices of commemoration, the "imaginary anatomy" (Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Michael 2000:20) of the corpse that Tearle views becomes all the more significant. Anterior to this body, I have suggested, is an occulted history of the post-apartheid national subject whose contours have been shaped by the corporeal politics of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Moreover, I have argued, the Commission is itself deeply indebted to the "representational literalism" (Damian Grant 1985 [1970]: 14-15) of realist epistemology in its characteristic South African guises. My problem with this relay of affect is twofold. Invocation of the brute materiality of the corporeal signifier all too often serves to foreshorten the distance between trauma and its representation, so that the trauma of the victim and with it, the particular political or national interests that victim is constructed as bearing, might appear to speak themselves into being *without mediation*. However, unmediated corporeality (even the mere illusion thereof) is a particularly ironic foundation on which to base a post-apartheid nationhood. For did not apartheid itself seek legitimacy in the *supposedly anterior materiality* of the body, a materiality whose *occulted* mediation was translated by the regulatory apparatus of South African state into a hermeneutic monopoly over the violently discriminatory practices that produced and maintained the viciously unequal power relation of the racist binary?

## **5. Uncanny Migrations**

This being so, there is next to nothing between the shared effacement of the constructedness of "pure" body in its apartheid-era or in its post-apartheid modalities. The body foregrounded in post-apartheid mnemonic performances can no longer simply be held to underwrite a kind of excess of truth that J.M. Coetzee once held to be the constitutive condition of the South African social body, "truth by the bucketfuls, truth that overwhelms and swamps every act of the imagination" (1992: 99).<sup>8</sup> Rather, the body must now be said to produce the excessive truth of *Nachträglichkeit*, once the bucket in question is allowed its belated association with the "wet-bag" method of torture famously reenacted in amnesty

hearings in Cape Town by police captain Jeffrey Benzien on the prostrate but living body of Tony Yengeni (see Krog 1998: 73, and on the belatedness of trauma, Cathy Caruth 1995: 6, *inter alia*).

My reading thus far has foregrounded a disavowed continuity between apartheid-era and post-apartheid semioticizations of the body, to argue that the corporeal dominant<sup>9</sup> of collective memory in contemporary South Africa constitutes a traumatic reenactment of the representational codes that helped to hold apartheid *in place*, in the first place, as the differential racialized fetishization of the body. But if the "truth" of the "pure" or "material" body is not solely, nor simply, a matter of referentiality, in what else might it consist? Is there room for a reconsideration of corporeality not routed through positivist essentialism in the tortuous, tortured displacements of the latter's tropes, turns, returns in the South African social fabric? What else may be discerned when the body is put on display?

Orly Lubin, in her analysis of representations of the dead Jewish body in Israeli cinema, argues that the putting on display of the body may detach its materiality from the sign that constantly encroaches upon it (2001: 126). I understand Lubin to say that the deformation of the body, whether through artifice (in dance, in sport, in the circus) or as the result of violence (*ibid.*), may momentarily release access a disruptive corporeality (at the border of bodily existence, as the borders of bodily existence) that gives up the ghost: the body's indebtedness to a materiality that cannot be thought in itself but that is constantly overwritten by the homogenizing discourses of nationalism, of race, or of ethnicity as they take up the body—or take up its (s)lack. And while I am less convinced than Lubin of the possibility (in a literary medium) of detached materiality, I certainly second her call for a reworking of the mimetic violence of the gaze: "It is necessary to reformulate the act of looking as a form of decipherment that includes the excluded and the repressed, the wounded and the dead, and that places itself in this field as part of it—and hence, as committed to—its politicization" (*ibid.*: 135, my translation).<sup>10</sup>

Instead, then, of endorsing the representational priorities of mimetic commemoration, commemorative mimesis, and with them, a peculiarly South African

fetishization of the body, I would like to take up Tearle's depiction, once again, of the corpse that we, Vladislavic's narrator and I, have provisionally identified as black. I would note particularly vis-a-vis its resurgence, that this corpse refuses its designation as essentially black, unequivocally black. Let us revisit the sentence I have already quoted: "I'd taken a good look at the Prospect Road corpse through my opera glasses: black male, fortyish, fifteen stone" (Vladislavic 2001: 117). Equally, let us revisit its successor, "But the next day, the *Star* said it was a *white* man, burnt to a char" (ibid., emphasis in original). Against what Allen Feldman has called "the correctness of the gaze" (2000 [1997]: 62-63), Vladislavic's text nurtures deliberate confusion. The Prospect Road corpse is now not so much superfluous, a form of excess waste deposited on the urban landscape, as excessively coded or anamorphic: "One image or form arising from or out of another form without the cancellation or disappearance of the first image" (Feldman ibid.: 70). Neither white nor black, both white and black, the corpse is, a restlessly transitional object, which phrase I wrest from the Winnicottian usage, to denote the relentless mobility of the trope—the stillness of the corpse notwithstanding, a stillness distilled in representation, distilled as Tearle's denigration (that is to say, wrenching the word back to its etymology, *blackening*) of the corpse. For his part, Vladislavic's evasiveness regarding the racial identity of the corpse means that this body is no longer simply emblematic of territoriality, racial identity or ethnicity—nor of the homogeneity formerly posited, formally posited between them under the socially segregated spaces of apartheid. Like the President of Tsotsis, its migrations are uncanny.

Instead of the referentiality of the body, let us opt then for its rendering, in a restitutive modality, a returning (of something, but of what) to its rightful owner (see Guiseppe Stellardi 1990: 41),<sup>11</sup> where the supplement of discursive or commemorative mediation is borne like a tattoo poised between the inscription of its embeddedness on the body and its simultaneous superfluity. "*Tattoo*"—the word is not unmarked when spoken by a Jewish Israeli. Once spoken, let it mark the place of that resistant, contaminated and traumatically contaminating, corporeality which I have read Vladislavic's depiction of the anamorphic corpse into bearing. In defiance of the uses to which the tattoo is conventionally put in the discourses of Jewish nationalist entitlement through bodily suffering that are an

undeniable component of the nationalist rhetoric which continues to justify the Israeli occupation of Palestine, I would like to conclude by emphasizing that the body as a space of memory does not speak itself into the service of *communitas*, emergent nationhood, nor even into the intimate and confessional narratives of the street without the mediation.

If there is an urgency to my rhetoric here, and I believe there is, it is because I too inhabit a space of violence. And there are bodies—Palestinian bodies, Israeli bodies—on the line.

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## Appendix

"Violent Seductions: The Mnemonics of the Body in Post-Apartheid South Africa"\*

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From Ivan Vladislavic 2001 The Restless Supermarket (Cape Town: David Phillip), page 6.

One Sunday morning not too long ago, on an overgrown plot in Prospect Road, I saw a body in the weeds under a shroud of pages from the Sunday Times. I saw it from the window of my own flat, where I stood with a carton of long-life milk in my hand, and I could almost smell the pungent scent of the kakiebos crushed by its fall. It lay among the rusted pipes, blackened bricks and outcrops of old foundations that marr every bit of empty land in this city, as if a reef of disorder lay just below the surface, or a civilization had gone to ruin here before we ever arrived.

What do I mean by 'we'? Don't make me laugh

\* In memory of Ronnie Bethlehem, South African economist, killed in what South Africans term a "hijacking" in the garage of his home, May 1 1997.

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<sup>1</sup> In *Spectres of Marx*, Derrida notes that injunction crosses with conjunction in the word "conjure" (1994: 12)—that is to say, conjuration entails the conspiracy of a solemn oath (ibid.: 40) as well as the "magical incantation destined to *evoke*, to bring forth with the voice, to *convoke* a charm or a spirit. Conjuration says in sum the appeal that causes to come forth *with the voice* and thus it makes come, by definition, what *is not there* at the present moment of the appeal. This voice does not describe, what it says certifies nothing; its words cause something to happen" (ibid.: 41).

<sup>2</sup> The murder statistic represents more fatalities, du Toit claims "*than the number of political fatalities for the entire decade of 1984-1994*" (2001: 47). The tendentious italics are, of course, his.

<sup>3</sup> For analogous representations in works by black writers, see Phaswane Mpe 2001 and Zakes Mda 2002 (1995).

<sup>4</sup> "Tearle," he is named, an obvious anagram for "relate" in a novel where the anagram is obsessively thematized.

<sup>5</sup> In fairness to Vladislavic, it is worth stating that the novel eventually suspends the codes of mimetic realism far more effectively than I have done: its second part, "The Proofreader's Derby (Corrected)," is both an intra-diegetic text written by Tearle and an apocalyptic and meta-fictional interrogation of the larger text which hosts it. These intra-textual displacement remain, unfortunately, beyond the scope of the present paper.

<sup>6</sup> My ability to think of the TRC as a "machinic assemblage" derives from Patricia Clough's provocative recent work on Guattari, forthcoming in *Social Text*, which she recently presented at Tel Aviv University. My understanding of the role of the TRC in constituting South African sovereignty and nationhood is pervasively indebted to Adam Sitze's remarkable work on this subject. "The Truth Commission," he writes, "*clarified* the truth of apartheid by way of *instantiation*, but it also *ritually purified* the new South Africa of apartheid—and, perhaps inevitably, produced a purified concept of apartheid itself. Illustration was the mode of *purge without purge* upon which the Truth Commission's catharsis hinged" (2003: 28).

<sup>7</sup> I have reduplicated Krog's punctuation, as well as, of necessity, the anonymity of the victims, all presumably women, as they appear in her account. By no means all of the victims whose stories are recounted in Krog's narrative are anonymous. Whether the victims are named or not, I find it necessary to resist their interpolation into my text as mere metonyms. Their singularity exceeds any historical or theoretical narrative, and its residue haunts me, haunts my text.

<sup>8</sup> The reference to Coetzee is fairly well known: "In South Africa there is now too much truth for art to hold, truth by the bucketful, truth that overwhelms and swamps every act of the imagination" (1992: 99), but for reasons of my own, I would like to recall the occasion of its enunciation, Coetzee's acceptance speech upon receipt of the "Jerusalem Prize" in 1987. The irony of the pronouncement, judged with respect to the time and place of my own writing, Hod-Hasharon/Jerusalem, 2004, does not escape me.

<sup>9</sup> I am using "dominant" in Jurij Tynjanov's sense, mediated through Roman Jakobson, to denote the focusing component of a work or synchronic literary system that governs, determines, and transforms the remainder. See Jakobson 1971.

<sup>10</sup> Like Lubin, anthropologist Allen Feldman has repeatedly stressed the violence of realist mimesis. For Feldman, "Visual realism is created through the defacement of the human eye and through the cultivation of a certain type of nonseeing; for one of the artifacts created by realist representation is the very normative eye that apprehends the image—seeing supposedly does not exist outside the realist frame, or so we are conditioned to assume" (2000 [1997]: 51).

<sup>11</sup> In a meditation on Van Gogh's *Vieux souliers aux lacets* (1886), Guiseppe Stellardi proposes that the truth in/of the painting (or extrapolating, its ekphrasis in/as realist text) becomes a question of "rendering" something. "This word [rendering] is still ambiguous (returning [something] to its rightful owner? reproducing it correctly? reflecting something as it truly is), but the accent seems to fall, more than on mere technical exactitude, on a moral *imperative* directly related to an indebtedness" (1990: 41, emphasis in original). There is in the very act

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of rendering, says Stellardi, an intimation of "something which is due and owing and which must be returned" (ibid.).