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"Mute Flesh": Women's Death-Worlds in *David's Story* and *Waiting for the Barbarians*

by

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For Achille Mbembe, life and death are intricately entangled. With his 2003 article "Necropolitics," Mbembe brings this complex interrelationship between life and death to light in an exploration of necropower, a concept expanding upon Michel Foucault's notion of biopower, which Foucault introduced in a 1976 lecture at the Collège de France (Mbembe 39; Foucault, *Society* 239). While Foucault conceives of biopower as "the power to 'make' live and 'let' die," a "massifying" power "applied not to man-as-body but to the living man, to man-as-living-being; ultimately, if you like, to man-as-species," Mbembe introduces a notion of sovereignty concentrated on the power "to kill or to allow to live" that surpasses political boundaries such as that of the nation-state and results in necropower, or "contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death," in which even survival is colored by the constant menace of the possibility of death (Foucault, *Society* 241-43; Mbembe 11-12; 39). With these modifications to Foucault's theory, Mbembe provides in "Necropolitics" a wide-ranging exploration of the scope of oppressive structures that he sees as being characterized by necropower, from its beginnings during the French Revolution, slavery, and early colonization, through late-stage colonization and apartheid, to the recent emergence of war machines and even the suicide bomber (11).

In tracing the historical development of necropower, Mbembe simultaneously explores the increasing indistinction of various boundaries and the resulting complexity of necropolitics. Predictably, forming the basis of his theory of necropower is the indistinction characterizing the boundary usually separating life and death, which becomes blurred for those subjugated by the oppressive structures noted above, as the conditions of their lives place them within a ghostlike reality. Mbembe and David Theo Goldberg underline the existence of these parallel worlds in differentiating between what they term "actual death" and other forms of death, including cultural death (Mbembe 22; Goldberg 127). Despite a population's survival in the face of oppression,

their existence may be haunted by ever-present death-like powers that force them into the margins. This blurring of worlds has come to the forefront in the modern era of necropolitics, creating what Mbembe terms "*death-worlds*, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of the *living dead*" (40).

The broad scope of Mbembe's "Necropolitics," including his explanation of death-worlds, takes into account the considerable impact of race on whether one becomes subject to necropower, but does not extend to the consideration of gender, although other theorists have begun to fill this gap. A variety of historical and current contexts, as well as works of literature exploring these contexts, provide abundant additional opportunities for expanding upon the theory of necropower while considering gendered power structures. Women's trauma in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa resulting from sexual assault and other violence is one such context.

Two novels shedding light on the above issues in terms of South Africa's apartheid and post-apartheid periods are Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story* and J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*. *David's Story* is an exploration of violence against women during these eras, particularly within the revolutionary group the African National Congress (ANC). In *David's Story*, readers are bombarded with a multiplicity of versions of and interruptions to the novel's narratives, whereas *Barbarians* is an allegory of South African apartheid permeated by the narration of a single unreliable witness. Although clearly differing vastly in their approach, both novels provide representations of women's trauma as viewed through male eyes that challenge the reader to interrogate their narrators.

An examination of women's trauma in these two novels, along with the consideration of additional theory on trauma and surveillance, together serve to complicate Mbembe's theories on necropower and death-worlds. Multiple women characters encountered in these works experience both initial trauma as well as retraumatization in the telling or attempted retelling of their trauma, including *Barbarians's* "the girl" or "the woman," who, along with most of this novel's characters, is never named, and Dulcie from *David's Story*. The girl, a so-called "barbarian" who is brought to an outpost of the Empire along with her people under suspicion of planning a rebellion against the Empire, is tortured. She also loses her father, who is also tortured and eventually killed by authorities from the capitol. She is left behind when her people are eventually able to leave the town and arguably experiences further trauma when the town's unnamed magistrate exploits her vulnerability at this moment by engaging her in a deeply problematic intimate relationship under the pretence of taking her under his wing. *David's Story*, which could just as truthfully be called *Dulcie's Story*, is "haunted" by Dulcie, the female leader of an ANC cell who receives nighttime visits from shadowy individuals who torture her, and also provides pieces of the story of Sally, a former ANC comrade who experiences assault at the hands of her ANC trainer (Wicomb, back cover). The fractured manner in which the two novels tell these women's buried accounts of trauma exposes numerous technologies of erasure acting against such narratives, and in so doing, simultaneously excavates these accounts for the reader.

Additionally, in *David's Story*, parallel to Dulcie's story is that of the titular character, David, a fellow ANC leader, and those of historical figures, including Georges Cuvier and Griqua Chief Andrew le Fleur, as well as other embattled women such as Saartje Baartman and Rachael Susanna Kok, Andrew le Fleur's wife, all of whom are encountered during David's mission to discover his family's story and the larger history of the Griqua people. Also of note is

the unnamed female amanuensis David has employed to take down his story, through which all of these narratives are filtered. Saartje and Rachael's phantom-like presence within the novel is significant in view of the overwritten nature of their lives, which mirrors that of Dulcie and Sally, as well as the girl in *Barbarians*. Saartje Baartman, a South African Khoi woman, was taken from her home in the early 19th century to Europe, where she was reduced to her bodily features by being exploited as a freak show attraction known as the "Hottentot Venus," and upon her death, had her remains showcased in a display organized by Georges Cuvier at a Parisian museum (Driver 230). Rachael is effaced as well; despite her role as her husband, le Fleur's, muse and mouthpiece of sorts, as she contributes significantly to his speeches and other communications, she is simultaneously relegated to the background, her husband even obscuring her very identity by giving her the new name of Dorie.

The lack of legitimacy given to traumatic experiences such as these women's and to narratives of these experiences can exacerbate women's initial trauma. In her Afterword to *David's Story*, Dorothy Driver contextualizes *David's Story* in terms of South African history, Griqua identity, and South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), particularly with regard to the trauma women experienced during this period. The TRC, which sought "to uncover as much as possible of the truth about past gross violations of human rights" that occurred during apartheid, held a series of hearings between the years of 1995 and 1998 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 49). Driver underscores the apathy directed toward living trauma victims of apartheid made evident by the TRC, explaining that it is undergirded by the belief that, "women have been only secondary victims of apartheid (mothers, wives, and sisters of primary victims, who were almost all men), and also that sexual assault against women is less serious than other torture" (239). A connection can thus be made to Mbembe's focus on forms of death

other than actual death, and an interpretation of the death-worlds theory focused on women's trauma appears possible; the layers of violence and erasure that women in these texts experience can be seen to confer upon them a spectral existence despite their avoidance of actual death, enshrining them in an unseen or at least nonunderstood layer of the world, or a death-world. Mbembe himself provides an ample foundation on which to build such an interpretation when he poignantly interrogates the powers that underlie not only explicit deaths but also the "wounding" of bodies during war, phrasing that can be said to include sexual assault: "Imagining politics as a form of war, we must ask: What place is given to life, death, and the human body (in particular the wounded or slain body)? How are they inscribed in the order of power?" (12). However, Mbembe stops short of explicitly making the connection between such wounding and institutionally recognized forms of violence and women in his neglect to discuss rape as a war crime.

Driver further probes this apathy toward violence against women during both the apartheid and post-apartheid eras, narrowing in on the TRC, with its unsupportive, clinical atmosphere, as a prime perpetrator of such neglect of women's stories of violence and trauma.

Driver states,

Even in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings, which were meant to unearth a variety of forms of violence, violence against women was rarely a topic. This was first thought to be because the commission hearings were dominated by men, and special women's-only hearings were accordingly convened. Yet even at these segregated hearings, few women, and no active female combatants, came forward to testify. (239)

Jacqueline Rose explores the issue of apathy along similar lines, even bringing to the surface another oft-neglected aspect of women's victimhood - women's occasional role in such victimization as violent agent. Interestingly, she starts her piece "Apathy and Accountability:

South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission," which reckons with the question of whether true accountability is possible in the aftermath of apartheid, with a retelling of what she describes as "perhaps one of the strangest moments in the extraordinary document that makes up the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa," one of the few points during the Commission at which women were centered. At this moment, an Indian woman is depicted as "applying for amnesty for what she described as her 'apathy'" (Rose 175).

Other theorists have deepened the complexity of the concepts of necropolitics, death-worlds, and related theory, sometimes developing their own variations on these concepts that deviate slightly from those laid out in Mbembe's "Necropolitics." Lauren Berlant, for example, brings additional attention to the forms of death other than "actual death" that Mbembe addresses. In "Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency)," she describes a similar concept that she refers to as "slow death," making note of the connection between extended non-actual death and eventual actual death: "The phrase slow death refers to the physical wearing out of a population and the deterioration of people in that population that is very nearly a defining condition of their experience and historical existence" (Berlant 754). Like Mbembe, Berlant emphasizes the death-like undertones coloring the lives of certain populations, but she also points to the nebulosity of the boundary between calculated and less intentional harm: she describes a "zone of ordinariness, where life building and the attrition of human life are indistinguishable, and where it is hard to distinguish modes of incoherence, distractedness, and habituation from deliberate and deliberative activity, as they are all involved in the reproduction of predictable life" (754).

Additionally, given that Mbembe's initial theory often uses broad strokes to describe the oppressive forces operating upon masses of marginalized populations, much of the work

expanding upon his necropolitics and death-worlds theory has been focused on particularizing the theory to encompass various specific marginalized groups within such oppressed masses. An example of such expansions is the scholarship on queer necropolitics; in his piece "Forced (Queer) Migration and Everyday Violence: The Geographies of Life, Death, and Access in Cape Town," one proponent of this area of theory, Ali Bhagat, claims that his work "seeks to re-frame Mbembe's Necropolitics to include the nuances within queer refugee life in Cape Town" (158). Such addendums also include work done through a feminist lens. Melissa W. Wright, for example, expands on Mbembe's theory of space and subjugation and the necropower that results in terms of femicide in Mexico in articles such as "Necropolitics, Narcopolitics, and Femicide: Gendered Violence on the Mexico-U.S. Border." And in "Gendering Necropolitics: The Juridical-Political Sociality of Honor Killings in Turkey," Cihan Ahmetbeyzade looks at what she terms "gendered zones of death," examining honor killings in Turkey and the "legal and spatial exceptions" to which women are subject and that lead to such killings (188).

As noted above, in "Necropolitics," Mbembe describes death-worlds in terms of colonization, apartheid, slavery, and other oppressive structures, stating that "the humanity of the slave appears as the perfect figure of a shadow" due to violations such as one's "loss of rights over his or her body" and "social death (expulsion from humanity altogether)" (21). Mbembe also explains the expressive limits that further isolate individuals within death-worlds, building on the theory of Paul Gilroy. Addressing the dearth of communicative power shaping the world of the slave, Gilroy states that, "There may, after all, be no reciprocity on the plantation outside of the possibilities of rebellion and suicide, flight and silent mourning, and there is certainly no grammatical unity of speech to mediate communicative reason. In many respects, the plantation inhabitants live non-synchronously" (Gilroy 57). These bodily and communicative violations are

hallmarks of death-worlds and can be likened to the violence enacted upon women in the two novels being considered, as well as their resulting trauma and lack of power over their own narratives.

The erasure that lends these women's traumatic narratives, as well as the women themselves, a ghostly nature is made manifest in a number of ways in these novels: as others' failure to perceive the signs of trauma despite often intense surveillance, as co-option of these women's accounts of their trauma, as depictions of bodily and narrative mutilation, and as straightforward characterization of these women and their stories as spectral. These elements are often imbued with the indistinctions Mbembe details when laying out his theory of necropolitics. Mbembe's sense of the increasing ambiguity of various boundaries in modern times and the resulting complexity of necropolitics, as well as concepts under the necropolitics umbrella such as death-worlds, is apparent throughout "Necropolitics." As hinted at above, the boundary usually separating life and death is perhaps the most basic of the indistinctions undergirding the idea of death-worlds. Other such indistinctions include those between seeing and not seeing, closeness and remoteness, and conceptions of civilization and savagery. The focus on these ambiguities reveals a significant way in which necropower can be differentiated from Foucault's conception of biopower. As touched on earlier, in "Necropolitics," Mbembe notes that "the notion of biopower is insufficient to account for contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death" (39-40). Indeed, in his 1976 lecture and in the chapter entitled "Right of Death and Power over Life" in his *The History of Sexuality* in which he further develops the concept of biopower, Foucault does not focus on the nebulous boundaries between life and death or on those between the other states mentioned above. Rather, he states that, "If genocide is indeed the dream of modern powers, this is not because of a recent return of the ancient right to kill; it is because

power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population" (Foucault, *History* 137). Even genocide is framed in terms of biopower's basis in the management of populations in terms of factors such as birth rate, disease control, and life expectancy; Foucault does not delve into the zones in which the states of life and death can become entwined for those deemed unworthy of such biopolitical care. Regarding this neat division between the deserving and the undeserving, Mbembe notes, "Operating on the basis of a split between the living and the dead, such a power defines itself in relation to a biological field—which it takes control of and vests itself in" (17).

The haziness between closeness and remoteness and seeing and not seeing that Mbembe describes is made manifest in the two novels' depictions of surveillance, a crucial component of Mbembe's theory of necropower; surveillance forms a foundation for the trauma of the characters being considered. Foucault's theory of the Panopticon underpins this surveillance component. The Panopticon was first introduced as an architectural structure by 18th-century theorist Jeremy Bentham for use in prisons, and Foucault builds upon this concept, implicating other oppressive societal structures such as schools, factories, hospitals, and the military in the use of this surveillance technology. Foucault describes the Panopticon as follows:

... at the periphery, an annular building; at the centre, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells ... All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy. (*Discipline* 200)

Since those being watched are unable to see either the "supervisor" or their fellow objects of observation, the constant threat of surveillance translates into constant subjection to "the gaze," regardless of whether actual surveillance is occurring in the moment (Foucault, *Discipline* 195; 200). Mbembe characterizes the modern era as having an increasingly spatially focused

subjugation; he builds upon both Foucault's concept of the Panopticon and Frantz Fanon's sketch of the structure of colonized worlds, describing the latter in terms of the "division of space into compartments" and "the setting of boundaries and internal frontiers epitomized by barracks and police stations" and claims that precise spatial boundaries and divisions are "the very way in which necropower operates" (26). Mbembe makes clear that as colonization developed, colonized spaces could no longer be delineated by simple borderlines on a single axis. Instead, the existence of layers of territoriality has resulted in "vertical sovereignty" and "a proliferation of sites of violence," allowing for "panoptic fortification that generates gazes to many different ends" (28-29). Despite this up-close panoptic view, however, the oppressor is able to restrict the closeness with which they actually see those they are watching, perhaps as a way of distancing themselves from the horror of their actions.

A general sense of being watched permeates both *David's Story* and *Barbarians*, affecting marginalized characters in particular. In both novels, this ever-present surveillance certainly has the characteristics Mbembe ascribes to modern surveillance, as it involves multiple, interwoven vantage points. In *David's Story*, for instance, surveillance by the state envelops an additional layer of surveillance occurring within the ANC itself among its comrades. In the novel, ANC members are under constant threat of observation. David and Dulcie stand outside together after talking to community members in Kliprand about expanding UDF (United Democratic Front) involvement there (Wicomb 278). At this moment, during which they are "avoiding each other's eyes," "again they stood in the wash of the riot lights that swept all night long over the village, that turned the new concrete community centre and its large concrete square, the ugly architecture of surveillance, into an eerie, surreal emptiness" (Wicomb 133). This moment, occurring well before apartheid's end, highlights the complex interaction of multiple vectors of

observation or non-observation: Dulcie and David's avoidance of each other's sightlines is emblematic of the ANC directive that comrades remain distant from one another, but the riot lights hint at the constant state surveillance to which the two are clearly subject.

Similarly manifold surveillance sightlines are evident in *Barbarians*, where the magistrate spends hours surveying the environs of the town in service to not only his job but also his hobbies of cartography and archaeology. This shadowing extends to living people as well. After Colonel Joll from the capitol brings "river people" to the town and places them in the barracks yard under suspicion of participating with the barbarians in a plot against the Empire, the magistrate and the townspeople observe this community of innocent people along multiple sightlines, from both visible and invisible vantage points: the magistrate says, "I spend hours watching them from the upstairs window (other idlers have to watch through the gate)" and "from my window I stare down, invisible behind the glass" (Coetzee 21). As made clear by the magistrate and townspeople's placement behind obstructions such as gates and panes of glass, which do not obscure the observers' view but place them at a remove from those they watch, and sometimes, even obscure the observers' presence from the watched, these onlookers are able to separate themselves from the import of their oppressive actions in the manner in which Mbembe describes; since they are merely watching at a safe distance from their targets, their behavior becomes seemingly harmless. Additionally, demonstrating Mbembe's delineation of intersecting new vantage points is the watching townspeople's position at the same level as the river people instead of from the unseen, panoptic location above favored by the magistrate, as well as the river people's newly compound exposure to this observation, from within the Empire's settlement as prisoners in addition to their usual location outside the Empire outpost.

As with the other aspects of his theory, Mbembe does not explore the gender dynamics of surveillance associated with death-worlds and the seeing/unseeing dichotomy typifying it by, for example, examining surveillance enacted on women in particular; he merely explains the way in which modern oppressive acts against general subjects are often inseparable from acts of surveillance, as with mechanisms such as drone warfare. However, these boundaries and points of surveillance pervade the existing axis of female oppression, as will be explored below.

Theorists such as Wright have further complicated the complex spatial dynamics Mbembe describes in terms of gender. According to Wright, the borderline between public and private for women is "a pillar of the necropolitics" of gender, in which the notion of "public women," that is, women who live part of their lives outside the domestic sphere, often by working outside the home, are made to seem as if they invite violence against themselves (714-15). This strict separation between the worlds of men and women translates into a general disregard for women's concerns that range all the way from household duties and childcare to violence against women. Wright additionally notes the belief of police officers investigating the murders of women in Ciudad Juárez that the victims must have been living double lives (that is, as sex workers), as if this justifies their murders, a notion that these officers expressed to victims' families (714).

Mbembe's description of the complex modern methods of surveillance becomes even more apt when considered in terms of the spatial dynamics of gender codings, as rigid views of the proper spheres for men and women permeate both *David's Story* and *Barbarians*. In *David's Story*, resistance fighters in general are often characterized as slippery, even ghostly individuals. Ouma Sarie, for instance, the mother of David's wife Sally, refers to David flippantly as "that David man who is never anywhere" (Wicomb 120). However, for women resistance fighters, gender adds another element to this ghostly characterization. Sally, who is a former ANC

comrade herself, is perceived negatively by even her loved ones when she begins her revolutionary activities as a young woman, which keep her outside the domestic sphere. Ouma Sarie refers to her as "Sally of no fixed address," and Sally's father fears that Sally has begun "whoring around" (Wicomb 122). The violence enacted upon Dulcie as she moves up within the resistance is another clear indicator of this attitude. Through her years in the resistance, Dulcie has "worked out that fucking women was a way of preventing them from rising in the Movement" (Wicomb 179). This is precisely what happens to Sally, who is sexually assaulted by her ANC trainer and later ends up largely confined within the home while David continues to rise within the ranks. David's belief that violence, including sexual or other violence against women, is an unavoidable part of the resistance unfortunately exacerbates such attitudes. As he says, "Keeping your hands clean is a luxury that no revolutionary can afford" (Wicomb 196). Similarly, in *Barbarians*, the girl's presence at the beginning of the novel in the public sphere, as she attempts to make a way for herself in the town by begging on the street after being left behind by her people, makes her subject to the attentions of the magistrate, who spots her near the barracks and surveils her continually over a period of several days. He eventually orders a soldier to bring her in, citing the town's "vagrant ordinances:" "We do not permit vagrants in this town. Winter is almost here. You must have somewhere to live. Otherwise you must go back to your people" (Coetzee 30-31).

The atmosphere of constant surveillance characterizing the spatial relationships in these novels and the strict delineation of spheres for men and women explained above manifest in the peopling of the two novels with an assortment of interrogators of women's traumatic experiences. In *David's Story*, David, the amanuensis, who does the work of compiling, interpreting, and telling various other women's stories, and even readers themselves, can be implicated as such

interrogators. The magistrate makes this comparison bluntly after the start of his relationship with the girl, remarking, "The distance between myself and her torturers, I realize, is negligible," although this realization fails to spur him to modify his behavior (Coetzee 32). The novel's opening scene provides the seed for the magistrate's realization, as he finds himself unable to look into the eyes of Colonel Joll, a significant interrogator in *Barbarians*, through the obstruction of Joll's sunglasses, only seeing himself in their reflection and therefore becoming unable to separate himself from this interrogator. At this moment, the magistrate notes regarding these sunglasses that, "The discs are dark, they look opaque from the outside, but he can see through them," reconfiguring the sunglasses as yet another panoptic technology of surveillance (Coetzee 1).

This likening of lover and interrogator brings to mind Mbembe's exploration of the murky boundary between so-called civilization and savagery. As is clear in his discussion of such events as the French Revolution, the rise of necropower has occurred alongside that of democracy, raising doubts regarding the trustworthiness of outwardly good actors. Mbembe notes that, "All manifestations of war and hostility that had been marginalized by a European legal imaginary find a place to reemerge in the colonies," further uncovering the menace underlying the motives of representatives of the state such as the magistrate, or even members of the ANC, even as they perform seemingly innocuous acts such as taking in the girl, on the magistrate's part, or working toward freedom and peace, on the ANC's part (25). The magistrate confronts the issue of distancing oneself from accountability in an instance of layered questioning when he internally queries Colonel Joll on the feelings of those who surveil and torture. The magistrate wonders if Joll, "shudder[ed] even a little to know that at that instant he was trespassing into the forbidden? I find myself wondering too whether he has a private ritual of purification ... or has the Bureau

created new men who can pass without disquiet between the unclean and the clean?" (Coetzee 13-14).

The magistrate violates the girl many additional times throughout their relationship, constantly questioning her about her torture, despite her reluctance to speak about her experience. He says, "I touch my lips to her forehead.' What did they do to you?' I murmur ... 'Why don't you want to tell me?' She shakes her head ... 'Tell me,' I want to say, 'don't make a mystery of it, pain is only pain'" (Coetzee 36). The magistrate's surveillance of the girl even attempts to be retroactive, extending back to the time before he was aware of the girl's existence: "I cast my mind back, trying to recover an image of her as she was before ... I know that my gaze must have passed over her when, together with the others, she sat in the barracks yard ... My eye passed over her; but I have no memory of that passage. On that day she was still unmarked" (Coetzee 38).

Despite such exacting surveillance, however, such interrogators often remain unable to perceive and understand such women's trauma, linking back to Mbembe's focus on the ability of those who surveil and interrogate to construct a boundary between themselves and those who they watch and torture, resulting in an inability to observe the truth. The resulting counterproductiveness of "evidence"-seeking methods such as those the magistrate uses to interrogate the girl is apparent in view of recent work on the specifics of the surveillance of women subjects in the modern age, such as Hille Koskela's "'The Gaze Without Eyes': Video-Surveillance and the Changing Nature of Urban Space." Here, Koskela details the many ways in which surveillance methods affect women in particular, building on the concept of the male gaze developed by Laura Mulvey by remarking on surveillance's function in the modern era as "an extension of the male gaze" (256). Mulvey introduces the idea of the male gaze, a notion that can

itself be linked to the more generalized oppressive gaze that Foucault discusses with his theory of the Panopticon, in her landmark article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." Here, Mulvey explicates the centrality of men's narrative and visual points of view in film, an aspect that can implicate even the viewer, who can be seen to assume these viewpoints simply by consuming these stories, and the resultant rendering of women characters as mute objects of observation, citing "a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning" (58). Of particular import in Koskela's expansion of Mulvey is the observation that sexual assault victims can take issue with surveillance methods such as video surveillance, as its utility is limited to capturing footage of such attacks; despite the value of such objective evidence of violence, it obviously cannot erase the trauma itself or its aftereffects and thus can be seen to have limited consequence in terms of victims' trauma processing (249).

Such surveillance technologies as video surveillance and unfeeling interrogative methods can additionally enact further harm and retraumatization. Video surveillance can thus be linked to the TRC itself, as surfaced by Lucy Valerie Graham in "'History Speaking': Sexual Violence and Post-Apartheid Narratives," a chapter in her book *State of Peril: Race and Rape in South African Literature*, where she explores the attempts of South Africa, and the TRC in particular, to reckon with the sexual violence of the apartheid and post-apartheid periods, doing so through the lens of works such as *David's Story*, as well as Coetzee's *Disgrace*, a novel dealing with the rapes of two women and the silences that result, and Achmat Dangor's *Bitter Fruit*, the story of a woman's rape during apartheid at the hands of a white policeman and the protracted, radiating trauma she and her family ultimately face following this assault. In this piece, Graham

emphasizes the public and thus arguably harmful nature of the TRC's interrogation methods, noting that,

During the TRC women's hearings, victims gave accounts of sexual violence, including rape, but although the CALS [Center for Applied Legal Studies] submission recommended that these hearings be held in camera and that steps be taken to guarantee privacy, the testimonies found their way into newspapers, into artworks and literary texts, and even onto the Internet. Even as the CALS submission called for the excavation of women's stories, the TRC's main objective, which was to make the testimonies public, was at odds with the creation of a "safe space." (135-36)

As with CCTV footage, the surveillance technologies built into the TRC allowed for the creation of a record of violence, but one that could be consumed and dissected by the public, possibly resulting in the centering of critique and blame on victims and without a guaranteed result of reconciliation. Also interesting is the connection between Graham's point and the public/private dichotomy Wright discusses. The quasi-legal apparatus of the TRC, with its ability to observe and record the traces of trauma that are evident in the public realm yet not understand or set right this trauma, can be likened to the police officers Wright mentions who lean on women's presence in the public sphere to condemn them for their own deaths.

Such surveillance failures to perceive the existence of trauma may engender doubts about whether trauma can in fact be communicated or even represented. These doubts connect to the notion of the "unspeakable," a concept in trauma theory that Naomi Mandel defines as "the rhetorical invocation of the limits of language, comprehension, representation, and thought on the one hand, and a deferential gesture toward atrocity, horror, trauma, and pain on the other" (4). This notion of the unspeakable seems to echo Gilroy's delineation of a lack of a "grammatical unity of speech" regarding one's trauma that results in "silent mourning," as discussed earlier in connection to death-worlds, and furthermore, a "non-synchronous" existence in which one is in a

sense suspended between life and death (57). The TRC approach to dealing with women's trauma in the aftermath of apartheid reflects the optimistic belief that it is possible to represent and communicate trauma and that such traumatic accounts have the power to resolve this trauma and thus reconcile the split existence that Gilroy discusses; even as she remains skeptical of such a capability, Rose makes note of the TRC's desire to "enact the restoration of dignity in the act of speech" (188).

However, recent work critiques the notion of the unspeakable, working from the belief that it is society's oppressive structures that render trauma unspeakable rather than the traumatic events themselves. In his piece "Colonial Trauma, Utopian Carnality, Modernist Form: Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*," which, along with the other chapters in *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma*, contributes to the updating of various classical literary trauma theory concepts, Greg Forter examines the unspeakable through the lens of postcolonialism. He states that,

The "unrepresentable" character of trauma is thus due not to its being 'originary' and hence, beyond history and representation. Rather, it has to do with the enforced rupture with precolonial pasts and the prohibitions against remembrance enforced by particular regimes of power ... within the current social and representational order, to 'give voice' to the silenced requires the violation of that representational order, an effort to shatter linguistic forms that conspire in the illusions of total understanding. (Forter 77)

Along similar lines, how would it have been possible for the TRC, supported by the same patriarchal structure underlying women's trauma, to reconcile the communicative gaps Gilroy highlights that trap such women in a death-world? Cannot the TRC be viewed, alongside figures such as the magistrate, as yet another interrogator, one with perhaps even more power? In *Barbarians*, the magistrate brings such a question to the surface without intending to; his reflection back to a discussion of the nature of justice with a young man being held prisoner by

the Empire sheds light on the discrepancy between the law and actual justice for victims of sexual assault and other violence: he says,

"You think you know what is just and what is not. I understand. We all think we know." I had no doubt, myself, then, that at each moment each one of us, man, woman, child, perhaps even the poor old horse turning the mill-wheel, knew what was just: all creatures come into the world bringing with them the memory of justice. "But we live in a world of laws," I said to my poor prisoner, "a world of the second-best. There is nothing we can do about that." (Coetzee 160)

It is important to note that the magistrate maintains the above mindset until he himself becomes victim to the Empire when he is arrested and tortured for suspected collaboration with the "barbarians"; it is only at this point that he seeks justice and rebels against the limitations of the law. Graham expresses similar pessimism regarding the TRC's ability to accomplish reconciliation, echoing Driver's condemnation of the TRC and casting this body as one of the "particular regimes of power" that Forter calls out. She notes that "Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story* and Achmat Dangor's *Bitter Fruit* foreground, despite the efforts of the South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the unspeakability of certain aspects of the apartheid past in the post-apartheid transition" (Graham 136).

The focus on spoken testimony of one's trauma leads to interest in the effectiveness of clear physical evidence in communicating stories of trauma. Does such nonverbal testimony function similarly to unambiguous spoken accounts? Theorists such as Éva Tettenborn endorse the existence of the unspeakable but turn this notion on its head by purporting that trauma's unspeakability actually has utility: in "Melancholia as Resistance in Contemporary African American Literature," Tettenborn explains that a focus on bodily scars of trauma lends the body narrative power and renders the body an agent of resistance against dominant narratives. She applies this lens to African American literature in particular and incorporates disability studies,

making note of the growing body of literature connecting these two traditionally disconnected theoretical areas. She states, "contemporary African American literature has portrayed characters with different, melancholic minds as figures who are not to be pathologized but who must be read as subjects engaged in acts of political resistance to dominant versions of memory and historiography" (Tettenborn 102). In her *David's Story* Afterword, Driver makes the connection between one such work, *Beloved*, and *David's Story* in terms of the novels' shared privileging of bodily evidence of trauma, asking, "how would Dulcie's scars turn into something as miraculous as the living tree that Sethe in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* has on her back?" (Driver 240). Such a bodily focus in these novels can also be thought of as providing retaliation against the ghostliness forced upon these women and their stories; explicit bodily evidence of trauma allows these women and their narratives to shed their ghostly facades and thus propels them into the light.

However, even explicit physical scarring resulting from trauma is often not sufficient for transmitting the story of such trauma, as a result of a failure to either see or comprehend such scarring. Both novels are rife with references to flesh that is often mute, or at least appears to be to those not listening. Even a seemingly ancillary character such as David's Ant Mietjie is viewed through such a bodily focused lens: David remembers a conversation during one visit to see Ant Mietjie where she leans over to tend to her oven and, "Only the printed nylon of her housecoat stretched tight across her rear was visible, and he could not very well address himself to that mute flesh" (Wicomb 129).

In terms of the markings of trauma, the girl and Dulcie's scarring is explored in depth by the novels' narrators, who have varying degrees of success in discerning the seriousness or even the existence of trauma. Dulcie's first appearance in the novel provides a prime example. Dulcie contemplates in detail the scars marking her body, but at this point in the story, we do not yet

know the origin of these injuries, and her body remains hidden from "the gaze of a viewer who cannot undress it," although the scars' ostensibly sinister source casts a grim glow over the beginning of the novel (Wicomb 19).

A later point in the novel conveys David's problematic relationship with Dulcie's scarring, although the marks in question are connected not to the trauma of Dulcie's torture but rather to an occurrence when she, early in her days with the ANC, is attacked by a swarm of bees when she steals honey from their nest in order to provide food for her comrades and herself. Interestingly, we are told this story through two intermediaries, as the amanuensis reproduces for the reader David's telling of Dulcie's telling of the story. The amanuensis tells us, "Dulcie leaned forward to show him the trace of her ordeal, a slight puckering of the eyelids, an excess of stretched skin, she claimed, although, even as he stiffly bent closer to look, he could see no evidence of that savage attack" (Wicomb 83). Despite acknowledging the strength and intrepidity that this story shows Dulcie to have, David seems to remain oblivious of the extent of the experience's impact on Dulcie, as hinted at in his inability to recognize the existence of the physical evidence of this accident. The limitations of David's understanding in this arena are hinted at from the start of the novel: as the amanuensis tells us within the first few sentences of her Preface, David "was unwilling or unable to *flesh* out the narrative" in his dictation to the amanuensis and in his own portions of writing that she incorporates into the manuscript, impelling her to fill in the gaps on her own (Wicomb 1, my emphasis). If up to David, it seems that these bodily marks would remain mute.

In a sense, the scars denoting the girl's trauma are more explicitly visible, but as noted above, the magistrate grills the girl and examines her body in a manner similar to that characterizing the panoptic surveillance described by Mbembe as being ever-present in death-

worlds. The magistrate thinks, "It has been growing more and more clear to me that until the marks on this girl's body are deciphered and understood I cannot let go of her. Between thumb and forefinger I part her eyelids. The caterpillar comes to an end, decapitated, at the pink inner rim of the eyelid. There is no other mark. The eye is whole" (Coetzee 35-36). During the same "interrogation" session, the magistrate makes note of additional bodily indications of trauma, which appear ghostly to him since he does not trust that such marks actually exist: "On the edge of oblivion it comes back to me that my fingers, running over her buttocks, have felt a phantom criss-cross of ridges under the skin ... " (Coetzee 36). Thus, as with Dulcie, seen through David's eyes, despite the girl's visible scars, she is not seen as a reliable narrator of her own lived experience. The magistrate seems incredulous in the above passage that she actually experiences any visual impairment because in his view, "the eye is whole."

These harsh methods of seeking the truth can furthermore constitute a form of retraumatization. Dulcie and the girl seem to express a desire to communicate their trauma on their own terms rather than in response to probing from others, or perhaps even keep their trauma private. At one point, Dulcie muses, "One day a nice man of her own age will idly circle the dark cents with his own thumb and sigh, and with her bear it in silence, in the deepened colour of his eyes" (Wicomb 19). Although Dulcie seems in this passage to be willing to share her pain with another, it also appears that there may be temporal and other conditions attached to this willingness, as evidenced by the use of the phrases "One day," indicating an unspecified future point in time, "a nice man," which strikingly refers to an unnamed, currently unknown individual, and "silence," which signals a desire to speak her pain without literally speaking. In *Barbarians*, the girl seems to reiterate Dulcie's reluctance to speak. During one particular round of questioning from the magistrate, the girl removes his hands from her, clearly unhappy with his

inquiries, but he persists, asking, 'What do you feel towards the men who did this?' She lies thinking a long time. Then she says, 'I am tired of talking'" (Coetzee 47). Interactions the girl has with those other than the magistrate suggest a willingness to speak with those with whom she perhaps has a relationship unhindered by the threat of surveillance and interrogation. The girl's animated, friendly conversations with the soldiers who have accompanied her and the magistrate on his journey to return her to her people stand in stark contrast to the coldness typifying her interactions with the magistrate. The fact that the girl is comfortable with these soldiers despite their status as representatives of the Empire is indicative of the extent of the menace lurking beneath the magistrate's behavior. This selective willingness to speak appears to extend to disclosure of her trauma, as evidenced by her conversations with other women such as a cook who is also acquainted with the magistrate. During a conversation late in the novel between this woman and the magistrate about the girl, the cook tells him, "'We talked to each other about what was on our minds. Sometimes she would cry and cry and cry. You made her very unhappy. Did you know that?'" indicating that the girl has revealed to her at least some of her trauma (Coetzee 176).

Driver advances concerns over the possibility of retraumatization by echoing Wicomb's questioning of the "imperative to question through the body" evident in *David's Story* overall and in moments such as the novel's epigraph, which originates from Fanon ("Oh my body, make of me a man who questions," taken from his *Black Skin, White Masks*); with regard to Dulcie, she asks, "if her body is in sexual service to the struggle, is it in sexual service to writing as well? Does the focus on her body mean the loss of her voice?" (240). Even if amplifying bodily evidence of trauma allows traumatic stories to be excavated and told, does it do so at the cost of reducing women to the sum of their body parts?

Regardless of the ultimate ability of such narratives to appropriately communicate women's stories, the co-option of these accounts is evident within both novels. This narrative appropriation connects back to Tettenborn's belief in the power of women's ownership of their pain: at times even this narrative power is still susceptible to usurpation. In addition, yet another link can be made to Fanon. Driver makes note of Fanon's strong presence in both larger South African society and in *David's Story* in particular, highlighting the bodily focus inherent in the Fanon quote Wicomb chooses for the novel's epigraph. The selection of such a corporeally focused passage is significant given the issues explored above in terms of narratives centered on bodily evidence of trauma. Driver also brings to light the problematic nature of Fanon's influence given that "one sometimes finds in Fanon an idealisation of women similar to David's" (240).

Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* provides a prime example of his dismissive attitude toward women and their trauma. One of the book's case studies on the Algerian War details the impotence that an unnamed male member of the National Liberation Front (FLN) faces after he learns that his wife has been raped by French soldiers in an effort to extract from her information about her husband's whereabouts. At multiple narrative levels - including both Fanon's selection of this man to profile despite his distance from the particular trauma being explored, as well as the husband's telling of his wife's story - reveal a man's centering of himself amid a woman's trauma. Although the man comes to realize the gravity of the attack on his wife, one of his earliest reactions is to think, 'Oh well, there's not much harm done; she wasn't killed. She can start her life over again,' revealing a neglect of the lingering trauma that can result from such violence in service to a focus on the avoidance of actual death (Fanon 257).

In his article "Loose Memory in Toni Morrison's *Paradise* and Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story*, Stéphane Pierre Raymond Robolin explores similar territory, as well as unearthing a link

between South African literature and Toni Morrison's writings in addition to that made by Forter, discussed above. Here, Robolin discusses the distrust of women's perspectives that can emerge in response to women's sometimes dual roles as victims and victimizers. Robolin finds a shared focus in the settings of the two novels on the impurity supposedly inherent in both women's narratives of their experiences and women's very bodies, stating, "The novels' parallel figurations of what I call 'loose memory' reveal the ways in which the management of memory is curiously akin to the patriarchal regulation of female promiscuity in racially stratified societies, as both women and memory undergo rigid scrutiny" (300-01). Providing a connection to the surveillance, with its pervasive yet imprecise gaze, that is intrinsic to the death-worlds suppressing women's accounts, Robolin describes the apparatus that supervises "official" histories accepted by communities, noting that in Ruby, the insular town in which *Paradise* takes place, the town's elders control the telling of Ruby's founding story and that, "Memories and interpretations change under rigidly surveyed conditions, even as they are coated with the varnish of purity and permanence" (304).

David's Story and *Barbarians* are rife with such co-options. These seizures of narrative control occur in a more general sense as well as with the particular characters being considered here. *David's Story* once again brings Ant Mietjie to the forefront in one such co-optive occurrence; at the meeting at which Dulcie and David advocate for UDF involvement in Kliprand, a community elder attempts to control the narrative among interruptive singing led by Ant Mietjie, in a moment challenging the earlier bodily angle from which she is viewed: "Voices wove into harmony, and they sang lustily until the end of the third verse, when old Paulse, in the split second of silence before the next, seized the opportunity to boom out as if there had been no interruption ..." (Wicomb 131).

Such narrative annexations are also apparent in *Barbarians* with the magistrate's explorations in cartography and archaeology, which both involve the superimposition of his own stories overtop those of mute subjects who cannot tell their own stories, the surrounding landscape and the ruins of an earlier civilization, respectively, despite his lack of lived experience in these areas. His remarks to Colonel Joll on the maps he has created of the land surrounding the outpost make clear how little authority his representation of this surrounding landscape actually has: "Those maps are based on little but hearsay, Colonel. I have patched them together from travellers' accounts over a period of ten or twenty years. I have never set foot myself where you plan to go. I am simply warning you" (Coetzee 13). Despite his "surveying" of the area, he has not actually seen these areas for himself, and fear of the unknown has filled the gaps in the magistrate's knowledge. Another moment similarly depicts the magistrate's reveling in his struggles to interpret the ancient history of the area; he makes such attempts using a series of slips that he has uncovered during excavations of the area not far outside the boundaries of the town, which contain a series of characters unknowable to him: he "does not even know whether to read from right to left or from left to right" (Coetzee 127). At one point during an interrogation, Colonel Joll and a warrant officer present the magistrate with the slips, which they have found among his possessions, and ask him to translate them, thinking they may be communications between the magistrate and "other parties," presumably "barbarians" with whom they believe the magistrate has conspired (Coetzee 127). The magistrate feigns authority and ownership of these people's history, "reading" from the slips a story that at first bears a slight resemblance to that of the girl and her lost father ("He sends greetings to his daughter") (Coetzee 127). However, the focus soon turns to actual death and slain male bodies, with the magistrate interpreting the slips to say, "You have so many bodies here, bodies of brave young men"

(Coetzee 128). Even the false story of war that the magistrate imposes on this series of artifacts involves male victims like himself, the default conflict victim that Driver summons in her critique of the TRC.

This commandeering of narrative power is also seen in the magistrate's interactions with the girl in the context of her account of trauma. In one instance, he becomes wrapped in a reverie as he tends to the girl's injuries, saying, "I lose myself in the rhythm of what I am doing. I lose awareness of the girl herself. There is a space of time which is blank to me: perhaps I am not even present" (Coetzee 32). Even in this moment in which, outwardly at least, he is reaching out to help another, he still makes himself the focus. This self-focus becomes markedly apparent at a moment when he looks into the girl's eyes and realizes that she will forever remain unknown to him, noting, "with a shift of horror I behold the answer that has been waiting all the time offer itself to me in the image of a face masked by two black glassy insect eyes from which there comes no reciprocal gaze but only my doubled image cast back at me" (Coetzee 50). Similarly to the magistrate's internal likening of "torturers" such as Colonel Joll to "beetles in dark cellars" during the same interaction, the magistrate dehumanizes the girl, reducing her to an insect-like encumbrance (Coetzee 50). It is significant that in this incident the magistrate is still unable to truly see the girl despite the absence of obstructive objects blocking his view such as the sunglasses that prevent him from seeing into Colonel Joll's eyes; the magistrate seemingly blames this inability to see on her blindness and resultant inability to literally see him.

Even after his own experience of torture after he returns the girl to her people, the magistrate may still not fully realize the degree to which he has overwritten the girl's story. Once again blurring the lines between lover and interrogator, he remarks toward the end of the novel that, "Our only excuse is that we leave no mark of our own on the girls who pass through our

hands ... Our loving leaves no mark" (Coetzee 155). The magistrate does seem to eventually become cognizant of his co-option of the girl's story to an extent, however; toward the end of *Barbarians*, he notes wisely that, "I have lived through an eventful year, yet understand no more of it than a babe in arms. Of all the people of this town I am the one least fitted to write a memorial" (Coetzee 178-79). In calling upon a more suitable memorialist, he is actually referring to individuals such as "the blacksmith with his cries of rage and woe," but the magistrate's words have significant import for the girl and others like her, such as Dulcie (Coetzee 179). Such narrative co-options indicate the difficulty or even impossibility of faithfully and sensitively transmitting a narrative of women's trauma.

These narrative appropriations also take the form of the feminization of male narrators, as well as the displacement of women as narrators of their own trauma and vice versa. Such shifts occur in *David's Story* to such an extent that the amanuensis questions Dulcie's very existence. The amanuensis ventures, "Dulcie is a decoy. She does not exist in the real world; David has invented her in order to cover up aspects of his own story. That is what I suspect" (Wicomb 124). David's own trauma as a victim of torture is obscured throughout the novel; regardless of whether Dulcie is real, her body does the work of processing his trauma, leading to uncertainty regarding who is speaking for whom and who is being obscured. David also vies with the amanuensis for control over not only his but also Dulcie's narrative. A key conversation occurring between the two sees David stating (as reported by the amanuensis, introducing an aspect of doubt as to whether we can trust her reportage, and thus an underscoring of the layers of narration typifying *David's Story*), "I suppose, David confesses, that I don't see the need to flesh her out with detail, especially the kind invented by you ... I think of her more as a kind of—and he has the decency to hesitate before such a preposterous idea—a kind of scream somehow echoing through my story"

(Wicomb 134). Clearly disagreeing with David's arguable erasure of Dulcie but nonetheless inserting her own interpretation of Dulcie and her story, the amanuensis replies, "A scream, I laugh, a scream? You won't get away with abstracting her. Besides, Dulcie herself would never scream. Dulcie is the very mistress of endurance and control" (Wicomb 134). Notably, it is not Dulcie's story on which David is focused here; as he says, it is "my story," despite the prominence he lends Dulcie's scream within it.

An opposing displacement occurs with the magistrate, who eventually operates as a stand-in of sorts for the girl, whose torture remains nebulous, in that the torture he comes to endure and the descriptions of this torture are subtly feminized. Consider, for example, the dress that his interrogators make him wear while they torture him. This feminization also takes on a much darker tone, however, as descriptions of his torture, both physical and psychological, are sometimes strangely analogous to descriptions of rape: he remembers, "They were interested only in demonstrating to me what it meant to live in a body, as a body, a body which can entertain notions of justice only as long as it is whole and well, which very soon forgets them when its head is gripped and a pipe is pushed down its gullet and pints of salt water are poured into it" (Coetzee 132-33). Later, he remarks the following of his torturer, "He deals with my soul: every day he folds the flesh aside and exposes my soul to the light" (Coetzee 135).

Significant in such moments of narrative seizures and shifts is David and the magistrate's almost mimicking of Dulcie and the girl's presence within a death-world. As made evident by David's insistence that it is his own story being told despite the superimposition of Dulcie's vocal testimony in the form of her scream, and the magistrate's focus on "blankness" and the almost out-of-body experience he has while caring for the girl, as well as the mirroring between his own experience of torture and what may have happened to her, there is a clear tension between

absence and presence coloring these men's interactions with this trauma. This play with the existence and disappearance of women's and men's bodies and voices provokes a general disorientation in the reader, but contradictorily, it also subtly centers women victims of violence by highlighting their absence. Together with the other instances of unseen trauma in these novels, these moves emphasize the tendency to ignore, speak over, or misinterpret women's stories.

Such narrative usurpation can be further explored in terms of the representation in these novels of women as agents of violence themselves, which speaks to non-essentialist depictions of women. As an ANC leader, Dulcie in particular fits the profile of violent agent, and the girl, although not actually a perpetrator of violence, is depicted as one by the Empire by virtue of the fact that she is a supposed "barbarian." Driver explores the significance of Dulcie's role as a perpetrator of violence as a comrade, delineating the two opposing roles into which women are sometimes alternately slotted—that of feminized victim and masculinized perpetrator—and thus questions whether women and their stories of trauma can be viewed through a more nuanced lens, in which they can exist in both roles. Driver makes note of "the use the text makes of Dulcie as the signifier of an unrepresentable excess, sometimes figured as 'the feminine' in deconstructionist criticism" and asks "Is the narrator (and behind her, the woman writer) herself producing a preordained script, writing through Dulcie yet another version of the idealisation of the feminine? Or is this idealisation negated by the blood on Dulcie's hands?" (Driver 248-49). It is as if, regardless of which of the two above roles women are placed in, their narratives invite suspicion: as feminized victims, their stories are fanciful retellings of dubious brushes with trauma, and as masculinized agents of violence, trauma that they have experienced is erased as if in atonement for the violence they have perpetrated against others.

Further exploring this question by way of the author of *David's Story's* epigraph, we return to Fanon, who has much to say regarding women's participation in revolutionary movements. However, this work has been challenged by theorists such as Radhika Mohanram. In "Algeria Unveiled," a chapter of his book *A Dying Colonialism* that he devotes to Algerian women's efforts in the struggle against colonization, Fanon depicts women's contributions to the resistance largely with a bodily focus, tracking the way in which their bodies, which he constructs as highly malleable, shift in service to revolutionary work. They begin their work unveiled, and once the suspicion falling on unveiled Algerian women escalates, Fanon describes the supposed bodily power with which the women transform themselves and thus the conflict itself; he states, "The Algerian woman's body, which in an initial phase was pared down, now swelled. Whereas in the previous period the body had to be made slim and disciplined to make it attractive and seductive, it now had to be squashed, made shapeless and even ridiculous" (62). Although he notes the violence to which these women are subjected as a result of their efforts, Fanon fails to make the connection between this violence and the public, bodily nature of women's contributions and the increased risk of violence women face when increasing their exposure to the public sphere, which brings to mind Wright's thoughts on the public-private dichotomy that troubles women's movement through space.

Mohanram notes as much in a chapter entitled "Woman-body-nation-space," part of her book *Black Body: Women, Colonialism, and Space*, which deals extensively with the positioning and movement of the bodies of women of color within space, particularly in terms of violence committed against them. In this chapter, she challenges Fanon's assertions of bodily power on the part of Algerian women, highlighting the price these women paid in exchange for gaining significance in the fight: "Despite the way he places the Algerian woman at the heart of the

freedom struggles, Fanon is nonetheless blind to the irony that she comes into subjectivity only at the moment she is arrested, raped, tortured, shot" (Mohanram 56). The aptness of Driver and Wicomb's interrogations of Fanon's suitability for conceptions of women's place and experiences in the context of war are made even clearer with such statements. Also interesting is that Fanon lends women panoptic power in the struggle, stating that, "This woman who sees without being seen frustrates the colonizer. There is no reciprocity. She does not yield herself, does not give herself, does not offer herself. The Algerian has an attitude toward the Algerian woman which is on the whole clear. He does not see her" (44). Although Fanon is correct to surface the tension between being rendered invisible as a result of being veiled and being deemed feminine and therefore harmless, it is important to highlight the paradoxical position in which such women are placed: they are unseen in terms of their general position in society and their accounts of violence and trauma yet sufficiently visible to be subject to such violence. This incongruity perfectly demonstrates the varying forces, whether involving surveillance, visibility or lack thereof, or narrative co-option, that place women and their stories within death-worlds.

In addition to the above coded or shrouded manifestations of women's positions within a death-world, depictions of unequivocal ghostliness and women's presence within what can be considered repressive death-worlds abound within *David's Story* and *Barbarians*. "Oh, you can talk about ambiguity or freedom, but you can't face putting the two together, not even from the sunny comfort of your garden chair. That's why you'll never understand about Dulcie; hers is another world altogether," David says to the amanuensis, although the profound truth of this statement seems to escape him (Wicomb 196). David seems unaware to an extent of the nature of the death-world imprisoning Dulcie, despite his own possible existence in such a sphere - his own name is written directly above Dulcie's on a hit list. Upon hearing these words, however, the

amanuensis seems to be thinking along the lines of Mbembe's multilayered concept of "vertical sovereignty." In her mind, "another image invades, one of worlds as a stack of so many dirty dinner plates that will not come unstuck as each bottom clings to another's grease" (Wicomb 197). Despite her position atop a pedestal, Dulcie remains suspended within a death-world.

The girl in *Barbarians* is similarly situated within a death-world, and this explicit ghostliness is ascribed to not only the girl herself but also the titular "barbarians" as a whole. Late in the story, the magistrate recounts the outpost's relationship with these ghostly figures, which is marked by paranoid sightings of spectral forms: "Sometimes in the mornings there are fresh hoofprints in the fields. Among the straggling bushes that mark the far limit of the ploughed land the watchman sees a shape which he swears was not there the day before and which has vanished a day later" (Coetzee 167). As the magistrate does when he creates maps of the area surrounding the outpost based on conjecture, the people of the town exorcise their areas of ignorance regarding the "barbarians" by attributing malice to these people and blaming them when a young girl from the outpost is raped. This spectral quality is exacerbated for "barbarian" women such as the girl and representations of her, as seen in the ghostly existence extended to even helpless creatures such as the girl's fox cub, who is arguably meant to be an extension of the girl herself and of whom we see only glimpses before it slips out of the story entirely. The magistrate gets this fox cub for the girl on what seems to be a whim, despite her lack of enthusiasm about it: "So the fox cub stays. Sometimes I see its sharp snout peeking out from a dark corner. Otherwise it is only a noise in the night and a pervasive tang of urine as I wait for it to grow big enough to be disposed of" (Coetzee 39). In addition to the parallel this moment provides to the way in which the magistrate eventually "disposes of" the girl once he tires of their problematic relationship and his inability to process the girl's trauma to his liking, this extract provides evidence of an

encounter with a spectral figure, with its description of a presence that is smelled and heard but not seen. Also interesting is the bodily preoccupation here providing a tension with this ghostliness (i.e., "a pervasive tang of urine"), underlining the central ambiguity between life and death characterizing Mbembe's necropolitical theory.

Dulcie and the girl's presence within a death-world, as well as the layers of oppression linked to gender and race in which they are mired, complicate the typical, linear process of healing often focused on in traditional trauma theory. In "Decolonizing Trauma Theory: Retrospect and Prospects," an additional work decolonizing classical trauma theory, Irene Visser critiques this "event-based" nature of traditional trauma theory, which characterizes trauma as "a sudden, sharp piercing of a membrane, as, for instance, by a sharp object implanted in the psyche, where it remains in its original form, hidden behind the screen of consciousness, but making itself known through a [series] of symptoms" (252). She notes that on the contrary, "The 'sudden' or unexpected aspect of trauma is not the prolonged, cumulative hurt of long years of repression that constitutes the trauma of colonialism" (Visser 252). Attempts by the TRC and well-meaning others to neatly resolve trauma are thus often inadequate in the face of trauma of such a long-lasting, recurring nature, and can even exacerbate the trauma.

In a nod to the possible retraumatization problematizing the telling of these stories, the novels reveal that the process of communicating trauma can involve symbolic re-mutilation, and eventually, even death, whether symbolic or actual. Dulcie, Sally, and the girl are depicted as undergoing bodily or psychological mutilation while exploring their trauma, whether this exploration is initiated by outside interrogators or the women themselves. Toward the end of *David's Story*, the amanuensis notes, upon coming across disturbing drawings of David's while perusing an assortment of notes he has given to her for his story, that she has "no doubt that it is

Dulcie who lies mutilated on the page" (Wicomb 205). "There are the dismembered shapes of a body: an asexual torso, like a dressmaker's dummy; arms bent the wrong way at the elbows; legs; swollen feet; hands like claws. There is a head, an upside-down smiling head" (Wicomb 205).

This blatant metaphorical dismembering is far from the only such occurrence in these works.

After touching Dulcie for the first time, David thinks, "He will not see Dulcie again. Not after he has seen his own hands tremble and settle on her shoulders. Not after he has held her there, at a distance, and allowed his eyes to mine the depths of her own, to be held by those black eyes, into which were drawn together every scrap of her—skin and bone, her hair, her voice ... " (Wicomb 177). Again, David appears to be processing Dulcie's, and perhaps his own, trauma through a lens focused on Dulcie's body. Even as a man arguably in love with Dulcie, David views her as an assortment of body parts and a disembodied voice, and indeed, Dulcie's later description of this same event is even more unsettling: "His fingertips pressed precisely into the wounds under her shirt, plunged intimately into her flesh, caressed every cavity, every organ, her lungs, liver, kidneys, her broken heart, with a lick of fire. She would not have been surprised to see those hands withdraw dripping with blood" (Wicomb 199).

Similar, although perhaps less gruesome moments of mutilation can also be found in the magistrate's interactions with the girl in *Barbarians*. During the girl's first night at the magistrate's home, despite the pretense of care with which he has taken her in, he neglects to fully treat her wounded foot once he has finished massaging and cleaning it and thus satisfied his strange desires: "I will find clean bandages for your feet,' I say, 'but not now.' I push the basin aside and dry the foot. I am aware of the girl struggling to stand up; but now, I think, she must take care of herself. My eyes close. It becomes an intense pleasure to keep them closed, to savour

the blissful giddiness" (Coetzee 33). In this passage, the magistrate practically delights in withholding the care the girl needs in order to fully physically heal.

Even if these women do become healed, such a process is often presided over by an authoritative male figure who eventually pronounces her whole again. In *Barbarians*, the magistrate muses upon the girl's ostensible healing, thinking of "this healthy young body while it knits itself in sleep into ever sturdier health, working in silence even at the points of irremediable damage, the eyes, the feet, to be whole again" (Coetzee 38). Interestingly, as evidenced by the presence of the words "irremediable damage" in this quote, the girl is seen as simultaneously healed and maimed.

Sometimes the trauma itself becomes ghostlike, being transported to a location where no one, not even the victim, can access it, as a method of survival, further blurring the line between life and death on which Mbembe focuses. As mentioned earlier, Sally experiences rape at the hands of her ANC trainer. Her acceptance of the belief rampant in the ANC that violence is an unavoidable aspect of life as a comrade renders necessary immediate relief from her trauma, so she attempts to make her trauma invisible while immediately continuing the swim training during which the assault occurs: "Then, cleaning herself in seawater, over and over, she lost her fear, found her body dissolving, changing its solid state in the water through which she then moved effortlessly" (Wicomb 123). Dulcie has similar thoughts, describing a process in which "the body performs the expected—quivers, writhes, shudders, flails, squirms, stretches—but you observe it from a distance. It is just a matter of being patient. Of enduring. Until the need to relocate once more" (Wicomb 178). Dulcie's thoughts do develop to the extent of suicide: she thinks that, "she would feel that macerated flesh grow weightless in the water, dissolve in the white spray that beats against the rock. Atomised at Chapman's Peak," the location at which David himself

commits suicide at the novel's end (Wicomb 180). Both women are moved by their trauma to wish for its annihilation, which can sometimes mean annihilation of the self altogether, whether symbolically, as in Sally's case, or in reality, as in Dulcie's. Although, like Wright, she examines cases of actual death, Ahmetbeyzade's exploration of repeated victimization is illuminating. As touched on earlier, Ahmetbeyzade has worked to add a gender-based perspective to necropower theory through a focus on honor killings in Turkey. As in Dulcie's situation above, existence in a death-world can result in further actual violence and even actual death, as Ahmetbeyzade observes in cases in which women and girls are raped and then killed as a result of being "tarnished" (191).

Dulcie's envisioned moment of "atomisation" and ghostliness provides an interesting throwback to the beginnings of one of the stories told alongside Dulcie and David's - that of Andrew le Fleur, the Griqua chief and David's presumed great-grandfather, and his wife Rachael Susanna Kok. Le Fleur, preoccupied by visions from God and deep thinking, is so busy "penetrating the molecular arrangement of things" and focusing on such structures as "the infinitesimal wing of an insect" that he almost misses meeting Rachael (Wicomb 45). It is only when a "concupiscent pollen sac, a fluffy little thing normally quite invisible to the naked eye" lands on her bonnet and draws attention to her sad eyes and smile (reactions to a series of deaths in her family) that he finally becomes aware of her existence (Wicomb 45). This collision of the visible and invisible provides an interesting commentary on the observability of women's stories: it is the invisible through which Rachael's bodily displayed story is eventually seen.

David's Story and *Waiting for the Barbarians* thoroughly document the various machinations shaping and often burying women's narratives of trauma, whether these forces take the form of a failure to see, damaging surveillance, narrative appropriation, mutilation, or forced

spectrality, and simultaneously add dimension to the liminal spaces existing between closeness and remoteness, seeing and blindness, civilization and barbarism, and life and death into which these women can thus be forced. These novels therefore provide evidence of the death-worlds in which traumatized women often live, and in so bringing these worlds to life, simultaneously work to exorcise the ghosts of trauma that exist within them, bringing these women and their stories out of the shadowy death-world in which they exist and into the light. In this way, these works create a space for the consideration of women's trauma in Achille Mbembe's theory on necropower and death-worlds. Despite the various factors diminishing the visibility of women's trauma and stories, the details of their absence, that is, their presence within death-worlds, can also work to re-center their stories.

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