



## **What happens when the body matters?: Phantom transmissions and corporeal textualities in the life and work of Olive Schreiner and J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace***

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### **Abstract**

This essay explores intergenerational transmission of trauma as evidenced in the body. Specifically the somatic experiences of two white South African women, one historical (Olive Schreiner, author of *The Story of an African Farm*, 1883) and one fictional/contemporary (Lucy, a character in J.M. Coetzee's novel *Disgrace*) are considered in order to elaborate the legacy of white colonial psychic disavowals in post-colonial South Africa. Using feminist and relational psychodynamic theories, this article addresses the alexithymia of the colonial predicament via an assertion that unwitnessed somatic distress as a result of disavowed trauma in individuals is potentially transmitted to subsequent generations and requires nuanced clinical attention. Jessica Benjamin argues that in attending to the psychic wounds of the doer, the done-to and those parts in each of us, we can interrupt the ongoing violent resonances of collective traumas. Curiosity about somatic distress is one avenue for this attending.

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In my clinical work I have regularly encountered the ways in which the psychiatric establishment diminishes somatic complaints (often referred to as “medically unexplained illness,” “somatic preoccupation” or “Somatoform disorder”) in clients/patients and finds little usefulness in bearing witness to what the body attempts to convey—the unspeakable narratives of trauma. Recent empirical and theoretical research on the connection of somatic symptomology to unsayable/inexpressible trauma (van der Kolk, 1994 & 2000) has begun to explore the problem of intergenerational trauma transmission and more specifically to elaborate on the possibility that one

mechanism of trauma transmission occurs via the body. I seek to explore the possibility that psychosomatic symptomology is, in one capacity, an alexithymia of the colonial predicament and a mechanism by which bodies are literally haunted by the collective trauma of the colonial encounter.

In spite of research regarding somatic symptomology, the phenomenon of psychogenic, somatic, psychosomatic and conversion symptoms in individuals remains marginalized. Contemporary analytic historians of somatic-based therapies argue that, since Freud, there has been a “biased interest in the power of the mind to affect and/or control body experience” (Shapiro, 1996, p. 7). And so I pose this question: *What happens when the body matters?* What if I were to trace narrative and seek out clinical material via the body? Is it possible for a body to speak about its own haunting legacies?

To explore the unknowable traumatic impact of colonialism on the body, I turn to two white South African women, one fictional/contemporary (Lucy of JM Coetzee’s novel *Disgrace* (1999)) and one real/historical (Olive Schreiner, author of *The Story of an African Farm* (1883)). Perhaps focusing on corporeal textualities could be a means of better understanding the complex phenomenon of the transmission of trauma as it relates to the legacy of colonialism in South Africa.

In a 2006 *New York Times Book Review* of Alexandra Fuller’s memoir recounting her childhood growing up “in a country (Rhodesia/Zimbabwe) where white men still ruled” (*Scribbling the cat: Travels with an African soldier*, Penguin Books, 2005), Stephen Clingman writes, “as much as the Fullers are pushed by external circumstances, it is also personal tragedy that drives them. One of the achievements of the book is somehow to make it clear that their private anguish mirrors the larger lunacies in which they are involved” (Clingman, 2006, p. 26). Similarly, in my case material, the bodies of Olive Schreiner and Lucy, when attended to via feminist and relationally oriented theoretical lenses, evoke the destabilizing impact of living as a white woman in colonial and postcolonial South Africa. Like the Fullers, Schreiner and Lucy are inheritors of the ghosts of white colonial desire and violence. Unlike the Fullers, however, Olive and Lucy oppose the racial tyranny of colonial imperialism in South Africa and are nonetheless emotionally and somatically impacted by their circumstances.

## Lenses

### *Alexithymia*

Alexithymia is an explanation for a seeming incapacity or challenge in utilizing language to adequately describe emotions, an inability to distinguish between feelings and the bodily sensations of emotional arousal, a deficit in drive-fulfilled fantasies, and a constricted imaginal process (Taylor, Bagby, Parker, 1999). This formulation can and does explain any number of body-based

symptomologies, such as anorexia nervosa, irritable bowel syndrome, fibromyalgia, substance abuse and certain personality disorders.

Here, alexithymia is used to describe specifically the dissociative element of the white colonial experience that is transferred to “post” colonial subjects. The dissociation, expressed as a seeming inability to hold in conscious awareness the horrors of colonialism for both oppressors and oppressed individuals and communities, often manifests, like other collective traumas (such as the Nazi-perpetrated Holocaust) in subsequent generations (Laub, 2005). I use the framework of the alexithymia of the colonial predicament (and all the disavowal it implies) to attend to the ways in which Olive Schreiner’s internal concepts of will, power, erotics of power, desire, gender, land, identity, pain, suffering are elucidated, in part, via her body and more precisely through chronic somatic pain and preoccupation. Alongside the voice of Olive, I place Coetzee’s character of Lucy, a possible inheritor of Olive’s disavowed trauma.

#### *Transmission*

Current somatic therapies may fall short in sustainable trauma repair if the following factors are not considered: an exploration of possible ancestral haunting of the body/psyche of a patient; the impact of institutions of power and social context in relation to bodily distress; and the clinician’s own relationship to bodily distress and phantom haunting. Although Freud himself (Freud, 1886) complicated his initial thoughts on hysteria in women, my clinical work has brought me into contact with many mental health practitioners who continue to endorse the notion that somatic distress is a manifestation of purely intrapsychic conflict with little to no consideration of the relational and collective context within which a “hysteric” suffers.

#### *Judith Butler*

There is perhaps no better guidepost than Judith Butler in an exploration of literary instances where the “weight of social expectations expresses itself symptomatically,” and where the body becomes “a site of battle expressing ambivalence towards heteronormative demands . . . on strike against [her] surroundings, unable to comply with what is expected of [her]?” (Lang, n.d., p. iii). It is in my exploration of somatic preoccupation and distress in literature that I have been able to trace the “inexpressible protest against oppressive structures” such as colonialism/ apartheid, heterosexism, sexism and racism (Lang, p.iii). It is the linguistic portrayal of the distressed body that meets Butler in her “loss of epistemological certainty” (Butler, 30). Often the words themselves fail, but the literary portrayal, the reading of the words (and the ways that this reading is influenced by the readers’ own positionality and fantasy life) draws out the potentiality of the not-quite-sick, the not-quite-well, the unsettled bodies of Lucy and Olive. These bodies are able to demonstrate, more powerfully than words, the violent, indigestible and unincorporatable aspects of these women’s experiences.

One way to read their “sickness” through the lens of potentiality that Butler provides is to locate it as a body in resistance, a body whose subjectivity as a white woman in South Africa possesses diminished cultural and political agency. Therefore, the body resists. It illuminates the subjectivity of a white South African woman who wrestles with rampant racism and sexism in her surroundings. Very little is permissible about this perspective. Coming directly from the mouths of these white women (both Lucy and Olive are unafraid to voice their subversive views), resistance is dismissed. However, when Lucy and Olive’s bodies are engaged in protest, in revolt, notice is taken.

To take notice is to engage in a reading of the corporeal textualities evoked in *Disgrace* and Schreiner’s published letters. Two feminist theorists who have also taken notice are Susan R. Horton and Georgina Horrell, South African literary scholars. Horton, a scholar of Olive Schreiner, and Horrell, who has published extensively on *Disgrace*, both share a commitment to a deep and thorough exploration of Olive’s and Lucy’s experiences as gendered white South Africans whose bodies are deeply impacted by historical legacies, their contemporary regulatory cultural norms and their struggles to be recognized in all their complexity.

*Susan R. Horton and Georgina Horrell*

In turning her attention to the subjectivity of two white South African women—Isak Dinesen, author of *Out of Africa* (1937) and Olive Schreiner—Susan Horton (*Difficult women, artful lives: Olive Schreiner and Isak Dinesen, In and Out of Africa* (1995) involves biographical references, Schreiner’s personal letters as well as content from her novels to critically engage around her topic of interest, a self-proclaimed “modest project of reification” (p. xxii). Horton “speculate[s] only on what two particular white women, got out of their particular encounters in Africa; to consider the part Africans played in each woman’s psychic economy” (p. xxii). While perhaps “modest,” Horton manages to illuminate overlooked and deeply personal dimensions of Schreiner’s psychic life.

In order to accomplish her task, Horton begins from a rather simple but profound starting point. She asserts that the experiences of white women who lived during colonial times in South Africa matter. Considering that her book was published only a year after the official end of apartheid, Horton’s “modest” feminist project necessarily takes on the weight of political maneuver. Horton’s book, an attempt to study the “literary practices” of Schreiner and Dinesen, encompasses and inclusion of:

*the way we comb our hair and position our bodies in the landscape as well as how we write our novels—[this] can take us far toward identifying then tapping into the charge certain writings and writers have for us; far toward bringing those ideological contradictions into the foreground and our Western, white and/or female selves into the light we’ve feared.* (p.242)

While never fully acknowledging the contemporary political circumstances in which she is writing, Horton remarks that her intervention—her almost obsessive focus on the details, the words, the traces, of the subjective experience of Dinesen and Schreiner—is ultimately meant to remind us, as Western readers, not to forget. Instead of attempting, as a Western critic, to “posit real Africans to counter earlier misconstructions,” Horton chooses to ask of white people who “produce those aberrant identities.... How did the distortions come to be and what needs do they serve?” (p.245). Her answer, and similar to mine, is that colonialism, imperialism, violence and racism in the European encounter with Africa functioned to fulfill both a lack and a desire in the individual and collective psyches of white Europeans. In order to avert a repetition of the past, we as white Europeans and European Americans must not make vows to never inflict violence again. Rather, we must return to and remember the deficits, the legacies of trauma, which produced the very circumstances for the violence and redemptiveness of the colonial encounter.

That women’s bodies are, in times of social conflict and disjuncture, sites of struggle or pages upon which the narrative of guilt may be written and the promise of reparation etched, should not be passed over without critical comment. (Horrell, 2008, p.30)

Another feminist theorist who, like Horton, is working intimately at the intersection of literature, gender studies, whiteness studies, psychology and philosophy is Georgina Horrell. Her focus is on the figure of the white daughter of the central character in Coetzee’s novel, *Lucy*. Horrell’s intervention in the extensive theoretical writing about *Disgrace* is evocative of Butler in that, her reading of the novel—and Lucy’s body and subjectivity in particular—are in central focus, thus debunking the idea of a naturalized and blank white South African female subjectivity. The “violent inscription” of Lucy’s body and its multifaceted meanings is interpreted through a lens influenced by Butler, Foucault and Nietzsche (Horrell, 2008, p.19). Horrell’s writing on *Disgrace* persistently trains the reader’s gaze onto the broader social implications of the pain, experience and oppression of an individual woman.

In her article “Postcolonial *Disgrace*: (White) women and (White) guilt in the “New” South Africa (2008), published 14 years after the official end of apartheid, Horrell makes a compelling argument for reading the “marks and ciphers” of Lucy’s body as “indelibly etched textually with guilt” (p.18). Horrell positions a read of these “marks and ciphers” as significant and diagnostic in regards to the “effecting of reparation” in contemporary South Africa (p.18). Conveyed more forcefully, Horrell asserts, “it is on and through the body of Lurie’s daughter that the terms for white South Africa’s future ‘remembering’ are ultimately sketched” (p.19).

To support this assertion and her reading of *Disgrace* from the point of view of Lucy as opposed to her father, Horrell turns to Nietzsche (*On the genealogy of morals/Ecce Homo*, 1969) and Foucault (*History of sexuality: An*

*introduction* ([1976] 1990)) and their philosophical musings on pain and punishment. While not specifically referencing the subjected female body, Nietzsche argued “if something is to be remembered, it must be burnt in: only that which never ceases to hurt stays in the memory” (Nietzsche, 1969, p. 61). Through Nietzsche, Horrell engages in a reading of Lucy’s rape and its subsequent somatic implications as evidence of the dialectics of guilt and punishment in the contemporary South African psyche. Furthermore, Horrell surmises, “for what must not be forgotten a corporeal note shall be made, so that even in the case of seeming bankruptcy, the debt is still retrievable from the body of the debtor” (p.19). Lucy’s white female body then, violated by black men in a brutal gang rape resulting in a pregnancy, becomes the “corporeal note,” a reminder that even in harsh economic times for this farmer, a debt reflecting the violence of her white ancestors must be collected.

Horrell’s argument grows out of Foucault’s and Nietzsche’s thinking that there is significance to the debtor-creditor formulation as it illuminates a social order built on legacies of trauma and a related requisite punishment. In contemporary South Africa and in *Disgrace*, these themes are substantially evidenced, perhaps even more so than the lofty ethics of forgiveness and transcendence promoted by proponents of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Some authors (Lebdai, B., 2008) side with the loftier ethics, reading the Lucy character as a “paradigm of hope” potentially reflecting a body terribly punished but also one willing to confront and accept “serenely” a new historical reality (of blacks and whites sharing power) (p.35 &36). Lucy, after all, chooses to keep the baby. Lebdai argues that this choice “enables the narrative to convey forgiveness and reconciliation” (p.37).

In contrast, Horrell insists on a discourse of remembering. She reads the rape as exploding open the depth of psyche wounding enacted by legacies of colonialism and apartheid rule, reminding the white body that moving forward with a serene and forgiving attitude cannot erase these legacies. If taken as a parable, *Disgrace*, via Horrell, becomes a tale of the wounded collective unconscious of black and white South Africa, a country in which violence abounds, debts are collected and history cannot be rewritten cleanly. To put it more clearly, *Disgrace* is, for Horrell, “white postcolonial writing that is attempting to negotiate the existential terms for a humiliating present and a dark, disrupted future” (p.30).

Horrell’s investigation concerning Lucy’s body returns again and again to the way that the young, white, female body spells out the terms of reconciliation in the New South Africa. Lucy demonstrates an awareness and acceptance of the historical wounds that inform her current occupation of the plot of South African land she is farming and she understands that there is a “price to pay for staying on” (Coetzee, p. 158).

‘How humiliating,’ he says finally. ‘Such high hopes, and to end like this.’

Yes, I agree, it is humiliating. But perhaps that is a good point to start from again. Perhaps that is what I must learn to accept. To start at ground level. With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity.’

‘Like a dog.’

‘Yes, like a dog.’ (p. 205)

Ultimately, there is the disgrace, and so much of it. To whom does it belong and who will take on the burden of responsibility? And what is the price that is paid when a white South African refuses to disavow the past? The humiliation of the legacies of violence enacted by her white ancestors, at the close of the novel, appears to rest solely on the willing corporeal being of Lucy. She keeps the baby, she consents to be Petrus’s (her co-farmer and a black South African) third wife in order to ensure his protection of her on the land and in so doing gives up all legal rights to the property. She accepts the humiliation as deserved, as what is required, to occupy space as a white person in the New South Africa. In a final exchange between Lucy and her father, Coetzee reminds us as readers just how terribly much of the body, mind and spirit must be compromised in order for a white female body to remain safe and unthreatened in rural South Africa. Lucy’s white, gendered body, as Horrell argues, is ultimately a “reparational cipher” that must be engaged when repentant words uttered during and after the TRC have failed so painfully in their insufficiency to mediate the legacies of violence enacted by white invaders (p. 29).

#### *Esther Rashkin*

If there is a lesson in the broad shape of the circulation of cultures, it is surely that we are all already contaminated by each other. (Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father’s House*)

Much like Horton and Horrell, Rashkin proposes a question with a complex answer: What are the cryptic narratives that go unconsidered in contemporary cultural criticism? Furthermore, what is the impact of repressed trauma on cultural production and/or the individual psyche? In their questioning, their reframing, Horton and Horrell strive to reframe the narrative of a white European encountering a black African and vice versa. They were able, through a lively and nuanced account of the experiences of Schreiner and Lucy, to speak to what these women might have needed from Africa and how they were impacted by these desires. Similarly, Rashkin poses questions about the mechanics of transmission of trauma and part of her answer resides in a reworking of the limiting discourses concerning trauma, suffering and repression. Rashkin’s theorizing around the notion of intergenerational transmission of trauma, and in particular, the haunted psyche, is precisely what Horrell discusses in her exploration of the ways in which Lucy’s body is necessarily inscribed with legacies of guilt and shame (“marks and ciphers”)

as a result of the violence enacted by her white imperialist ancestors (Horrell, p.18).

Rashkin's engagement with psychoanalysis and cultural production reflects the ethics of contemporary psychoanalytic feminists, in particular a rigorous commitment to expose the radical political potential revealed through an exploration of the depth of individual and collective psychic experience. Her staunch insistence on the relevance of what falls outside of a text (phantom narratives) to culture—what she terms “encrypted links”—is precisely what feminist theory is striving to identify (Rashkin, 2008, p. 17). The concealment of what does not serve the heteronormative, white, sexist cultural critic or analyst does not, as Rashkin argues, make this repressed content vanish. Traces of disavowal remain.

*Too shameful to be put into words or integrated within the parent's ego, yet too central to the parent's experience to be expelled or foreclosed, the drama is buried alive, along with the shame attached to it, and transmitted in encrypted form into the child's unconscious.* (Rashkin, 1999, p. 443)

Rashkin, an analyst and academic, is a theorist of the unspoken, not only with the unconscious of her clients, but also with the unassimilated trauma of their ancestors. Rashkin argues that this unspoken trauma, when disavowed or intolerable, is transmitted to the next generation via a mechanism of “transgenerational haunting” (Rashkin, 1999, p. 447). Inheritors of this trauma often experience psychic distress in the form of anxiety, depression, psychosomatic illness, isolative behaviors, fears of persecution and feelings of panic and impotence. The inheritors to which Rashkin refers, are frequently charged unconsciously with expressing the affect that a parent “attached to an event about which [he or she] was unable to speak” (p. 444). In many cases of these phantom transmissions, the unspeakable affect contained in the secret is in the realm of guilt or shame.

For Rashkin, much of her work is influenced by clinical encounters with children of Holocaust survivors. The inheritors, within whom an “intrapsychic bequest capable of significant behavioral and affective disruption” is lodged, are plagued by the knowledge of having survived the collective trauma that their parents endured. The impact of being forced unconsciously to manage and make sense of symptoms related to the unassimilated trauma of one's ancestors is significant. As a result, Rashkin asserts that an analyst must engage with symptoms that “narrate in ciphered form” such as reading a child's anorexia as “something [that] was taken into the mouth that must never leave the mouth or be uttered; that the mouth must be kept closed about the shame the mother ‘swallowed’ and silenced.” In the course of working with this type of symptom, Rashkin realized that, along with phantom recognition, the work of an analyst is also one of helping a client “rejoin with its absent narrative-complement or intertext, which lies silenced beyond the child” (p.444-5).

What are the narratives beyond perception or experience that influence the two inheritors with whom this project is concerned? In my own work with the characters of Lucy and Olive I have attempted, much like Rashkin's analyst, to make contact with the collective "ancestor who concealed the secret" (p.445). In other words, the collective ancestor, the white colonial and imperialist South Africans, must be "raised from the dead so that [his or her] secret can be safely brought out in the open" (p.445). In my reading of the narratives of Lucy and Olive I do not, much like Rashkin, identify the "secret" as something consciously hidden, but rather as a series of shameful violations and guilty complicities that were likely part of the unconscious of many of Lucy and Olive's ancestors, parents included.

Rashkin advocates for a form of analyzing the deceased and the resonance of this activity for my project regarding intergenerational transmission of trauma is significant. In focusing my reading of the cryptic symptoms on the bodies of Lucy and Olive, I have attempted, influenced by Rashkin, to evaluate the possibility of "helping to rid the haunted subject of something that does not belong to her" (p. 445). In other words, it is possible that the somatic symptom, a "narrative in ciphered form," does not come about as a result of repression of psychic distress in an individual (p. 445). Rather, Rashkin's theorizing would indicate that the phantom narrative is precisely the collectively disavowed shame and guilt of white colonial and apartheid-era South Africans. This disavowed narrative is embedded as an intrapsychic bequest in the bodies and spirits of Olive and Lucy, demanding attention and threatening to expose the collectively repressed violence and shame of generations of white South Africans.

Much like Olive and Lucy's ancestors, contemporary readers, scholars and clinicians cannot metabolize the potentially physically and psychically destabilizing content of certain events or dramas of the colonial encounter or apartheid rule. The result of this (often collective) unconscious disavowal is a resting of the "shameful, humiliating and thus potentially annihilating" content, "enveloped in silence" in the unconscious of an inheritor like Olive or Lucy (Rashkin, 2008, p. 15). Somatic distress, contained and often unexplainable or inexpressible pain (often deemed non-existent, unwarranted or hyperchondriacal), is one manifestation of the disorienting and profound impact of the transmission of unassimilatable trauma from one generation to the next.

*Misogynist thought has commonly found a convenient self-justification for women's secondary social positions by containing them within bodies that are represented, even constructed, as frail, imperfect, unruly, and unreliable, subject to various intrusions which are not under conscious control.* (Grosz, 1994, p.13, emphasis mine)

In his well-regarded book (*Only an Anguish to Live Here: Olive Schreiner and the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902* (1992)), Karel Schoeman, often cited as the leading South African scholar on Olive Schreiner's life, frequently embodies the particular "misogynist" position Grosz describes. In *Only an anguish*, Schoeman (1992) describes Olive Schreiner as; a "passionate, gifted and deeply committed woman living within constraints and in a climate of violence which she was unable to influence," an "impetuous, emotional, over-excitabile and completely impractical" and a "hopeless invalid who suffered from a heart condition and crippling attacks of asthma" (p. 7, 15 & 31). These descriptions are interspersed with narratives about the extent to which Schreiner was impacted by the landscape in South Africa--- something Schoeman ultimately attributes to a sort of psychological vulnerability and a possible indication of her receptivity to the intrusions of the unforgiving South African land. Schoeman's portrait of Schreiner as a woman who sought out beautiful yet barren landscapes and who engaged impractically in anti-racist and anti-imperialist struggles marks Schreiner as nearly deserving of her somatic distress. In a particularly poignant passage, Schoeman details the events of surrounding Schreiner's miscarriage:

*In August 1899 Olive Schreiner, who was then living in Johannesburg with her husband Cron, had a miscarriage. At the same time, she began to suffer a severe attack of asthma, brought on by the weather, which in turn developed into bronchitis, and was so ill that her doctor insisted on her leaving the town. [At the time], Johannesburg was preparing for war. The Cronwright-Schreiner's wished to be in the Transvaal, where their sympathies lay, but Olive's rapidly deteriorating condition gave her little choice. (p.11)*

Schoeman's unchallenged misogyny underscores my commitment to engaging in feminist theory in this project as a means to experience Schreiner in a more nuanced light. He pays no mind to the impact of violence (racism, sexism, heterosexism, imperialism), the historical legacy of violence Schreiner inherited or the correlation between the miscarriage (her first pregnancy ended in the death of her newborn and three subsequent miscarriages before this final fourth) and Schreiner's physical "deterioration." In so doing he positions her as a woman incapable of subjection and his solution is to blame Schreiner's physical and emotional distress on her wild and non-normative identity--- a position that Schoeman very nearly believes merits the punishment of sickness for its excessiveness and willfulness when embodied by a woman. In his final analysis of Olive, Schoeman bluntly summarizes,

*throughout her life she retreated consciously or unconsciously into physical incapacity in order to avoid responsibility and escape situations with which she could not cope. . . her apparent failure to realize her full potential would seem to be due to factors such as her odd, undisciplined childhood and beyond*

*that to some fatal emotional flaw which doomed her to be always searching and striving, energetically but aimlessly, but with little tenacity.* (p. 217)

The very understanding of the somatic distress of Schreiner and Lucy is what enables this distress to speak and have meaning beyond the dismissal of Schoeman's normative gaze. This project, especially drawing on the work of Rashkin and Butler, is an effort to insubstantiate Schoeman's attribution of a willfully reckless and hypochondriacal character to Schreiner.

## Themes

Three broad themes emerge in a close reading of the letters of Olive Schreiner, the character of Lucy and the dyadic pairing of the two women: trauma transmission via the white female body, especially due to unknowable traumas from past and inadequate means for self-expression; guilt, shame and unacknowledged desire as a legacy of the violence of colonialism as expressed by white South African women; and disavowal and dissociation as defenses in the face of the disappointments, violence and desires implicated in the colonial and postcolonial predicament.

I set out to make sense of Olive's letters[1]. I wanted to open up the complexity of her somatic distress in ways that validated the implications of her experience and the ways that her body was not simply sexually repressed, but actually deeply impacted by the legacies of her colonial ancestors and her contemporary (deeply conflict-ridden) social environment. I aimed to describe and analyze the ways that Olive's psychic and physical distress are important indicators of larger societal dysfunction.

What I discovered within myself, perhaps understandably, was a significant ease in approaching a contemporary character such as Lucy from *Disgrace*. It was much more difficult to stay with and bear witness to Olive's somatic annunciations. I found myself distracted, trying frequently to sublimate this discomfort and uncertainty by focusing on Lucy's experience. Olive's letters as corporeal text are jarring, speaking to fragmentation within her thoughts and identity. So many contradictions (national identity, gender and sexual identity, relationship to race/racism, political beliefs) are simply held within Olive, ping-ponging as she expresses longing and despair, excitement and confidence, fear and pleasure, groundedness and unhoming. Olive Schreiner's personal childhood was unpleasant and marked by what she simultaneously sees as injustice (economic strife, being forced to leave and work outside the home at an early age, frequent hunger, lack of affection) and personally deserved abuse.

*I remember when I was a little child being whipped till I could hardly stand by a big brother twelve years older than myself whom I worshipped, because I didn't open a door quickly. I hadn't the least feeling of resentment or injustice.*

*I only crept away and felt as if my heart was broken. When I remember what a wild indomitable child I was and how fiercely I resented injustice, it stands out to me as a most remarkable case of instinct over-riding everything. I remember distinctly that I did not feel the least trace of unlove, only for weeks when I looked at his hands I used to quiver. I couldn't bear to think it was they that hurt me. This feeling I believe is lay dormant in woman, it always exists when she loves a man. . . not because women are not free, because that sweet and happily given service with the pleasure element being delight in bearing pain for him cannot be there if the man is not the one a woman chooses, but simply the one who offers her the best means of livelihood. It is woman's irony that she has to sell herself, whether into the bitter loveless childless deformed untender state of prostitution or into loveless marriage. I often wish I were a man just that I might be tender to women. It must be so glorious to have the same unlimited power and use it magnanimously. (Olive Schreiner to E. Ray Lankester, lines 75-90, 32-51 and 123-25)*

In my attempts to elevate the character of Olive from sexually repressed colonialist to that of a coherent and complex woman in whose body is written the violence of her ancestors, I felt stuck. I experienced within myself an alignment with these so-called “establishment” mental health professionals who avert their eyes, cannot access curiosity, simply want to fix the symptom, are tired of the litany of symptoms and ensuing despair. I knew that her symptoms, her physical and emotional distress, were important, but I struggled to articulate why. I also desired a more physically and psychically comfortable life for Olive. So too did many doctors in her time. She was offered various drug treatments and surgeries (including sniffing quinine, cold sponging, taking iron, Chlorodyne, various narcotics, directives to stop writing, drier weather (South African climate), cooler/more damp weather (climate typical of England)) for her ailments (which included asthma, pain in the shoulder, angina, twisted womb, anxiety, severe depression, trouble eating (esp. socially), measles, amenorrhea, preoccupation with dying and multiple miscarriages) (Rive, R. ed, 1988). Olive received differing opinions on the cause and cure for her ailments, many of them tinged with medical doctors' disbelief (“They all say they have never seen a case just like it [Olive's supposed debilitating asthma]” (Rive, R., ed., p.44)).

In her letters there is a stark resignation (“My asthma is bad, I fight for breath, but it doesn't matter.”) that comes from Olive and is almost suffocating to bear (*Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis*, lines 6&7). There are moments when her physical health issues so consume her existence that she expresses suicidal ideation, increasingly melancholic longings for whatever continent she is not currently inhabiting (Europe vs. Africa), and despairs at the prospect of improvement in her own condition and possibility of an end to violence in South Africa.

*I am getting worse and worse. I can't get better. . . The thought of you is all that helps me in this agony and loneliness. Where shall I go? What shall I do? Such agony comes over me to think of becoming a real invalid and having no where to go. (p.55)*

Throughout her life, Olive remains deeply confused about belonging, citing a desire to find a home, a home where she can be well, far too frequently to reference extensively here. She regularly debates the qualities of the place in which she is currently not living, often despairing about how much better she would feel if only she were in England when in South Africa and South Africa when in England,

*It is true about that self losing. As soon as my body gets weak, so that the old original nature comes up, the strong individuality, then my whole soul cries out, not 'from infinite', not 'from God to God'. I don't want to die. I don't want anything I love to die, nothing must lose its individuality. I woke up last night shouting and crying. It isn't only that I'm weak. I always get into this state when I live utterly alone in England and see only the sea roaring out my window. (p. 57)*

Even in periods of improvement in her health, Olive interestingly continues to describe her strong emotional experiences via physical terms, indicating that, above all else, for her entire life, her body and mind remained intimately connected.

Have you ever had internal hemorrhage, and they give you ice and the flow stops at once, and you always feel a curious kind of gratitude to the ice? You always seemed to me like a lump of ice put on a wound from which one was bleeding to death and freezing it up. (Rive, R., ed., p.179)

Olive's despair, her expression of a stance of victimization, may be reflective of a determination to find a way to make sense of her past ("the agony of my childhood"), contain her tragic and traumatized origins, in order to maintain her sense of power (p. 212).

*You remember long ago I told you how, nearly 20 years ago, when I was at Dordech, I had such a horror of eating before people, I couldn't, and how I used to have to eat alone, and how it kept on all the time my periods stayed away, and I told you what unkind, untrue things they said about it. Well, there came some people here ten days ago, from the Cape, I think, or they knew people there, and they have been talking to all the people at the Hotel about it. They have heaps of money. They sit and jeer at me at the table. I'm hunted to death. If I stayed here a little time longer, I must die. I am going to Florence. My cough is bad too and I feel so weak that it has taken me all day to think clearly enough to write this. Harry, the world isn't fair, I haven't sinned so much more than other people to be hunted down so. If it goes on a little more*

*I will kill myself. Oh, I've been so desolate all my life Harry. I've never had a home, I've never had anyone to take care of me like other girl did have. I was thrown out onto the world when I was eleven, and even before that I hadn't a real home. Oh, you who've never been turned out of a house, don't know what it is.* (Rive, R., ed. P.151)

The relentlessness of Olive's condition, her suffering, is hard to bear, knowing that she was writing and experiencing this stance at a time (1889) when her fellow British countryman, Cecil Rhodes and his South Africa Company were actively colonizing South Africa and profiting immensely from dominating natural resources there. As Georgina Horrell (2004) points out, we can potentially read the external signs, Schreiner's somatic preoccupation, her "fragility, her physical lack" as a way to remove herself from "the harsh complicity of white militarized society, detached from quotidian existence" under colonial rule (p.771). While critical of the policies of British colonial rule and the thrust of capitalism fueling this imperialism, Olive was remarkably consumed by her own sense of persecution (as a woman, a poor white, a sick woman, an increasingly well-known socialist and feminist and a popular female writer) that she frequently lost perspective, possibly sublimating her own outrage at the social and political turmoil and oppressive violence into what Freud may have deemed hysteria (Freud, 1986).

*Did I ever tell you how my chest first got bad? I was four days quite without food, and travelling all the time; I had nothing but a little cold water all that time. I had no money to buy food. When I ate the first mouthful at the end of the time I got this horrible agony in my chest, and had to rush out, and for weeks I never lay down, night or day. I suffocated if I even leaned back. Ever since that, if I get to a place that is close, and damp and hot, it comes back. I have been to so many doctors, some say it is an affection of the heart, some say it is asthma of a very peculiar kind... Somehow one can't go back into the past without blaming those that are dearest to one, and it is better to let the past bury its dead eh? I have not been able to go on any walks....* (Rive, R., ed., p. 44)

It was only in revisiting Esther Rashkin's notion of phantom haunting and cryptology that I was able to get a handle on Olive's letters. In her psychoanalytic character analysis of fictional narrative, Rashkin's interpretations apprehend the phantoms lodged in the bodies of characters as reflected in their narratives. As a reminder, these phantoms are not explicitly repressed memories in the character, but rather reflections of the intergenerational transmission of disavowed affective experiences related to trauma(s) experienced by a character's ancestor(s). Engaging with the idea of Olive's body as a crypt, a ghostly container, a receptacle of intergenerational trauma, an important signal, reminded me that Olive's distress is connected to

a larger context of social and cultural imperatives to disavow the violent and aggressive desires of colonialism in Africa. While so focused on her own somatic preoccupations, the larger weight of what Olive was carrying went unrecognized, unexposed to light. Olive herself clearly stated that she did not see much usefulness in dwelling on the pain of the past, though I imagine she very much longed for repair of past traumas. What Rashkin offers in terms of perspective on the complexity of Olive Schreiner, is an assertion that, what an individual experiences as haunting, as a lingering and persistent pain, likely indeed is ghostly residue. The pervasiveness of Olive's distress, emotional/physical and psychic, indicates more than the weak constitution of a woman determined to possess more freedoms than her cultural moment could provide. Her 'darkness' is, according to Rashkin, the unacknowledged 'darkness' of her ancestors. In the context of a country like South Africa, in which black Africans are in the majority, on another level, I wonder what Olive's ancestors' relationship to 'darkness' might mean?

*I am much better though not quite strong after the miscarriage I had the last week at Johannesburg. I knew I should never go my time in all that sorrow and darkness. . . You see the better half of the English nation is moving for us now, but I fear me it is too late.* (Olive Schreiner to Isie Smuts nee Krige, lines 10-17)

*But I've had another miscarriage—all my own fault riding a rough horse and I had to ride on for two hours in that state till we got to farm house. I feel so depressed mentally. It's so easy to forgive other people but so hard to forgive yourself for doing a foolish thing.* (Olive Schreiner to Betty Molteno, lines 38-44)

*I am pregnant again but only in the very early stage. If I don't have a miscarriage I shall be ill in January or February. I am going to try and take great care of myself that all may go well. The worst is I'm so stupid and lazy. I'm quite well, but so disinclined to work. I'd like to be a cow and lie in a big meadow and chew the cud all day!* (Olive Schreiner to Betty Molteno, lines 10-15)

Reflecting on the work of Jessica Benjamin I am reminded not to disavow the "oppressor;" to remember that the discomfort I might have been experiencing all along in regards to Olive was my own identification with her all-consuming distress and subsequent paralyzing shame. I too understand what it is to be betrayed by a body that works inadequately, a body whose distress and dysfunction expose vulnerability. In the face of this vulnerability, to feel unsupported, to have internalized a sense of aloneness in the world at an early age, it is clear that for Olive, this vulnerability was too much to bear. Shame is the understandable end result of this unbearable exposure. The shame Olive experienced as a result of her physical incapacity, her ongoing emotional turbulence and her seeming inability to be recognized (due to her status as

woman) within the full range of her potential, devastated Olive's life. The shame of her physical and emotional condition might also signal her own alexithymia of the colonial predicament—an inability to fully hold/access/bear active witness to the devastation enacted on native black South African individuals and communities during colonial times. Regardless, it was a constant, nagging, and relentless emotional experience of shame that persisted despite significant periods of physical improvement.

In all my physical agony the thought sometimes comes to me, as the only consolation, that after my death some use might be made of my body, knowing what it had been. You will find it in my heart. That long asthma may have affected my lungs, and has now, but that isn't the root. It has always been a funny thing to me why opium and iron and prussic acid have been the only things that ever, though in quite different ways, really touched my diseases, and it was only last night, reading the book you sent, that I know why. They all three strengthen the heart's muscles. (Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, lines 9-17)

What is wrong with Olive's "heart"? A modern day clinician would likely see her somatization, her tendency towards turbulent intimate relationships, her complex and diffuse sense of self, her proclivity towards self-harm as outlet for anger, her chronic feelings of emptiness and fear of abandonment by loved ones as reflective of Borderline Personality Disorder (American Psychological Association, 2000) symptomatology/ Olive is characterologically damaged/broken, a modern-day clinician might argue, perhaps as a result of early trauma, disrupted attachments and unstable internal object relations.

The only life I would ever punish anyone by taking [written during World War I], is my own; I have always since I was a little child.... Thought the punishment one would have a right to inflict on those who had injured one too much was to go and stand before them and stab or shoot oneself and say 'my blood be upon you.' (Cronwright-Schreiner, ed., p. 316)

Admittedly, I also see Schreiner's symptom picture as reflecting a borderline intrapsychic organization. But, to stop there, to simply and absolutely name Olive's diagnostic predicament, lets her ancestors off the hook. The collective impact of colonialism and the lead-up to British colonial rule matters in considering Olive Schreiner's somatic distress. I will explore these collective ancestral disavowals (including Olive's) in dialogue with a modern day version of Olive: Lucy, a character in J.M. Coetzee's contemporary novel, *Disgrace*.

*She becomes his second salvation, the bride of his youth reborn. Poor Lucy! Poor daughters! What a destiny, what a burden to bear!* (J.M. Coetzee, *Disgrace*, p.86-7)

*He cannot expect help from Lucy. Patiently, silently, Lucy must work her own way back from the darkness into light. (Disgrace p.107)*

If we are so influenced by our ancestors, their bodies, actions, hopes and disavowals, it follows that a narrative such as *Disgrace* would prove compelling for my exploration. In this story we witness the ways in which Lucy's father's body misbehaves and abuses women, especially 'colored' women in South Africa. The complex impact of his actions, his embodiment, is then traced on her own body, a body that rejects men as sexual partners. But it is also a body that enacts the same identity markers that we as readers might imagine her ancestors (white European colonial settlers) would valorize. Lucy is a farmer, a homesteader, with modest dreams to successfully maintain a piece of land in the African "bush." As a result of what she has made for herself, within the legacy of her colonial forefathers, her father, early on in the novel remarks, "Good! If this [life as a "sturdy young settler"] is what he leaves behind—this daughter, this woman—then he does not have to be ashamed" (p.61 & 62).

Shame is introduced much earlier in the novel, before we meet Lucy (the possible source of David Lurie's salvation). While deeply conflicted as to how white South Africans ought to remember "the implications of culpability and the consequences of violent colonization," the novel follows Lurie's various attempts to temper, indulge and allay his guilt (Horrell, 2002, p. 25). In the end, after a violent encounter (his daughter is gang raped by three black African men during this traumatic event) with the latent aggression of apartheid's victims, Lurie, feeling "the after-effect of the invasion," his "pleasure in living snuffed out," decides to atone for his transgressions with Melanie (the 'coloured' woman he assaulted while a professor and she a student) and then subsequently works day in, day out, at a rural animal hospital, humanely putting down (and disposing of) unwanted/maltreated dogs (Coetzee, p. 107).

Lucy, of a younger generation, processes her rape differently. The remainder of the novel is dedicated to this distinction and signals Coetzee's hope, I believe, in the possibility of a brave(r), less disavowed accountability of white South Africans in the ongoing unfolding of reconciliation. Lucy is also, and importantly, a woman, and this has great bearing on what she experienced during the homestead attack and how she comes to terms with the attack afterwards. In this, Lucy is both victim and victimizer, doer-and-done-to (Benjamin, J., 2004). She is a woman, who, as a result of that gendered embodiment and what it socially and culturally means, is victimized, made to "pay with her body, through its violation, the debts of white colonists/settlers" (Horrell, 2002, p.30). In the face of this violence however, Lucy, demonstrates a "harrowing, fledgling acceptance of the terms" laid out by her victimizers (p. 30). She "acknowledges her debts and, rejecting the safety of white hegemony, will attempt to pay the price" (p. 30).

Her father, David Lurie, cannot comprehend his daughter's silence, her refusal to go to the authorities. He is outraged and shamed that he was unable to protect her. He assumes the worst, that the crime was gang rape, although Lucy remains silent on this matter. He pleads with her saying, "There is no shame in being the object of a crime. You did not choose to be the object. You are an innocent party" (Coetzee, p. 111). This sentiment reflects Lurie's hope that he, like his fellow white South Africans, might be spared the haunting of his white colonial ancestors and his own complicity in the violence of apartheid. In many ways, Lurie never does fully see, can never bear witness to the horrors he and his fellow white South Africans enacted. So, what is disavowed rests on Lucy.

"One gets used to things getting harder; one ceases to be surprised that what used to be as hard as hard can be grows harder yet." (Coetzee, p. 219)

After recovering from the rape, Lucy, now pregnant with a child belonging to one of her assailants, transfers her land to Petrus, the elder black man with whom she was previously sharing rights to the land, itself an extraordinarily new post-colonial arrangement. In the end of the novel, Lucy becomes one of his wives, in exchange for his protection and his assurance that she be able to raise her child peaceably on what is now his land. The consequence of her father and his forefather's actions is indelibly inscribed on her body. At the end of the novel, Lurie remarks on this intergenerational transmission while also noting the way that his daughter, despite what she has abdicated, has also grown more solid in her willingness to bear witness to the complexity that is race relations in post-apartheid South Africa:

"So: once she was only a little tadpole in her mother's body, and now here she is, solid in her existence, more solid than he has ever been. With luck she will last a long time, long beyond him. So it will go on, a line of existences in which his share, his gift, will grow I inexorably less and less, till it may as well be forgotten." (Coetzee, p.217)

### *Side by Side*

Earlier in this article, I asked whether or not Lucy must pay for Olive's expansive settler/colonialist views. In other words, as I noticed traces of Olive in Lucy and vice versa, I became curious about the way that Olive's disavowals of guilt and shame led to such a stark "corporeal negotiation" for Lucy in her post-apartheid moment (Horrell, 2008, p.29). I am also invested in exploring the complex interplay between the two subjectivities and bodies of Lucy and Olive. More specifically, I ask, can a hypothetical dialogue between the bodies/subjectivities of Lucy and Olive constitute a third space (Benjamin, 1997)? Reflecting the feminist and relational imperative to value subjectivity and mutuality, thus "destabilizing the active-passive dichotomy" which is so central to the dyadic formulations of analyst/analysand, masculine/feminine, settler/colonial subject (p.xvi).

“It was history speaking through them,” he offers at last. “A history of wrong. Think of it that way, if it helps. It may have seemed personal, but it wasn’t. It came down from the ancestors. . . . That doesn’t make it easier. The shock simply doesn’t go away. The shock of being hated I mean. In the act.” (Coetzee, p.156)

In the passage above, in which Lucy’s father attempts to soothe her after her rape, Coetzee is perhaps proposing that, the true impact of the legacies of white South African’s ancestors cannot simply be experienced in an abstract and collective identity-as-guilt-manner. Instead, via the body of Lucy, we as readers experience the ways in which the personal and somatic impact of the violence of colonialism is inscribed, painfully felt, and must be lived with. In activating the third space of dialogue between Lucy and Olive, I am struck by the likelihood that the intensity with which Lucy is punished and inscribed is commensurate with the incapacity of Olive’s white colonial social sphere to hold her pain.

I am reminded here of my reaction to Olive’s persistent and unrelenting accounts of her somatic distress in her personal correspondences. I felt overwhelmed, perhaps, as Uehara et. al. (2001) so eloquently describe in their work with survivors of the Cambodian killing fields,

“Provided with no summation, evaluation or other narrative niceties, the reader/listener sense that these pains and sicknesses go on indeterminately, without containment or boundary.” (p. 46)

In the chaos narrative, Frank (1995) suggests, “troubles go all the way down to the bottomless depths. What can be told only begins to suggest all that is wrong” (p.99).

It is almost as if Olive’s unremitting somatic pain and unarticulated shame and outrage at the violence being enacted around her, bled over, past and through the generations and landed with Lucy. Consequently, Lucy’s embodied pain more fully elaborates the fullness, the unspeakable “bottomless depths” of one aspect of what was “wrong” with Olive all along.

*Guilt, masked in complex and constantly diverse, malleable manner, forms a discursive threat through white colonial and postcolonial texts. Masquerade, the necessary performance of guiltless, innocent, self-effacing and self-sacrificing white femininity is, I would like to suggest, an ‘obsession’ or ‘narcissistic insurance’ which remains implicit in the writing of white women: women who, like Schreiner in colonial pre-apartheid southern Africa are compelled to ask, ‘What must I be and do—or rather, perhaps—what must my protagonist be and do, to live in South Africa at this time?’ [This reflects] a thread of guilt woven into a tissue of concealment. (Horrell, 2004, p. 769)*

Perhaps the “tissue of concealment” to which Horrell refers, is my notion of corporeal text—the somatic reading of colonial and postcolonial texts with the intention of splaying this protective boundary of colonial and postcolonial

disavowal, forcing it open, to allow what is concealed to come forth. In this corporeal textual attending what emerges is a set of themes common to the experience of Lucy and Olive: both women demonstrate a willingness to withstand physical discomfort to remain connected to South African land (and the ensuing power that this position confers); both women experience very little consolation or sense of solace within themselves or their social interactions beyond their deep connection to the South African landscape; both women are sexually non-normative (Lucy as a lesbian and Olive is deeply engaged with feminism and notions of sexual liberation for women); both women channel their own shame and guilt via attempts to disavow needs/desires and fear being a burden to others (they are both staunchly proud of their self-sufficiency) and both women consequently reveal very little of their emotional experience to others, for fear of exposing unforgivable or shameful parts of themselves.

Despite many similarities revealed explicitly and implicitly in the body of Lucy as intrapsychic crypt reflecting Olive's disavowals, I also note a significant and stark difference—a contemporary adaptation. Olive's health issues were one way for her to, via somatic preoccupation, evade complicity in the intolerable violence occurring around her. Unconsciously splitting off and channeling unbearable traumatic experiences constitutes the alexithymia of her colonial predicament, leading to the necessity of transmission of these disavowed traumas from generation to generation. While Olive's somatic preoccupations constituted an unconscious but shameful withdrawal, they also perhaps signaled a rejection of a regime or occupation she did expressly oppose but greatly benefited from. It might have been her best adaptation, her way of navigating how to exist as a white person in colonial South Africa, to perform a weakened self, a debased and ever-disempowered self.

Alternately, Lucy knows, on some level, that she cannot evade complicity via withdrawal. Lucy's determination to stay her course on her land (in spite of the tremendous physical and psychological cost), is depicted explicitly as indicative of a nearly aggressive throwback to colonial times—a violent assertion of her right as a white person to own land like an other African. However, understood in dialectical tension, one can also understand Lucy's refusal to withdraw as an unwillingness to evade her own complicity in the legacies of the violence of apartheid and colonialism. She will remain, and bear the brunt, endure the shame and the guilt, for her ancestors, in the hopes that her child will benefit from her intervention.

### *Unbearable*

Ultimately, my project is an attempt to articulate where to position oneself, as a clinician, in relationship to somatic distress. How does a clinician bear witness to a potential client like Lucy without a willingness to feel and understand the un-met psychic needs of Olive? I came to psychoanalysis as a scholar, driven like Jessica Benjamin to “illuminate social contradictions and

collectively experienced tendencies,” especially in regards to more fully understanding the pervasiveness of collective trauma that I experienced while living, as a white female college student, in South Africa (p. 473). Relational and feminist theories and specifically those that address the intergenerational transmission of haunting/trauma offer to the tremendously complex and violent legacy of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa a respite from the rigidity of the limiting dichotomies of victim/victimizer/doer-done-to. By extension, the limiting clinical discourses regarding the etiology and treatment of somatic preoccupations might very well become more expansive when considering intergenerational transmission of trauma and the importance of mutual recognition. Benjamin (2012) writes, "I am not sure whether it is possible to simultaneously acknowledge trauma and confront someone with the way in which their trauma has led them to hurt someone else" (p.211).

## **Conclusion**

In this project I have allowed the bodies of Lucy and Olive to matter; to, as Judith Butler describes, “emerge as critical matters of concern,” mostly to rescue them from the normative and regulatory powers that tend towards disavowal when it comes to somatic distress (Butler, 1993, p. 4). While useful and inspiring, many discourses within psychoanalysis also serve a regulatory function in terms of formulating somatic phenomena.

When a clinician fails to see/look for the coherence, the story as it is behind the somatic symptomatology or distress, it indicates to the client the level of the clinician’s own dissociation, his/her own reluctance to see and have to hold, embody, legacies of atrocity, the far reaching impact of collective horrors (e.g.: Apartheid, the Holocaust). To demonstrate empathy then, to not disavow Lucy’s suffering after her rape, is to conjure up Olive. Olive’s symptoms, at the very least, beyond psychic trauma, indicate a desire for recognition. If somatic distress in white South African women remains a “wordless enactment,” without coherence, it is evident to me that history will repeat itself (Dimen, M. & Harris, A., 2001, p.9). In other words, left unattended, the repressed guilt and shame, the violent desires, all that makes up the white female unconscious in colonial and postcolonial moments, might re-emerge in more covert and aggressive ways with the repressed collective trauma, the alexithymia of the colonial predicament, leading to ongoing relational violence. The disavowed in all of us, left unacknowledged and unheard, will return.

It is in attending then, as Jessica Benjamin (2004) encourages, to the psychic wounds of the doer, the done-to and those parts in each of us, that can interrupt the ongoing violent resonances of the Holocaust or Apartheid. Curiosity about somatic distress is one avenue for this attending. Relational and feminist theories assert that bodies/identities do not exist outside of a relational context. Therefore, a distressed body can indicate, as Stephen

Clingman wrote in his review of Alexandra Fuller's memoir, the "madness" of the larger social context (2006). The failure to explore these regressive and violent disavowals articulated in somatic distress will replicate, again and again, a witnessing of and a contribution to, the horrors of colonialism and apartheid.

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