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The Legacy
Jacqueline Rose

During the past year and more, I have been receiving a steady flow of information – news articles, commentaries, leaflets, statements, official and unofficial, counter-statements – from the University of Cape Town and beyond about the protest campaigns that have been taking place in universities across South Africa since March 2015. In this I have been indebted to a number of people from within the student movement, to legal scholar Jaco Barnard-Naudé, as well as more broadly to international scholars and writers with stories deeply entwined in South Africa such as Gillian Slovo and Drucilla Cornell, to the writing of Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, in-depth analyst of the lasting traumas of the nation, and many more.

I arrived in South Africa from Great Britain which, as the mainly white metropolis of empire in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, has much to answer for in relation to the torn fabric of South African history. The 1913 Land Act, an act of sheer theft initiated by the British which laid the ground for segregation and then apartheid, would be a good enough place to begin, not least because the unresolved question of land - its still cruelly unequal distribution - is at the heart of the continuing struggle in South Africa, one of the most enduring and troubling legacies of the past. In fact, my family were all Jewish migrants from Poland who travelled, under various forms of persecution and duress, to what was felt then to be something of a haven in the United Kingdom (UK). Nonetheless, it is from this distance, and with this sense of historic responsibility and privilege, that I found myself immersed in the stories of the protests that have erupted across the educational landscape of South Africa – protests which were initially precipitated by, but which speak to, and have drawn so much more than, education in their train.

As I read *The Daily Maverick*, *The Daily Vox* and *The Conversation*, they seemed to me to constitute an alternative university space of their own. From their pages I heard voices speaking, analysing, protesting, voices calling for colloquia, dialogue, workshops, debates, for a form of radical understanding that can be politically transformative without, in the words of Dudu Ndlovu, Black Radical Feminist and Fallist who has chaired many meetings, “collapsing the space.” (Thebus n.d., 63). That suggestive formula gave me pause. I read her as calling for a space that somehow holds across the fractures and fault-lines it must also expose and create, a space that emerges from a message of brokenness in both declaratory and imperative mode, a statement of fact and intent: this *is already* broken, this *must* break. Or in the words of Petrus Brink, farm worker and activist from Citrusdal, a township in the Western Cape, interviewed

by Simon Rakei in the student issued pamphlet, *Pathways to Free Education*, “This is... this is... this is really not working” (Rakei n.d., 20). Brink is a member of the food sovereignty campaign, and the forum for workers, farm dwellers and migrants, just one of the groups to whom the student protests have reached out and who have reached out to those protests in turn. I have been struck by how far building solidarity nationally and internationally across struggles stands out as a key aim of the protests: the campaign against outsourcing, the challenge to the hierarchy between manual and intellectual labour, the call, issued by Brian Kamanzi amongst other students, for a socially responsive University which would offer asylum to fellow African and diasporas across the globe (a call which, in the face of Trump’s assault on migrants and refugees, not to speak of the UK’s own inhuman policies, has surely never felt more relevant) (Kamanzi 2016a).

So how to move forward without forfeiting either the disruptive force of Brink’s deceptively simple statement (“this is really not working”), or the space for dialogue and understanding - without collapsing the space? Or to put it another way, can politically motivated rage be generative, can it erupt and move us forward in the same breath? In her Ruth First memorial lecture on “Violence and Rage,” delivered in August last year, Leigh-Ann Naidoo spoke of the “violent, pathological” inequality which scars the nation (Naidoo 2016). When Lovelyn Nwadeyi addressed the top two hundred South Africans selected by *Mail & Guardian* last June, she described the time as “disjointed, out of sync, plagued by a generational fault line that scrambles historicity” (Nwadeyi 2016). “Pathological,” “plagued” – these are powerful, evocative, words. One of the things I will be suggesting in what follows is that the protests, together with the outpouring of commentaries, have raised the relationship between affect and politics to a new level of understanding.

As a young woman in the late 1960s and early 1970s, I was part of the student protests in Oxford and Paris. In fact, shortly before going to Oxford as an undergraduate, I had taken the last plane home out of Paris in May 1968 before the airports shut down, to the accompaniment of headlines: “La France s’écroule” – “France is crumbling.” If the campaigns in South Africa evoked for me memories of those moments – the same hyperbole of destruction thrown at the protests (after all France did not crumble or fall apart in 1968) - the worlds could also not be more different. Up to that time, Oxford, had been a site of unadulterated privilege, more or less untouched by questions of race, gender and class. Today it seems fair to ask if, or how far, any of that, at a deep level, has really changed? Taking their cue from UCT, students at Oxford initiated their own Rhodes Must Fall campaign last year, demanding first and foremost the removal of the statue of Cecil Rhodes from its prominent position at Oriel College

as founding father and benefactor. Having first agreed to consider this demand, the College Management revoked their offer when various alumni threatened to withdraw their donations and/or disinherit the college in their wills. A major donor, whose legacy was rumoured to be in the region of £100,000 was reported to be “furious.” “Rhodes will not fall” was the front page headline of the right-wing *Daily Telegraph* daily newspaper which could barely conceal its elation at this climb-down (Espinoza and Rayner 2016).

There is an irony here. After all, it was Britain that was one of the first countries to import into the African continent the brute force of capital whose continuing sway in post-apartheid South Africa is the cause of so much that is broken today. It was, then, somehow hideously appropriate that, faced with the petulant omnipotence of money, the Oxford University Management should, without a trace of historic self-consciousness, so promptly and cravenly buckle. Those who defended the presence of the statue on the grounds that it needed to remain as part of historical debate, or who argued more bluntly that students wishing to take it down rather than engage in such civilised discussion had no place at Oxford and should seek their education elsewhere (Oxford’s Chancellor no less), or that one of the main student organisers disqualified himself from any protest since, as a Rhodes scholar, he was indebted to Rhodes, of course never for one minute raised the question of the ongoing histories of material exploitation, of global capital shunted around an increasingly unequal world, in which the monies before which they prostrated themselves might be embedded.

As a young student, I was the beneficiary of a free state-provided education. Like many in the UK, I have watched appalled as the right to education free at the point of entry, a key demand of the protests, has been systematically dismantled, while an increasingly instrumental version of learning, wedded to “impact” and quantifiable forms of knowledge in tune with the calculations of capital, has spread across universities. That these fees impact disproportionately on the disadvantaged goes without saying (a manageable loan for the middle class being an insurmountable debt for the poor). So it seemed to me crucial to start by expressing my solidarity with the basic demand – whether in the form of free education for all or free education for the poor which has also been a subject of debate. I have witnessed the deleterious effects on the house of critical thought of any whittling down of that fundamental right in the so-called free world.

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I have given my lecture this evening the title of “The Legacy.” My question, which the reality in South Africa so sharply helped and obliged me to focus, is: what, in moments of historical crisis, is being passed down from one generation to the next? In a struggle which is

also a reckoning with the past – as all political struggles may be, but this one surely is – what both can, and cannot, be borne? What do we not want to know about the past? What do we not want to know about ourselves?

In everything I read, the word “free” has been central, first in the context of the demand for free education, and then again in the concept of the “born-free,” the term applied to the generation born after the legal and political dismantling of apartheid in 1994. When the journalist, Eve Fairbanks, visited South Africa to investigate the protests for the *London Guardian* in November 2015, she was driven from the airport to UCT by a 50-year-old black man from the township of Langa who, without prompting, told her how he had reacted when his 14-year-old son had asked him what apartheid had done to him: “‘I don’t want you to know about the past,’ he responded angrily, ‘you are free of all that!’” (Fairbanks 2015). Sociologist Xolela Mangcu told her that he tries to avoid conversations about black history with his daughter who is attending a privileged mainly-whites school: “‘I’m afraid of how she’ll process it. How she’ll relate to her friends. So I haven’t had the courage to do it’.” The historic and persisting division between black and white must not be spoken. I assume he fears that if he told her, she would from that point onwards see her white school friends only through the lens of apartheid and that she would hate them.

At their most simple, both these parents were simply expressing the desire of all parents for their children to have a better life, a desire raised to the highest pitch in South Africa. But they also carry a subliminal message or instruction: This is not your story, do not harp back to or think about it, forget. Such an injunction is impossible for any human to obey, and in fact coils the recipient even more tightly in the rejected legacy of the past. During the course of her investigation, Fairbanks found that many people who expressed outrage about the police killings at Marikana were more hesitant and wary in response to the student protests, a difference she read, not just in terms of the greater quotient of violence of the former, but also in generational terms. There is a history in relation to the miners, whose demands harked back to the days of apartheid when their brute exploitation was the hallmark of the regime (that their condition is still so appalling underscores the persisting, class and race inequalities of the nation). Whereas the students, the “born frees”, often privileged – as in the UK the most deprived never make it to university in the first place – “were not supposed to feel that degree of historical pain.” “How South Africa’s youth turned on their parents’ generation” is the title of Fairbanks’s article.

The present crisis in South Africa seems, therefore, to be driven by a logic, or rather illogic, of generational time: disjointed, out of sync. According to Nwadeyi (2016), the term

“illogical” – to which I will return – has more than once been thrown at the protesting students in order to discredit them. “The challenge of being young in South Africa,” Nwadeyi observes, “perhaps, is having a past that you can never know enough about and having a future that was prescribed for you by those who themselves weren’t sure of what that future would look like.” This formula stood out for me. It defies the normally understood temporal state of things while also touching on the limits of human knowledge. Neither the past nor the future, I read her as saying, can be fully known. The passage from the one to the other, which is the time we are living, can therefore only be hesitant, messy and unsure (Leigh-Ann Naidoo’s lecture had the title: “The anti-apartheid generation has become afraid of the future.”) However much we yearn to know the past, our legacy, like the psychoanalytic unconscious one might say, escapes our mental grasp.

The problem therefore is not just denial, but the false mastery it tries to exert on what will be, and on what has gone before. But, although the past is not fully knowable – or rather for that very reason - it is no less part of who we are, shadowing the future it beckons. One cannot control the future any more than one can leave the past behind. We cannot, ever, just wrap the events of history under our belts and move on. Or in Nwadeyi’s words again, “Young and old we are now being forced to deal with the ghosts of our very present past.” The legacy of the born-frees is the “present past.” Their task, although they will not be thanked for it, is to bring back to the surface what the previous generation, in sway to unspeakable anguish – what psychologist Chabani Manganyi already described in the 1970s as “chronic, silent, secret anguish” - thought, prayed, was buried and done with (Manganyi 1977, 65). Refused employment in South African universities on grounds of political activism, Manganyi left South Africa to take up a post at Yale University in the US. “You and your society,” he says as he walks out on his therapist, “have exhausted the revolutionary possibilities of your life,” “You will never know what my people have to go through in the land of their birth” (44). Manganyi was apartheid’s exile. He describes himself as a “pilgrim turned refugee in search of a gaping grave” (6).

It is of course different now – how different, to what extent, and in what ways is the question. But this new generation were not meant to rise up against today’s iniquities: the racially unequal dispensation, the crushing of the poor under the weight of a lawless, criminal capitalism which Sampie Terreblanche (2012, 20) traces back to Reagan’s licensing of the Trans National Corporations across the world in the 1980s, notably into the global south (a move he describes as “pure madness”); the stranglehold of the Mineral Energy Complex, or Fossil-Centric Capital Accumulation in Patrick Bond’s phrase, over South Africa’s economic

development including, as students have pointed out, many University Electrical Engineering Departments; the deal struck by the ANC to secure political victory at the cost, many argue, of a potentially more radical economic agenda, an agenda which could not be included in the historic agreement with the National Party of 1994 when, as I was often told during my visit, a white army ready to provoke a civil war was standing at the door; the ambiguity – although this is contested – of the Constitution’s property clause; and most crucially for the universities, the incomplete project of decolonisation, which democratisation has not secured (it is a central contention of this campaign that decolonisation has barely begun) (Ntsebeza 2007). To put it most simply, the next generation were not meant to cry foul, or claim that apartheid had not ended, or that their future was blighted by a past that had not gone away. They were meant to embody a new ideal of progress – but not of course the distorted version of progress against “barbarity” through which the colonisation of Africa had historically been justified. None of which is to deny in any way the radical, in many ways revolutionary, constitutional, political, legal, transformation of 1994, nor the human struggles of those who made it possible.

For Hannah Arendt – who post-Trump has shot into the best-sellers lists in the US - the idea of progress was dangerous in so far as it allows rulers of the present dispensation to pretend that everything is just fine when it is not, and provides a license for those in power to rule the world (a critique she mounts most forcefully in her essay on “Lying in Politics” written in the midst of the Vietnam War (Arendt 1972, 1-48)). It also robs the people of their inalienable right to history by relegating history to a backwater, casting a smokescreen over the past. In her article for the London *Guardian*, Fairbanks reported that in the mid-1990s, the government’s curriculum-redesign committees eliminated history as a standalone subject, folding it into “human and social sciences.” During a previous visit to UCT in 2013, Jane Bennett of the Humanities Department and Gender Institute told me that even in humanities departments, history – above all South Africa’s immediate and still pressing history – was becoming harder and harder to teach. These protests have been about enduring racial discrimination, poverty and inequality. But it has also seemed to me that it is this deal, or no-deal, with history, a history that implicates the young so profoundly and which will not go away, that has raised the temperature, precipitated the rage, made the situation feel at moments unmanageable.

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As I continued reading, it struck me that in South Africa of all places this surely makes no sense. The ancestors revered in African culture are there to remind us that no-one is ever born free – as is understood far better and more deeply than in the metropolitan Western world which

I come from. African communal life, writes Mogobe B Ramose in his 2001 article “An African perspective on justice and race,” “consists in a triadic structure of the living, the living-dead (the supernatural forces) and the yet-to-be-born.” (Ramosé 2001). I note that the yet-to-be born do not arrive from nowhere like visitants from a new world, but are cyclically folded into the triad. They can no more redeem their past than transcend or forget it. Legal and feminist scholar, Drucilla Cornell, has vividly described the extraordinary complex reckonings, the forms of obedience and disobedience, of anger and teasing humour, which the transgendered sangoma, Nkunzi Zandile Nkabinde, whom she met in KwaZulu Natal, conducts with her ancestors, female and male (Cornell 2014, 141-147).

Cornell lived and set down the deepest roots in South Africa for many years. The legal implications of this way of thought, which both she and Ramosé draw from the African ethic of uBuntu, specifically in relation to temporality, are far-reaching. “To the African,” Ramosé writes citing Kéba M’Baye of the International Court of Justice, “there is nothing so incomprehensible or unjust in our system of law as the Statute of Limitations, and they always resent a refusal on our part to arbitrate a suit on the grounds that it is too old” (Ramosé 2001). (Can an ancestor who has survived the death of the body be too old?) (Cornell 2014, 206). The Statute of Limitations is unjust because it enshrines in law the repudiation of the past. “The African believes,” M’Baye insists, “that time cannot change the truth” (Ramosé 2001). Nothing is over. You pay tribute to the past and usher in your future by remaining open to a conversation, however difficult and tetchy, with those who were here before you (in fact you are commanded to do so). As I understand it, this temporal dimension of honouring the forebears, is the companion and complement to the expansiveness of uBuntu towards others, which was the reading of the term with which I had been most familiar.

Perhaps, then, I found myself wondering, it is the poverty of insight in Western culture as regards these forms of frail but indomitable linkages across time, that can help explain why psychoanalysis, which has been central to my own work, erupted, unwelcome, into Western thought which has been so less attuned to, indeed mostly pathologizes, the idea that we are blessed by the voices of our foremothers and forefathers still guiding and chiding us in our heads. For psychoanalysis, nothing perishes in the mind. As subjects we are always haunted. Struggling for a suitable analogy, Freud compared the mind to a city whose every layer of history existed simultaneously, every earlier stage persisting alongside the later stage that has arisen from it (Freud 1957, 285). Seen in this context, psychoanalysis is a counter-history, channelling what we have repressed into a future struggling to find its own knowledge (Freud always insisted that the patient, rather than the analyst, holds the key to her or his unconscious

truth). Writing after the Second World War in the 1950s, the British psychoanalyst, D W Winnicott wrote of a patient who had gone looking for a piece of his lost past in the future, the only place he might possibly hope to find it (Winnicott 1974). This is the future perfect tense in which the experience of psychoanalysis unfolds: not what I once was and am no more (repression), nor what I still am in what I once was (repetition), but what I will have been for what I am in the process of becoming (Lacan 1977, 86). It occurred to me that this formula of disjointed, generative temporality, which comes from the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, might also do for the political time in which South Africa is living. Above all, our most fiercely guarded self is a palimpsest, peopled by those who have struck a chord, for better or worse, deep inside our hearts (Rose, 2004). It is the primary task of analysis to uncover these hidden histories which inhabit us, prompting and fleeing our consciousness in one and the same breath. For psychoanalysis, for uBuntu – if you will allow me for a moment to make the bridge - the idea of being born free is meaningless. To be born free is not to be born at all.

As I was trying to understand this more deeply in relation to today's struggles in South Africa, I lighted on the distressing story with which Pumla Gobodo-Madikela opens her recent edited collection, *Breaking Intergenerational Cycles of Repetition: A Global Dialogue on Historical Trauma and Memory*, which began as a Conference at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein in 2012 and was published as a book last year (Gobodo-Madikela 2016, 1-11).

A group of girls between seven and ten years old, “*not yet born* when the event they were enacting took place”, re-staged an act of necklacing from 1980s South Africa in the township of Munglisi in the Eastern Cape, an act which they could not have witnessed and which their parents most likely would not have talked about. “It was strange, even surreal,” she writes, “to see a group of young girls seven to ten years old, laughing and cavorting in the streets of Munglisi, the same township that between 1986 and 1988 had been the scene of so much misery, a tinderbox of inflamed emotions against the inhumanities of apartheid. *But that was before the children were even born.* The squeals and cries were the very embodiment of joy. They looked like little tender shoots of foliage – little blades of life – poking out from under the cooled lava of the township once utterly devastated by apartheid’s volcano” (Gobodo-Madikela 2016, 1). Note the repetition: “not yet born,” “before the children were even born.” Only the idea of an unconscious legacy transmitted through the generations – what psychoanalysis terms “transgenerational haunting” (Abraham 1987) – can, I think, help us to grasp what then unfolded so shockingly before her eyes.

As she watched, the ringleader took on one by one all the roles of this saga – bystander, driver of the vehicle from which the tyre is seized, perpetrator and victim. Then, slowly but surely, she relinquished all roles but the last, pretending to strike a match as if the baying crowd of executioners had forced her to set herself alight, flailing and waving her arms, until her screams faded to a whimper and she lowered herself to the ground where she “died.” It was a ghoulis performance, a memory of violence - of which this child can in fact have had no memory - enacted with glee. Gobodo-Madikezela suggests the children, in time honoured fashion, were using their play in order to try and master something as intolerable as it was unspoken (violence as child’s-play).

What struck me was, first, the sheer detail of the enactment - every component of the awful hidden memory carried deep inside the body of this child. In fact, this accords with today’s neuroscientific concept of epigenetics which allows for one generation’s lived experience, even when unspoken, to slip into the blood stream of the next. And then the fact that, for all the frantic circulation of parts, it was the role of dying victim that finally claimed her. Any mastery was therefore as perverse as it was self-defeating, since it could only proceed by snuffing out the life of the chief player - the mistress of ceremonies - of her own deathly game. So, this story seems to say, it is when memory is buried or silenced by one generation that it erupts at its most virulent in the next. You cannot “grass over the past,” a Xhosa expression which I also take from the writing of Gobodo Madikizela (2001, 29). These tender shoots of foliage poking out of the cooled lava of a devastating history were faced with only two options: ending their own lives or killing; setting themselves on fire or placing a burning necklace around somebody else’s neck.

Critics of RMF (Rhodes Must Fall) and FMF (Fees Must Fall) who have accused the university protests of being too “visceral” would do well to look here. As would those who have accused the movement of illogicality, or of being unreasonable or of rejecting conventional notions of reason, of going too far, not playing by the rules of the game (what or whose game? we might ask). It is as if affect, or unreason, instead of forming a constituent part of being human, were a slur on the political scene, like a dirty smudge on a scrubbed and scrupulously clean white plate. There is, however, nothing reasonable about the dispensation of the world we are living in today, a world in which – to take just one recent example - Michael Flynn, before he had to resign as National Security Adviser, could tweet: “Fear of Muslims is RATIONAL” (“rational” in capitals), a tweet he did not delete after his appointment. I have a Palestinian friend who, appalled as the rest of us by the election of Donald Trump in the US and Brexit in the UK, is nonetheless noticing that people who have not wanted to acknowledge

the dire, steadily worsening, predicament of her oppressed people over decades, are at least now picking up that there is something wrong in the world, that, to repeat the words of Petrus Brink, “this is really not working.”

What is reasonable in an unreasoned world? A world in which – to cite Manganyi again – the oppressed are expected to sport a “mask” of sanity to veil the inhuman reality of their subordination, while pretending that the future and prosperity of the mask “depends upon a negation of the past”? (Manganyi 1977, 20; 44). (He could be talking about today) The more you claim to own the house of reason in an unjust world, the louder and messier the clamour will come in reply. After Frantz Fanon, who has been much returned to and debated at this time on campuses during the protests, Manganyi is interested in what exploitation, racial inequality, and oppression under colonialism do to the human heart, especially in the form of their denial. In his remarkable 1977 meditation, *Mashungu’s Reverie*, part memoir, part fiction, Manganyi called, in response to such crushing of body and soul, for a psychic space of “violent reverie” - two terms not normally found together but which could be a perfect description for the game of the Mungulisi girls. This is a space of the deepest self-knowledge, where he encounters the most frightening aspects of himself: the “incubated beast,” a “killer...demanding recognition,” the fantasy of “killing and being killed” (again the resonance with the enacted fantasy of Mungulisi is striking) (Manganyi 1977, ii; iii; 43).

Manganyi shares with Fanon a belief in the infinite complexity of who we are. Under conditions of extreme oppression, Fanon wrote in *The Wretched of the Earth*, “you are forced to come up against yourself” (Fanon 1961, 249-250). “We are forever pursued by our actions... Can we escape becoming dizzy? And who can affirm that vertigo does not affect the whole of human existence?” (Fanon 1961, 203). Engaged as they both were with the most uncompromising reckoning with injustice, neither Manganyi nor Fanon, I suggest, are interested in false innocence, in a white-wash of the mind. In the midst of the Algerian war of independence, Fanon treated victim and torturer alike. “You must therefore weigh as heavily as you can upon the body of your torturer,” he wrote in the chapter on the mental disorders of colonialism, “in order that his soul, lost in some by-way, may finally find once more its universal dimension” (Fanon 1961, 238). In discussions of Fanon as the revolutionary thinker he surely is, this call for radical empathy is rarely talked about.

There is a violence in the human heart, perhaps implanted, but certainly hugely aggravated, by social injustice and cruelty. And there is a violence in the world which buries its own ruthless logic deep inside the norm, and nowhere more so than when it boasts – vainly in a violent, unfree world - its own commitment to freedom. At the end of his Preface to

Mashangu's Reverie, Manganyi, with remarkable prescience, cites these lines from French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty: "We must remember that liberty becomes a false ensign, a "solemn complement" of violence... as soon as it becomes only an ideal and we begin to defend liberty instead of free men" (Manganyi 1977, iv). He then continues to cite words that chillingly anticipate and resonate with the neo-liberal order under which so much of the world, including South Africa, continues to suffer: "An aggressive liberalism exists," Merleau-Ponty states, "which is a dogma and an ideology of war...Its nature is violent, nor does it hesitate to impose itself through violence in accordance with the old theory of the secular arm" (Manganyi 1977 iv). Rather than calling for reason as the only acceptable face of protest, therefore, we should be exposing how reason, masquerading as sanity, can itself be a form of violence and the bearer of unspeakable crimes. In the midst of the Algerian war, Fanon treated a twenty-one year old student whose lucidity, he realised, "precisely by its rationalism" was a decoy. A mask of sanity, it was her way of trying to cover over the anguish she experienced at the funeral of her father, a high-ranking civil servant who had thrown himself into the "Algerian man-hunt with frenzied rage" (Fanon 1961, 222-223). His death allowed, or rather forced her, to rip the cover from her own reasoned illusion and to fully recognise the violence of state power.

There comes a moment, Freud suggested in the midst of the first World War, when the people realise that the state has outlawed violence to its citizens, not because it wants to abolish it, but because it desires to monopolise it "like salt and tobacco" (Freud 1957, 279). The journalist Margie Orford, known in South Africa as the "queen" of crime fiction, and also former chair of PEN South Africa, has publicly stated that, since the Marikana massacre when the state fired on the workers in the name of capital, she has felt unable to write in this genre, since crime writing depends on being able at least to foster the illusion that the arm of the law is on the side of justice (Orford 2013, 220-229). It makes for a "very different plot, a very different country," Orford writes, "when the moral centre of one's world can only exist outside state institutions" (Orford 2016, 229). Already in her 2009 crime novel, *Daddy's Girl*, she found herself exploring a "feral society... in which the very institutions and individuals that should protect the vulnerable, are criminal" (Orford 2013, 227).

It is Orford who has also named the systemic violence against women in post-apartheid South Africa "serial femicide," (again you do not need me to rehearse the statistics). I understand the issue of gender has been the subject of sometimes acrimonious dispute during these protests, including the side-lining and isolation of Black Feminist organising blocs and, in one case brought to my attention, sexual violence (Kamanzi 2016b). In her address, Lovelyn Nwadeyi (2016) started by channelling her remarks to those among the black women recipients

of the award “who identify as women”: “We cannot live our lives in fear of rapists neither should we live our lives in the kind of reductionism that forces us to make ourselves smaller” There is the deepest link between racial and sexual oppression. In *Mashangu’s Reverie*, which is also a sort of unhappy love story, Manganyi tracks the line from his own political impotence and rage – his “chronic, silent, secret anguish” – to the obsession, the over-excitement, the casual disregard and denigration with which women are treated by himself and his African male friends exiled in America, where “whoring” is a replacement for the lost struggle, and, even thousands of miles away, “the South African gloom gathered slowly around them. Like a bad dream” (Manganyi 1977, 22). There is no political struggle that is not fed by and does not rebound on the social arrangements of gender and sexuality. Tackling the oppression of women can never be some kind of political afterthought. There is no politics without affect and fantasy. The idea that this struggle has “recycled” emotions back into politics where they do not belong, is, for me, meaningless, however high the temperature has been raised (in fact for me, the silencing of affect is the cause, not the solution, to the problem). There is no politics that does not tap into the subterranean core of who we are, no politics without the nightmare and the dream.

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For South Africa, the dream was of course, not just freedom, but reconciliation, the latter to be effected through the manifold pathways of truth. That was the challenge and the new dispensation intended to create a better world. The answer in protest has been that you can have neither freedom nor reconciliation in a world which still disproportionately oppresses the blacks and the poor (on this the pages upon pages of statistics circulated by the campaigners, which again you do not need me to rehearse, have been eloquent). But as I hope you will have sensed from what I have said so far, there is as I see it another element - no less powerful and not finally detachable from the rest - which is the enduring obduracy with which historic injustice is registered and stored in the deepest annals of the mind. So, for the last part of this lecture, let me cast my net wider and move away from South Africa before returning here at the end, as I light finally on two literary texts which have helped me think through these dilemmas.

Published last year to enormous acclaim, Hisham Matar’s *The Return* (2016) recounts his search for knowledge of his father who disappeared in 1995 and was almost definitely killed by Gaddafi’s henchmen in the notorious Abu Salim prison massacre of dissidents in 1996. The search seems interminable, endlessly thwarted by the remnants of Gaddafi’s fallen regime – no

truth commission to solve the enigma or to lay the historic ghost to rest. What matters, however, is not the outcome of a search, which is in fact allowed some type of closure by the end of the book, but the process, and what it teaches him about the cunning ruse of the perpetrators, the gamble they take on the malleability of the human spirit in the face of the most corrupt, deadly, forms of political power. As the news about the massacre started to dribble out into the open, the threatened grief was so intense that no one really wanted to know (unrelenting as he was in his search, Matar realises that this is no less true of himself). “Power,” he writes, “must know this... Power must know that, ultimately, we would rather not know” (Matar 2016, 247). “Power must believe, given how things proceed, that the world was better made for the perpetrator than for those who arrive after the fact, seeking justice, or accountability or truth.” This, I know, has been one of the critiques of the South African Truth Commission, that so many of the perpetrators have lost nothing and got off scot free. As they try “to make reason of the diabolical mess,” the bereaved, the witness, the investigator and the chronicler rush every which way, “like ants after a picnic, attending to the crumbs” (Matar 2016, 247).

And yet, as time rolls on, and the chance of never fully knowing what happened, dwindles with every passing day, something happens to bring the thwarted, agonised, past - a past on the brink of extinction - back to life: “the point from which life changed irrevocably, comes to resemble a living presence, having its own force and temperament” (Matar 2016, 248). It is for me one of the most powerful evocations of what Nwadeyi described as the “ghosts of our very present past.” In the face of impossible knowledge, the mind retreats. But that very same mind is also the place where such knowledge finds its most palpable, endlessly beating, incarnation. Matar is, I think, writing about forms of psychic endurance, for better or worse, to which no truth commission could possibly expect to be equal. And he is writing about the perpetrator for whom - against every fibre of our being, every impulse to justice - the world, we are shockingly told, is “better made”: “The world was better made for the perpetrator than for those who arrive after the fact, seeking justice, or accountability or truth.”

It is this mortal gamble of the perpetrator that provides the link to my final text, the award-winning South Korean writer Han Kang’s *Human Acts* (2016) also published last year, and which unexpectedly allowed me to make the link back to South Africa. I read the novel on the recommendation of Gillian Slovo, when I told her about this visit and the difficulty I was having trying to think of the process of reconciliation and whether, as the protests might be taken to assert, history would judge that reconciliation had finally failed. She suggested that Han Kang’s book might be helpful on that topic in relation to the healing of the past. What followed I was utterly unprepared for. *Human Acts* is, I can truly say, one of the most disturbing

novels about atrocity – if not *the* most disturbing - that I have ever read (the Zimbabwean writer, Yvonne Vera's *The Stone Virgins* would be another). It tells the story of the massacre of students in the southern city of Gwang-ju in the summer of 1980 at the command of Chun Doo-hwan, the army general who had replaced the dictator, Park Chung-hee, the previous year. Using the excuse of rumoured North Korean infiltration, Chun had extended martial law across the whole country, closed universities, banned political parties and further curtailed freedom of the press, provoking mass student demonstrations in response.

This is a novel of extraordinary courage that spares you nothing - the translator, Deborah Smith, describes the immense difficulty she had faced with the constant slide between “corpse,” “dead body,” “dead person” and “body” (Kang 2016, 2). It begins with a young girl volunteering to lay out the bodies - corpses, dead persons - for identification in the morgue. She is looking for her brother, pretending he is one of hundreds of students to have gone missing, although, as we slowly uncover, she was there with him when he was gunned down at the demonstration and saw him die. For me, one of the novel's worst moments comes when a young woman, the victim of sexual torture – it is crucial that this is a novel written by a woman - is asked by an academic researcher to “face up to those memories,” “to bear witness,” so she, the investigator, can write her report. The victim responds by repeating the question: “Is it possible to bear witness to the fact...” before recounting in harrowing detail what was done to her (Kang 2016, 274). With this format of question and its chilling counter-reply, it seemed to me that Han Kang had found the perfect literary form for reluctantly disclosed knowledge, for memory and its repression in one and the same voice.

As I waded through the unredeemed agony of this novel, it slowly dawned on me that I had misunderstood what Gillian Slovo was telling me, and that reconciliation and healing were the last thing that this novel was about: “What is humanity?” “Some memories never heal,” “‘Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.’ I forgive nothing and no one forgives me” (Kang 2016, 100; 140; 158). When I expressed my bafflement to her, she then generously directed me to the open letter she had recently written, partly in response to Kang's novel, to her dead mother, the anti-apartheid activist, Ruth First, who, as you all will know, was murdered by a letter-bomb in Maputo, Mozambique in 1982 (Slovo's letter is available on the web-site of the UK Arts organisation, Artangel, originally as part of their “Inside Prison” project of 2016) (Slovo 2016).

What Han Kang's novel had confronted her with, she wrote in the letter, was the perpetrator. She then recounts a story, which she heard many years after her mother's death, of a young woman who, like First, had been detained and tortured, in this case not just mentally

but also physically and for longer periods of time. Arriving in Maputo, she found herself describing her experiences to First because of her unique quality of listening and the way she asked questions (unlike the blunt investigator in Kang's novel). And then, when the woman reflected that her torturers could not have possibly known what they had done and still be human, First unhesitatingly replied: "They knew exactly what they were doing." So, I understood, the point of Han Kang's novel, what I should have picked up above all else, was the title - *Human Acts* - its unflinching depiction of what human beings, in the fullest knowledge of what they are doing, are capable of. As the novel itself tells us, this is the hardest issue to face: the question – "What is humanity?" – appears inside a book on the student movement in lines that were scored through by the censors (Kang 2016, 100). "You were able," Slovo addresses her mother, "to tell this victim that her torturers had done what they did to her deliberately and your words helped release her from their thrall." This is not reconciliation, but it is a way of confronting impossible knowledge. That was, she told me, what she had seen in Kang's novel. You have given me my lecture, I said.

And yet – and I end with this – there is a thread running through the novel which says something else, not counter to the horror, but which grows out of it, like tender shoots of foliage or blades of life poking out from the cooled lava of an atrocious history, to evoke Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela's poetic description of the girls from Munglisi once more. We are inside the mind and body of the dying brother, dumped from the back of a lorry with a pile of other corpses – it is here that the ambiguity of "corpse," "body," "dead person" comes into its own – when he feels a presence, "that breath soft-slip of incorporeal something, that faceless shadow, lacking even language, now, to give it body" (Kang 2016, 51). It is an intangible, barely imaginable, form of connection between two bodies, one dead, the other not quite alive: "Without the familiar bulwark of language, still we sensed as a physical force, our existence in the mind of the other" (Kang 2016, 52). "My shadow's edge became aware of a quiet touch; the presence of another soul" (Kang 2016, 53).

I can assure you that this is not a flight into false lyricism or religious sentiment. It is rather a form of linkage across space, bodies and time (Nwadeyi's "ghosts of our present past" again, or perhaps ancestors on the cusp of being born). Perhaps, in a world of such cruelty, human and inhuman, the only place where we can envisage such utopian being – the idea of really existing, without let or discrimination, in the mind of the other - is the world of the dead. Or else in the fleeting moments of recognition between those who have survived, but only if they are able to look fully at each other without the faintest intent of wiping the shadows from the other's face: "As we each enquired how the other had been, something like transparent

feelers reached tentatively out from our eyes, confirming the shadows held by the other's face, which no amount of forced jollity could paper over." (Kang 2016, 131). I see these transparent feelers, the breath soft-slip, the touching at a shadow's edge, as this novel's answer to the rigidity of the bodies in the morgue. In such moments, I read it as saying, only if we entertain our ghosts will we have the remotest chance of moving forwards into the next stage of historical time.

So what, to conclude, is the tentative message I have hoped to convey in my lecture tonight? To hold in the mind what is hardest. To acknowledge that the past has not gone away. Write it, breathe it, because we *already are* doing so. Stare straight in the eye of the perpetrator still at large, who knows, but takes no responsibility for, what he has done (weigh on the body of the torturer, as Fanon would say). Above all, do not blame those who erupt because they were burdened with an injunction to transcend history, an impossible demand that can have no place in any attempt to build a better world. In the end what I have heard most loudly in these protests is a plea to the previous generation, to all of us, which might go something like this: Re-open your minds, even if, perhaps especially if, it means returning to where you never wanted to tread once more. Not least because that is where we, the next generation, are still living. None of it has gone away. Such knowledge is the only path to understanding, and the only path to justice. That, finally, is what I have learnt from you.

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