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Remembering and Dismembering:  
Violence, Representation and the Body.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
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Jack Trolove

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Remembering and Dismembering:  
Violence, Representation and the Body



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## ABSTRACT

Experiences of violence are commodified, sanitised and eroticised through their visual and linguistic representation, and as such they are implicit in the power relations in which the original violence occurs. Because of this representations of violence and trauma are deeply problematic. Within this research I explore the poverty, the continued violation even, of attempts to narrate (visually or textually) experiences of violence and trauma in the face of real people and real bodies that have been violated and traumatised. A response by some visual artists to this dilemma has been to try and re-present violence through the use of a symbolic body. The symbolic body may act as a cipher to communicate aspects of experience from other bodies. In this thesis I discuss the politics of using symbolic bodies as a visual strategy to narrate violence. I pay particular attention to how these representations may simultaneously remember (witness to) and dismember (violate) violated bodies. By reflecting on both my own works and those of other artists, I explore the possibilities as well as the problematics of attempting to narrate violence and trauma without violating. I discover that this is an extremely difficult task but insist on the importance of trying.

## INTRODUCTION

For as long as I can remember I have been distressed by the presence of violence<sup>1</sup> in my own life and in the lives of others. As an artist I rely on visual language, making it important for both my life and practice to understand how imagery shapes our understandings of violence and power, and how this in turn shapes us. I sit down to watch the six o'clock news, I walk into a gallery, I open a book; everywhere I turn there are images and stories of violated bodies. A number of theorists point to the ways in which such images (in documentary or in narrative style) do not in fact 'inform' the viewer about violence and injustice, but instead commodify, sanitise and even eroticise trauma. While few accept that silence or non-representations challenge this cultural consumption of violence and trauma, the representational possibilities around these are very limited. Along with discussing these limits my work explores possibilities for engaging visually with issues of violence and trauma without violating.

The meeting place (where stories are told) between violence and representation is volatile. This fraught meeting place is where I locate my practice and this thesis. To investigate this territory, along with the development of my own artworks I have considered a number of figurative artworks and films, all of which have been born into a dominant culture,<sup>2</sup> poised to consume trauma. I am particularly interested in the theatrical strategy of 'symbolic' bodies that 'stand in for' another or more often, for a group of bodies in order to testify to a particular violence. Inevitably this 'casting' brings up many issues around power, agency and subjectivity, so I have selected particular works in order to discuss what I see as both the potentials and dangers of utilising symbolic bodies, particularly when the body is that of the artist. Through looking at where symbolic bodies begin and end, I am hoping to discuss the reach of empathy or maybe where empathy can begin and end.

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<sup>1</sup> In using the word 'violence' I refer to an abuse of power in any form. This extends to systemic violence, the violence of colonisation, gender based and interpersonal violence etc.

<sup>2</sup> In using the term Dominant Culture, I refer to power relations in society; who validates knowledge, knowing and experience and whose knowledge and experience is excluded from dominant imagery and discourse. In an academic context, Gramsci's concepts of Hegemony, (Adamson, 1980) as well as Foucault and Butler's notions of 'regulative discourses' (Foucault, 1975, Butler, 1997), shape much of this thought.

To contextualise I will discuss briefly what I mean by these particular artworks being born into a dominant culture poised to consume trauma. In doing this I discuss my understanding of the relationship between representation and reality, drawing on theory from cultural studies and post structuralist perspectives. In many ways the areas I am looking at can be broken down into the contexts of production and reception of artworks or more specifically, the motivations for producing and receiving. An image speaks a thousand words and a text is often said to be loaded with imagery. In my research I approach language and visuality as interdependent, compatible and interchangeable. This interdisciplinary approach is to focus on communication around violence, and allows me to move freely between textual, verbal, bodily and visual languages. This also allows me a wider inroad to explore the pedagogy of visual language, or how we are educated and shaped by it. My practice over the last ten years has engaged and will continue to engage in this area. The tensions and politics of representing violence form the backbone of my practice. To outline why this choice is so important when looking at issues around violence and representation, I wish to address the power of language and stories to shape culture. In the words of Toni Morrison, "Narrative is radical, creating us at the very moment it is being created." (Morrison, 1993, p.2).

From a poststructuralist perspective, stories are not born into the ether, they are born into culture, born into millions of other stories and bodies. As a visual 'speaker' I consider the environment of the visual languages and contexts to which I am contributing, in the same way that textual and spoken languages are understood in poststructuralist theory. In her Nobel Lecture (1993), Toni Morrison emphasises the political and cultural nature of language;

*"There is and will be rousing language to keep citizens armed and arming; slaughtered and slaughtering in the malls, courthouses, post offices, playgrounds, bedrooms and boulevards; stirring, memorialising language to mask the pity and waste of needless death. There will be more diplomatic language to countenance rape, torture, assassination. There is and will be more seductive, mutant language designed to throttle women, to pack their throats like pâté-producing geese with their own unsayable, transgressive*

*words; there will be more of the language of surveillance disguised as research; of politics and history calculated to render the suffering of millions mute; language glamorised to thrill the dissatisfied and bereft into assaulting their neighbours; arrogant pseudo-empirical language crafted to lock creative people into cages of inferiority and hopelessness.*" (Morrison, 1993, p.1).

Having considered the power of representation to construct reality, I ask how might an artist use the body to testify, respond to or engage with issues around violence without not only remaking it, but without simultaneously marketing the violence or trauma.

## PART ONE: THEORETICAL CONTEXT

## THE VISUAL CONSUMPTION OF VIOLATED BODIES

There are an infinite number of examples, particularly in the 'west' of trauma being an exceedingly marketable commodity (Edmondson 2005).<sup>3</sup> This is not because there are huge numbers of people who want to know what's going on for others, in order to use their privilege to intervene and destabilise the power structures that ensure most violence happens and continues, but so they or we can consume it. Throughout my practice and exegesis, I ask if this means that attempts to testify or witness to violence, inevitably disintegrate during the process of 'consumption'.

Susan Sontag alludes to this visual consumption when she writes about setting aside "the sympathy we extend to others beset by war and murderous politics for a reflection on how our privileges are located on the same map as their suffering, and may- in ways we might prefer not to imagine- be linked to their suffering." (Sontag 2003, p.37). Obviously in the interests of hegemony and feeling all right, imagery of violence is not mediated in a way that is going to implicate the viewer, at least not in a way that would threaten the innocence or impotence of the viewing public. Apparently by the age of 12 most children in the U.S.A (but I'm sure it is not radically different in Aotearoa) have seen representations of around a hundred thousand deaths, countless rapes, assaults, hunger and images of homelessness. "Wars are now also living room sights and sounds." (Sontag, 2003, p.43).

Consumption, and the problematics it poses for art practice, are central to these discussions. The model of consumption I am using to contextualise these issues, is one Deborah Root calls Cannibal Culture (Root, 1996). This notion is an extended analysis of appropriation, referring to the colonial urge to dissolve difference and maintain power-over, through a complex set of conscious and unconscious strategies

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<sup>3</sup> Laura Edmondson provides a poignant example of this in her paper 'Marketing Trauma and the Theatre of War in Northern Uganda'. She critiques a 'creative rehabilitation for children programme' being run by World Vision in Gulu. While acknowledging the necessity for rehabilitation she refuses to assume the inherent 'innocence' of such a programme, deconstructing the power dynamics at work through focusing on the global politics which make trauma marketable. To do this she discusses the priceless, authenticating 'products' (the children's drawings and performances available for visitors, journalists and tourists) produced and their use in the self-promotion of World Visions "humanitarian performance". She discusses how the theatrics of drama and art-therapy slot perfectly into the readymade gaze of globalisation, addressing the 'cultural capital of drama in the economy of war'.

for dominant bodies to eat their way through the world. This manifesting in white<sup>4</sup> fantasies of being able to assimilate experience (including experience of atrocity, violence and trauma) through attempted consumption of the 'other'. Consumption creates context for the reception of artworks, testimonies and narratives around violence. Within this research I ask what potential there is for 'receiving', or for the reception of visual stories.

Many artworks made in this area are about speaking, and not being spoken for, and stem from an urge to communicate in order to affect social change. Alternatively, experiences of violence are appropriated in artworks via cannibal or colonial culture in an often well-meaning attempt by an artist to identify with the violence, albeit with a lack of acknowledgment or integration of their positionality. This problem has lead me to investigate theory around Affect (Bennet 2005, Kennedy 2004, Hesford 2006) and the crisis of witnessing. This theoretical area opens many questions related to the reception as well as the production of representing violated bodies.

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<sup>4</sup> I use the term 'white' here in the way it is used in Critical Whiteness Studies which as a concept, rather than being obsessed with binaried measurements of skin colour, refers to systems of power, 'view points' and access to privilege. This concept of 'whiteness' challenges the 'un-raced' (invisible) nature of 'white bodies' through mapping and unpacking its perceived and performed centrality / neutrality.

PRODUCING and RECEIVING  
REPRESENTATIONS of VIOLATED BODIES

*"But without stories, without listening to one another's stories, there can be no recovery of the social, no overcoming of our separateness, no discovery of common ground or common cause. Nor can the subjective be made social. There can only remain a residue of tragic events, as disconnected from each other as the individuals who have experienced their social lives engulfed and fractured by them."* (Jackson, 2002, p.138)

At the outset, I wish to note I have found that much discourse around the trauma theory I am working with, integrates veiled subtexts of hierarchies- of not only trauma but of oppressions, sufferings and bodies. A lot of this discourse is still very American/Euro-centric meaning many of the hierarchies in these subtexts are raced if not also gendered; in this way reinstating power and dominant narratives even while critiquing aspects of them. Sontag, writing about photographs of anonymous American 'casualties of war' appearing in newspapers, noted out they were "always prone or shrouded or with their faces turned away. This is a dignity not thought necessary to accord to others. The more remote or exotic the place, the more likely we are to have full frontal views of the dead and dying" (2003, p. 45). It is this same hierarchy of bodies and their value which I feel underwrites a lot of academic discourse around violence.

In searching for ethical ways to receive testimonies and imagery around violence, much research at some point looks to possibilities within identification, as an inroad to the narrative. This is the idea that we 'recognise' ourselves in other bodies and stories, and because of this have the potential to 'hear' (and respond) in a compassionate and useful way. I will critique the simplicity of this concept throughout my paper.

I have drawn on concepts of identification from the fields of Trauma Theory, stemming from seminal texts by Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman,<sup>5</sup> (1992) both of

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<sup>5</sup> See in particular: *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature Psychoanalysis and History*. Shoshana Felman (co-authored with Dori Laub, M.D.) (1992).

whom wrote about trauma and testimony, as these issues relate to the Jewish Holocaust. Because of these roots, this field has always explored issues around public and private speaking, and yet fundamentally these theories have been developed primarily from, and for use in, therapeutic or healing contexts. The point at which this becomes problematic, is where these theories have been influential in socio political or public events, like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa as well as with the Stolen Generation Testimonies in Australia. Aspects of these theories created for therapeutic purposes have been adapted to address situations of mass trauma and structural violence. My critique of this centres around the idea that there needs to be a very different language used to discuss, analyse or understand the same components or interactions in a therapeutic environment and a wider social/political environment.

Empathetic Identification ideally wrestles with the issues of power and agency within these possibilities to identify, holding space between identifying or empathising, and consuming. There are many arguments in favour of empathic identification being a reasonable response to encountering representations of violence, or at least a response with potential. Many of these rigorous arguments are offered by Wendy Hesford (1999, 2000, 2004, 2006) who writes extensively on violence and ethical considerations in the receiving of stories and testimonies; visual, textual, bodily or verbal. Hesford states a case for the potential of empathic identification to raise awareness, create solidarity and initiate political change.

Primary criticisms of Empathic Identification as a valid response or form of engagement are that excesses of empathy can serve to erase history and depoliticise a situation. Both Haunani Kay Trask (2004) and Gayatri Spivak (2004) voice suspicions as to what use empathy really has, at least as an end point. They insist that in relation to human rights violations, people look at their structural relationships, not just their personal ones. To use an example from daily speech: while the personal is the political, having queer friends doesn't mean a person is not homophobic, or because a person's partner is not white doesn't mean they can't be racist. It is this personalising of issues around violence, which often, as valid as they are in some contexts, can be used to overwrite a person's positionality or relationship to power and dominant culture. There is a quote from an interview with Haunani Kay Trask,

which to my mind encapsulates a lot of the crucial criticisms. She was asked what she thought of the abuses and uses of empathy, and responded:

*"Empathy to me is irrelevant; it's Clinton: 'I feel your pain'. This issue is so far beyond the Manini idea of empathy. People are suffering and they're dying. They don't have land, they suffer ill health. When somebody once said to me, 'Well, what can I do? I can't give you anything,' I said, 'You don't know that. Let me ask you. Do you own a house? Give it to me. Sign it over to me. Do you have a car? I got all these Hawaiians that are taking the bus from Waimanalo. Give it to me, and I'll give it to them. There's lots you could do, but you just want to cry and tell me that you feel badly for me. I don't need that. I don't need your feelings. I need two million acres of land that were stolen at the overthrow. Are you a lawyer? We need lawyers to defend Hawaiian prisoners who can't mount a defence.'" (Trask, 2004, p. 222-28).*

Taking 'consumption' as a given in the world within which I live and make art, I look to the degree with which attempts to testify or witness to violence, disintegrate as a result of this environment. In this first chapter I have opened a discussion around the conditions which contextualise how we produce and receive representations of violence. I have looked at **language** and narrative and how these shape, define, and disrupt experience, with a particular focus on academic and visual languages. Borrowing from Deborah Root a conceptual framework with which to view representations of violence and trauma, I have referred to issues of identification and empathy as they exist within the field of trauma theory, raising the concerns I have with how theory is applied. The dynamics of public and private speaking are central to this field and so in this opening section I have begun to extend this to look at related issues of empathy and identification. This starting point allows me to explore the contested dynamics of personal and structural relationships as I work through the following artworks.

## SYMBOLIC BODIES

I will use three artworks to examine visual implications for the theoretical issues I have raised. One is a painting of mine from the year 2000, one is a performative installation piece by Mona Hatoum (1999) and the last a cinematic work by Isabel Coixet (2005). I will use the work by Hatoum, as well as one of my own works, to discuss concepts of empathy and mis-identification. Following this I will undertake a brief comparative analysis of works by Hatoum and Coixet to explore the politics and dynamics of offering or refusing resolution in an artwork which uses the body to address exclusions, power relations and violence.

I use the term 'symbolic bodies' to refer to bodies in a testimonial context, which stand in for other bodies. This casting is often used as a strategy to prevent re-traumatisation of the survivor(s) and also to shift representations and discussions into an overtly narrative realm, therefore shifting the parameters for how these bodies testimonies can be received. In this case a cast or symbolic body becomes a type of cipher for the story but not the person.

Works that I have explored and unpacked during my research have been those that deal with figurative representations of violence. I have noted recurring visual strategies within these artworks which utilise either a.) an overt absence of the body<sup>6</sup> b.) the use of objects, and / or abstraction to talk about the space and trauma around



<sup>6</sup> Fig. 1 'Real Pictures' Alfredo Jaar 1995 (Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, USA)

An example of this strategy can be seen here in an installation by Alfredo Jaar. In this work he refuses to show the photographs he was commissioned to take of people in Rwanda, and in an attempt to disrupt the consumption of the images Jaar built black memorial like boxes to seal the photographs in, providing instead a text describing the image in each box. Thus the absence of the bodies is what becomes poignant, providing space to consider the ethical questions around looking and what narratives such images reinscribe.

these bodies,<sup>7</sup> and c.) the body or a cast/stand-in body is used as the testimonial site. My specific interest is in this last strategy; in work where the body is a symbolic site of violence as opposed to a literal one. To distinguish this difference, I have examined works by artists such as Christanto Dadang, Arahmaiani, Coco Fusco, Mona Hatoum, Ana Mendieta, Rachel Rakena, Jason Hall, Monica Tichacek, the Atlas group and filmmakers Sally Potter, Shirin Neshat and Isabel Coixet - as opposed to artists like Marina Abramovic or Franco B that present the body in pain or experiencing literal violence. Many works by artists such as the latter are deeply relevant to these discussions however they engage very different dynamics.

I approach these discussions with two givens, the first being that the very nature of representing violence usually in some way means remaking or reinforcing it. (Jackson 2002, Hesford 1999, 2002, 2006, Feldman 2004, Kennedy 2004, Young 2004, Tang 2005) Secondly that there have been cases when chosen silence or a refusal to represent has been a powerful and active response to violence and dominant culture. However as I write from my personal experience and engagement with art practice, I find not representing or speaking, in contemporary social and political climates of structural violence, is not an option. As a white body who is offered many privileges of dominant culture, silence is not a position I am comfortable with.

Academic discourse has been home to many authoritative and policing voices which have contributed to an exploitative history in relation to narrating violence<sup>8</sup>. The nature of violence and trauma is destabilising, harrowing and complicating;



Fig. 2. Jenny Holzer *Lustmord Table* (1994).

Many artworks by Holzer provide an insight into a memorial-style aesthetic which often recurs in works around these themes. Holzer's works are not figurative but constantly refer to the body and violence, usually through a mix of loaded materiality and text (language).

<sup>8</sup> Patricia Yaeger (2002) discusses the risks inherent in academic approaches in her paper "Consuming Trauma; or, The Pleasures of Merely Circulating."

discussions that remain sterile are those that reside outside of experience (Tang 2005, Jackson 2005, Hesford 2004, Halberstam 2001, Perera 2004). Attempting a kind of order within this field often manifests as an attempt to contain it, to articulate it, to find logic in something that logic and empirical language enforces. Given that exploring these issues purely within an academic discourse is loaded I look toward artworks and other 'stories' for a less 'reasonable' understanding. In the speech I referred to earlier, Morrison went on to discuss the importance of recognising "that language can never live up to life once and for all. Nor should it. Language can never "pin down" slavery, genocide, war. Nor should it yearn for the arrogance to be able to do so. Its force, its felicity is in its reach toward the ineffable." (Morrison, 1993, p.3).

It is this ineffable quality that I would like to suggest offers possibility and potential to these discussions through presenting symbolic bodies. That potential is in the refusal to define experience or 'possess'. In suggestion or gesture it seems symbolic bodies can transcend their edges, and not embody or contain, but gesture toward if not the experiences of those who are not speaking, then the politics that ensured their agency was attacked. This is a quality I have found manifested in the work of Mona Hatoum.

## R E F L E C T I N G   O N   P R A C T I C E

The Negotiating Table, Resisting Amnesia and The Secret Life of Words :

Three practices examining Trauma, Violence and The Body.

In light of the theory I have presented, I will identify and unpack strategies and qualities in my own work and works of others where the body is used to testify and engage with issues around violence. I search for the points within these works where violence is remade, mimicked or destabilised, and look for elements which signal testimony or witness disintegrating during its reception (consumption). In these works I also look to the capacities for gesture and suggestion within these symbolic bodies, which may allow them to transcend their edges; through their refusal to contain or embody narrative cleanly.

I focus on the roles of production (speaking) and reception (hearing) in representations engaging a testimonial dynamic, in order to explore the power structures and flux within these roles. I question the tensions inherent in speaking and being spoken for as this relates to my art practice and the work of other artists and filmmakers. This methodology provides me a framework to address issues of power and agency within art practice and story telling. Writing about the following three works, I anchor my discussions on the use of a theatrical, symbolic body. I do this in order to address the visual implications of theoretical issues I have raised.

### T H E   N E G O T I A T I N G   T A B L E

I open this section with a piece of work by Mona Hatoum called The Negotiating Table, made in 1983 yet depressingly, could have been made yesterday; where the symbolic body, coupled with the artist's contextualisation of it, became a powerful and implicating force.

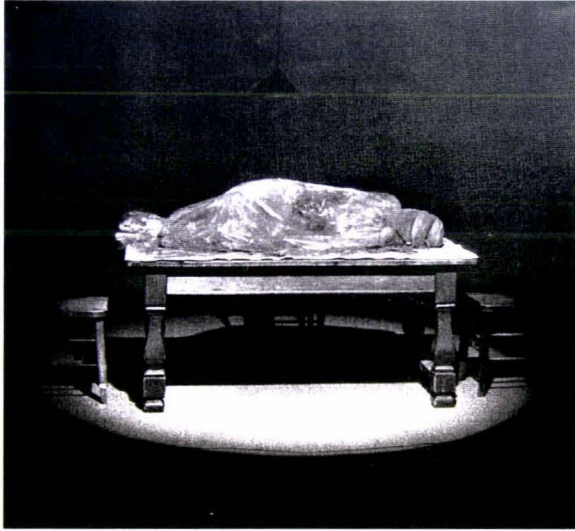


Fig. 3. *The Negotiating Table*, performance, Mona Hatoum, 1983.

In this work, Hatoum spent three hours lying on a table under a solitary light, her body covered with bandages, entrails and blood. She was enclosed in a body bag, her presence representing the victim of war. The audio provided a soundtrack of Western political leaders talking about peace, emphasising the tragedy of the (symbolically) violated body, and the chilling irony of the world it inhabits. The work seems almost static – aside from the hardly noticeable breathing of the artist's body under plastic. Spectators standing outside of the spotlight were forced to confront their own impotence in the face of violence, this impotence of spectatorship contrasting with the rhetorical political speeches. Hatoum is Lebanese by birth, and has personal experience with both resistance and oppression in a number of situations: from within Lebanon when it was invaded by Israel in 1982 and in the West where she has spoken about being identified as a 'third world outsider' and therefore 'othered.' (Warr, 2000).

In my opinion, much of the power of this work is in its ability to drag language back to the body. To hold language and dominant culture accountable for the physical manifestations of its words. To write back into visual language, the place where power, and the language of power, hits bodies. Interestingly, for all my leanings to critique notions of identification and empathy, the deeply engaging aspects of this work are initiated through not only a sterile awareness of Hatoum's body, but through some level of recognition; figurative recognition. As much as I would rather use different words, some level of identification with it.

To share a space in the room with her during that performance, hearing her difficult breathing, hearing the disembodied voices of politicians framing violence as everything but what we can see in this moment, that it is, one would have to be dead not to feel some kind of empathy. Because of the confrontational nature of her work, and her articulate use of visual language, she intercepts habitual responses to these issues by creating a context where there is no space in the room for sympathy. She clearly exposes what mediated representations of violence do. She is not mediated, the viewer shares space with her, breathes the same air as her. Surrounding both her and the viewer, in contrast to this, are the mediated voices of inaccessible men. In the middle of the room, in the middle of the negotiating table is the usually invisible object of negotiation. The theatrical lighting alludes, among other things, to the 'theatre' of war and the theatre of how war is mediated. Part of these theatrical strategies involves the casting of bodies, bodies standing in for. In this case, the use of this strategy by Hatoum argues strongly for affecting, ineffable representations.

RESISTING AMNESIA



Fig. 4. *Resisting Amnesia*, Jack Trolove 2000, oil on canvas 1.5 x 3 m

In wanting to discuss the concepts of empathy and misidentification it was of course tempting to hide behind the failings of another artist, however I felt the most honest place to start was to use an example of my own work and body. (*Resisting Amnesia*, Oil on Canvas, 2000) The painting is made up of two separate canvases. There was another painting in this series of a bandaged hillside. The works were called 'Resisting Amnesia'. Ironically what I had hoped to discuss through these paintings

were issues around 'intention'; how even with the sincerest and most 'loving' intentions, unthinkable violence is wrought. Because of these intentions even. (Ahmed 2004).<sup>9</sup>

I attempted this through making visual references to the missionary impulse to 'heal' - to create the wounds but also provide the salve (Root 1996, Hooks 2003, Ahmed 2004). I hoped to talk about atrocities couched in the language of compassion. The work was me trying to identify with the reality of systematic oppression and colonisation. I approached this through looking into my own history for a way to understand. I was thinking about stories I was raised with, of the English colonisation of the Irish and the Scots, and how similar strategies were used in relation to theft of land, language and history<sup>10</sup>. This was possibly a reasonable place to start, however the analysis was short circuited because of my colonial (and therefore Christian) default settings, ensuring that I stopped when I reached the point of compassion.

Compassion, when looked at structurally not personally is awfully close to sympathy, which is relatively cosy with empathy. Of sympathy, Sontag says it can be "[a] way for us to feel, that we are not accomplices to what caused the suffering. Our sympathy proclaims our innocence as well as our impotence." (Sontag, 2003, p.4). While my body might have been in the picture, my positionality wasn't. As a feminist I was politically committed to using my own body to tell stories, as a way to avoid appropriating the body of another; in retrospect this is deeply ironic, in that the work is an out and out appropriation of an experience outside of my body. Further than this, I had created a scene and cast my body in it as if it were a neutral vessel, as if it were not particularly raced or gendered. I was not entirely unaware of this at the time but I probably did feel that the ultimate goal of this artwork was to try to elicit from a pakeha audience, some kind of empathic identification with the realities of

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<sup>9</sup> See: *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Edinburgh University Press, Routledge. (2004)

<sup>10</sup> I feel it is important to note the complicated nature of these stories, and how in themselves they point to many issues raised by theorists concerned with storytelling, who critique notions of authenticity and truth, looking more to the reasons we 'need' these stories, or what role they play in our social, ethnic and familial relating. Jackson (2002) writes: "Yet it would be a mistake for us to construe the imaginary as a negation of the real, for experiences that we disparage as 'mere fantasy' or dream are as integral to our 'real' lives as night is to day This is why it is important to explore not only the ways in which stories take us beyond ourselves, but transform our experience and bring us back to ourselves, changed". (Jackson, 2002, p.137).

colonisation and pakeha dominance. I was unaware that that ‘empathy’ or ‘identification’ came at a cost or had a history in this country. I didn’t register my re-enacting of the colonial impulse with Root’s ‘cannibal culture’ or see my relation to the capitalist continuum of colonisation, to consume, to appropriate, to digest. In short, to absorb and disappear.

I remain interested in similar issues of power, violence and bodies but am now more invested in incorporating my body through its positionality and relationship to power as opposed to incorporating my literal body. Coming to this point lead me eventually to believe in a kind of paralysis around the unrepresentability of violence, arising from the sometimes impossible ultimatum; on the one hand to remember and thus re-indulge the initial violence, or on the other hand to ‘forget’ and thus stay silent. I explored these tensions recently in the following series of images<sup>11</sup> entitled ‘Spectacular Testimony’. These works looked into visual defaults commonly used for representing violence, particularly the spectacle of the silhouetted testimonial and the power dynamics this supports. The works also attempted to illustrate the sense of futility and often humiliation associated with testifying:

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<sup>11</sup> Refer to studies (video working drawings) made leading up to this work on DVD Three, entitled ‘*Vignette One*’ and ‘*Vignette Two*’. For stills of my previous work relating to the broader subject of this thesis, refer to ‘*Memory: performance and video stills*’ on DVD Two.

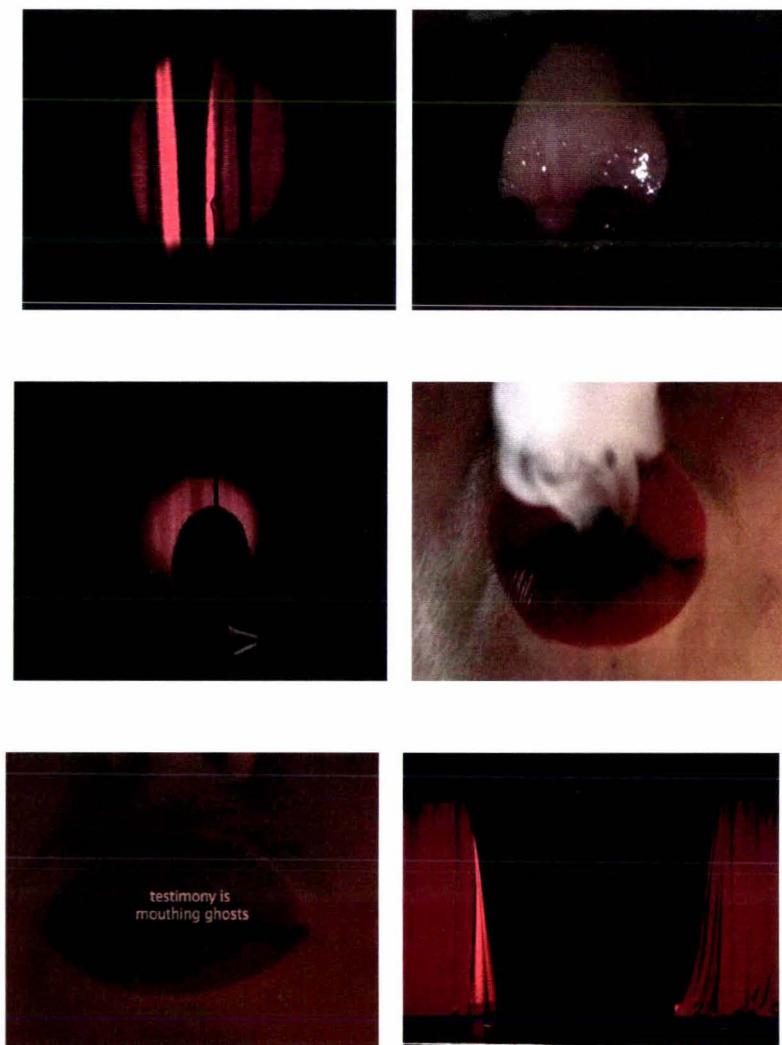


Fig. 5. Jack Trolove, *Spectacular Testimony*, Video Installation (stills) 2006.

As an artist or visual speaker, I do not know that there is any kind of flawless method for representation around violence that is not in some way corrupt, an abuse of power or problematic and if this research was entirely academic or textual I do not imagine I would have any trouble arguing outright that the ‘visual strategy’ of an artist using their body or casting another, in the place of bodies that cannot speak, is colonising, paternal and insulting but ultimately, also asking of the body that which is beyond its reach. I would also argue that it was reductive; reducing serious violence, trauma and oppression into a consumable chunk, ultimately treating something unspeakable as speakable. To illustrate this point, I quote from a short story by Lorrie Moore (1998), which captures this sense of impotence in representing violence and trauma.

*"How can it be described? How can any of it be described? The trip and the story of the trip are always two different things. The narrator is the one who has stayed home, but then, afterward, presses her mouth upon the traveller's mouth, in order to make the mouth work, to make the mouth say, say, say. One cannot go to a place and speak of it; one cannot both see and say, not really. One can go, and upon returning, make a lot of hand motions and indications with the arms. The mouth itself, working at the speed of light, at the eyes instructions, is necessarily stuck still; so fast, so much to report, it hangs open, dumb as a gutted bell. All that unsayable life! That's where the narrator comes in. The narrator comes with her kisses and mimicry and tidying up, the narrator comes and makes a slow, fake song of the mouths eager devastation." (Moore, 1998, p.237).*

My subject position and life experience differs from Hatoum when looking at structural violence and dominant culture<sup>12</sup> and these subject positions are always elements that shape the making of artworks/the telling of stories. The following excerpt is from my workbook earlier this year:

*To have a body that is cast or 'stands in for' another body or group of bodies, is to be clear that that is the speaking body. This reinscribes the centrality of the speaker, and their position as an authenticating presence. This visual strategy reasserts that those the body 'represents' are not speaking subjects, although in some cases this is due to trauma, the experience of persecution, or death. My issue is with casting, of the artist's own body or another, **as a default strategy** in representing violence, in instances where there is little rigorous investigation around the politics of remaking/reaffirming a person or a peoples status as speechless victims. (Personal workbook entry, June, 2007)*

From this entry it is clear that I felt relatively sure of my take on the ethics of casting (arranging speech/choreographing/directing); that as a general rule, if a person is

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<sup>12</sup> Identities are always in flux but when I'm making artwork about systemic violence, I am usually trying to critique a structure which in a raced or ethnic, if not gendered sense, privileges my body to some degree.

speaking ‘on behalf’ of someone with whom they do not share an experience, then they are not only remaking the violence but reinscribing the systemic power dynamics that facilitated the initial violence. I then saw two visual narratives which forced me to rethink this. One was a film called *Yes* by Sally Potter and the other was *The Secret Life of Words* by Isabel Coixet. Given the framework I had secured for thinking about the dynamics of storytelling/speaking, I could easily posit that both are white middle class feminist women from the ‘first-world’ telling stories about systemic and bodily violence in contexts which are outside of their experience. In these writer/directorial roles, these women are positioning themselves as Narrators. They are speaking on behalf. This is not to say there are not crossovers with their own experience or lives, but my point would have been that they risk nothing. They remain central and stabilised.

The continuum of approaches to untellable stories varies greatly and a plethora of ethical questions ensue when the ‘making public’ of stories of violation is considered. Fundamentally it is the *price* of remaking or representing the violence that needs to be considered. Who foots the cost? Who spends and who pays? Who speaks and at whose expense? There are infinite reasons why it is ethically impossible to tell some stories yet visual culture is packed with these ‘salacious’ emotive narratives. These millions of stories get told anyway because of what I feel is a lack of care within capitalist (cannibal) culture, meaning we no longer feel responsibility to each other, or that with the individualist drive, we lack structures of genuine accountability to each other.

Occasionally artists/writers/makers with a relatively deep understanding of these issues, still choose to tell the stories. These are the works that really interest me. I want to understand what gives these storytellers enough conviction to tip the scales and speak, when they are aware of the cost, and who pays. The lived consequences of these stories becoming public will not ultimately lie with them. For storytellers<sup>13</sup> with an embodied analysis of colonisation and dominant culture this is a rare and problematic decision, yet these are the works that compel me. I don’t want to find a philosophical answer, I don’t want to find a way to be entirely comfortable with this,

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<sup>13</sup> Storytellers: read visual artists, performance artists, writers, dancers, filmmakers etc.

but I do wish to learn from the complex strategies these artists have employed in order to complicate and disrupt readings of power, and therefore its reinscription.

An excerpt from Marcus Wood, in his book *Slavery, Empathy and Pornography* (2002), echoes this sense of discomfort with the process of speaking.<sup>14</sup> Below he comments on feeling unsettled by what he writes and asserts that this is probably why it needs to be written. He has just been discussing why he is using canonical historic texts by white English men in his book instead of texts from the same period by black writers, specifically ‘slaves and ex-slaves’

*“...What still has not happened is an equally sophisticated interrogation of the workings of the white slavery archive. Consequently, ‘Slavery, Empathy and Pornography’ takes up the most influential of the white texts about slavery, and tries to pull them apart a bit, to see if their intimate structures, their internal aesthetic and ethical mechanisms, can now tell us anything new.*

*As a result, I am not comfortable with this book, with what it describes, or with how it is written. But given the subject I **am** now comfortable with the inevitability of discomfort. In truth the subject demands more than discomfort; perhaps it demands the maintenance of a perpetual state of shock, the shock of knowing that you will never know what you want to say about slavery, or what the right way of saying it might be. (Wood, 2002, p.10-11)*

One could read this as a post structuralist excuse, but for better or worse it is this kind of territory I am finding myself more and more familiar with. I find this area reflects the tension for me between theory and art practice, in that the opportunity to explore theory offers me space to critique and deconstruct things that are problematic, however the studio process of making artwork is very much based around the idea of constructing. There is much greater risk of being implicated in construction as opposed to deconstruction, or critique. To explore this vulnerability I will look briefly to the cinematic work written and directed by Isabel Coixet, *The Secret Life of Words* (2005), as this work is an active, narrative and artistic response to the questions I raise within this research and is situated firmly within the visual and theoretical areas I am engaged with. Unlike many of the other works I have explored throughout the year,

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<sup>14</sup> Patricia Yaeger also explores these ideas in her writing, referring to a need for ‘Textual Anxiety’ or ‘Discursive Doubt’ (2002, p.241) when writing in relation to trauma and traumatised bodies. I am interested in extending this to include visuality, arguing for the importance of ‘visual anxiety’ around attempting to represent violence and trauma.

there are crossovers in the subject positions of the filmmaker and myself.<sup>15</sup> The piece offers examples of many strategies used by artists and filmmakers in discussing violence, the body, trauma and power - in particular the use of a 'cast' body to simultaneously testify to, and unsettle the viewer.

## THE SECRET LIFE OF WORDS

The film is set on an oilrig off the coast of Northern Ireland. A woman gets work almost by accident, nursing a burns victim on the rig after there has been a fire. She and the man she nurses stay there until insurance can be arranged for the rig and the man can be taken to a hospital on the mainland. The film centres on their relationship in this isolated place and particularly on the life of the woman protagonist, who we discover, is a survivor of the rape camps in Sarajevo.

How does a Spanish filmmaker make cinema about the unspeakable nature of what people lived through in the Balkans?

She made a film about forgetting.

She told a story, largely leaving out 'the' story, she told around its edges. One scene offered an exception to this. In this scene she ruptured the narrative, letting some story out, but in the same breath, smothered it. This tension created an interception in what would have otherwise negotiated stock standard erotic consumption of the protagonist's trauma. (I will discuss this scene in more detail below). The two leads slip easily into a comfortable paradigm, so as viewers we are relatively at ease. Once we are engaged, however, 'she' unsettles everything. I argue that trauma and its representation is at best ultimately unsettling.

The paradigm is of the vulnerable female victim (unavailable – emotionally and sexually), she is not any kind of predator. The men read her as a neutral slate.

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<sup>15</sup> The majority of artworks I have explored within my research which address issues of violence, trauma, witness and testimony, have been made by indigenous artists and or artists with an experience of living and being 'othered' in occupied territories; domestically or 'nationally'. I have found very few works made by artists who are concerned with these issues outside of such experiences, or who are prepared to incorporate the reality of their very different subject positions and bodies when engaging with the same issues.

Consistently in conversations she is referred to as unattached: neutral, yet to be written, and therefore desirable. Her distance is read inside the consuming narrative of desire: as mystery. The mysterious woman. The uncolonised woman, the undiscovered woman, the ‘virgin’ woman/forest/land. She has a dark secret. Needs a father figure. Someone who can hold her. Somewhere to be vulnerable, feminine. Her clothes become gentler as she heads toward The Scene. We notice she’s prettier, for the first time, she smiles. Only moments before The Scene, the light catches her shirt and we see the curve of a breast... The rupture I mentioned earlier, comes now: in the form of a scene where the protagonist uses her body as the testimonial site, by speaking about her past and showing the physical scars on her chest. The man is temporarily blinded from his burns and so she makes him touch her, the traumatic history to be read like Braille on her body. The use of ‘display’ in this case, sits within a complex and troubled lineage (Feldman 2004), one which I will expand on in a moment.



Fig. 7. Film Still : Hanna (Sarah Polley) and Josef (Tim Robbins) in *The Secret Life of Words*. (2005). [Motion Picture] El Deseo, S.A. (<http://sarahpolley.org/gallery/>)



Fig. 8. Film Stills : Hanna (Sarah Polley) in *The Secret Life of Words*. (2005). [Motion Picture] El Deseo, S.A. (<http://sarahpolley.org/gallery/>)

The self-sexualised aspects of her 'performance' mean the protagonist disrupts the 'inevitable' spectatorship of her disclosure. In her 'telling' she actively unsettles the viewer, constantly remaining a step ahead of our responses. She acts in the remembering of her trauma. Simultaneously stabilising the viewer (displaying her story/trauma: it is consumable) and destabilising us through an active seduction (she is not passive in any way in its re-telling). In the same moment, in the same telling, in the same vulnerability and disclosure, she catches us, our urge to consume in some way, our pleasure (however distasteful or uncomfortable<sup>16</sup>) in watching. She interferes with the erotic safety of spectating, and jumps into the viewers lap. With all her pain, with all her mess and her leaking. While we wait, shy and ashamed of the emotional arousal of her story she eats us (devouring us by devouring him) before we can eat (consume) her (Root, 1996). Again one step ahead however, she remains empty stealing from us our 'right' to relief.

It is haunting when she presses her body and breasts onto him; the man who for all intents and purposes, mirrors the perpetrators. In the midst of her disclosure, when talking of those who raped and tortured her, she says very directly: "[they were] ..men who sound like you". The spectatorship is again momentarily disrupted as many audience members become aware of the English language they share with him.

To expand on the 'troubled lineage of display' I referred to in the previous paragraph, I wish to note Feldman's (2004) discussion of this in relation to performative elements within the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He points to the exposure of the scarred body in the abolitionist oration standing in relation to the exposure of the slave's body as commodity on the auction block, also writing about the reversal of the body and speech in abolitionist testimony. The use of the body as a testimonial site, is addressed often within human rights discourse and issues of the gaze. The 'trauma aesthetic' (Franklyn and Lyons, 2004) is troubled with the space between the

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<sup>16</sup> I argue that actually this does comfort us. Tang (2005: 72) writes "The sympathy comes from seeing the image (of horror) within conditions that leave intact the divide between us and them, with "us" in a safe, external (ahistoricized) viewing position. The horror is mediated through discourse such as "the human condition" (classical, essentialist), or perhaps "unequal power relations" (modernist ideological) these words enable us to *understand* suffering, purporting to reveal the truth about horror. But so quick are we to speak these words as truth that they conceal the lack of reality, the loss, within the very worlds we speak; hence our "impotence" (our castration) and, they leave us exonerated from our complicity, hence our "innocence".

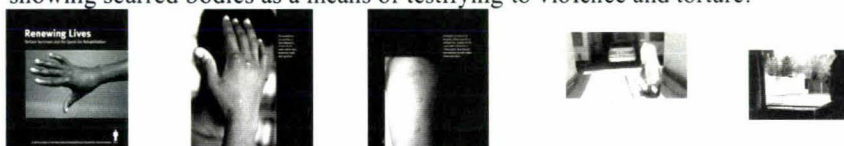
right of a survivor to ‘display’ (or sometimes the coercion / humiliation of having to display) and the spirit with which it is received. Hesford also addresses these complex dynamics in her work ‘Reading Rape Stories: Material Rhetoric and the Trauma of Representation’ (1999). When discussing a documentary called ‘Calling The Ghosts: A story about rape, war and women’, she writes:

*“Cigelj's dilemma of whether to speak or stay silent articulates the relationship between the spectacle of trauma and oral testimonials as both empowering and voyeuristic, collective and individual. The material presence of women's bodies and their excruciating experiences of torture produce important tensions between witnessing and spectacle. To find testimonial narratives and images of suffering simultaneously empowering and voyeuristic is not, however, to remain undecided about their role, but rather to recognize their complex rhetorical dynamics”.*

Using the body in this way is a common, if troubled, strategy, and one often employed by Human Rights organizations such as Amnesty International and the ITRC.<sup>17</sup>

Coixet addresses some of my key concerns, in particular the ambiguous ethics of taking and or ‘receiving’ testimonies, by setting a scene in the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT) archives. The male lead (Josef) turns up at the centre, having come to uncover the protagonist (Hanna’s) story after she disappears from him. The woman who runs the centre (Inge) asks him directly why he wants to know what happened to her and what would he do with that knowing. In short, she asks him how he intends to intercept his cultural instinct to consume it. She takes him to the archive. The archive is full of files and video testimonies of survivors. Eventually Inge puts the videotape he is so desperate to watch in his hands and says, “If you must, watch it”. He doesn’t watch it in the end,

<sup>17</sup> Fig. 6. Examples below are from the ‘Renewing Lives’ photo booklet produced by the ITRC, showing scarred bodies as a means of testifying to violence and torture.



and this in itself posits curious and implicating questions for the viewer, watching the film.



Fig. 9. Film Still : Inge (Julie Christie) talking with Josef (Tim Robbins) in the archival library of survivor's testimonies and stories, in *The Secret Life of Words*. (2005). [Motion Picture] El Deseo, S.A. (<http://sarahpolley.org/gallery/>)

A central concern relating to the reception of artworks, and the receiving of testimonies, is how a story (language and imagery) is able to implicate a viewer. Strategies that provide this implication offer resistance to sanitised and abstracted representations of violence. This can perhaps be measured by what degree of responsibility or risk the viewer is able to encounter in receiving the work. In Hatoum's *Negotiating Table*, by virtue of physical proximity and the unrelenting (endurance) elements within the work, the viewer is not offered any type of consolation. The work instead illustrates how mediations of violence shape and constrict the spaces real bodies inhabit.

The closing sequence of Coixets film shows the protagonist and the man she nursed living happily and safely together with their young children. This raises questions for me about what use such dominant romantic narratives have in this kind of story, and how they can be present without undoing all the subversions presented in the main body of the work. This narrative choice troubled me because of the unsettling power relations between the two leads. The last scene, however, also uses visual strategies to embed the domestic scene with a type of haunting, so it certainly doesn't offer a clean resolution; but it does relieve the viewer to a degree, as both characters find some happiness and companionship in each other, and therefore the loneliness and isolation of trauma is somewhat relieved.

Critically I was disappointed in the relative 'consolation' offered in Coixet's work- yet in another way, this ending challenges the inevitability of survivor's lives being 'written off'. Sally Potter's film *Yes* (2005) which I referred to earlier employs a similar approach. The film is politicising, confrontational and poetic in the way it addresses power, bodies and violence, yet at the last minute a romantic narrative is redeemed. She defends this, saying "It's a choice; but one which observably energises people. We think better, more creatively, and act more decisively from a perspective of hope than from one of despair" (Potter, 2005).<sup>18</sup>

From these discussions one can see that the lines which negotiate implication, empathy and responsibility, are fragile and loaded ones. I wish to close this section with a quote from Coixet; (2006)<sup>19</sup> contextualised by the concerns of this research, it encapsulates the ethical flux and ambiguity of meaning, speaking and responsibility that I am wrestling with.

**"This story never would have been possible without the women of Sarajevo who lent me their words, their silences, their secrets" (Coixet, 2006).**

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<sup>18</sup> Sally Potter interviewed by Cynthia Lucia, (2005) 'Saying Yes to Taking Risks: An Interview with Sally Potter'. *Cineaste*, 30, (4), pp.24-31.

<sup>19</sup> Cited: <http://www.typicallyspanish.com> Spain Culture News Spain Culture Round Up. Thu, 26 Jan 2006, 09:16, by 'H.B'

P A R T T W O

THREE EXPERIMENTS IN REPRESENTING  
VIOLENCE : WORKS BY JACK TROLOVE

The Corner of 4am and Cuba, Coal(d) Prayer and Ruin

## THE CORNER OF 4am AND CUBA



Fig. 10. 'The Corner of 4am and Cuba' Devised Theatre, bodies / voice / space / mixed media, Jack Trolove and the Wheelbarrow Co-op, (produced and directed by Ronald Trifero Nelson), 2007.

'The Corner of 4am and Cuba'<sup>20</sup> was a piece of devised theatre performed at Bats Theatre in Wellington from 12 - 21<sup>st</sup> April 2007. The work was created to remember Jeff Whittington, a 14 year old boy who was killed in a homophobic attack by two men ten years ago in Wellington. Jeff was not represented figuratively on stage at any point, however his body was referenced constantly. All seven bodies of the performers remained onstage for the entire duration of the piece. We created the work from interviews with friends and family, as well as indepth research into court transcripts, and the media representation following his murder. An attempt to analyse and deconstruct dominant narratives and discourse within media representations at the time played a key role in the development and presentation of the work. The final

<sup>20</sup> To see full length show refer to DVD One.

script and performance was part verbatim and part fiction. The work did not attempt to be objective and was largely created to re-present narratives and discourse avoided in official media coverage while reflexively examining how we participate in and are affected by social policing around representation. The devising process was deeply embodied. My role as a collaborator was both as performer and visual designer. The decision to work within a very physical and relatively traditional theatre context came from a sense of disembodiedness in my research and practice the previous year (as well as the aforementioned sense of despair around the intersection of violence and representation).

*"I have to have some kind of hope otherwise I will practice a consenting, defeated silence. This is why I have decided to go ahead with this project and contribute to making work that is (given my analysis of representing bodily violence) inevitably flawed, because I have realised id rather live with fucking up than accepting paralysis. I also feel that if there are some fractures in which these discussions are activated or effective then the only way I will find them is by rolling around until I fall down a gap. It seems I can't look for a gap; I have to feel for it. This has also affected my decision to move away from video and into working in a collaborative and bodily / physical discipline, specifically devised theatre."* (Personal workbook entry, February, 2007).

I do not perceive it to be a great leap to move between visual art practice and devised theatre; while each discipline stems from its own histories, the frameworks for engaging their common components (narrative, visuality and performativity for example) are different but certainly not incomparable as recent developments within performance design shows us (Oddey & White, 2006, Oddey, 2007)<sup>21</sup>. My participation in the work was an attempt at a more embodied method of research into the politics of representing violence; and specifically issues of witness, testimony, narrative, the live body, ethics and spectacle. Reflecting again on my writings from this period, I find that the desire for an embodied way of understanding was, at least in one respect, satisfied.

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<sup>21</sup> In particular, see: *Re-framing the Theatrical : Interdisciplinary Landscapes for Performance*, by Alison Oddey, (2007).

*I also want to write about the dynamics and sensations of putting my body on the line. Of not working through an alternate surface (as with painting and video) where the artist's body is referenced but invisible. There was an amazing lack of safety about this. [performing] No way to hide behind ideas. My body delivering everything.*

*Face to face with the viewers... the energy of that first night, I remember standing on my bin on stage, the bodies and breathing of the 'audience' around me and feeling so like the inside of something, like all of us were a body together in that room, the space didn't hold us, we held us- chaotic potentially volatile parts, participating, god it was good. It was everything that the screen is not, even though theatre, over all performance exists within its own relatively strict codes, inside this there is a living energy. The kind that isn't dead, the kind that could go wrong, the kind that is likely to leak, to fuck up. This keeps it living.* (Personal workbook entry, February, 2007).

Interestingly enough, it was this leaking, this risk of rupture which brought my initial dilemma hurtling back to the fore, and this time back to my body. I had to face having created the situation I most feared, and had spent years of my practice, concertedly avoiding; and thus to my regret I began the year with blood on my hands. The 'rupture' happened on the last night of the season. Up to this point, there had been full houses almost every night and varying responses but most of the audiences seemed to be moved and to appreciate the work. On various occasions, we had members of Jeff's family in the audience as well as one night the extended family of the men currently in prison for his murder. The feedback was consistently that people found it very difficult and painful but appreciated it. However the last night, Jeff's sister came to see the work. She had been instrumental in many of the interviews and collecting of stories to create the piece. She had been unsure of coming along but decided at the last minute to attend.

During the performance, the second time the scene of him being attacked was referenced/enacted, she called out, grieving, 'don't do it again, don't do it again'. I felt like Judas. For everything I have invested in trying to avoid remaking violence,

there it was, a woman watching her brother being killed ten years later. Not watching a representation, but watching another killing.

*We got to the end of the performance that night, carrying the story through, only just keeping our bodies from vomiting. That in between place of acting something out once your (spirit) has vacated your body. Desire abandons the body but the body performs the rest of the story, empty and resentful. It soldiers on. We narrate this as professionalism. We consoled ourselves through this 'professionalism'. We had set ourselves up. We had a responsibility to finish the telling for the other people in the space, so we carried them 'to safety' but with dead eyes. We had tried to remember the dead and in doing so we had become killers. "Don't do it again". He had been killed not once not twice but three times. The moment she called out, the physicality being performed transubstantiated and we were enacting something else.*

*It took four words to shift the entire universe.*

*We paused and stopped the performance for a few minutes. Her mate took her outside of the theatre until the end of the performance. Afterward an actor said to me that the fourth wall of the theatre had been pierced, but this wasn't it. It wasn't the wall being pierced, punctured between spectator and performer it was when we truly became audience and she more than performer. This is not such a big deal in and of itself, but it was Who she was that was so loaded. It was not a theoretical plunge at us, a quick-witted academic sabotage of the performance. it was lived. It was guttural, an involuntary response. It was living (gasping for breath we were taking from her). It was those three words that dragged ourselves, kicking and screaming, onto the stage, to be held accountable. Finally we were embodied performers interacting with an embodied woman whose body refused to spectate.*

"Those who attend live performance have more than just ears, and have more than eyes; they are fully embodied participants, each providing cultural, experiential and haptic 'matter' to the space" (Trubridge, 2005, p. 98). As far as how this initial

change in tack with researching has affected my work, the work itself as usual, raised more questions than it answered especially in relation to theory. The process of developing the work, however, was to become key in later experiments during the year. The making process was in some ways traumatic. In this context I am well aware of the loaded nature of this word<sup>22</sup> but there are few other ways to describe it. I have many problems with the structure and methodology that was used to devise the piece and especially the lack of emotional and spiritual boundaries /safety however, it was how it was and within that there have been many experiences which have served to enrich and complicate my research.

*The making process has been like wrestling with real bodies rather than interviews, transcripts, newspaper clippings, texts and newsreels; the details are fucking sad and heartbreaking. Every night at rehearsals it feels like all of this information ruptures under the surface of our skins. It has been breaking open sealed bodies. During rehearsals on hearing or performing / embodying possible scenarios relating to the time of his death, our own bodies wept, pissed and vomited. We leaked. We leaked because we couldn't hold the information. Because our bodies couldn't hold onto it.*

*We are not islands. We live in the world; we are interwoven in his story. Reading verbatim; the pathologist describing his body, evokes an (un)equally physical response in ours. Hearing the sterile reports is like signs transmitting from body to body, not written not verbal. Nothing pumps through me intellectually, but it drills through me viscerally. All this mess in rehearsals, all this mess in the devising, the movements, the scripts and with this godlike aspiration to 'distill'... the materiality of the work needs to reflect not deny this process, this undoing, and yet to communicate there needs to be a sense of order, at least in part. This structure of 'devising' feels like grasping at straws*

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<sup>22</sup> There are many problematic texts produced around concepts of 'secondary' or 'vicarious trauma' as a result of encountering material relating to, or hearing stories of another person's trauma. The term is often used in relation to those in a professional capacity (counsellors for example). However writers in trauma and memory studies have called for a critical position of bearing witness, where the witness –the listener or the viewer, "Does not take the place of the other" (Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, "Unbearable Witness: Toward a Politics of Listening," 2002). Again this is an issue where there are different parameters needed to discuss the very real experiences of being affected by another's trauma personally and then as those experiences relate structurally.

*and trying to manufacture a sense of order and control when there is none, it's like a desperate attempt to distance or feign some sense of objectivity, anything not to admit we are knee deep in messy bodies, thumping hearts, piss and tears. we are not in control. We were not in control. We are in the process of mediating stories again though, curating moments together, consenting on an edit.*

## COAL(D) PRAYER

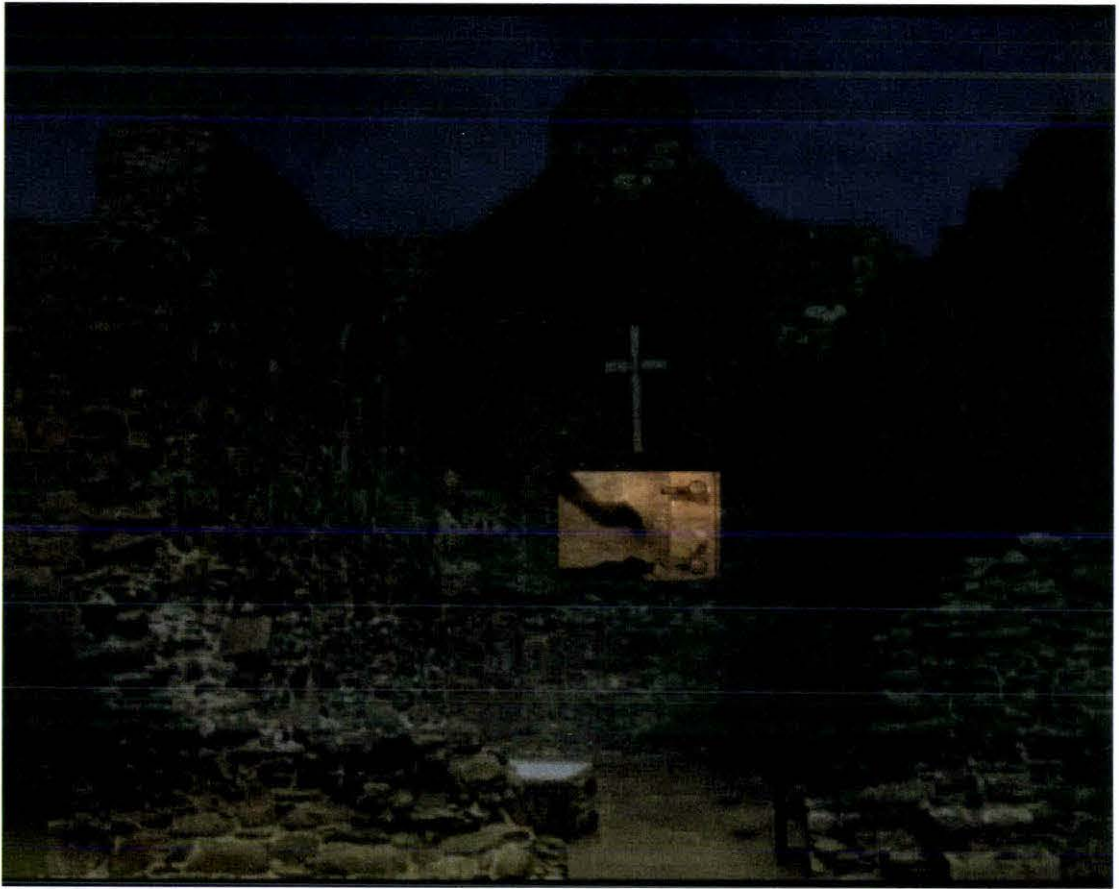


Fig. 11. Jack Trolove *'Coal(d) Prayer'* (2007) Video Installation Still, Rothesay Castle Chapel, Scotland.



Fig. 12. *Jack Trolove 'Coal(d) Prayer' (2007) Video Installation Still, Rothesay Castle Chapel, Scotland.*



Fig. 13. Jack Trolove 'Coal(d) Prayer' (2007) Video Installation Still, Rothsay Castle Chapel, Scotland.

Coal(d) Prayer<sup>23</sup> was a site responsive video installation, shown in the small open-air ruin of a chapel within the Rothsay Castle<sup>24</sup> on the Isle of Bute in Scotland on the 20<sup>th</sup> October 2007. The work was developed during a four-month residency on the island and was an investigation into ruptures in empirical / historic narratives around bodies and power.

The work was a way of using the moat surrounding the castle as a metaphor for the bodies of water surrounding the island, which also weave through the nearby isles.

<sup>23</sup> Due to the lack of light (the work was installed for a Dusk showing) This piece did not document well on video, so please refer to 'Coal(d) Prayer Installed' on DVD Two, to see an approximate reconstruction of this work.



<sup>24</sup> Fig. 14. Aerial view of entire castle.

These like the moat, are often thin strips of water. Historically they were used as holding bays for ships coming in and out of the Glasgow docks during its busiest period, when the island was 'flourishing' and most of the current architecture was erected. The dockyards in Glasgow were where many of the slave ships were built, and the 'merchant' ships coming in and out were packed with 'goods' from the associated industries of the slave trade. Tobacco, rum, cotton and tea.

In 2007 the UK raised a token gesture toward 'remembering' as it marked 200 years since the abolition of slavery (at least in the form it took 200 years ago). Many of the public initiatives were framed in a way which clearly attempted to historicise slavery and racism, and the little recognition there was of the role of whiteness in this, was regurgitated in a way that managed to avoid any implications for dominant culture<sup>25</sup>.

The day I arrived on the island was the day a person drove into the Glasgow Airport. I spent my first night on the island in a pub as the news broke. This moment became pivotal as I experienced unguarded expressions of racism from everyone in the bar. The Glasgow 'airport bomber' afforded white Scotland an opportunity to speak without censorship. Narratives being mediated in the initial throes of responses<sup>26</sup> echoed almost to the letter the kind of responses Pauline Hanson's standing for government elicited a number of years earlier in Australia<sup>27</sup> (Hage 1997). People found an opportunity to make public a voice which had been 'oppressed' by the 'political correctness' said to silence neutral white bodies. This sense of being united by a common hatred or fear (in this case the manufactured fear of Asian/Arab peoples), led me to develop the ideas around choreographies of male bodies,

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<sup>25</sup> Seen nowhere more clearly than with the launch of 'Amazing Grace', a mainstream film about the 'abolition' of the transatlantic slave trade, ensuring that popular culture marked this 200 years by hailing a white man as the saviour of black bodies. Even in this 'remembering' racism and power are re-inscribed. These cautions around memorialising aesthetics are aspects I have considered throughout the year especially when looking at the relevant and moving works of Alfredo Jaar and Jenny Holzer. Unfortunately due to space I am unable to introduce this discourse here but wished to note that the aesthetics of memorial and trauma aesthetics are contextualising issues for the visual components of this research.

<sup>26</sup> John Smeaton was the Glasgow airport baggage handler cum national hero after intervening in the attack. For weeks the media replayed him talking to the press from the airport an hour after. In moments he had become a national hero and celebrity, even gaining a medal from the queen. The way this was mediated (see <http://johnsmeaton.com/>) certainly reinscribed the dominant narrative of the white male saviour and voice of reason.

<sup>27</sup> See: Ghassan Hage 'White Nation: fantasies of White supremacy in a multicultural society', Annandale, NSW: Pluto Press (1997).

vulnerability and power, which lent itself easily to the historic choreography of bodies within the castle walls; armies, gangs, collective and collected bodies. This baptism into Scotland was certainly formative and set the scene for how and why I wanted to make work.

This particular piece, *Coal(d) Prayer* integrated these ghosted waterways, by visually opening a tap above the moat, within the chapel ruin. The moat became a stagnant body of water into which history drains. I wanted to disrupt the idea that we can rid ourselves of history, I wanted to confirm its haunting, that we live within it, that we perform it, that it shapes us, shapes how we speak, how we walk in the world. As Barbara Kruger (2005) says, “power and its politics and hierarchies exist everywhere: in every conversation we have, in every deal we make, in every face we kiss”. Every time we ride the ferry to or from the island, we travel the same bodies of water as the slave ships; the buildings we house ourselves in were paid for with bodies; there is nowhere for history to go but back into the dirt, water and our bodies. I wanted to talk about memory and leaking, so the tap in the chapel opened a point for the stories to leak out.<sup>28</sup>

This piece of work was my opportunity to discuss the intersection of two major areas of structural violence that contextualised and built the castle; the slave trade and the mines. Because of the climate of unchecked racism on the island (local shops regularly sold out of gollywogs) I was cautious of using imagery that would be reabsorbed back into racist narratives and so I focused the work on the bodies of the white miners. The piece in the chapel was a way of trying to link and make connections between race, whiteness and complex discourses around power; many of the people on the island related personally to histories of the miners, and the oppressions they suffered, however, it was not necessarily registered that this did not undo a relationship to racism and slavery.

The video begins with hands covered in coal. Eventually, after much scrubbing, it is washed off, down the drain (into the moat), leaving white hands. Through sitting the projection just below the cross, the moving image is located immediately within a

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<sup>28</sup> Julia Kristeva, discusses concepts of this ‘leaking body’ in her work ‘Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection’. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.)

library of Christian references to the washing of hands, in any context, an obsessive and loaded ritual. This ritual of washing or more specifically, scrubbing, is deeply evocative and associative in relation to trauma. A ritual associated with abuse / rape / guilt / history / blood on ones hands / Shakespeare's unwashable blood / post traumatic stress and obsessive-compulsive disorder / Mary Magdalene washed by Jesus, and poignantly, Pontius Pilate's washing of his own hands.

To consider Spivak's necessary divisions, I note there are both structural and personal points where this work links to the church. The structural connection being the institutional relationship of church to empire, the personal being the missionary impulse to colonise. This second aspect, being from the body, was the one that located itself within the chapel. With this work I hoped to draw links between ideas of 'salvation', empathy and sympathy as they relate to race and power. The ruin of the chapel is contextualised by the large monument it is fixed within, and therefore contextualised by its obvious historical relationship with power, and yet this provides a poetic fluidity. It has been worn down, through battles, fires, attacks, birds nesting and years passing. It is now a humbled place and without its ceiling or floor creates a very beautiful and contemplative theatre. This piece, like the other work I made for the site, was shown at dusk<sup>29</sup>.

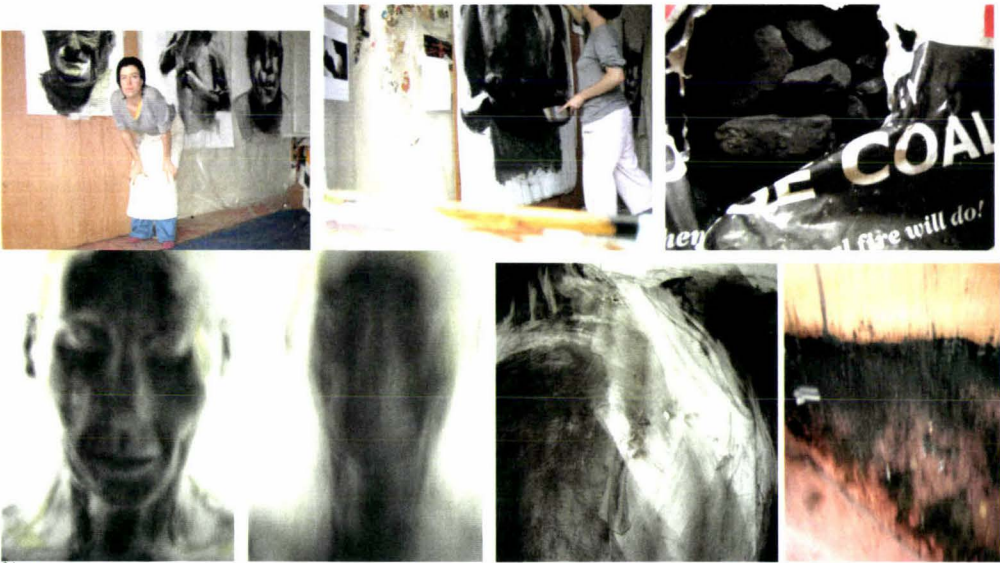
Ideas for 'Ruin'- the installation I will discuss shortly- passed through many manifestations as they developed. The installation began with six metre high coal drawings on loose canvas that were to be hung around the interior space,<sup>30</sup> to a

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<sup>29</sup> I interpret dusk to be the time between worlds / in the half light/ when the membrane between the living and the dead is said to be thinnest/ when the light plays tricks on the eyes.

participatory performance piece,<sup>31</sup> to a series of small video works (each shown on one stone), to large drawings projected upside down onto the side of the ruin to be read though their reflections in the moat. I was also developing ideas for a piece (which quickly became impractical) where I would empty the water in the moat and fill it with tea (of the East India Trading Company), to locate discussions of power around the time of the height of Empire and then develop different daily performances around implication and innocence through devising washing rituals with actors (tea and blood stain a similar colour), visually linking many stories of rivers being ‘awash’ with blood. Please note also the working draft<sup>i</sup> of a performance I developed during this time, in the appendix. The following stills were another series of images I explored during this working process.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Fig(s) 15. Some of the smaller scale working drawings:



<sup>31</sup> The coal drawings were to be replaced by shadows ‘drawn’ with the bodies of the spectators blocking

a central light source. Fig. 16.

<sup>32</sup> To see other photographic stills from this working process, refer to ‘Stained Bodies’ on DVD Three.

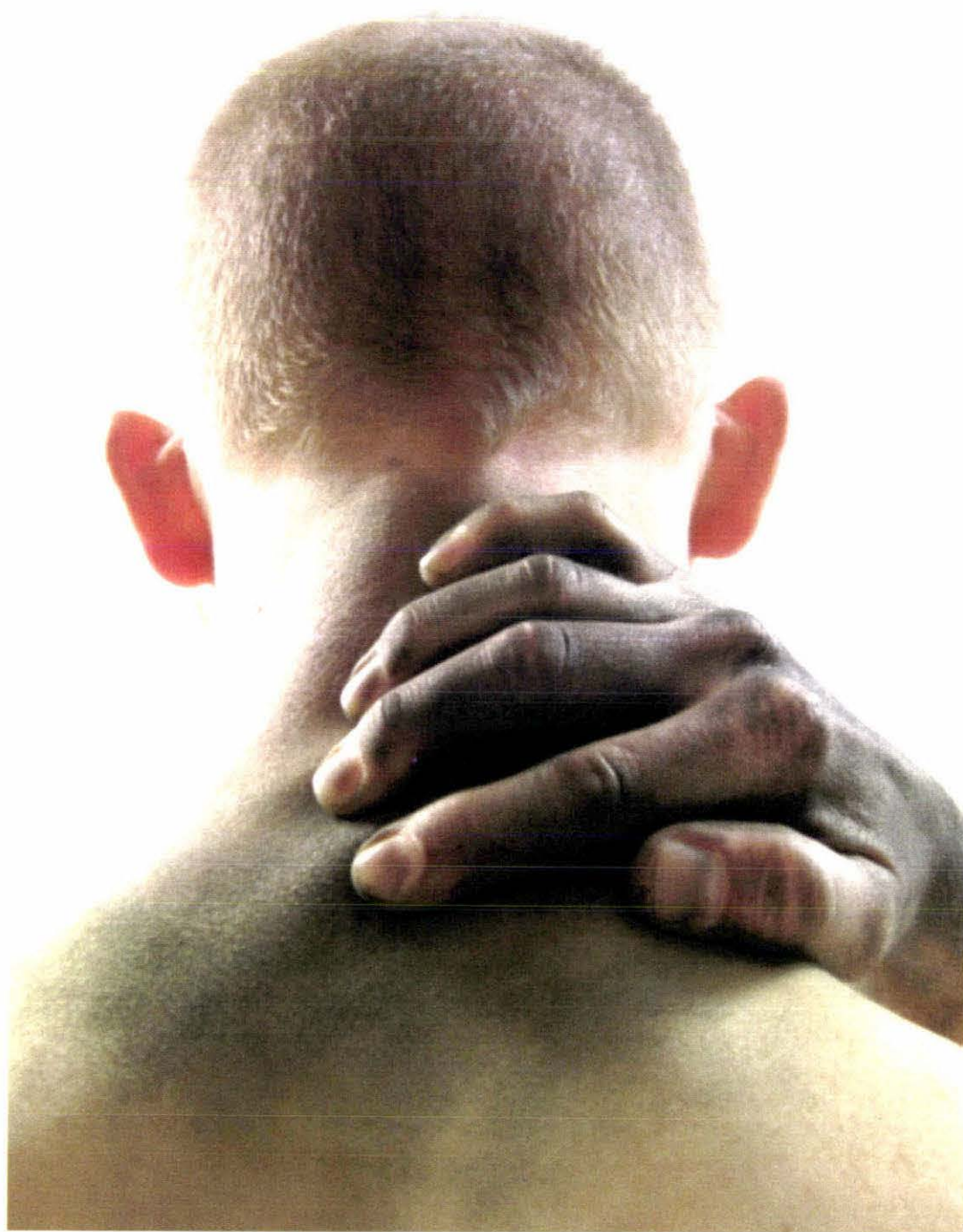


Fig. 17. Jack Trollove, *'cold fear'* Photographic Still, 2007.

These photographic works are my response to my experience on the evening I arrived. The previous image, and the two that follow, emerged out of working with coal stained bodies.<sup>33</sup> In many cases I felt the images encapsulated aspects of the racist imaginary that were being nurtured in the media, specifically fear of the black male body. This first surfaced in a working video drawing 'Coal Throat'<sup>34</sup> where the 'miner' in the performance clutches his throat, trying to breathe and in the same action, stains himself, reminiscent of the way miners necks became stained. During this his elbow came out of shot a number of times, leaving an image that looked like a white man being strangled by a black hand<sup>35</sup>. As he becomes more panicked the shot pans out and the viewer can see that it is, indeed, his own hand<sup>36</sup>.

These works provided a successful illustration of racism being contained in white bodies and how, as Wood (2002) states, fear of the 'raced other' is located in and around white bodies, and is a component of the white archive, unconnected to real black bodies. The previous image and these two following are photographic works developing this idea that surfaced in the video drawing. Photographing from behind the body and detailing goose bumps on the neck drew on associated references; simultaneously illustrating and draining racist imaginings by focusing on where those imaginings are located.



33

Fig. 18.



Fig. 19.

<sup>34</sup> Please refer to 'Coal Throat' on DVD Three.



35

Fig. 20.



36

Fig. 21.



Fig. 22. Jack Trolove, 'cold fear' Photographic Still, 2007.



Fig. 23. Jack Trollove, *'cold fear'* Photographic Still, 2007.

## RUIN



Fig. 24. *Aerial photograph of site (Rothesay Castle) Luminous patches show location of projections.*

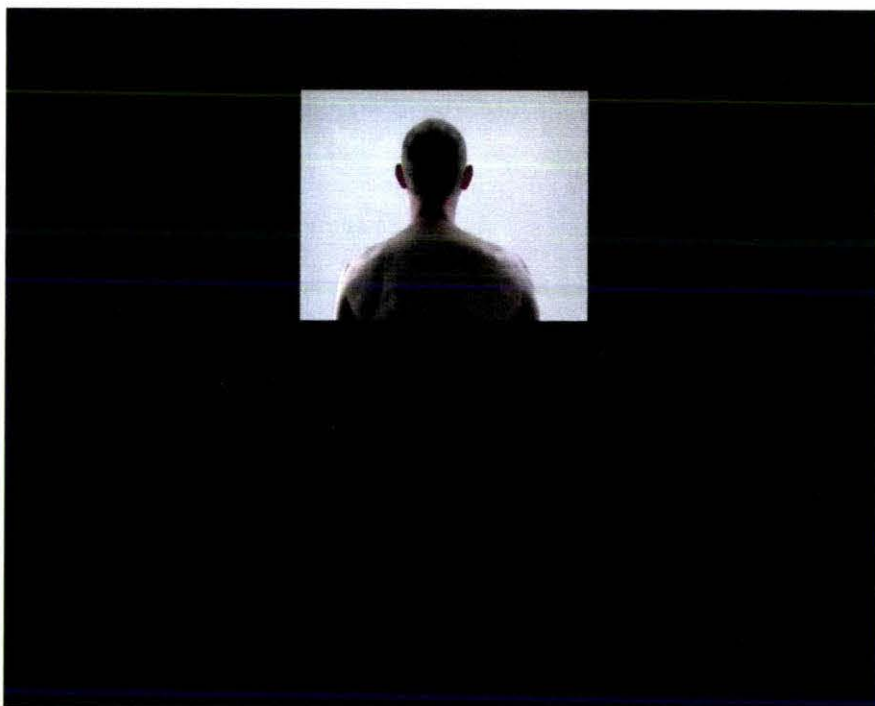


Fig. 25. Stills from 'Ruin' Installation, Jack Trollove, video projections on stone, each aprox 9x9m high, 2007.

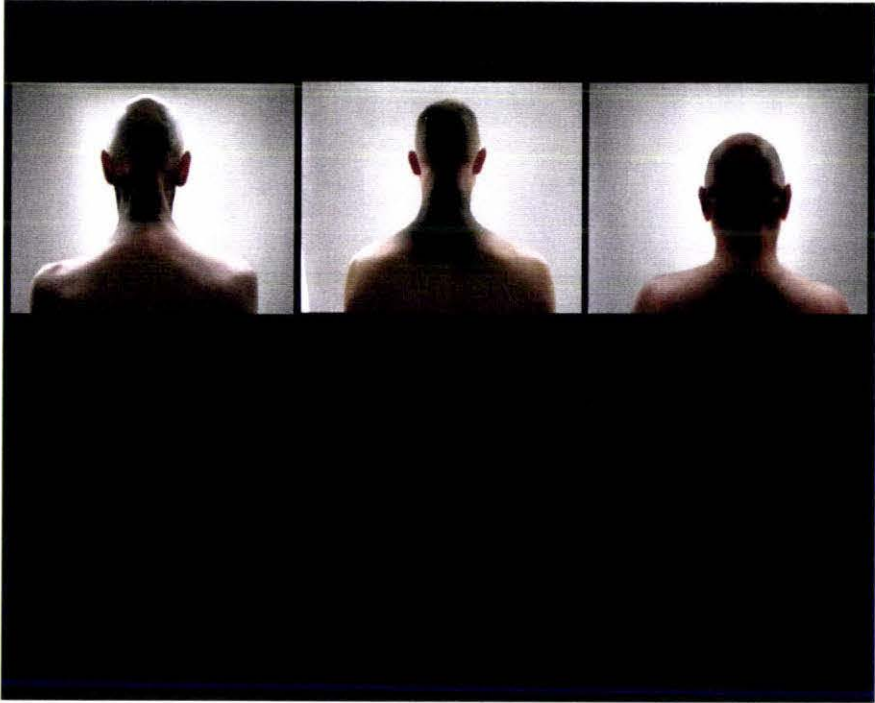


Fig. 26.

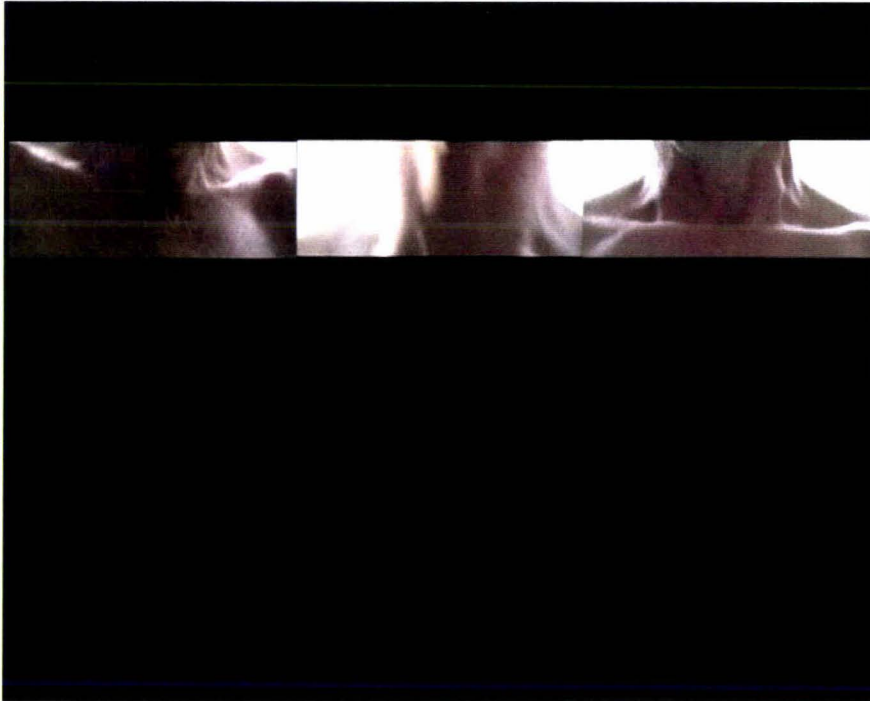


Fig. 27.

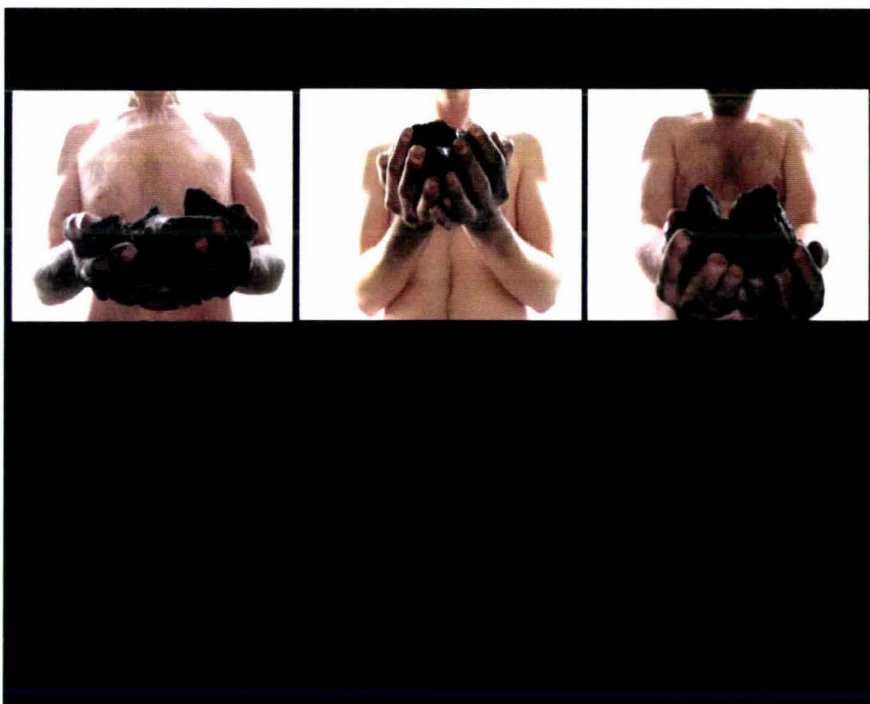


Fig. 28.

The Ruin<sup>37</sup> was a site responsive video installation, which was shown in the Rothesay Castle on the Isle of Bute in Scotland on the 20<sup>th</sup> October 2007. This work approached the monumental, circular ruin as a body, as a container of memory, and looked to its materiality for a way into the political narratives embedded in the stones, water and dirt.

Rothesay castle is ancient but was rebuilt in the 14<sup>th</sup> century by the Stuart (from the word 'steward') family. The castle and the 'Historic Scotland' signage which surrounds it are all signifiers of 'official history' (Jackson, 2003). The building was originally constructed to protect the ruling class and is now managed by government and councils who protect and maintain official history. In this work the representative body (edifice) of those who write history is contrasted and made to cohabit with unofficial history, or untrustworthy, 'variable' histories (and bodies). (Folk songs: Jackson 2005, Authenticity: Hesford 2004).

The Stuart's family company still own almost the entire island and large parts of Scotland and Wales. Most of their money was made from the slave trade or more specifically its 'associated' industries and from taxing the ships of **coal** coming in and out of the docks they owned in Cardiff<sup>38</sup>. The research process looked to the edifice through folk stories and songs (unofficial histories) for traces of the bodies inextricably linked to its existence. These bodies are physically part of the matter and materiality of the space, but through language (and therefore power), have been invisibilised.

I was not interested in the notorious violent history of the site and the ruin, so much as the violence of how empirical history is mediated and maintained. It was an opportunity to work with a site which has narratives that have always been overtly choreographed to protect power (currently through maintenance of official history).

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<sup>37</sup> To see the video work which was projected onto stones, refer to DVD Three, 'Ruin un-installed'.



<sup>38</sup> Fig. 29. Historic Photograph of the docks in Cardiff.

The castle aside, its mediation has been part of a labyrinth of dominant narratives that ensure systemic violence – in particular, racism and poverty<sup>39</sup>. In the gaps of these narratives are the stories of people who are spoken out of history. The edifice is built with thousands of cut stones. Human hands laid these stones, and human bodies paid for these stones; or more specifically, the stones were paid for with bodies; miner's bodies, many of whom died young of black lung<sup>40</sup>. And so, to illuminate these bodies' relationship to the stones, I made work hoping it would operate as the dusty lungs of the edifice.

The work was a series of three simultaneous projections, wrapped around the inside of the circular walls. On entering the ruin, the viewer faced in the darkness the backs, shoulders and heads of three men, all facing away. The images are gentle, there are no clothing markers on the bodies and they face outward, as if protecting the viewers. They are keeping watch. They are almost god-sized. The images are still but as the people (audience) have filed into the openair castle, the bodies begin to breathe. Shoulders moving up and down in time with a comfortable and regular breath. The choreography then changes. The men turn and look inward. They are no longer keeping watch for those of us in the castle; suddenly we are surrounded. The shift was slight but in a moment we have become implicated<sup>41</sup>.

It is now about the space inside, where we stand. We can't see the faces of the men but their chests and throats line the walls surrounding us. Its dusk and the little light there is left plays tricks on the stones. Eventually, the men start to cough a little and before long the images start to break up. Their images become intermittent, flashing like shots of memory as they hack up the dust in their lungs, heaving. Suddenly the

<sup>39</sup> I use the term racism here to refer to the process of historicising slavery.



<sup>40</sup> Fig. 30. An x-ray image of 'Black Lung'.

<sup>41</sup> I was also in the UK a few years ago, around the time of the 'make poverty history' campaign. This campaign fell into a trap common to dominant and particularly mainstream culture(s)- of 'addressing the issues', but with no overt positionality in negotiating an approach. I recall seeing someone one day who had one of the merchandising t-shirts on that so many people were wearing. She had adapted the text with a marker instead to read 'history made poverty'. Since then I have been struck by the simplicity of readjusting the gaze which in a moment is capable of implicating and changing power infinitely.

images contract, leaving only their throats, wrapping around the walls like a long text, like a script, a scroll. A linear narrative coiled around the buildings insides. On the scroll the throats are heaving, slowly, haunting and gasping for breath.

The audio becomes disconcerting, guttural, at times they sound animal. The sound is now like wheezing. Technically it is sound left from the original film, slowed down so far like a chewing tape. It references narratives dissolving, “history being chewed into a continuous present” (Smith, 2002, p.215) After some time, it becomes about endurance, so there is time to think about the place we are, remember the spot we stand in and notice dusk has fallen and the sky is thick with stars. This theatre is ancient. The night is gentle and all the time we can smell the familiar scent of the moat surrounding us. We are not going anywhere, the time is not rushed. This is the ultimate empirical island, its borders protected by water. And we are inside.

The throats continue heaving as their bodies contest the heroic and noble narratives of the site. Eventually over the heartbeat which has throbbed - the only constant throughout - a woman’s voice rises. The hairs on our necks prickle and still images of the men relax, like epitaphs. They stand with their offerings, black gold on their marked bodies. They hold for a short while then fade like ghosts back into the stones. After this ritual they will always be there. Spoken back into the space. Their images fade and the protest song rings through the air, unofficial history and the woman’s voice milking the night, taking up space that every other day of the week they are spoken out of.

We all stand silent like we are at some kind of memorial service, or we are waiting to be rallied together to fight, and I can hear sobs quietly as folk remember, through their own bodies and families. Eventually the song ends and we all stand in silence. It is some time before anyone speaks, and even then, it seems no one really wants to. Eventually people start to talk. Everyone has a history with these bodies or the bodies that were cast to stand in for, and for a moment, everybody re-members and we speak these histories into being.

This work was my head on attempt to approach the theatrical concept of ‘casting’, of casting bodies other than my own to represent (stand in for) particular bodies. This

was also the case with *The Corner of 4am* and *Cuba*, but in the theatre this is a representational strategy which is taken for granted. Up to this point I have always made figurative work and have always used my own body. The dynamic of the gaze has been interesting<sup>42</sup> and is new territory in my practice, though I have spent much time on the other side of this gaze; for many years I worked as a life model and my own body has been ‘cast’ for money numerous times - in other people’s artworks, TV commercials, voice-overs and short films.

The making process certainly allowed me to think about the subtleties and tensions between devising, collaboration and directing. This project was in flux between all three approaches. The visual language was also in flux as there were many considerations to address in order to make the work accessible to the locals on the island who were to be the primary audience. This was an interesting exercise in trying to make imagery that didn’t require fine art reference points, without making work that was didactic or which undermined the visual literacy of the people on the island. The figurative aspects certainly helped as an inroad for relating to the imagery, making me question again my initial instinct to ‘write off’ possibilities for figurative identification.



42  
31. Video stills of myself photographing the ‘miners’ 2007.

To complete the last work within my masters research, I take the footage and imagery I created for the Ruin installation in Scotland, and stay primarily with the same body of material. I am in the process of 'translating' / transmuting the very much site responsive work into a new located and site specific piece here in Poneke, Aotearoa. This strategy satisfies one of the key concerns within my research of the past few years, which is how to address and embody a genuine positionality.

While in Scotland my body was contextualised unusually for me. Here I am Tau Iwi, and Pakeha. My body and presence here is part of a continuum of colonisation. I am Manuhiri, four generations later. As always, identities are multiple and complex, and my relationships to power shift in relation to gender, race, sexuality and class etc. While in flux, these identities are still what shape my subject positions. In Scotland my 'whiteness' takes on different meanings. The strategy of transmuting takes imagery made from a particular set of subject positions, and relationships to systemic violence/history and rearranges these images and bodies into a new choreography of images to 'speak' here.

The obvious critique of this is that it is the ultimate colonial act, to pluck from a place and insert the image, body or language into a new place irrespective of meanings, thus denying cultural, physical, historic, spiritual, and bodily contexts. Everything in the work 'Ruin' felt like it came from those stones and that water, from those isles and particularly, from who I am and how I'm read in those isles. The remaking of the work here is in a way a remaking of my own body here, or a conscious way to address my positionalities to systemic violence in Aotearoa (as the main focus of the work). As an exercise I am hoping it will allow me a difficult task, not of producing a caricature which 'marries my celtic ancestry with the pacific', but of finding a way to navigate the complicating space of ethically engaging with imagery around violence.

This fantasy of 'translation' provides a perfect conceptual location for this piece of work. Translation assumes the need for a 'mediator' - in this case, the need for visibility to be mediated. The symbolic body I have been investigating embodies this location through its role as a type of cipher. My own body also occupies this location through its role, as the artist (speaker/maker). Through stretching this concept of the symbolic body by giving it a potentially 'impossible' task such as the one I have

described in my plans for this work, I am searching for its edges, its limits (and where it transcends or transgresses these limits). In stretching these symbolic bodies and my own, I hope to locate the points where they/I become impotent and/or implicated (visible).

In attempting a piece of work which will 'translate' images and bodies, imbuing them with new meaning to reflect my own relationships to structural violence here, I will be thrown around by the work as much as 'choreographing' it. This struggle is likely to scar or inscribe this piece of work, and I envisage it being these 'traces' which will bear witness to the flaws in such attempts to 'narrate', as well as honouring the necessity of trying to speak.

*Although the stories that are approved or made canonical in any society tend to reinforce existent boundaries, storytelling also questions, blurs, transgresses and even abolishes these boundaries. (Jackson 2005: 34).*

## CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

In this second chapter I have utilised my personal reflections of art practice over the past year in order to wrestle with the theoretical issues I raised in part one. In particular, I have concentrated on notions of identification and empathy as they relate to the production and reception of representing of violence and trauma, also as they are engaged through the symbolic body. Throughout this exegesis I have used Root's (1996) concepts of consumption, and its colonial source, to contextualise the bodies I refer to and the testimonial dynamics they engage. In my discussion of 'The Corner of 4am and Cuba' I explored the potentials of literally embodied research as well as reflecting on my personal encounter with the ethical concerns central to representing violence; in particular what happens when a symbolic body becomes real.

In reflecting on 'Coal(d) Prayer' I demonstrated in greater depth the power relations of language and space, in this instance, in relation to raced bodies and whiteness. I used the third work 'Ruin' to elaborate on issues raised in the first part of my exegesis, around the politics of casting bodies as a visual strategy. I also used this work to discuss the embodied and performative aspects of my art practice.

I have discovered the 'symbolic body' to be a fraught site, certainly no passive vessel for a story. However, I have also discovered over the course of this research, that the strategy of using such a body continues to offer real promise for visual practice. Interestingly I have found this potential to be *because* of the slippery nature of such a site. Potentially the symbolic body can avoid the ultimate betrayal of violated bodies because the flaws of this strategy make it unable to define, or 'wrap up' violence through its performative representation.

When I set about this research project I was already making work that engaged with issues of violence and trauma. What I genuinely hoped to find through this inquiry were practical strategies and an ethical methodology which would allow me to avoid remaking or mimicking violence in the making-process or in the artwork. This hope for a creative and ethical framework to return to my old studio with has been deflated; at least in the way I envisaged this 'problem-solving' to look. I have been humbled by

the realisation that there is about as much chance of me finding a 'functioning' framework in an un-functional world as there is of finding 'a' way to understand my own body's relationships to structural violence.

Instead I have come to appreciate the tensions, even the visual anxiety I experience while trying to make work. These elements which I used to feel 'held me back', now signal a genuine engagement with not only the politics of violence but a poetic engagement or reflexivity with the unsettling 'nature' of trauma. What I have learned to hope for instead, is a vocabulary of visual strategies which are true to this unsettling; strategies that may be used to complicate and disrupt readings of violence and power and therefore their reinscriptions. Perhaps what I am hoping for is a way for my body or the symbolic bodies in my work to contribute to, among other things, the 'unsettling' of my colonial legacy of settlement.



## POST MORTEM : reflections on process

For some time I tried to discuss this research project using the metaphor of a journey and for some time I have felt like a fraud, trying to narrate the 'journey' as if I was walking in a straight line. Truth is, I have not walked in a line. I have for the most part felt disorientated. The experience of making work and researching over the last year between here and Scotland has been much more like being stuck in a huge steel fish, lost at sea, buoyed by the waters of the Atlantic and the Tasman Oceans, with all the weight of their naming. Stuck below deck, under the crushing weight of ethical concerns and theory, I have felt like Jonah smashing around in the ribcage of language. This ship is the contested and volatile site where violence and trauma are represented and ingested. The problematics and disorientations of representing violence have formed the backbone of this exegesis. My history and my body are at risk here. I am implicated. I cannot fly above this place in some Darwinian plane.

I have spent the last twelve months at sea and still there is no land. With my art works I have tried to make islands, only to find them submerged as quickly as they have been built. Life rafts sink. I have now realised that a successful dissertation and body of work does not mean for me, creating islands that are effective, and stay afloat. The reasons my islands (artworks) are sinking is because I am finally in the waters that I need to be in. Unless I make stories (artwork), my body is absorbed into dominant narratives and lends its weight to their *power-over*. Sometimes when I make stories, this happens anyway. For some time I have been paralysed by this responsibility of potentially irresponsible storytelling.

There are more than enough meta narratives around storytelling and speaking as it is; I have no interest in finding an overall or containing argument around these issues, even the issues of empathy and identification. I resist the idea that there is a one-size fits all position. The more I research and make work in this area, the more I realize that the defence of a static position, and the policing of these borders is the problem. The meeting place (where stories are told) between violence and representation is volatile. It seems my position(s) on the politics of representing violence figuratively, change as the contexts for those representations change.



## APPENDIX / END NOTES

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**Draft 2 for the performance:**

People (participants/spectators/viewers) meet at the dock. Boats, ships, the smell of the sea. Dusk is drawing in. Night will fall over the next half hour.

People gather

Through the space available for the people to gather at the wharf, their bodies are formed into a line (the very thin part of the pier is the meeting point). People are asked to be silent (TBC: by who and how)..

The piper begins his dirge.

He leads the procession of people as the red blistered carpet is rolled out before them/us.

They walk to the castle (only a minute away) over the familiar blistering (enamel) innards of the tenements.

As the procession crosses the bridge over the moat, they see people scrubbing themselves. Men trying to wash the coal dust from their bodies in the moat. The men are scrubbing and scrubbing.

The people walk into the castle through the tunnel-like part that connects the bridge to the open interior space of the ruin. Lining this esophagus / breathing tubes of the building, there are images projected either side that are hard to make out initially. They are projections of men's chests, heaving and coughing (only it is dead silent except for the pipes) The projections are blown up very big. The bodies of the people are small against the castle and the heaving coughing chests.

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The people continue, the procession arrives at the centre (heart/lungs) of the open-to-the-sky ruin. The enamel (or coal) path signals where to go, leading them into a relatively transparent 'shelter'.

The piper stops. Audio recordings of familiar songs begin. Miner's songs and 'slaves laments' play into the space and now dark sky.

The shadows of the bodies of the people are thrown onto the walls of the ruin in a huge scale via the industrial strength lamp in the centre of the transparent shelter.

The projectors stop running, and eventually the music fades (but people will probably have left by then).

The miners 'disappeared' while the people were lead inside, so as the people depart they are likely to look around for the men washing as they leave over the bridge but the the men are nowhere to be seen. maybe the miners were like an apparition in the half light. (After all, those minutes of twilight everyday are between waking and dreaming, the time its not surprising to glimpse the dead among the living.)

Notes:

The rolling out of the insides (red 'carpet') is a (phenomenological) way of linking the bodily interior of everyday/contemporary buildings and tenement housing to the epic building, or overt metaphor of a monument to power and official history in an attempt to link current and historical narratives back into a kind of a continuum in relation to violence and power. The work has many references to poverty as violence. Of a literal walking over bodies to 'power'. The red blistered internal bodily 'strip' of red which lines the buildings currently inhabited by people on the island (many of whom live with serious health issues as a result of poverty on the island and also face a kind of economic and physical entrapment on the island because of low income and the monopoly of one ferry provider to the island), and again the systemic violence experienced by the miners resulting in early deaths by black-lung.

The red carpet as a gesture however, refers to the pomp and ceremony around official history and monuments in Britain (including Scotland), with proportionately huge amounts of money put into memorialising, maintaining a heroic version of empire. Of course there are ruptures within this narrative, with public initiatives like the Liverpool Museum of Slavery and the (under-funded) Black History tours in Glasgow etc. I am nervous that the gesture of the carpet is too loaded, and could become like a caricature of how it's intended. Am also considering the possibility of the path being coal, with all the associative qualities (and mark-making qualities) of having to 'walk over hot coals'.

These are the body linings (blistering tenements) that I refer to:

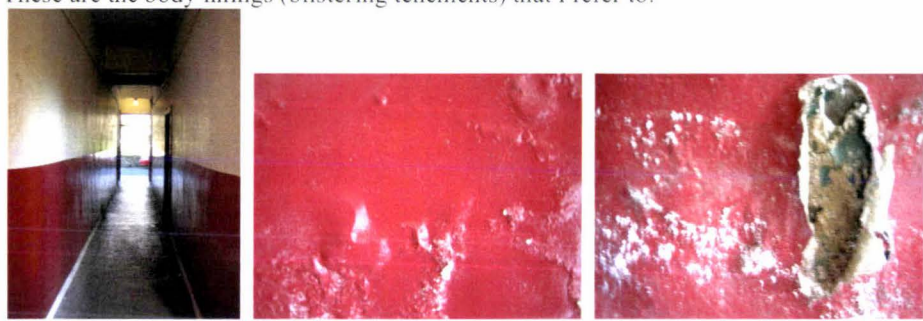


Fig. 32.

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**Fig. 2.** *Lustmord Table*, marble, Jenny Holzer, (1994) at Cheim & Read.  
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**Fig. 4.** *Resisting Amnesia*, Oil on Canvas 1.5 x 3 m, Jack Trolove, (2000).

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**Fig. 23.** *Cold Fear*, Photographic Still, Jack Trolove, (2007).

**Fig. 24.** *View from the Air* [my photoshopped adaptions] Rothesay Castle and St Mary's Church : The Official Souvener Guide (1996) Denys Pringle. Date and Photographer unknown. Historic Scotland.

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