

TRAUMA, TESTIMONY, AND TRUTH

Contemporary South African Artists Speak

KIM MILLER

She is sitting behind a microphone, dressed in beret or kopdeok [headscarf] and her Sunday best. Everybody recognizes her. Truth has become Woman. Her voice, distorted behind her rough hand, has undermined Man as the source of truth. And yet. Nobody knows her. The truth and the illusion of truth as we have never known them.

—Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull* (1998)

South African writer Antjie Krog's words directly address the problematic and highly contested relationship between truth, trauma, and representation. Specifically, Krog refers to traumatic experiences and notions of "truth" as presented at South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Constituted to investigate politically motivated forms of violence and human rights violations committed during apartheid, the TRC was formed as an attempt to understand the past, to come to grips with the crimes of the past,

and to give individuals a chance to speak about their suffering under apartheid. With individual healing and national reconciliation as its ultimate goal, the Commission sought to reveal truth through the recognition and recovery of stories that had previously been universally ignored. Through these stories, the Commission aimed to obtain and build a more complete picture of South Africa's oppressive and misrepresented past.

Visual representation played a central role in the TRC's efforts, for people's experiences were at once represented in legal terms, oral testimonies, and through visual media. Although the work of the Commission has officially

ended, these issues continue to be mediated and investigated through each of these realms. This paper will consider how notions of trauma and truth in South Africa continue to be addressed visually, for an extraordinary number and variety of artmakers are currently concerned with these issues. For example, Sue Williamson interacts directly with the TRC, examining the ways in which individuals internalize trauma as a result of giving, or listening to, personal testimony. In her *Truth Games* series, Williamson is primarily concerned with testimonies as they were spoken and received by witnesses, perpetrators, and survivors at TRC hearings. When considered alongside other examples of documentary photography, the contrast allows for a compelling investigation into the nature of victimhood. Artist Berni Searle also investigates the representation of truth, trauma, and testimony at the TRC, specifically in relation to women's experiences with violence. In *A Darker Shade of Light*, Searle literally shows that which was absent at the TRC by focusing her camera on her own body, which appears to bear bruises, lingering on the body as a painful reminder of the trauma of sexual abuse. Likewise, textile artist Ntsiki Stuurman uses the female body to call attention to similar crimes



against women. As a witness to acts of spousal murder and domestic violence, Stuurman adds her own story to the TRC's narrative, disavowing the omission of such crimes from consideration by the TRC. Through entirely different visual strategies, these artists continue the work of the TRC as they critique its results. In visual terms, they work to build and to reveal memory, insisting that the telling and the visualizing of traumatic stories are complicated ongoing processes.

Trauma Narratives: Survivor Testimony

History is what hurts.

—Frederick Jameson,
*The Political Unconscious: Narrative
as Socially Symbolic Act* (1982)

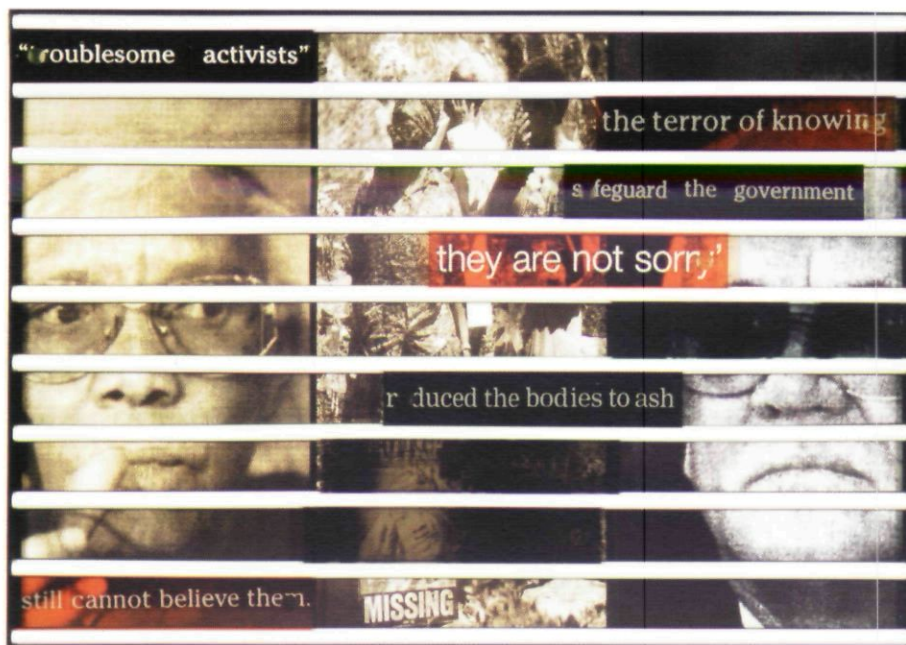
I'd like to begin my exploration of these issues by considering two different images that address the same story. The first is a photograph taken in June of 1996 by an unknown photographer at one of the TRC hearings (Fig. 1).¹ This photograph shows Joyce Mtimkhulu, a South African woman, facing the TRC and the entire country of South Africa as she testifies to the murder of her son. The second

image is a familiar work by artist Sue Williamson, taken from her *Truth Game* series. In this series, Williamson juxtaposes photos of crime scenes with those that were taken of both the sites and the victims when the victims were still alive, photos of the victims' families, and sometimes images of the perpetrator of the crime. The result is a disturbing contrast of survival and victimization, which reveal the tragic consequences of apartheid violence.² This particular work is called *Joyce Mtimkhulu—to ash—Col. Nic Van Rensburg* (Fig. 2). As in the first image, Williamson shows Joyce Mtimkhulu testifying before the TRC; a close-up of her face is visible in the work's left panel (Fig. 3). The photograph, which Williamson appropriated from a newspaper source, shows Mtimkhulu facing the Commission at another moment during an amnesty trial. Both of these photographs were printed in newspapers and other visual media and both were familiar images in South Africa at the time of the TRC hearings.

Both of these works are about the same story: They address the death of Joyce Mtimkhulu's son, Siphiwo Mtimkhulu. Siphiwo was a college student and political activist from South Africa's Eastern Cape. An anti-apartheid activist, he was imprisoned multiple times for his oppo-

sition to the apartheid government and for his consciousness-raising activities. While incarcerated, Siphiwo was repeatedly tortured and, unbeknownst to him, poisoned with thallium, a rat poison. He was then allowed to return home, where the poison slowly took its effect. He lost weight, experienced excessive swelling, lost control of his nervous system, and eventually lost the use of his lower body. Crippled and forced into a wheelchair, his hair slowly fell out until he was completely bald and unrecognizable to his family. As witnesses to his prolonged physical and psychological deterioration, Siphiwo's family agonized over his failing health. Shortly thereafter, Siphiwo vanished. His abandoned car was later "discovered" by the police near the South African border, but his body was never found. For fourteen years following Siphiwo's disappearance, his family endured continued harassment and a deliberately sadistic misinformation campaign from the very police who abducted

1. Photographer unknown.
Joyce Mtimkhulu speaking at Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 1996.
Photograph; Dimensions unknown.
Here, Joyce Mtimkhulu faces her son's killers, demanding to be told the "truth" about his fate.



ROGER WOOLDRIDGE



ROGER WOOLDRIDGE

This page:

Top: 2. Sue Williamson
Joyce Mtimkhulu—to ash—Col. Nic van Rensburg;
Truth Game Series, 1998
Color laser prints, wood, metal, plastic, Perspex;
80cm x 120cm x 6cm (31½" x 47¼" x 2⅜").

This work is from Williamson's *Truth Games* series, where Williamson is primarily concerned with testimonies as they were spoken and received by witnesses, perpetrators, and survivors at Truth Commission hearings. This particular work focuses on the stories of Joyce and Siphiwo Mtimkhulu.

Bottom: 3. Detail of Fig. 2

This detail from the left panel of Williamson's work depicts Joyce Mtimkhulu, and allows for a compelling investigation into the nature of victimhood.

Opposite page:

Left: 4. Detail of Fig. 2

This detail from the right panel of Williamson's work depicts Col. Nic van Rensburg, one of the perpetrators of the crime in question.

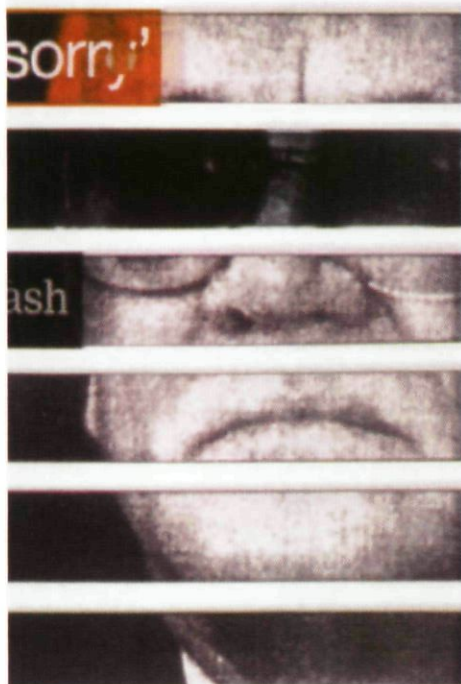
Right: 5. Detail of Fig. 2

This detail from the center panel of Williamson's work depicts the Mtimkhulu family at the scene of the crime.

and killed her son. The apartheid police led them to believe that Siphiwo was alive and that they were pursuing his whereabouts in another country.

While both artists pay tribute to the TRC's important work, they also critique the Commission's focus on particular notions of "victimhood." Part of Commission's charge was to "hear those narratives offered by the victims of apartheid ... and to determine who was, in fact, a victim" (Becker 2004:2, my emphasis). Calling upon viewers to broaden their notions of victimhood, the artists show us how, within the context of the TRC, violence done to children may be inscribed on the bodies and minds of their mothers. Challenging the narrow definition of "victim" as originally proposed by the TRC, these artists demonstrate that in addition to being victimized during apartheid, Joyce Mtimkhulu's experiences at the TRC may in fact have increased her suffering. Yet paradoxically, in providing a public forum for her to speak, the Commission also served as a vehicle of empowerment by offering Mtimkhulu a space to tell her story. When viewed through the lens of trauma theory, together they illustrate this paradox. An analysis of their work will show that while hearing the truth can be traumatizing, increasing one's sense of victimization, speaking about one's experiences as a victim can give the speaker renewed agency, leading to a more empowered life as a survivor.

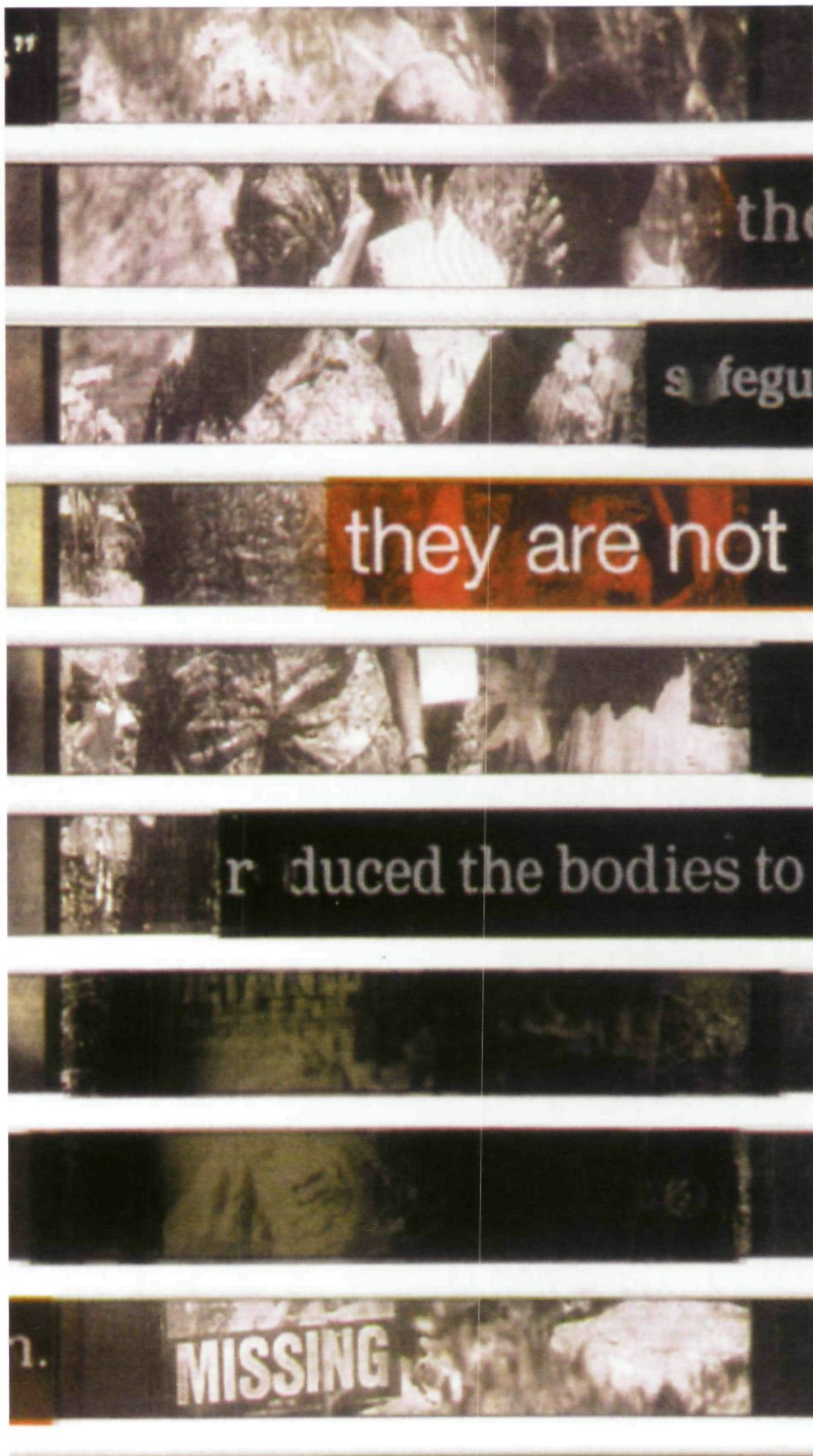
According to the Commission, victims of apartheid were primarily those individuals who physically experienced politically motivated violence under apartheid. According to the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act (No. 34,



ROGER WOOLDRIDGE

1995), which established the TRC, victims were first and foremost “persons who ... suffered harm in the form of physical or mental injury, emotional suffering, pecuniary loss, or a substantial impairment of human rights.” At the very end of this section of the Act, “such relatives or dependents of victims *as may be prescribed*” were also included (cited in Ross 2003:12, my emphasis). However, as Fiona Ross describes, “The Commission’s focus was, for the most part, body-bound” (Ross 2003:11). This narrow focus had two serious ramifications that are important for my discussion here. First, as other scholars have noted, because of the TRC’s emphasis on “primary victims,” women’s own stories were frequently sidelined, and most people considered women as “secondary victims” to men (see Graybill 2001, Ross 2003, Goldblatt and Meintjes 1996, Krog 1998).³ Secondly, it resulted in the exclusion of many individuals who, like Joyce Mtimkhulu, also considered themselves to be victims of apartheid. “Without focused attention, certain kinds of experience slip easily from the record” (Ross 2003:3). Most of those who slipped from the TRC’s record were women.⁴

By concentrating on Sipiwo Mtimkhulu’s story, these two images attest to the challenge faced by the TRC in reconstructing and representing the historical truth of the apartheid past through the vehicle of testimony in the absence of the “primary” victim. The interesting choice by both artists to place a visual focus on Joyce Mtimkhulu—the victim’s mother—effectively centers the experiences of women and draws our attention to one of the TRC’s biggest and most unexpected challenges: coping with the vicarious trauma of survivors who felt the need to



ROGER WOOLDRIDGE

be identified as victims because of the pain they internalized from knowing the suffering of others. The TRC was completely unprepared for the hundreds of female relatives—mostly mothers—who came to testify about the death or disappearance of their family members. The TRC, the media, the public, and some-

times the women themselves, were reluctant to identify these individuals as victims in their own right.

For the most part, when women spoke before the Commission, they did not testify about themselves. Even though countless women were victimized, both directly and indirectly, for the most part they came



JEAN BRUNDRIT

to the Commission to speak about the painful experiences of their male relatives (primarily their sons). Ross explains that "[W]omen testified differently from men: speaking mainly of men's suffering, they addressed their own experiences of harm and activities of resistance to the Apartheid State only indirectly" (2003:5). During the Commission's first five weeks, this unexpected trend was borne out in astonishing numbers. Although the *majority* of submissions were from women, "over three-quarters of their testimonies and 88% of the men's were about abuses to men. Only 17% of the women's testimonies and 5% of the men's were about abuses to women. Twenty-five percent of all cases involved women speaking about their sons..... There were no cases of men speaking about their wives or sisters" (Ross 1996:5). While Fiona Ross links this phenomenon directly to the TRC's "body-bound" focus, noting that it "permitted the expression of certain kinds of experience while eliding others" (2003:1), these staggering statistics also illustrate the phenomenon of vicarious traumatization as it was experienced by many South African women.

Here, both artists effectively draw our attention to the concept of vicarious traumatization as explained by trauma theorists Ana Douglass and Thomas Vogler. Drawing on Sigmund Freud's ideas presented in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1975/1922), Douglass and Vogler clearly explain that it is not necessary for there to be a direct connection between an individual's experience of trauma and the original traumatic event. It is possible for people to experience trauma even when the event

did not happen directly to them (2003:11). Often associated with post-traumatic stress disorder, vicarious traumatization "functions like a contagion, capable of arousing symptoms" in others who were somehow exposed to a traumatized individual or traumatic event (*ibid.*). One may experience trauma even from hearing a traumatic story as told by, or about, the suffering of a loved one. Dori Laub, psychiatrist and co-founder of the Holocaust Survivors Film Project at Yale, also speaks to the notion of vicarious traumatization and the varied ways in which brutality may vicariously manifest itself in the body. He emphasizes that the listener "is a party to the creation of knowledge *de novo*. The testimony to the trauma thus includes its hearer, who is, so to speak, the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed" (Douglass and Vogler 2003:34). In the context of the TRC, the notion of vicarious traumatization is manifest most clearly in the presence and testimony of the many mothers who, like Joyce Mtimkhulu, cast themselves as victims, who physically and emotionally experienced pain and suffering because they identified so intimately with the suffering of their children. Speaking about their own pain as indistinguishable from the pain of their children, they identified their own suffering with that of their loved ones, forcing the TRC and its listeners to reconsider its understanding of victimhood. Here, both artists depict Joyce Mtimkhulu as a woman who experiences this sort of trauma after being exposed to the pain and suffering of her son. We see her speaking, and hearing, about the details of his torture and death.

The documentary photograph shows us a traumatized Joyce Mtimkhulu testifying before the Commission. She speaks to the suffering of her son, whose only "crime" was that he fought for freedom from an oppressive government. Her association with trauma comes through the violence that she has internalized through the prolonged suffering and death of her son, declaring "[I am] trying to show the pain that he was sharing with me" (TRC 1996). In this photograph, she is testifying, defiantly calling attention to the suffering of two bodies, Siphiwo's and her own, convincingly presenting herself as a victim of apartheid violence. Speaking to the "truth" of apartheid violence as they both endured it, Mtimkhulu clutches in her hand a clump of Siphiwo's hair with his scalp still attached. She had saved it for fifteen years, waiting for the moment when it might stand as evidence in prov-

This page:

6. Berni Searle
A Darker Shade of Light; Discoloured series
Installation with Polaroid transfers digitally reproduced on backlit paper and lightboxes:
The Granary, Cape Town

Opposite page:

7. Berni Searle
A Darker Shade of Light; Discoloured series
(detail, the nape of the neck), 1999
Installation with Polaroid transfers digitally reproduced on backlit paper and lightboxes
In this series, Searle investigates the representation of truth, trauma, and testimony at the TRC, specifically in relation to women's experiences with violence. This detail appears to bear the bruises of trauma to the throat and neck.

ing their story: "I want the Commission to witness what I've brought here today so that they should know the effect of the poison which was used on my son.... [W]hy did I keep this hair? I said to myself, let me keep this so that one day something might happen so that I can be able to show this to the people." Shaking it dramatically at the trial, this mother cried, "the poison they could have used for those rats they used on my son" (ibid.).

Sue Williamson's work also focuses on Joyce Mtimkhulu's experience and agony, although it adds other testimonies to Mtimkhulu's story. In doing so, Williamson's work demonstrates the way in which the Commission's proceedings unintentionally increased Mtimkhulu's pain and further intensified her vicarious victimization. Williamson's work includes the image and testimony of the perpetrator, Colonel Nic Van Rensburg (Fig. 4). As Williamson's work suggests, although Van Rensburg's testimony is likely to be flawed or even inaccurate, it is critical to include because Joyce Mtimkhulu's knowledge of what happened to her son ended with his sudden disappearance. At the TRC hearing, she demanded to know the details of Siphiwo's final days, asking: "Where did they leave the bones of my child? Where did they take him to? What did they do to him? How? What did they do to him and where did they leave him?" (TRC 1996). It is clear that she needed to rely on the testimony of Siphiwo's murderers to finish the story. As both perpetrator and surviving witness to the crime, Van Rensburg was given the task of answering her questions, and filling in the "factual" narrative of Siphiwo's story. In Williamson's work, victim and perpetrator face each other, as they did at the amnesty trial, on opposing panels of the work.

Indeed, Van Rensburg confessed to the torture and murder of Siphiwo Mtimkhulu. In his detailed and devastating testimony, Van Rensburg described how he and other members of the South African police force, under direct orders of the apartheid government, committed the crime and then destroyed all evidence of their act by burning Siphiwo's body. A group of officers from the Special Branch burnt Siphiwo's body on a fire while having a BBQ nearby.⁵

The center portion of Williamson's work apparently depicts the scene of the crime (Fig. 5). According to Van Rensburg, this is where Siphiwo was murdered and his body disposed of. This photograph, which was formally used as evidence by the TRC, shows Joyce Mtimkhulu standing at the scene of the crime with two other family members, just moments after having learnt that this was the place of Siphiwo's murder. At the request of the TRC and the Mtimkhulu family, Van Rensburg led them here and, in front of attorneys, journalists, photog-

JEAN BRUNDIT



raphers, and a video crew, described in detail the manner in which he committed the crime. Upon hearing this testimony, family members in the photo stand still, gently wiping tears from their faces. They silently process the information, indicating their initial inability to fully register the horror that results from finally knowing the truth. In the photo we also see Joyce Mtimkhulu, standing still and silent, holding one of the many "Missing" posters that she and her husband distributed after her son first disappeared fourteen years previously. This image juxtaposes the agony of not knowing with the horror of finally knowing as it illustrates the complex ways that individuals may deal with hearing about trauma and atrocity. At this moment, in Joyce Mtimkhulu's mind, the complete truth of Siphiwo's story remained missing; she doubted the veracity of Van Rensburg's story.⁶

There is no physical evidence that the crime Van Rensburg describes had been committed here. After recovering from the initial shock of hearing the story, Mrs. Mtimkhulu's own uncertainty is revealed in her refusal to react with anything but defiance and rage when faced with Van Rensburg and his version of the truth. Both artists clearly show this. In both images Joyce Mtimkhulu is in the midst of giving testimony, responding to Van Rensburg, who remains cold and detached. Her angry, furrowed brow, flaring nostrils, and pursed lips, coupled with her animated and accusatory hand, show strength and the depth of her emotion. These images clearly establish Joyce Mtimkhulu as a victim of vicarious trauma,

connecting her body and physical pain with Siphiwo's through his remains, which she grips in her hand. Facing her son's killer and questioning the accuracy of his testimony, she disrupts his authority with hers as a mother who has internalized the pain and suffering of her son.

These sentiments also appear again and again through her own testimony, which was also recorded at the trial. Along with her image, these words play a central role in Williamson's work, further displacing the certainty of Van Rensburg's narrative with ambiguity. Mtimkhulu's words appear as fragments on the movable transparent slats that criss-cross over the photographic images:

"They are not sorry"

"Still cannot believe them"

"The terror of knowing"

Williamson's fragmented repetition of Mtimkhulu's narrative shows the emotional complexity of Mtimkhulu's position and complicates the very notion of establishing the truth. Williamson effectively communicates this difficulty in large part through her innovative use of movable, plastic slats which engage the body of the viewer and result in an ever-changing image. Each plastic slat contains a fragment of testimony and a hole just large enough to fit a viewer's finger. One is compelled to interact with the work by sliding the fragments of text back and forth across the faces and bodies of both individuals, as well as the site of violence. As each new viewer interacts physically with the work, manipulating

the words spoken by both perpetrator and victim, the meanings of both words and images shift, and we are compelled to think more deeply, more critically, about the problematic ways in which victimhood is defined, the complicated ways in which trauma is internalized, and the elusiveness of truth.

In critiquing the TRC's understanding of victimhood through their focus on Joyce Mtimkhulu's story, both artists further complicate the already ambiguous position of Mtimkhulu and others like her by casting Mtimkhulu as both victim and survivor. Here, their work recalls trauma discourse on Hiroshima/Nagasaki, specifically the Japanese concept of *hibakusha*, a useful notion that helps explain this liminal position. In the context of post-WWII Japan, the notion of *hibakusha* is "more precise than 'victim' or 'survivor'." It means "one who was subjected/exposed to the bomb and/or to radiation" (Douglass and Vogler 2003:287). In other words, *hibakusha* reframes the notion of victimhood, acknowledging that one can come to know trauma through various means, that trauma manifests itself differently on

people's minds and bodies, and that one can concurrently be traumatized as a victim and empowered as a survivor. When applied to the context of post-apartheid South Africa, the concept of *hibakusha* helps to explain the complicated identities of those people who were "exposed" to apartheid violence.

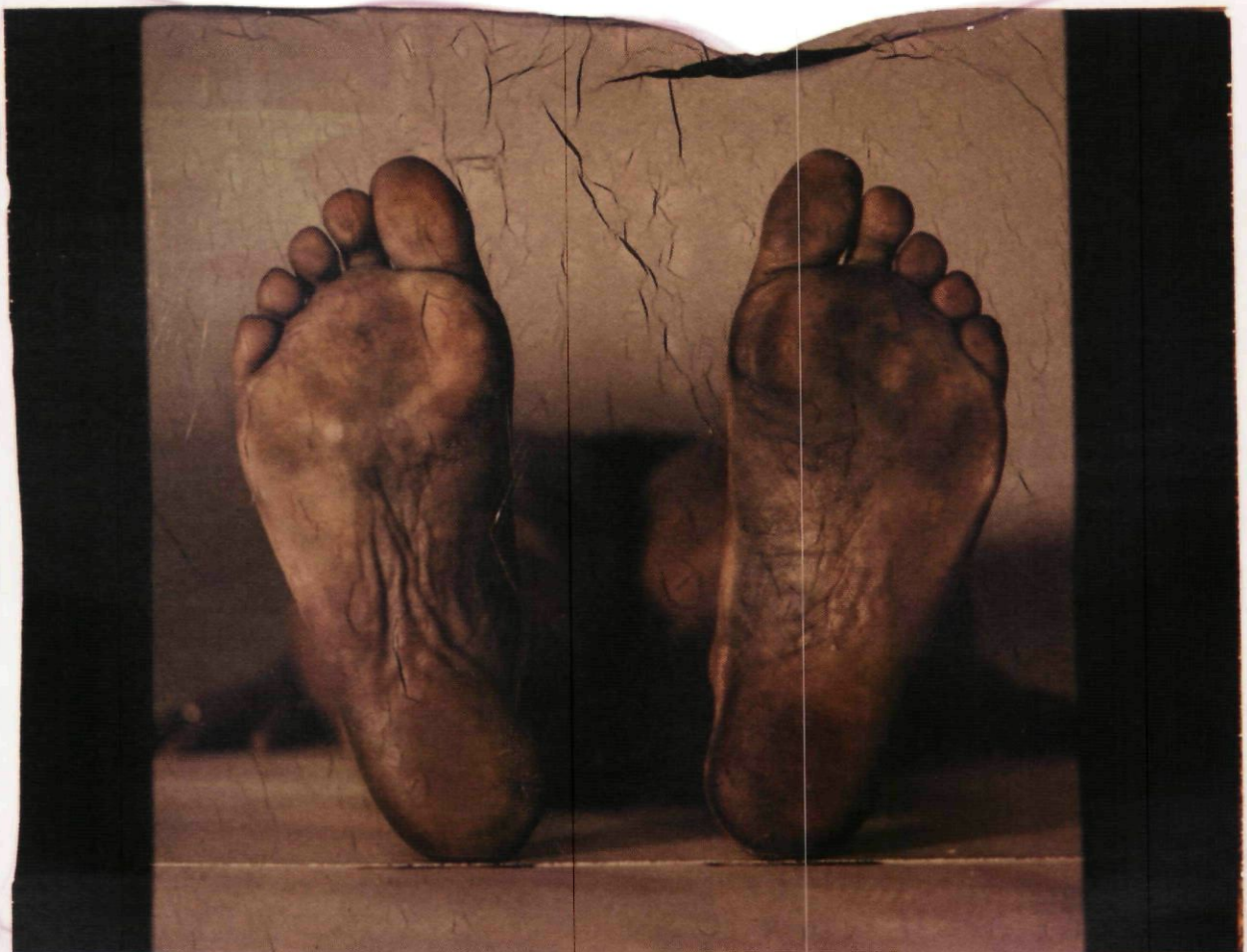
Central to understanding the concept of *hibakusha* is knowing the emphasis that it places on survivors who are active witnesses and who courageously reject the notion of themselves as passive victims through the act of giving testimony. A *hibakusha* is an empowered survivor who refuses to keep silent. It is the very act of telling of one's own story and the emphasis on actively claiming a victim/survivor identity for oneself that establishes one as *hibakusha* (Douglass and Vogler 2003:6).

The change in the role of survivor in Japan is exemplary of one of the most striking changes in the last two decades of trauma discourse: the transformation of witness as victim to witness as survivor, and to wit-

ness as performer, telling the tale of survival as a form of self-therapy and inspiration for others. Although the traumata differ widely, these "survivor narratives" have a number of features in common, among them the idea that narrative testimony, in the form of an active remembering and telling, can enable a move from a state of helpless victimage to a mode of action and even potential self-renewal, demonstrating that new actions can still be possible in spite of the trauma of suffering (Douglass and Vogler 2003:41).

As Douglass and Vogler describe it, *hibakusha* relies on the idea that the act of testimony is important to survival, placing emphasis on the agency, rather than the victimization, of the speaker.

The notion of *hibakusha* is useful here, for as the artists both demonstrate, Joyce Mtimkhulu's careful presentation of herself as both victim and survivor becomes clear through the act of telling her story. In one particularly powerful moment, which



JEAN BRUNOIT

Opposite page:

8. Berni Searle
A Darker Shade of Light; Discoloured series
 (detail, the soles of the feet), 1999
 Installation with Polaroid transfers digitally reproduced on backlit paper and lightboxes
 Imagery in this photograph can be interpreted as evidence of torture done to the soles of the feet.

This page:

9. Berni Searle
A Darker Shade of Light; Discoloured series
 (detail, the palms of the hands), 1999
 Installation with Polaroid transfers digitally reproduced on backlit paper and lightboxes
 This photograph recalls torture done to the hands.

is illustrative of this, she declared, "I don't want to cry. I understand that this is my day. I don't want to cry. I want to speak. If I cry, it won't be due to the pain, it would be due to the hatred. This is the fourteenth year, for fourteen years we were going along with this pain." After articulating her conflicting emotions, Mtimkhulu demands that the Truth Commissioner write down her story: "I hope you are writing

what I am saying because I want it to be scribbled as I am saying it. Is it being written?" (TRC 1996). At this moment in the hearing, Mtimkhulu ceased giving testimony until she received an affirmative response from the Commissioner. The visual focus of both works show her possessed with both this pain and the courage to speak out in a very public way about the brutal murder of her child. In Fig. 1, she tells a survivor narrative, staring directly and purposefully at the photographer and his camera, allowing her photograph to be taken, gripping what remains of her son's body in her hand. Connecting her body to his, this gesture not only allows her to memorialize the atrocity that led to his disappearance, but also asserts her own pain and suffering. Unashamed, she confronts her audience as well, forcing us to question how victimhood is defined, and how women (mothers, in particular) might internalize suffering differently from non-mothers. Williamson also places a pronounced emphasis on Mtimkhulu's agency and her urgent need to tell her story. What we see here is Mtimkhulu's agency—her insistence that we hear her

story as both victim and survivor—despite fact that the TRC may not have received her in this way.

Gender Blindness: Envisioning A Post Trauma(tic) Narrative

*Stories of harm are intricate,
 oddly delicate*

—Fiona Ross, *Bearing Witness:
 Women and the Truth and
 Reconciliation Commission in
 South Africa* (2003)

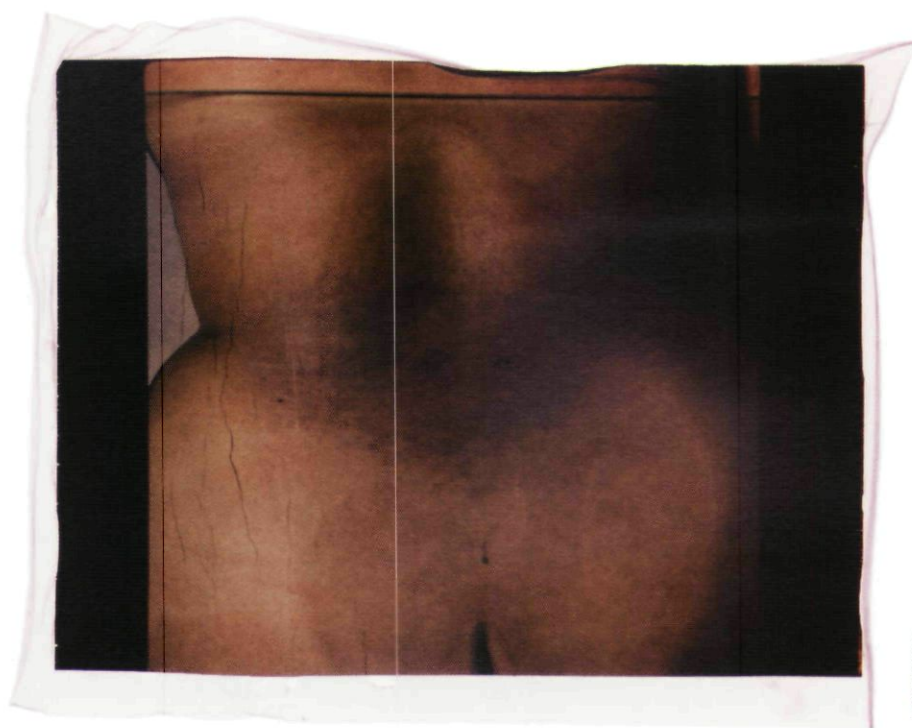
Like the documentary photographer, Berni Searle is concerned with visually documenting narratives of trauma. And like Williamson, Searle tries to invoke stories that have been largely rendered invisible by showing other experiences of victimhood. In contrast to both of the other artists, Searle's primary concern in *A Darker Shade of Light* (Figs. 6–11) does not focus on one specific event or an individual's story, but rather on documenting that which was rendered nearly invisible

JEAN BRUNOIT



within the TRC hearings: women's experiences with physical violence. While Searle's work may not at first glance appear to be about the TRC, it is very much in dialogue with it, in that these photographs challenge, from a feminist position, the ways in which notions of truth and victimization were represented at the hearings. Using and manipulating her own body as her medium, Searle challenges the historical invisibility and silencing of South African women, not only during apartheid and within the scope of the TRC, but also in the present day.

One of the Commission's primary goals was to sympathetically deal with the survivors of apartheid-era violence and to facilitate healing by providing a safe and supportive space for survivors to speak. Given this, the TRC was perhaps the one place where women expected their experiences to be handled with compassion. And yet many South Africans have leveled strong critiques about the Commission's failure to effectively deal with women's experiences with violence—especially torture and sexual violence (Graybill 2001; Ross 1996, 2003; Goldblatt and Meintjes 1998 a and b, 1999; Krog 1998). Beth Goldblatt and Sheila Meintjes, scholars at the Gender Research Project at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, are two such critics. Goldblatt and Meintjes insist that although the TRC upheld that "violence has been the single most determining factor in South African political history" (TRC 1998, 1:40), the Commission failed South African women because it did not attempt to fully understand or explain the gendered nature of apartheid violence. In addition, when determining how the hearings would be administered, the Commission did not take into account certain important factors specific to women's experiences which might affect their willingness to speak publicly about victimization, such as the shame associated with sexual violence and the embarrassment of speaking publicly about these crimes.⁷ Lyn Graybill recounts how even powerful women were scared and ashamed to speak about sexual torture and rape in the context of the TRC: "Many high-ranking women in [the current] government who were rape victims during the apartheid years may have worried how they would be perceived if they come forward with their stories.... Many women chose not to speak out" (Graybill 2001:5). The consequences of this are profound. Not only did many female survivors stay away from the Commission because they felt that what happened to them was either not serious enough or too embarrassing to speak about, but "the failure to utilize a gendered analytical framework ... has led to a number of weaknesses with the report which has [had] serious implications for the telling of [South Africa's] history" (Goldblatt and Meintjes 1999:1). The failure to adopt a gendered perspective

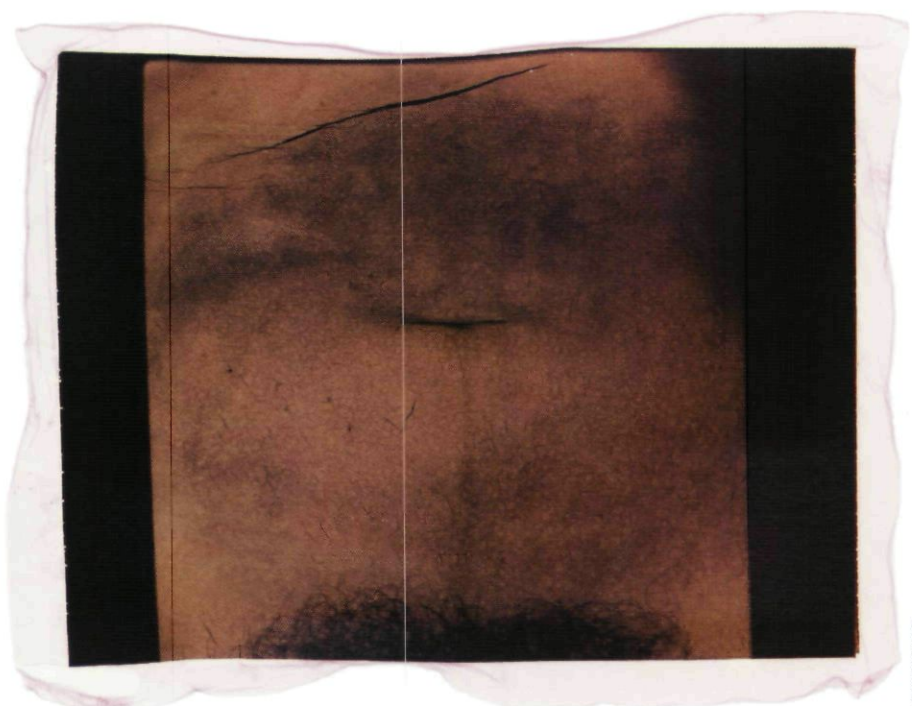


JEAN BRUNDRIT

means that a seemingly objective approach to the recording of South Africa's history has resulted in what Goldblatt and Meintjes call "gender blindness": an exclusion of women's testimonies, experiences, and suffering (Goldblatt and Meintjes 1999:4). Indeed, the TRC's gender blindness holds serious implications for South African women today. Here, Searle joins these critics by creating a visual space to consider the absence of women's testimony about these issues.

In *A Darker Shade of Light*, Searle responds to this gender blindness by creating a series of five photographs offering

close-up views of various parts of her body.⁸ Just as Joyce Mtimkhulu clutches the clump of her deceased son's hair, so does Searle turn to the body for evidence of atrocity and the demonstration of enduring pain. Focusing her attention on the visual power of the traumatized body, rather than on the words of spoken testimony, Searle turns the camera on her own body and conveys a forceful message about the depth and invisibility of women's trauma. Having rubbed specific parts of her body with dark henna, which has seeped into her skin, Searle's discolored flesh appears to be badly bruised. These mark-



JEAN BRUNDRIT

Top: 10. Berni Searle
A Darker Shade of Light; Discoloured series
 (detail, the small of the back), 1999
 Installation with Polaroid transfers digitally
 reproduced on backlit paper and lightboxes
 Here, Searle invokes bruising as a painful remind-
 er of the trauma of sexual abuse.

Bottom: 11. Berni Searle
A Darker Shade of Light; Discoloured series
 (detail, under the belly), 1999
 Installation with Polaroid transfers digitally
 reproduced on backlit paper and lightboxes
 As in Fig. 10, Searle invokes bruising as a painful
 reminder of the trauma of sexual abuse.

ings clearly indicate pain and suffering and alert us to the former, and continued, presence of traumatic acts. Searle responds by visualizing that which continues to remain invisible, filling in the Commission's "blind spot" with these troubling images of her own body.

Searle has carefully chosen the parts of the body to emphasize here: the palms of her hands, the small of her back, the nape of her neck, her lower belly, and the soles of her feet. By separating each part of the body into its own frame, Searle puts viewers in the uncomfortable position of closely scrutinizing the pained body; we are faced with not a whole body, but a fragmented one. Here is a body realized only as "hands" or "feet" or "neck," and so on. In isolating these parts she compels us to envision specific acts of physical violence that were experienced by women during apartheid. For example, the circular "bruises" around the back of the neck suggest strangulation, or perhaps the terrifying practice of "necklacing" (Fig. 7). Lyn Graybill reminds us of the gendered aspect of this particular crime:

The object of sexual competition between men, women became the target of political violence. Many women were victims of the so-called necklace, a gasoline soaked tire thrown around the neck of an adversary. For a woman, it was often her status as an enemy's wife or girlfriend that made her the object of this particularly gruesome killing (Graybill 2001:3).

Searle's alarming image reminds us of the link between this violent practice and the sexual exploitation of women. In other images, the deep markings on the inside of the hands and feet indicate torture on these tender areas that are so frequently used in daily life (Figs. 8–9). These "bruises" recall a crippling torture technique frequently used by the apartheid police: forcing political prisoners to stand for hours, even days at a time on rock-hard surfaces. In the final two frames, the large, swelling "bruises" on Searle's lower back and belly are especially disturbing as they imply sexual assault accompanied by brutal force, or even perhaps the physical abuse that pregnant activists regularly

experienced during detention (Figs. 10–11; Graybill 2001:7). Searle visualizes the common transgressions against women that were the very crimes most frequently absent from the TRC hearings.

In addition to the fragmentation of the body, Searle also uses her nudity, anonymity, and positioning of the body to comment on the objectification of women and its link with violence, especially during times of conflict (see Meintjes, Pillay, and Turshen 2001, for example). Indeed, in creating the image Searle objectifies—even injures—herself; the artist lies naked on the floor, while an assistant firmly presses a large piece of glass against her body until the photograph is taken. As a body positioned uncomfortably beneath glass, it appears as if this violated body is being manipulated and scrutinized even further, increasing the physical pain and the psychological detachment of the subject. Here, as Searle alludes to the revictimization that many women experience during courtroom testimony, she makes a reference to the uncomfortable environment of the TRC for survivors of sex crimes. And although we, as viewers, know that this is Berni Searle's body, the absence of face or identity suggests the shame and humiliation many rape victims face. Furthermore, this anonymous woman reminds us of the voicelessness of so many women within the scope of the TRC. Without the possibility of testimony, we are left to speculate as to—or ignore—what this woman has experienced.

In addition to viewing Searle's work as filling in the gender blindness of the TRC, this series is important because it raises issues of violence against women in the post-apartheid period. Here, Searle effectively illustrates how the South African female body has been a site of violence in the past and continues to be subject to varied forms of violence and oppression despite the end of apartheid. For example, while black women, who were the most oppressed sector of that country's population, were subjected to a particularly hostile and violent environment under apartheid, they continue to be subject to varied forms of violence despite the fact that the new South Africa appears to be one of the most "gender friendly" places available to women worldwide. South Africa's new constitution is one of the most progressive in the world in terms of gender awareness; it contains an equality clause, which explicitly outlaws discrimination based on gender.⁹ The new government also boasts an extraordinarily high number of female government leaders, including Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, South Africa's newly appointed deputy vice president. Despite this, many conditions for women have worsened; physical violence is a primary example. Rape statistics are particularly distressing: South Africa currently has one of the highest incidences of reported rape in the world. In

response to this, in 1999 local newspapers dubbed the city of Cape Town, "Rape Town," due to a sudden outburst in brutal acts of sexual violence against women.

As a resident of Cape Town, Searle reacts strongly and passionately to this issue. Creating and manufacturing images of violence in order to get at a truth which is not seen, Searle endeavors to create visual evidence of past injustices and present violence against women. As Annie Coombes observes, Searle shows those spaces of the body that are most often associated with privacy and intimacy: "The sites of the body which Searle chose signal a lover's knowledge and a lover's touch. The fragility and intimacy of this 'naming of parts' compounds the voyeurism of the viewing experience" (Coombes 2003:11). Here, the lover's touch is visible only through the evidence of his crimes. Searle effectively presents the damaged body in such a way that the presence of both intimacy and brutality is suggested, reminding us that a lover's touch can also be a vicious, even deadly, one.

These are also body parts that tend to be hidden from public view, and thus are doubly vulnerable in that they, like the apartheid government, conceal and hide both the acts and the evidence of violence. Searle's depictions of trauma suggest that there was, and continues to be, an atmosphere of silence and shame surrounding violence against women. The shame associated with this victimization leads survivors of violence to conceal, rather than reveal, such crimes. This more elusive, subtler rendering of suffering suggests that violence against women continues to be veiled in society and is more widespread than the already high statistics suggest (Clayton 2005, LaFraniere 2004). In these photographs of her own body, Searle not only exposes the ultimate failure of the TRC to capture and represent any kind of absolute truth when it comes to women, but also comments on the present and questions what the future holds for the women of South Africa.

Critiquing A Culture of Violence: Telling Testimony on the Body

By claiming that she was to "declare the truth to the people," Sojourner Truth saw her intellectual and political task not as one of fitting into existing power relations but as one of confronting injustice ... believing that speaking the truth in a context of domination constituted an act of empowerment.

—Patricia Hill Collins, *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice* (1998)

Where Williamson and the documentary photographer compel viewers to reconsider the nature of victimhood within the context of the TRC, and while Searle presents the female body in pain in order to address historical and contemporary silences about violence against women, textile artist Nontsikelelo (Ntsiki) Stuurman uses her own body as a visual text to raise related concerns. Extending the work of the TRC, Stuurman compels us to recognize more varied forms of violence, such as domestic abuse, assault, and murder, depicting crimes against women that proliferated under the patriarchy of the apartheid state, supported by apartheid's institutionalized racism, which has resulted in widespread violence against women in the post-apartheid period.

As previously discussed, the TRC's narrow understanding of victimhood, coupled with the uncomfortable circumstances for women who endured sexually based crimes, served to exclude many women's voices from its hearings. In addition, the TRC's focus on "politically motivated" crimes excluded many transgressions that were committed against women: "Under the guidelines of the legislation authorizing the TRC, it was mandated only to recompense victims of gross human rights abuses, defined as the 'killing, abduction, torture, or severe ill treatment' of any person, by a person acting with a political motive" (Graybill 2001:4, citing the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, Number 34 of 1995). Most crimes against women were not defined as "political." Ntsiki Stuurman responds to this by calling our attention to this exclusion. As a witness to acts of spousal murder and domestic violence, Stuurman adds her own story to the TRC's narrative, disavowing its omission of such crimes. Working as part of the Philani Project, a women's cooperative based outside of Cape Town, Stuurman creates an unusual and innovative space for visual testimony, handpainting her designs onto colorful t-shirts. Worn in the tradition of the protest t-shirts donned by anti-apartheid activists in the 1980s, Stuurman's shirts bear slogans that call upon other people to join her in speaking out on issues such as violence against women. Also similar to the anti-apartheid activists who came before her, Stuurman speaks on behalf of all women in her community, not just herself, wearing her testimonial t-shirt on her own body, thus truly expanding the public practice of "truth-telling" that was encouraged by the TRC.

In 1998 Stuurman created an untitled¹⁰ memorial to a murdered friend by painting the scene of her tragic death onto the surface of a cotton t-shirt (Fig. 12).¹¹ In painting this image, Stuurman declares the truth of this event; the artist exposes the interior of her friend's home as an act of "domestic" violence is in progress.

Using the t-shirt as her canvas, Stuurman presents the image as a visual expression of trauma and mourning. By wearing the shirt on her own body, Stuurman literally enacts a gendered dimension of public memory, transforming her female body from a likely site of violence to one that openly calls for justice against these very acts. In looking at this t-shirt, we watch this event unfold as the artist herself witnessed the crime. Along with Stuurman, we too become witnesses to murder.

The woman depicted here was a frequent victim of spousal battery and sexual abuse. The moment that Stuurman depicts is the instant the husband murdered his wife by beating her on the head with a large rock. We can see the family of three—husband, wife, and child—standing together in what appears to be the kitchen. A long table with dining objects and a plant is visible in the background. Behind the male figure, a low purple divider separates the family's sleeping quarters from the main living space. Small, colorful flowers and green plants outside show a garden that has been carefully tended. A tall tree, full of lush green leaves, frames the right side of the house; it has been strategically placed there in order to draw our eyes inward to the living area. The artist also uses vibrant color to catch our attention; the interior of the home is flooded with bright orange which, juxtaposed against the cool purple background, alerts us to the trauma that unfolds. In a dramatic gesture, the male figure, who is significantly larger and physically more powerful than the female, sweeps his arm over the head of his child, striking his wife's head with a large object. Turning away from her assailant and toward the viewer, the woman raises both arms to her head in an unsuccessful attempt to protect herself from his blow. The child, a young witness to this scene, tugs urgently at her mother's skirt.

Because of the close proximity of homes in Crossroads, the South African township in which this scene takes place, events that happen in the interior of one's home are frequently exposed to neighbors and the surrounding community.¹² Stuurman demonstrates this by focusing her attention on the interior space of the home. In doing so, she also effectively engages several of the important issues that have motivated women's rights activists to break the silence about domestic violence.¹³ Because it occurs between intimate partners inside the home, domestic violence is frequently seen as a personal or private, rather than a political and public issue. It has been a primary goal of women's rights advocates around the world to reverse this perception and to politicize these crimes. Presenting the crime in the manner that she does, in literally opening up the home and exposing this event for public view, Stuurman

breaks down the public/private divide, insisting that this kind of violence is not a private issue.¹⁴

Furthermore, in creating this t-shirt, Stuurman makes visible women's traumatic experiences, which are typically rendered invisible in her own South African society. For example, Stuurman continues to publicize this crime by wearing her t-shirt even in plain view of the perpetrator depicted in the work. In doing so, not only does she testify to the existence and prevalence of domestic violence, she also comments on the failure of the judicial system to prioritize these crimes and prosecute and punish offenders.

Whereas the TRC sought truth and justice through a complicated process of spoken confessions, testimonies, and requests for forgiveness, Stuurman seeks representational justice within the domain of visual culture. She attempts to extend the work of the TRC and respond to its gender blindness by filling in the narrative gaps that were left open by literally visualizing women's experiences, using textiles to express issues of trauma and memory. Her creative efforts in cloth provide an entirely unique form of testimony—one that is visual and worn on the human body, thus calling attention not only to her own individual stories, but also to the ways in which the South African female body has been a site of violence in the past and continues to be subject to varied forms of violence and oppression despite the end of apartheid. When Stuurman wears it, this t-shirt marks women's refusal to keep silent on critical issues and become public expressions of trauma and memory, two of the TRC's primary concerns.

Speaking from within a community marked by a long history of violence and speaking on behalf of this community for change, Stuurman continues the unfinished work of the TRC by citing specific events, naming perpetrators, and memorializing victims.¹⁵ This courageous form of truth-telling places Stuurman within a long-established tradition of black women who have sought personal empowerment and public justice through the act of testimony. Patricia Hill Collins, who has written extensively about the historical and contemporary importance of black women's testimonials, writes:

a Black women's testimonial tradition [is] long central to naming and proclaiming the truth ... testifying for or publicly speaking the truth, often about the unspeakable, not only recaptures human dignity but also constitutes a profound act of resistance (Collins 1998:237–8).¹⁶

In speaking publicly about violence against women, in refusing to be silenced, and in overcoming her own, existing fear of violence, Stuurman enacts and con-

12. Ntsiki Stuurman
Untitled, 1998
 Acrylic on cotton t-shirt
 Private collection

Textile artist Ntsiki Stuurman uses the female body to call attention to violent crimes against women. As a witness to acts of spousal murder and domestic violence, Stuurman adds her own story to the TRC's narrative, disavowing the omission of such crimes.

tinues this tradition. She foregrounds historical truths and contemporary concerns that have been erased from historical record.

For example, the act of testifying involves insisting that one's private acts be taken seriously as public concerns, for public awareness is crucial in one's search for justice. Collins elaborates on this point:

[W]ithin a narrow use of the testimonial, individuals testify within a community of believers such that each testimonial spurs others on to greater faith. However, a broader use of the testimonial involves testifying the truth to cynics and nonbelievers. Within a more generalized testimonial tradition, breaking silence, speaking out, and talking back in academic settings constitute public testimonials. Moreover, linking this tradition to a search for justice politicizes it (Collins 1998:238).

Collins's words, and Stuurman's image, are important when viewed within the context of the TRC because they insist on the politicization of crimes against women, urging that women's issues be viewed as political. Stuurman suggests we reconsider crimes which may seem private as political and societal concerns.

In addition to politicizing an issue, truth-telling through public testimony may also facilitate individual and group healing—another critical issue in post-apartheid South Africa. As Collins notes: “naming oneself and defining ideas that count as truth are empowering acts. For those damaged by years of silencing, [testifying] speaks to the significance of self definition in healing from oppression ... Although important, private naming is not enough—truth must be publicly proclaimed” (Collins 1998:208). Through visual testimony Stuurman insists that the pain of women be recognized as an integral part of South Africa's democratic transition and community building, working alongside Searle in helping to rectify the gender blindness of the TRC.

Ntsiki Stuurman engages in political action in order to resist oppression in wearing her testimony on her body. In this sense she continues the tradition of using the power of visual culture of everyday life to fight a political struggle, although she fights not against an op-

pressive state, but rather against an entire culture of violence where women are the most frequent victims. As James Scott writes, “The open declaration of the hidden transcript in the teeth of power is typically experienced, both by the speaker and by those who share his or her condition, as a moment in which truth is finally spoken in the place of equivocation and lies” (Scott 1992:xiii). Scott's words are useful here, for as this image shows, for South African women, the teeth of power can be located in the government, on the streets, at work, at school, and in the home. The “teeth of power” are at once national and local, and in expected and unexpected places, including, perhaps, the TRC. In pulling this t-shirt onto her body, Stuurman lets the world know that Crossroads women want and are willing to struggle for freedom from violence. Stuurman suggests to the TRC that there are many other stories still waiting to be told.

Conclusion

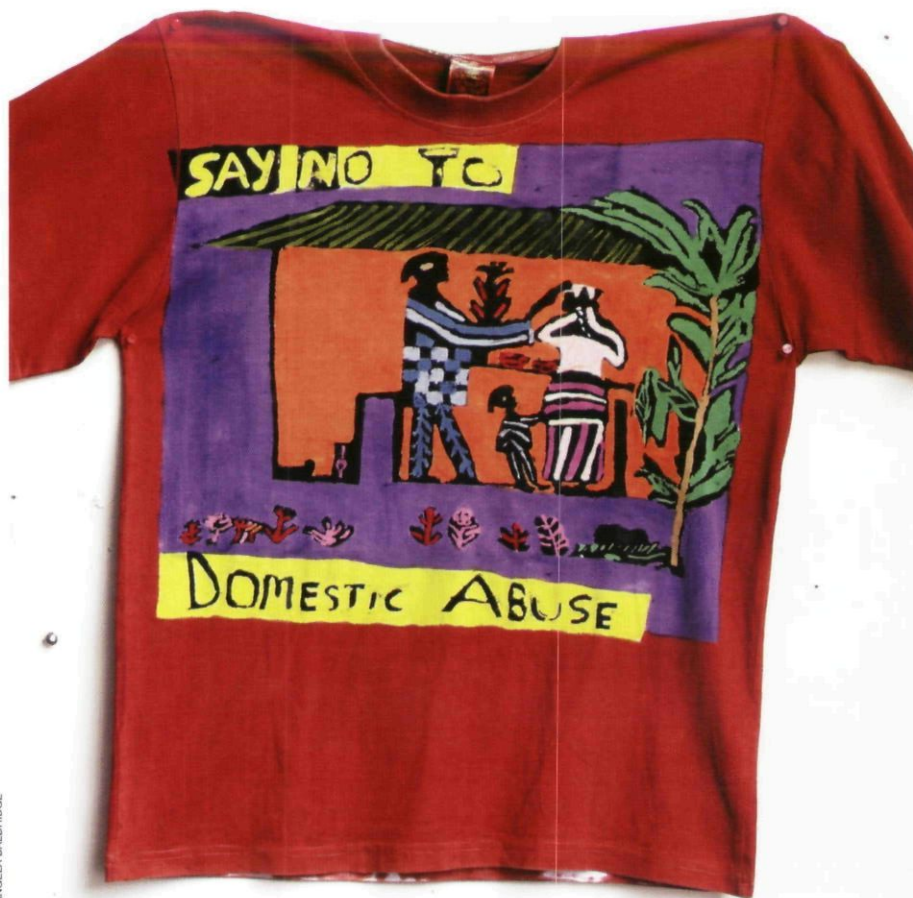
The long-term importance of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission cannot be understated, for it created a culture that encouraged truth-telling, healing, and reconciliation, values that continue to be attended to in various spaces. As Fiona Ross notes, “Close attention to [the

TRC's] working offers a means to reflect on how suffering is given voice to and acknowledged” (Ross 2003:1). And, since the end of the TRC hearings, its five-volume *Final Report* has been praised as the “closest thing South Africa has to an official history of apartheid” (Goldblatt and Meintjes 1999). Yet, in his forward to the Report, Archbishop and Truth Commissioner Desmond Tutu denies that the TRC is the final word on truth. He says that the Report “is not and cannot be the whole story” (TRC 1998), and calls upon South Africans to add to, and amend, this story.

The artists discussed here, and many others, have taken up Archbishop Tutu's challenge, seeking to further the noble aims of the TRC as they critique its results. Whereas the TRC sought truth and justice through a complicated process of spoken confessions, testimonies, and requests for forgiveness, these artists seek representational justice within the domain of culture. By focusing their artistic efforts explicitly on women's experiences with violence—by listening to how women's suffering was “given voice to and acknowledged”—these artists find effective and powerful ways to address and represent traumas experienced by South African women. ■

Notes, page 93

ANGELA BALDRIDGE



Fletcher, Angus. 1964. *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Gerhart, Gail M. 1978. *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Goldberg, Vicki. 1993. *The Power of Photography: How Photographs Changed Our Lives*. 2d ed. New York: Abbeville.

Hallam, Elizabeth, Jenny Hockey, and Glennys Howarth. 1999. *Beyond the Body: Death and Social Identity*. London: Routledge.

Hamber, Brandon. 1999. "Symbolic Closure Through Memory, Reparation, and Revenge in Post-conflict Societies." Paper presented at Traumatic Stress in South Africa, Center for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation. Johannesburg.

Herremann, Frank, ed. 1999. *Liberated Voices: Contemporary Art from South Africa*. New York: Museum for African Art.

Holiday, Anthony. 1998. "Forgiving and Forgetting: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission." In *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa*, eds. Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee, pp. 43–56. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Kayser, Undine. 1999. "To Be Considered... A Post-TRC Age?" Paper presented at The Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Commissioning the Past. University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Kentridge, Sidney, Georges Bizos, and E. Wenzel. 1977. Statement issued during inquest proceedings. Magistrate's Court for the District of Pretoria: Inquest No. 573/1977, December 1. Pretoria.

Kolane, David. 1994. *Sam Nhlengethwa: Standard Bank Young Artist Award*. Pamphlet for exhibition at arts festival.

Kristeva, Julia. 1982. *Powers of Horrors*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Latakomo, Joe. 1981. "Steve Biko Is Dead." [Johannesburg] *Sowetan* (September 11).

Legae, Ezrom. 1984. Interview by Linda Givon, December 12. Goodman Gallery archives.

Maier, Charles S. 2000. "Doing History, Doing Justice: The Narrative of the Historian and of the Truth Commission." In *Truth vs. Justice*, eds. Robert I. Rotberg and Dennis Thompson, pp. 261–78. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Manaka, Matsemela. 1997. *Journey of the Spirits*. Film produced by Peter Trehaeren. Johannesburg.

Merrett, Christopher. 1994. *A Culture of Censorship: Secrecy and Intellectual Repression in South Africa*. Cape Town: David Philip.

Ndebele, Njabulo S. 1994. *South African Literature and Culture: Rediscovery of the Ordinary*. New York: Manchester University Press.

Phillips, Sandra S., Mark Haworth-Booth, and Carol Squiers. 1997. *Police Pictures: The Photograph as Evidence*. San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Powell, Ivor. 1993. "Artists Turn Around and Take Back Reality." [Johannesburg] *Mail and Guardian*, December 23–29.

Richards, Colin. 1993. "Drawing a Veil: Art in the Age of Emergency." Rev. 1997. Unpublished paper.

—. 1997. "Cross Purposes: Durant Sihlali's Art of Allegory." In *Contemporary South African Art—The Gencor Collection*, ed. Kendall Geers, pp. 81–97, 163. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball.

—. 1999. "Drawing a Veil." Paper for The TRC: Commissioning the Past, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Rugoff, Ralph. 1997. *Scene of the Crime*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Small, Adam. November 1977. *DRUM* (November):20–27.

Tagg, John. 1988. *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*. London: Macmillan.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission. 1999. *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*. Vol. 1. Cape Town: The Commission.

Tyson, Harvey. 1988. "Can You Bear Those Cries?" *The [Cape Town] Star* (August 1).

Van Alphen, Ernst. 2001. "Deadly Historians: Boltanski's Intervention in Holocaust Historiography." In *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, ed. Barbie Zelizer, pp. 45–73. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

VAN DER WATT: Notes, from page 35

[This article was accepted for publication in June 2005.]

This is a revised and substantially expanded version of an article that first appeared in *Third Text* 56 (Autumn) 2001:63–75.

1. For a fuller discussion of the question of historical responsibility after the Holocaust, see Fulbrook 1999. See also Friedlander 1993 for an overview of the historiography of the issue of German generational responsibility in the years after the war. Friedlander characterizes the struggle with the past that many Germans still feel today as an intractable predicament: The Nazi past is too massive to be forgotten and too repellent to be integrated into the "normal" narrative of memory. For the last forty years, Germans of at least two generations have been caught between the impossibility of remembering and the impossibility of forgetting (1993:2).

2. As Heidi Grunebaum-Ralph and Oren Stier (1999) outline in an article that discusses the strengths and weaknesses of such a comparative framework, the comparison was first made at the start of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings by Kader Asmal, Louise Asmal, and Ronald Suresh Roberts in their book *Reconciliation Through Truth* (1996). While Asmal et al. made it clear that these two historical occurrences were not simplistically the same, especially if one considers the "adept extermination of Jewish people ... which really has no parallel," the authors nevertheless wanted to invoke the Holocaust as a useful historical framework for thinking about the dangers of race hierarchy in another context, that of apartheid. Asmal et al. were criticized by Mahmood Mamdani who, in a review of their book, argued that, through the comparison with the Holocaust, a false parallelism is established that "highlights as key to

the injustices of apartheid the relationship between perpetrators and victims, not beneficiaries and victims" (Mamdani quoted in Grunebaum-Ralph and Stier 1999:143). Mamdani also emphasized that whites and blacks in South Africa are not equivalent to Germans and Jews because after the Holocaust the latter two groups did not have to work together to create a common future in one country—"There was Israel" (ibid., 144). Historian Dominick LaCapra made a similar point about the particularity of these two contexts. In reference to a conference at Yale University that brought together scholars working on the Holocaust and the TRC South Africa to discuss the confluence of trauma and recovery in the aftermath of traumatic historical situations, LaCapra warns to take heed of the particularities of these two situations—"not least of which is the total near elimination of Jews in Germany as opposed to the majority status, as well as the rise to power, of blacks in South Africa" (LaCapra 2001:45).

3. On this historians' debate or *Historikerstreit*, see Knowlton and Cates 1993; Baldwin 1990; also *New German Critique* 1988. The debate flared up again recently with Daniel Goldhagen's (1996) controversial publication, on which see also Habermas 1998.

4. These two articles by Habermas were first published in *Die Zeit* on July 11 and November 7, 1986.

5. Minnette Vári was born in 1968 and raised in Pretoria. She completed a masters degree in fine art at the University of Pretoria and is currently based in Johannesburg. She has shown extensively in South Africa and internationally.

6. See <http://www.artthrob.co.za/nov98/fr-9811.htm> for an extract of this video (accessed February 1, 2005). My thanks to Minnette Vári for sharing the details of the video with me.

7. <http://www.artthrob.co.za/nov98/fr-9811.htm> (accessed February 1, 2005).

8. This has been a constant theme in post-apartheid white discourse. For instance, Chris Louw, an Afrikaans journalist in his forties, has recently published a book that expresses his anger at a previous generation that fathered apartheid yet never had to fight physically for its survival. He argues that his generation was used as pawns in this war and is also singled out as the most visible guilty party by the TRC, while the masterminds, a previous generation, walk free.

9. It is tempting to read a strong Jewish theme in Vári's work in the reference to the golem, to The Pale and the shaved hair, but Vári disputes this. In an email to me she argues that the golem interested her on more levels than simply its Jewish reference; in addition, the Beyond the Pale reference invokes her personal history rather than a specific Jewish one, and the shaved hair, especially in the case of women, has always gestured historically towards outsider status, to penance and punishment, and not simply to Jewish prisoners.

10. Minnette Vári, "Oracle: Artists Statement," prepared for the Vita Art Awards; at <http://www.mg.co.za/mg/art/vita/artists/vari.html>, December 1999.

11. Vári continues this theme of displacement in more recent work that lies beyond the scope of this article with its focus on the context of the TRC. In *Chimera* (2001), for instance, personal displacement is explored in relation to personal and official history. See van der Watt 2004b.

12. Like Minnette Vári, Kendall Geers grew up under the apartheid system and came of age during its demise. The son of an Afrikaans policeman, he ran away from home at age fifteen and later studied fine art at Witwatersrand University in Johannesburg. In 1988 he went to New York in order to evade military conscription, but returned to South Africa in 1989 when conscription became voluntary. An outspoken and prolific art critic, Geers has repeatedly asserted his belief in the role and responsibility of art to question and challenge the status quo and to be "of its times." Geers's art is characterized—however broadly—by a strongly conceptual basis that challenges the status of art, working in a long tradition of modernist avantgardism.

13. Now at <http://www.kendell-geers.net>. Accessed in February 2001 at <http://www.icon.co.za/~kendell/home.htm>.

14. <http://www.icon.co.za/~kendell/home.htm>.

15. Ibid.

16. It is interesting that both Vári and Geers, like so many of their contemporaries, choose this repetitive editing technique. In a show curated by Klaus Biesenbach titled "Loop," held at PS 1 in New York in January 2002, it became evident that this trend of the looped video is especially prevalent among artists who came of age during the 1990s. "Loop" examined thematic parallels with other media, such as sculpture and performance, and also explored various affects of the looped art work, ranging from the poetical, to the mundane, to the anguished. In addition, the repetition of the looped art work is often also a way to represent trauma, as in the case of Alfredo Jaar, who put posters with the name "Rwanda" repeated over and over in Malmö, Sweden.

17. The audio levels have been the center of much controversy in this show. Some of the other artists on the show complained that Geers's soundtrack interfered with their own works and he was asked to turn down the volume on his work. Since Geers saw the soundtrack as central to his piece, he rather removed his works prematurely from the Vita Art show.

18. In an interview with Jérôme Sans, Geers says that describing him only in terms of his South African background "would be like speaking about Damien Hirst's work only in terms of his being British or Matthew Barney as being American. The world today is a small place and as an artist I am influenced by all sorts of things that are not only about being African or having lived most of my life in the Third World" (Sans 2000:267).

References cited

Austin, J.L. 1962. *How to Do Things with Words*. Cambridge, MA:

Harvard University Press.

Adorno, Theodor W. 1992. "Commitment" (1962). In *Notes on Literature*, vol. 2, ed. Rolf Tiedemann. New York: Columbia University Press.

Baldwin, Peter, ed. 1990. *Reworking the Past: Hitler, the Holocaust, and the Historians' Debate*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Blignaut, Charl. 1998. "The Siege of Fort Klapperkop." *Mail and Guardian*, January 16–22:11.

Caruth, Cathy. 1996. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Dyer, Richard. 1997. *White*. New York: Routledge.

Farred, Grant. 1997. "Bulletproof Settlers: The Politics of Offense in the New South Africa." In *Whiteness: A Critical Reader*, ed. Mike Hill, pp. 63–78. New York: New York University Press.

Felman, Shoshana, and Dori Laub. 1992. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*. London: Routledge.

Freud, Sigmund. 1961a. "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, vol. 4. New York: Norton.

—. 1961b. "The Uncanny." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, vol. 17. New York: Norton.

Friedlander, Saul. 1993. *Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Fulbrook, Mary. 1999. *German National Identity after the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah. 1996. *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. New York: Knopf.

Grunebaum-Ralph, Heidi, and Oren Stier. 1999. "The Question (of) Remains: Remembering Shoah, Forgetting Reconciliation." In *Facing the Truth: South African Faith Communities and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, eds. James Cochrane, John de Gruchy, and Stephen Martin, pp. 142–152. Cape Town: David Philip.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1988a. "A Kind of Settlement of Damages. (Apologetic Tendencies)." Trans. Jeremy Leaman. *New German Critique* 44:25–39.

—. 1988b. "Concerning the Public Use of History." Trans. Jeremy Leaman. *New German Critique* 44:40–50.

—. 1998. "Goldhagen and the Public Use of History: Why a Democracy Prize for Daniel Goldhagen?" In *Unwilling Germans? The Goldhagen Debate*, ed. Robert R. Shandley, trans. Jeremiah Kiemer, pp. 263–273. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Knowlton, James, and Truett Cates. 1993. *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler? Original Documents of the Historikerstreit, the Controversy Concerning the Singularity of the Holocaust*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.

LaCapra, Dominick. 2001. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Laub, Dori. 1995. "Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle." In *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth, pp. 61–75. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Lifton, Robert J., and Greg Mitchell. 1996. *Hiroshima in America: Fifty Years of Denial*. New York: Putnam.

Louw, Chris. 2001. *Boetman en die swaansang van die verligtes* (Little brother and the swan song of the liberals). Cape Town: Human and Rossouw.

New German Critique. 1988. Special Issue on the *Historikerstreit*. 44 (Spring/Summer).

Ross, Robert. 1993. *Beyond the Pale: Essays on the History of Colonial South Africa*. New Haven: University Press of New England.

Sans, Jérôme. 2000. "Landmines in the Gallery: Kendall Geers." *Trans-arts.cultures.media* 8:267–73.

Shohat, Ella, and Robert Stam. 1994. *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*. New York: Routledge.

Van Alphen, Ernst. 1997. *Caught by History: Holocaust Effects in Contemporary Art, Literature, and Theory*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

van der Watt, Liese. 2004a. "Unhomely Places / Uncanny Knowledges: The Art of Minnette Vári." In *Minnette Vári* (exhibition catalogue), pp. 30–35. Lucerne: Museum of Art.

—. 2004b. "Identity's Lack, Identity's Excess: Two Works by Berni Searle and Minnette Vári." In *A Decade of Democracy, IZIKO: South African National Gallery*, ed. Emma Bedford, pp. 120–27. Cape Town: Double Story Books and Iziko Museums.

Ware, Vron. 1992. *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism, and History*. London: Verso.

MILLER: Notes, from page 51

[This article was accepted for publication in June 2005.]

This paper is a much-expanded version of a conference paper delivered at the College Art Association Annual Conference in February 2001. The original paper was titled "Truth and the Illusion of Truth: Contemporary South African Artists Speak." I'd like to offer sincere thanks to two individuals for their support in the writing of this paper: Bryan Trabold and Shannen Hill. Trabold's close reading and smart editorial suggestions resulted in dramatic changes that vastly improved this paper. Hill's collegiality and support as a co-editor of this volume helped make writing this paper, and editing the volume, a tremendously rewarding experience. I am also grateful to Sue Williamson, Berni Searle, and Ntsiki Stuurman for allowing me interviews and discussing their work with me.

1. Despite our best efforts, it has proved impossible to trace the photographer of this image. If anyone recognizes it, please contact *African Arts* so that we may give the photographer's credit.

2. The *Truth Games* series consists of twelve individual works, only one of which is being discussed here. The series in its entirety is reproduced in Williamson's *Truth Games* brochure. Additionally, the exhibition catalogue from *Liberated Voices* (Herremann 1999) contains an essay by Williamson along with reproductions of three images from this series, not including the image discussed in this essay.

3. Although there are countless examples of this, one well-known story involves the case of the Craddock Four, four men who were abducted and killed by security police in 1987: "In the first week of the TRC hearings in the Eastern Cape, the widows of the 'Craddock Four' came to speak about their murdered husbands. They also had been harassed and arrested, yet their own stories were not solicited but rather were treated as incidental by the commissioners, almost as a postscript" (Graybill 2001:4). Sue Williamson's *Truth Games* series also includes a work devoted to the story of the Craddock Four. It features Nomonde Calata, one of the four widows, on the far left in the work's "victim space."

4. As Carol Becker rightly notes, "[M]any have felt that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has constructed a circumscribed version of the truth established through 'narrow lenses' designed to 'reflect the experience of a tiny minority of victims and perpetrators.' Because indigenous women, for example, were not widely included in the process their stories have remained hidden" (Becker 2004:2, citing Mahmood Mandini, *Beyond Rights Talk and Culture Talk: Comparative Essays on Politics and Culture*, 2000).

5. Siphiso's killers filed for amnesty just before the Commission's amnesty period expired. For further detail into Siphiso's particular case, and for more insight into the amnesty process, the reader can consult Mark Kaplan's important film *Where Truth Lies* (1998). Kaplan's film focuses on Van Rensburg's accomplice, former Special Branch Colonel Gideon Nieuwoudt. During the film, Nieuwoudt visits the Mtimkhulu family in their home in Port Elizabeth, asking them for their forgiveness for his crime. The Mtimkhulu family deny his request.

6. The stillness seen here can be considered alongside a TRC videotape that was taken moments later, which shows the Mtimkhulu family screaming with grief, their bodies convulsing as they fully experience the emotional shock of knowing. Although for obvious reasons the video cannot be included here, it is a powerful example of the truly violent somatic and emotional impact that may come from learning about the acute suffering of a loved one. Alongside Williamson's images, the video displays another deeply painful example of vicarious traumatization at its most extreme.

7. The TRC hearings were structured in such a way as to promote full public access and facilitate a democratic process. All testimony was heard in open sessions held in local spaces, often within the same communities where the crimes being spoken about were committed. The hearings were then broadcast nationally on radio and television in multiple languages. While this arrangement helped facilitate an accessible and democratic process, the hearings were generally not perceived as safe or comfortable spaces for women to talk about torture or sexual violence.

8. *A Darker Shade of Light* is part of Searle's larger *Discoloured* series, which was first exhibited at the Granary in Cape Town as part of the exhibition called "Staking Claims: Confronting Cape Town." Curated by South African National Gallery curator Emma Bedford, "Staking Claims" addressed issues of exclusion and oppression in the city of Cape Town and included several references to violence against women (Bedford 1999). Searle's series of photographs were subsequently shown at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg as part of an exhibition of visual interpretations of the TRC called *Truth Veils*. At this venue, the series was renamed *The palms of the hands, the small of the back, the nape of the neck, under the belly, the soles of the feet*, and displayed differently. *Truth Veils* was part of a larger conference responding to the TRC from various cultural, academic, and activist standpoints. For more information about this exhibition, see the website at: <http://sunsite.wits.ac.za/trcresearch/exhibition.htm>. Thus, the series has been exhibited in ways that suggest its relationship with women's experiences with violence in both historical and contemporary circumstances.

9. Lyn Graybill elaborates: "In the Constitution, the government committed itself to the abolition of not only race inequality but also gender inequality, which had previously characterized the nation. Other initiatives early in Mandela's administration that focused on women's rights include the Commission on Gender Equality, which monitors, investigates, and reports on issues of gender in civil society; the Office on the Status of Women, which is responsible for mainstreaming gender in all government departments; and the introduction of the Women's Budget Initiative, which analyzes the impact of the national budget on women" (2001:1).

10. In my numerous conversations with Stuurman at her studio in Crossroads in December 1998, February 1999, and June 2001, she referred to this t-shirt by various terms, including "domestic violence" and "the violence t-shirt." However, given that the shirt does not have an official or consistent title, I have referred to it as "untitled" in this essay.

11. Ntsiki Stuurman is not alone in her efforts to expose injustices against South African women through the vehicle of culture. Stuurman is one of a group of women artists who form the Philani Printing Project, a women's art-making cooperative located in the South African township of Crossroads. Stuurman's t-shirt is one of a series of five shirts created by Philani artists, including Ncediswa Mantlana, Lungiswa Pikoko, Neliswa Fanteni, and Nomfundo Dyantyi. Each shirt depicts an experience that its creator personally had with some form of violence.

Through the creation of these t-shirts, the Philani artists give visual form to women's voices regarding the important issue of violence against women, as they simultaneously use the t-shirt as a unique public space to help women to recover from, and to survive, the very experiences they depict. For further analysis of this series of t-shirts, see Miller 2005.

12. Once a sprawling squatter camp, Crossroads is now a black township located in South Africa's Western Cape, on the edge of Cape Town, a city which is otherwise known for its extraordinary wealth and beauty. The township of Crossroads is a space marked by a deep history of forced labor, displacement, violence, suffering, resistance, survival, and women's activism. For a historical overview of Crossroads, including the history of women's activism in this space, see Miller 2003.

13. Nontsikelelo (Ntsiki) Stuurman, personal interview, Crossroads, South Africa, February 1999.

14. Ibid.

15. Stuurman's colleagues at the Philani Project join her in these efforts.

16. Although I refer specifically to Patricia Hill Collins' words in relation to women's testimonial traditions, there is a tremendous amount of compelling literature on women's testimonial traditions within black and Latin American communities. Many scholars have pointed out the similarities of the two traditions, including the creation of a communal feminist political consciousness; the effort to document and record historical truths that have been erased or rewritten in history; and efforts to use testimony to bear witness in order to change oppressive conditions. Furthermore, the relationship between women's testimony and memory, political resistance, and representation is important here. For further discussion of these practices, the reader should refer to Mohanty et al. 1991 and The Latina Feminist Group 2001.

References cited

- Becker, Carol. 2004. "Amazwi Abesifazane (Voices of Women)." *Art Journal* 63 (4):116.
- Bedford, Emma. 1999. *Staking Claims: Confronting Cape Town*. Cape Town: South African National Gallery.
- Clayton, Jonathan. 2005. "Anti-Rape Device Must Be Banned, Say Women." *The [Johannesburg] Times Online*, June 8.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 1998. *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Coombs, Annie E. 2003. "Memories are Made of This." In *Berni Searle: Fresh*, ed. Emma Bedford, pp. 8-24. Cape Town: South African National Gallery.
- Douglas, Ana, and Thomas Vogler, eds. 2003. *Witness and Memory: The Discourse of Trauma*. New York: Routledge.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1975 [1922]. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Ed. and trans. James Strachey. New York: Norton.
- Garson, Philippa. 1999. "Truth Hurts, but It Helps." *Mail and Guardian* February 5-11:31.
- Goldblatt, Beth, and Sheila Meintjies. 1996. "Gender and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission." Submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. www.truth.org.za/submit/gen der.htm
- _____. 1998a. "A Gender Perspective on Violence during the Struggle Against Apartheid." In *Violence in South Africa: A Variety of Perspectives*, eds. Eliree Borman, Rene van Eden, Marie Wentzel, pp. 227-52. Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council.
- _____. 1998b. "Dealing with the Aftermath—Sexual Violence and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission." *Agenda* 36:7-17.
- _____. 1999. "Women: One Chapter in the History of South Africa: A Critique of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report." Paper presented at The Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Commissioning the Past, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.
- Graybill, Lyn. 2001. "The Contribution of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Toward the Promotion of Women's Rights in South Africa." *Women's Studies International Forum* 24 (1):1-10.
- Herremann, Frank, ed. 1999. *Liberated Voices: Contemporary Art from South Africa*. New York: The Museum for African Art.
- LaFraniere, Sharon. 2004. "Letter from Africa: After Apartheid: Heated Words about Rape and Race." *The New York Times*, November 24.
- Latina Feminist Group, The. 2001. *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Meintjies, Sheila, Anu Pillay, and Meredith Turshen, eds. 2001. *The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transformation*. New York: Zed Books.
- Miller, Kim. 2003. The Philani Printing Project: Women's Art and Activism in Crossroads, South Africa. PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- _____. 2005. "T-shirts, Testimony, and Truth: Memories of Violence Made Visible." *Textiles: A Journal of Cloth and Culture* 3 (3):1-47.
- Mohanty, Chandra. 1991. "Introduction: Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism." In *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, eds. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres, pp. 1-32. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Ross, Fiona. 1996. "Existing in Secret Places: Women's Testimony in the First Five Weeks of Public Hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission." Paper presented at the Fault Lines Conference, Cape Town, July 4-5.
- _____. 2003. *Bearing Witness: Women and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa*. London, Pluto Press.
- Scott, James. 1992. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa [TRC].

1996. Transcript of Joyce Mtimkhulu Victim Hearing, June 26. www.doi.gov.za/trc/hrvtrtrans/hrvpe2/mtimkhu/htm

_____. 1998. *Final Report*. 5 vols. Cape Town: CTP Book Printers.

SCHMAHMANN: Notes, from page 65

[This article was accepted for publication in June 2005.]

1. The FNB Vita Craft Competition, which was first held in 1995, is the major craft competition in South Africa and is one of various First National Bank (FNB) Vita awards for the creative and performing arts. The competition is organized in cooperation with the National Crafts Council of South Africa and includes an exhibition.

2. Since 1994, works by Mapula members have begun to feature in the permanent holdings of South African art museums and local corporations. Furthermore, works by Mapula have been used in the context of official or government-sponsored events. In 1998, for instance, they were used as backdrops at the ambassadorial reception for the South African soccer team in France, and the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology has selected works by Mapula for inclusion in official displays of South African art overseas, such as the "Celebrate South Africa" festivities held at the Oxo Tower in London in 2001. Mapula works have also been included in number of temporary museum exhibitions. While some of these shows were surveys of contemporary South African art or art by women, others focused on needlework specifically: "Embroidered Impressions" held at the Pretoria Museum in 1995 and on the Greek island of Naxos the following year, is one example, and "Material Matters," an exhibition held at five major galleries in South Africa in 2000 and 2001, is another.

3. Sister Immaculata, interview conducted by the author, Pretoria, South Africa, April 3 2002. I cite this interview and give a similar synopsis of conditions in the Winterveld during the apartheid years in Schmahmann (2005:165-168).

4. Sister Immaculata commented on the choice of the name for the center: "I went to Ireland on a trip in 1986. When I came back I discovered the place was now called D.W.T. Nhathe. The reason for that was that Mr. Nhathe was in the old Bop [Bophuthatswana] government and was in charge of education. And the only way we could get it registered was to name it after him" (Sister Immaculata, interview conducted by the author, Pretoria, South Africa, April 3 2002).

5. My information about the circumstances of the founding of the Mapula project has been gleaned from informal conversations with Janette Van der Merwe as well as formal interviews with her conducted in Pretoria, South Africa, September 12, 1999 and April 1, 2002; also interviews with Karin Skawran, Pretoria, South Africa, April 3, 2002, and Antoinette du Plessis, another Unisa staff member involved with the project in the early years, Pretoria, South Africa, September 15, 1999.

6. In Schmahmann 2000:124, I note: "Initially these cloths were conceptualized as items that would be placed on a table. A central motif would be surrounded by smaller motifs that were arranged to accommodate viewers who would be positioned at various points around the table. If cloths of this type were hung on a wall, some motifs would be upside down. Since 1998, however, most of the cloths have been structured in the manner of 'pictures' designed to be placed on a wall: although they contain no loops to facilitate hanging, motifs are set out in such a way that the cloth has a 'top' and a 'bottom.' The 'table top' form is now used only occasionally."

7. Dorcas Ngobeni took over her role as coordinator of the group who meet at the school. Sadly, Ngobeni died after suffering a stroke in 2003, and Doreen Mabuse took over as group coordinator.

8. At the time of writing, this newly formed group had not yet elected a coordinator.

9. No record is kept of the person who may have devised the design for the embroiderer, however, and my identification of Raymond Sibiyi and Rossinah Maepa as the author of certain designs is the outcome of research.

10. This is by no means done in an ad hoc fashion. Van der Merwe makes still further discriminations, sending works she regards as being of better quality to outlets such as the Kim Sack Gallery or Arts Africa in Johannesburg rather than to less-established shops. Some of the embroideries—normally those that Van der Merwe regards as least impressive—are marketed at the Magnolia Dell Fair, held monthly in Pretoria. While showing works at Magnolia Dell affords the project little prestige, it provides opportunities for Mapula women to do the selling themselves and thus to have some immediate contact with buyers.

11. The name of this city was changed to Makhado in 2003. Previously in the Transvaal, it became part of the Limpopo Province after the first democratic election. Makhado is in the far north of South Africa, close to the border with Zimbabwe.

12. This commentary is from an unpublished document by Florence Resenga. In 2001, Janette van der Merwe encouraged women in the project to write their life stories, whether written by themselves, if they were literate, or narrated to a literate friend who would transcribe; fifteen documents had been produced by early April 2002. Women in the project assisted each other in producing these transcripts, enabling those who are entirely illiterate as well as those unable to write in English to be included. I have edited this passage slightly.

13. Selinah Makwana, interview conducted by the author, Winterveld, South Africa, April 2, 2002. Interpreted by Phyllis Dibakwane

14. Dorcas Ngobeni, Unpublished transcript of life story, 2001-2002. See note 12 above.

15. Makwana was one of the embroiderers who showed work when Mapula were winners of the FNB Vita Craft Gold Award

Copyright of *African Arts* is the property of MIT Press and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.