

Restitution: Seeing Past Loss and Abandonment

by

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I declare that this essay is my own work and that all the sources I have used have been
acknowledged by means of complete references

SIGNED:

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is concerned with loss and abandonment, and together with the practical component, titled *Restitution*, forms part of a Master of Fine Art degree submission. Both loss and abandonment can take many forms, from the straightforward deterioration, departure or removal of objects to the more complex deterioration of memory, responsibility and dignity. It seems though, that the question, "What has been lost?" is one that is always asked once it is too late. The loss becomes irretrievable and one is left only with fragments and traces. In Chapter 1 issues of liminality and the precariousness of being between states is addressed. Dignity of the 'other', in this case the deceased pauper, is interrogated especially with reference to complicity, forensic investigation and the forensic aesthetic. Chapter 2 outlines photographic representation, with attention given to posthumous portraiture, the *punctum* and memory in the service of permanence and authenticity. Chapter 3 considers the ambition and purpose of the artist through a critique centred on contemporary photographic artist, Sally Mann.

Throughout the thesis and exhibition, I am concerned with loss as it relates physically to objects. Metaphorically, I investigate loss and abandonment in relation to dignity and responsibility. In so doing I view death as being the ultimate form of loss, as there is physical loss of the body, as one part of the whole that makes up 'the person', as well as the psychological and emotional loss that attends the passing of life. The delayed burial of the deceased therefore is seen to be evidence of abandonment at its extreme. I end by positioning my conclusion around a stop animation series in which I dug a grave and buried a pauper at Mayfield cemetery.

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Finally, all thanks to God in whom all things have purpose and reason.

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever". (1 Peter 1:22-25)

Dedicated to my Father (16 July 1933 – 4 March 2013)

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis, *Restitution: Seeing Past Loss and Abandonment*, which accompanies my MFA exhibition, explores themes of loss, neglect, memory and abandonment. It attempts to question accountability and acceptance by engaging with these themes using photography as a tool for seeing and showing. It investigates how marginalisation, allows for a deterioration of dignity, and thus facilitates a shift towards impermanence and erasure.

From the onset this work has tried to maintain an unwavering sense of dignity for paupers who were both catalyst and nucleus of my creative output and research. The title *Restitution* in many ways expresses both purpose and ambition from my own point of view but also implies the need for equilibrium, a re-establishment of value and dignity. Vision lies at the heart of photography and yet the greater scene, the context seems to be a repeated casualty of the image. Absence is as much a part of the presentation as the photographic artefact itself and this seeing is always anchored by time, just as the image too is anchored in a moment. 'Seeing past loss and abandonment' thus becomes ambiguous, alluding to core photographic philosophy as well as the major concerns of my work.

In this thesis, I look at pain, often an inevitable by-product of loss and memory, as it might relate to the image and a desire to maintain or secure memory. Photography as a practice appears to immortalise through mechanical reproduction but it also yields an analogous object—something that is not real but bears such a close resemblance, that it may even stand in for the real (Sontag 1977; Barthes 1981). The portrait is not the person as the landscape is not the land. The photograph thus becomes a relic, an artefact, or forensic trace, but evidence of an existence too; 'proof' of life and also death.

Life, loss, death and memory become entwined with liminality and transition and this shift develops into both a physical and metaphorical “rite of passage” (Van Gennep 1960). In Van Gennep’s book, *The Rights of Passage* (1960), he describes the significance of the common threads that bind the transitional life crises of humans. These transitions are liminal and volatile, requiring careful navigation from one secure state to another. This “transitional period” he says, “is met with rites of passage which cushion the disturbance” (Van Gennep 1960:ix). In this thesis I consider the ways in which Van Gennep’s (1960) theories of liminality can be applied to further understand my concern with loss, erasure, neglect and dignity.

Memory, as something to be cherished and guarded, colludes with loss towards permanence. All three however; memory, loss and permanence are seldom complete. This is because, having a reciprocal relationship with each other, fragments of the others often remain. Thus, memory has its own loss working against it, and vice versa, whether that loss is active or involuntary. The same thing said differently means that complete amnesia (not in the clinical sense) has memory to fight against and as long as there is memory or incomplete amnesia, permanence becomes enigmatic. Likewise, permanence is pitted against its own deterioration in this relationship of reciprocity with loss and memory. With this in mind, memorialisation becomes an important consideration and so I treat memorialisation as an often well-intended act, but one that is prone to a disruption and fatigue that might mirror the often complicated, but fragile effort towards securing or releasing memory. This cerebral process of sequestration and submission can be seen as a multi-layered, constructive process, but also one of denial and forgetting¹. Memory is not secure and neither is life. Living creates memory, but death severs the narrative leaving memory exposed and vulnerable.

¹ See Roberts, M. and A. 1996. *Memory: Luba Art and the Making of History*, for a further discussion on the role of forgetting in the construction of memories.

A constant concern with visibility, concealment and perceptibility informs my photographic exploration whilst time, always at work and always complicit in the photographic agenda, is likewise attendant within the commentary. The tenacity of the trace, the ability for a residue to remain, dovetails with one's best efforts to memorialise and remember, and it is in this vein that I allude to forensic photographic methodology alongside the forensic aesthetic in art. The forensic aesthetic, unlike forensic investigation, problematises objective conclusivity and instead expands subjective multiplicity and inconclusiveness. Since the forensic aesthetic suggests an always-greater narrative that hides clues, nuanced interpretation is called for as the viewer actively sifts through pieces of information. In so doing, the forensic aesthetic is "inextricably linked to an unseen history", and "embodies a fractured relationship to time" (Rugoff 1997:62). Also investigated is the earnest process of inquisition and scrutiny; disturbing, collecting, recording and reconstructing. In his book *Scene of the Crime*, art critic and curator Ralph Rugoff (1997:62) describes the forensic aesthetic as being, "marked by a strong sense of aftermath" that requires the viewer to "speculatively piece together histories", interpreting through traces and marks seen as clues. The forensic aesthetic and its trace are important throughout my practical work, but especially in the *Pauper 2006—2012* series as well as in the *Unmarked* and *Unnamed* series, especially since, in the forensic aesthetic, subjects are analysed for their capacity "to be reshown to those who would prefer not to look, who have habitually avoided looking" (Wollen in Rugoff 1997:29).

Contemporary artist Sally Mann provides a useful lens and reference point through which to approach some of my major concerns. Sally Mann is an American photographer who made sharp inroads into the contemporary art world when she exhibited *Immediate Family* in 1992. Indeed it was her immediate family that steered Sally Mann towards

being called “America’s best photographer” by *Time* magazine in 2001². In particular I address aspects of her *Immediate Family* series (1992), especially with regard to making visible that which is normally hidden, but nonetheless part of the everyday. I also analyse Sally Mann’s work produced at the University of Tennessee’s anthropological facility at Knoxville where human bodies and their decomposition are studied for forensic purposes. Here, the results of Mann’s photographic investigations form part of her series titled *What Remains* (2004). Further, drawing from the shared common denominators of the forensic trace, memory, loss and liminality, I consider Sally Mann’s images taken at American Civil War battle sites such as Antietam in Sharpsburg, Maryland.

Discussion of my own artwork deepens themes of loss, marginalisation, and erasure raised in this thesis and expands upon the questions raised. Especially important is my interest in how paupers might be seen as ‘envoys’ or ‘social bearers’ of the ‘social ills’ that form part of my thematic concerns. At this point, some clarity on my use of the term ‘pauper’ and some distinctions need to be provided. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1990) defines a pauper as “1. a very poor person; or 2. historic, a recipient of poor–law relief”. These definitions are rooted in ‘traditional’, even ‘Westernised’ notions of poverty, allied closely with urbanization and industrialization. It is acknowledged that ‘poverty’ can mean very different things to different societies, and in different geographical and historical contexts. Indeed poverty need not have anything to do with finances and ownership at all, but in this research I am specifically concerned with urban poverty in a South African context.

Furthermore, my use of the term pauper, is grounded in South African legalistic terminology which sees a deceased person being classified as ‘pauper’ by the state after efforts made to contact surviving family either yields nothing or, when located, a ‘no

² Price, R. Photographer: Sally Mann. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1000293,00.html>. July 2001. Accessed on 22 February 2010.

claim' decision is made by family concerning the deceased relative³. To distinguish between pauper as 'living poor person' and pauper as 'deceased cadaver' I draw on contemporary artist, Sally Mann who has referred to a living poor person as a "street person"⁴. Thus, in this work, a 'street person' will always refer to a living poor person and a 'pauper' will always refer to the deceased who have been classified by the state as a 'pauper'. It is acknowledged that these generalisations are problematic, but the term 'street person' should not necessarily be seen to imply only someone who lives 'on' the streets or that only poor people are to be found on the street. The term also should not be read as suggestive of a directly comparable relationship between poverty and 'the street'.

Juxtaposed with the reality of a street person's life of exclusion, oversight and rejection, my interest in deceased paupers is tied to the pauper being made visible by being 'presented' through the attention of the photographic process. In this way the probing of social accountability and tolerance is developed. The paupers form a constant point of reference for this thesis, as they did throughout the process and production of my exhibition material.

The cadaver is a familiar reference and subject in the art historical context and so my own work, acknowledges this inheritance, draws from and expands upon it. As well as Sally Mann, already mentioned, I discuss German artist and curator Gunther van Hagen's work in relation to ethical challenges and considerations. Also making use of cadavers, especially in his more recent work is American photographer Joel-Peter Witkin who connects disparate bodies, body parts and objects into a collective and therefore new mode of interpretation. The American, Andreas Serrano's *Morgue series* also deals

³ This may be due to many reasons, the details of which fall outside of this study, but often the surviving family have had an historical fallout and/or have not had contact with the deceased pauper for many years. Common also is the reality that families sometimes lack the financial means to afford burial.

⁴ Morrison, B. 29 May 2010. <http://www.photographsdonotbend.co.uk/2010/05/more-on-sally-mann>. Accessed on 12 February 2011.

with cadavers photographed in a morgue and thus shares similar content and location with myself. Serrano's series makes interesting ties between 'unknown' cadavers and their cause of death and thus, between image and text/title. In a South African context, Pieter Hugo has done some interesting work in his *The Bereaved* series that explores the spaces associated with mourning and bereavement. At the forefront of South African photography for nearly forty years, David Goldblatt's oeuvre has a wealth of imagery concerned with memorials and markers. Finally Jo Raetliffe's *Love's Body* and *Guess who loves you* are two poignant series of work that are notable examples of her general interest in absence, memory, the periphery, exclusion and silence.

CHAPTER 1: THE DANGEROUS MIDDLE GROUND

In this chapter I introduce paupers as signifiers of contemporary social ills. As such, the paupers can be seen as bearers of failed social or humanitarian welfare. With this in mind I outline the irony between the lived experiences of street people and the treatment of their bodies as paupers. I draw from Van Gennep's (1908) seminal work on liminality in *The Rites of Passage*, translated in 1960, and discuss the forensic aesthetic as a method of representation when dealing with the aesthetics of beauty, pain, suffering, loss and death.

THE LIMINALITY OF 'PAUPER-NESS'

The world's present hegemonic social orders, democracy and capitalism, can be seen as contradictory. Democracy proposes a lateral structure that values equality and inclusivity, whilst capitalism thrives on verticality that caters towards, hierarchy and exclusivity. One of the effects of this tension appears to be an amplification of the divide between wealthy and poor with the result that, "it becomes more and more apparent that lifestyle choices, within the settings of local-global interrelations, raise moral issues which cannot simply be pushed to one side" (Giddens in Franscina and Harris 1999:22). The paupers that I draw attention to in my photographic work are seen to 'carry' or bear the evidence of this increasing rift, despite constant calls for its redress. The casualties of failed hope camouflage city streets and tarnish the idealistic view of a shared and caring collective humanity. These 'poor' live and die on the periphery, on the edges of society, and on the edge of our vision. By not looking people seem to hope they will not have to see the blight within society, for if they do not see, denial can come easily on the heels of disregard. People tend to keep 'them', those that are not 'us', in a social and personal 'blind spot'. My practical work attempts to reconstitute what I see as a 'safe', distanced, philanthropic view. The camera as well as its assumed audience, thus collude

through attention to the plight of the destitute generally. Through this attention the pauper specifically becomes fore fronted and centralised out of the periphery⁵.

At this juncture a note on the origin of this work would be appropriate. In 2006 I was working on a documentary photographic project that sought to question the assumption of a so-called 'middle class'. In the documentary, I used the preparation of the body for burial as a primary example of a moment or space where equality can truly assert itself. From a Judaeo-Christian perspective the treatment, preparation (and sometimes presentation) of the body for burial is very similar no matter the previously 'held' or assigned notions of wealth, class, race, gender or power. Death in this context was seen as a diligent, truthful and unpretentious equaliser. During this experience and whilst working in a number of different mortuaries, I came across paupers who potentially disrupted the intended message behind my documentary. The paupers achieved this by virtue of the simple fact that as paupers they did not necessarily receive the aforementioned treatment, or at least not for what appeared to be a very long time, years in most cases. This delay, very simply, seemed wrong. Worse, my experiences seemed not to be the exception. Unable to justify what I had seen through any possible paradigm, I sought to engross myself with the problem and marinate with its horror. This thesis and attendant exhibition are the fruits of that immersion.

Marginalisation as a process serves to introduce my discussion that uses 'the pauper's experience'¹⁶ as a foundation from which I critically engage with society and perceptions of loss, empathy, dignity and restoration. The distinction that I choose to make between street person and pauper is an important means of clarification throughout this thesis, but also 'pauper' as an archaic term references Victorian notions of the poor, and the

⁵ Throughout this thesis, as well as in my practice, I have tried to subtly imply, and therefore impart agency, for the pauper. This is a choice made in the spirit of a restitutive endeavour.

⁶ Or more correctly, my experience of the 'pauper's experience'. Since the paupers are dead, they can no longer *have* 'experience'.

period's arguably draconian approach to the governance of 'the poverty problem'. For the Victorians this was a problem in which "the poor were not covered by the umbrella of religion, ritual, and conscience" (Kastenbaum 2004:217). Particularly revealing in this regard is Robert Kastenbaum's reference to Jonathan Swift, a parliamentarian known for his ostentatious politics. In Swift's 1729 parliamentary address elaborately titled *A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of the Poor People from Being a Burden to Their Parents or the Country, and for Making Them Beneficial to the Public*, Swift proposes that "twenty thousand Irish children be reserved for breeding, while the hundred thousand others be fattened up for sale as food" (Swift in Kastenbaum 2004:215). Kastenbaum's critique of this historic ideology has some alarming application to the present and thus reveals the fragility of contemporary notions such as 'modern', 'progress', 'unity' and 'humanitarianism', not to mention the 'pseudo-sciences' popularised during the Victorian period. Kastenbaum (2004:215) says:

Swift had made his point. For the establishment, the common people were others—others whose lives did not really matter. And since Crown and Parliament did not give a figgy pudding for the lives of Irish children, who cared how they died and what became of their starved and diseased bodies? Why waste good funeral rituals on such nobodies?

With regard to Swift's comments to Parliament in the early part of the eighteenth century, I question the assumption of our 'modern progress' and question, what has changed. Some of the problems that I expose fall in the grey area between distanced, cognitive acceptability and tangible, emotive failure—standard practice, or the expectation thereof, versus the evidence to the contrary that poverty provides. I hope to illuminate what I see as a rift between the normative social values associated with 'the dead', as constructed for our (the living's) peace of mind, and the reality of the street persons' abandonment by society when living and then later, their perpetuated neglect as a pauper⁷. In this way, as

⁷ In due course (see page 12) I will acknowledge and account for the fact that there are different contexts, therefore different interpretations, pertaining to what is 'normative' in any given context. This is achieved with a discussion centred on Van Gennep's liminal rites of passage, especially his notion of transition (*marge*).

muted protagonists, the paupers' anarchistic⁸ (in)action reveals a travesty that mirrors their lives. In the following section, drawing from anthropologist Arnold van Gennep (1960), I discuss the problem of non-timeous internment and its potential ramifications, and will connect these notions to 'pauper-ness'.

According to Strauss, Sherman and Spreen (2006:679), memory has three main conceptual components: encoding, consolidation or storage, and retrieval: "Encoding refers to the processing of information to be stored, whereas consolidation refers to the strengthening of the representations while they are stored". Of concern is the division of long-term memory into explicit, conscious or declarative memory, and implicit or unconscious memory (Strauss et al 2006). Both encoding and consolidation precede retrieval, but when we access or attempt to access our memories it is not "unitary", meaning that there are "a variety of different forms" which may yield differing results or degrees of accuracy (Strauss et al 2006:678). Simply put, recall is not always voluntary and it is not always accurate. In a biological context homeostasis keeps natural hierarchies in place, meaning that decomposition can only act in the absence of life. The 'inanimacy' of memory however, operates a little differently in that deterioration occurs alongside life, with time providing the fuel. Both are subject to processes, but life to death, death to decomposition, and decomposition to erasure is more delineated and processional than the erratic and subjective erosion of remembrance. The processes of life, death, decomposition and erasure maintain much more clearly defined spaces than memory.

Following the seminal work of Van Gennep (1960), these processes must be occupied, in order, and so as to, proceed to the next stage. Thus, these are varied, but navigable

⁸ The process of going from the death of an unknown person to an eventual classification as pauper and then internment is not a simple one and is dealt with in due course. Thus, the 'poverty problem' perhaps exemplified in the street person, is not removed by death. The 'problem' persists since paupers demand more attention, bureaucratically and logistically speaking than those who die more 'conveniently'.

states of transition. Rooted in early twentieth century anthropology, Van Gennep's *Les Rites de Passage*, first published in 1908, was translated into English in 1960. Van Gennep's (1960:vii,11) threefold classification model of preliminal rites of separation (*séparation*), liminal rites of transition (*marge*), and postliminal rites of incorporation (*agrégation*) can be seen for its relevance beyond anthropology (Kimball in Van Gennep 1960:vii). For Van Gennep (1960:3), society is intricately bound in its negotiations around transition, negotiations that are "looked at as implicit in the very fact of existence". Thus, society, whilst not static or rigid, is modular, requiring procedural negotiation to enable transgression between states. As Van Gennep (1960:3) notes, "there are ceremonies whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally well defined." These intercessions are often elaborate affairs and are the result of culturally evolved ritual and ceremony. Fundamentally, the passage between states is seen as disruptive to both the individual and society, since the individual and thus the society, becomes "modified" (Van Gennep 1960:3). Kastenbaum (2004:79) is in agreement when he says, "There can be little doubt that how we die (or how we are perceived to have died) has significant implications for the living." The rites therefore can be seen as primarily protective. In Van Gennep's words (1960:13), "Such changes of condition do not occur without disturbing the life of society and the individual, and it is the function of rites of passage to reduce their harmful effects".

Of particular interest, and the focus for the remainder of this section, is Van Gennep's (1960:13) attention to rites of transition "in their most dramatic form" as they pertain to death and funerals, which is the focus for the remainder of this section. One might expect rites of separation to be of greater relevance to this particular discussion than rites of transition, but Van Gennep (1960:146) argues that, "A study of the data ... reveals that the rites of separation are few in number and very simple, while the transition rites have a duration and complexity sometimes so great that they must be

granted a sort of autonomy". He says: "That such changes are regarded as real and important is demonstrated by the recurrence of rites, in important ceremonies among widely differing peoples" (Van Gennep 1960:13)⁹. Diversity of peoples and beliefs ensures diversity of types of rites of passage but Van Gennep's success lies in the unity of the intent, not in the particulars of the practice. Kimball agrees in the introduction to his translation of *The Rites of Passage*, "There is no evidence to suggest that a secularised urban world has lessened the need for ritualised expression of an individual's transition from one status to another" (Kimball in Van Gennep 1960:xvii).

If these periods of transition are indeed "implicit in the very fact of existence" and are paramount to the smooth functioning of the society, as well as the individual, as Van Gennep (1960:3) stresses, then evidence of interruption or breakdown of these processes should be cause for concern. In particular, views or representations of the human deceased, may well be abundant but do not necessarily indicate an interrupted rite of passage. Views of the deceased person(s), separated as they might be from the life that was theirs, still remain bound up as a part of our own lives. Thus, death separates them from life, but not necessarily us from them. Importantly though, whether on a street corner or a battlefield, whether urban, rural, present or historic, the deceased in plain sight comes with the attendant assumption that the rites of separation and transition are pending, to be performed immanently. This assumption is reassuring.

To further this point, and addressing it from the opposite direction, dead human bodies marked by physical decomposition are indicative of a breakdown in the normative functioning of that society, since rites of transition have not been duly performed.

Decomposition in plain sight is an especially bleak reminder of mortality and this is one

⁹ The "recurrence of rites ... among widely differing peoples" (Van Gennep 1960:13) then can be accepted as the normative values for those particular people at that time (see footnote 7, on page 9).

of the reasons that the visible decomposition of one's own dead is avoided¹⁰ (as opposed to the dead of one's 'enemy', although more often than not the point holds just as true). So the presence of human decomposition is evidence of unperformed rites, which is in turn evidence of a dysfunctional society unable to act upon the tried and tested protective measures for dealing with the deceased and its community of survivors, since these rites are seen to be essential and symbiotic. The argument here is that there seems to be few exceptions to understanding that it is not right to knowingly do nothing or at least very little, with the deceased.

In the case of paupers, key subjects for both my thesis and practical enquiry, so little is done with these deceased that there is severe decomposition prior to effecting the governing cultural expectations and requirements, whatever the specifics might be pertaining to those rites. The 'presence' (assuming that our efforts to 'not see' are unsuccessful) of "street people"¹¹ as well as the paupers, form an important thread that sews together both thesis and practical components in my work. The paupers' condition, of interest here, refers to the extended period of time that exists between death and internment, or to put it differently: between death and performed rites of passage that facilitates a smooth transition between death and departure for both society and individual.

The categorisation of the deceased pauper, its 'pauper-ness', suggests that an affiliated community or society does not exist (at least not in any reciprocal social manner) and is

¹⁰ Open funeral pyres and 'sky burials' appear to provide exceptions, but these practices involve *consumption* (by fire and by wild animals respectively) and not *decomposition*. Furthermore, they are site specific, not random, bearing testimony to the sanctification of the location. Funeral pyres are structures usually built of wood for the purpose of cremating a body and are traditionally common amongst the Hindu and Sikh religions. Sky burial, sometimes referred to as 'open air burial' is most commonly associated with certain Tibetan funeral practices in which a body is laid out at a specific location and exposed to animals and especially birds. Interestingly, both practices seem to have at their core the need for complete 'removal' of the corpse to the extent that remaining bones at sky burial locations are often broken up and mixed with butter or milk, barley flour and tea, then re-presented for consumption (www.wikipedia.org. Accessed on 4 August 2012.)

¹¹ Morrison, B. 29 May 2010. <http://www.photographsdonotbend.co.uk/2010/05/more-on-sally-mann>. Accessed on 12 February 2011.

evidenced by the legal surrendering of the body to the state. I will elaborate on this in due course, but in saying this I do not suggest that the street person or pauper has always been outside of society or void of community. What I do suggest is that the official categorisation of 'pauper' translates as a denial of ties and therefore the obligation to duly perform the necessary rites of separation switches from an 'immediate' community of family, relatives or personal affiliations to a 'community' of strangers and officialdom. Without being judgemental, as there are many reasons for this predicament, denial, which leads towards classification of a pauper, becomes separation without duty. This is a withdrawal from activities meant to ease the status from living street person to deceased pauper. The negation and forfeiture consequently allows a person to be processed as a 'pauper' by the state and, family found or not, allegorises their previous 'status' as a living street person.

In South Africa, the Nkomazi Municipality¹² has a draft *Policy on Pauper Indigent and Unknown Burials* in which a pauper is defined as a "person who has died as an unknown person, or if no relative or other person, welfare organization or NGO can be found to bear the burial or cremation of such deceased person"¹³. Further on, the policy says, "A pauper is defined as a person who has died as an unknown person within the geographic boundaries of Council". Paupers and the burial of paupers is considered to be a messy affair, as are the policies that govern their treatment. For example, in The Great Kei Municipality's¹⁴ policy, point 'A' details the Municipality's responsibility for the "removal and burial of the body of a destitute person or any dead body which is unclaimed ...". Point 'B' removes responsibility from the municipality for those who have

¹² The Nkomazi Local Municipality is in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. It serves an area of 32440 square kilometres.

¹³ Nkomazi Municipality "Policy on Pauper Indigent and Unknown Burials". Date unknown.

¹⁴ The Great Kei Municipality is in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. It serves an area of 1421 square kilometres.

died in “a hospital or other institution”, unless, point ‘C’, “the person was [a]dmitted on the order of a municipality”¹⁵.

Even whilst living, the street person, at best, only occupies a peripheral position in society. This helps direct my concern towards diminishing the middle ground between neglect, abandonment and loss on the one hand, and respect empathy and dignity on the other. After death, and without family, or after a family forfeits its kin, the anonymous paupers become eternally unknown, unnamed and lost. They are twice disowned: rejected in both life and death. But rejected and disowned by whom? If this state of abandonment and neglect is unacceptable then there must be a need for accountability.

Timeous internment for the deceased pauper is prolonged. Thus hidden, and whilst family members are sought or until bureaucracy has taken its course, the paupers remain in limbo; stored in a mortuary between death and grave and often for extended periods, even years. Legally in South Africa, it seems that this period must not exceed 30 days¹⁶. This state of limbo is also a characteristic of the living street person, a characteristic which is maintained and prolonged, carried over into death, a residual mirror if you like. However, like death itself, this uncertain waiting period is removed and hidden. Upon internment the process of removal and hiding takes place once again, an allegory of what has twice happened already. Firstly, a conscious but ideologically and socially informed process of erasure from social sight, as a street person, then secondly, as a problematic pauper awaiting ‘permission’ for burial after a course of policy and politics have been realised. Once buried the grave goes unmarked, the ground only is scarred by digging, and in time nature removes all trace of the site, whereupon the only record of this life is to be found, presumably, in official cemetery documentation stored off site. Thus, there is an element of liminality that enters through the insecurity and non–

¹⁵ Great Kei Municipality “Pauper Burial Policy”. Policy Number: 3. Date unknown.

¹⁶ Great Kei Municipality “Pauper Burial Policy”. Policy Number: 3. Date unknown and Nkomazi Municipality Policy on “Pauper Indigent and Unknown Burials”. Date unknown.

specificity of attachment to place. Final rest is impermanent, imprecise and transitory, quickly moving into absence and erasure. It is worth elaborating on these documents briefly before ending my commentary on liminality, process and place. In trying to source some of this official documentation I came across cemetery maps, hand drawn plans for sections of Mayfield cemetery where the majority of the region's paupers are buried. These maps, for example *Mayfield, Block G* (Fig. 1), are crude, hand drawn and are used to record the progress of graves dug and filled. Each map is divided into plots and when graves are dug or in the process of being dug they are marked with a cross. Once occupied the crossed areas are then coloured in. As the grave itself is filled, so the corresponding rectangle on the card is also filled. So 'X' marks the spot, but it also indicates absence: a plot waiting to be filled by an as yet unnamed occupant. Corresponding to often quite large areas, the maps deteriorate and become marked by their handlers over time. The pieces of cardboard are crudely mended and marked, some stapled, some fixed with tape. Ink and pencil mixing into doodles and memos inevitably characterise the documents in very specific and individual ways.

In drawing this section to a close there are two things worth noting with regard to process and specificity of place, closure and termination of the liminal, transitory and dangerous middle ground between death and disposal. Firstly, one might suggest that the process of erasure is inevitable, given the nature of time. Left for long enough, everyone might be forgotten. This slow erasure, however, still predominantly takes place after due process, that is, after the completion of burial rites. Furthermore, the trajectory from impermanence towards absence and then erasure is seldom as abrupt as it seems to be with paupers. This is the difference between the emphasis being on diminished liminality but prolonged erasure (which is important, but not limited to, contemporary Judeo Christian culture), and the inverse in the case of the pauper—a prolonged state of liminality with rapid erasure. A second point of concern is the reification that exists between the non-celebratory nature of the deceased pauper's process and the

comparatively elaborate processes of burial and memorialisation that are so often taken for granted, by the non–pauper majority.

This concept of liminal space as it pertains to paupers, with its imprecise and impermanent occupation strongly places them outside of the efficiency and predictability of normative expectation, even experience. If this is true then it begs the question of how, on a personal level, one might try to make sense of this dichotomy. How does one reconcile with communal expectations of dignity for all through performed rites of passage and its stark failure for some?

THE DEATH OF DIGNITY

Central to my concern, in both practical and theoretical components of my work, and concerns that were matched by those of the Ethical Standards Committee at Rhodes University¹⁷, is the question of dignity, especially a consideration of how it might be realised or jeopardised by my work. An assumption of a distinct and always realised dignity–for–all is what I challenge through my work. Unpacking the concept of dignity and questioning its accessibility, might yield less comfortable conclusions.

Dignity, as it relates to the pauper, does not exist. Dignity is something offered, not an inherently possessed trait and especially not one that can be ‘owned’ by the deceased. It cannot exist, because the life is lost and there is no–one to accept or deny the gesture of dignity offered. Thus, dignity as it relates to death, is something that is bestowed by virtue of the actions and behaviours of those still living. Since the pauper’s ties to community are removed through life as well as due to processes after death (the classification as ‘pauper’ especially), dignity too goes missing. So the very real and important cry for ‘dignity in death’ is always made by the living and is really a call for

¹⁷ Rhodes University, in line with international trends, requires that permission be granted by their Ethical Standards Committee for work that might be cause for concern. Permission was granted for the continued research and exhibition of my work.

security and safety when confronted by the inevitability of death and the disempowerment that it brings. Individuals, society and the state, often deny street people beneficial attention. Can we deny them attention again, now in their death? Might we choose to look away, directing the gaze and this attention towards a more pleasing and safer 'anywhere—else'?

Meaningful social upliftment for the street person seems routinely absent. Likewise, in the case of the pauper it appears that no one was caring enough, or was financially empowered enough, to afford a 'decent' end to life, or burial. If these or similar sentiments can be juxtaposed with the everyday reality that, in life, these same individuals were shunned and rejected, invoking recoil, contempt or pity, then what possible justification can we advance that criticises their treatment, let alone depiction, once dead?¹⁸ Surely our concern and efforts should extend towards those who are still in a position to receive charity in whichever form it might take? If not, then living street people will die to become paupers that lie unclaimed before eventually being placed in crude coffins and buried without remorse, celebration or memory (Fig. 30).

In contemporary 'Western' cultures, death and decomposition are removed, hidden away from our view and consciousness. Kastenbaum (2004:44) claims that "we have succeeded more than most" in avoiding death and it has been achieved partly "by keeping people alive longer" but also because "we have cultivated techniques for keeping not only the dead but also the dying from general view". Indeed, far from being integral to the daily courses of life, death is "seen as more of an unfortunate interruption to achievement, power, and pleasure" (Kastenbaum 2004:36). Central to my own practical work is the presentation of photographs taken of paupers prior to their burial by the state. My exhibition that accompanies this thesis, thus subtly brings forward the

¹⁸ This debate, centred upon the ethics and presentation of the cadaver in art and in the public view is addressed in more detail further on in this thesis. (See pages 26–34)

paupers, so as to make visible and explicit that which seems to be blindly condoned every day—the wholesale erasure of the paupers’ existence. As a collective the pauper images (Fig. 2, 3, 4 and 5) can be seen as an attempt to ensure that a “life narrative”¹⁹ continues, even after death, thus part of the purpose of my work is to “bring death to life in order to make it speak” (Marin, 1995:83). The process of ‘taking and showing’ from a photographic sense of ‘taking’ pictures and ‘showing’ them to an audience²⁰, is attentive and ‘bears witness’ in the tradition of documentary photography. In so doing, presence is afforded to those that are absented by giving them an audience and a view (Puleo 2010).

The paupers that inform my work all reveal obvious evidence of physical decay. In fact, such is the severe nature of their decay that they are arguably rendered physically unrecognisable, even by those that might have known them well. What is shown in my images of the paupers, and expanded upon by the other sections of my exhibition, happens every day and is ongoing. Having not been buried, the neglected state of the paupers depicted in my images, contrasts with the efficiency with which the industry of removal (hospitals, old age homes, funeral parlours and undertakers, etc.) takes place. This industry ensures that the deceased remain out of sight until they can be safely and ‘appropriately’ presented. This physical erasure mirrors the psychological effort to maintain clarity and composure in the face of degradation. My images of paupers, exhibited in a public gallery, thus stand in opposition to the efforts made to mentally erase the presence of street people, rendering them ‘faceless’ by not ‘seeing’ them. The deceased and the images of paupers in my work are too disruptive to be allowed free reign. But street people are seen, or at least noticed. They are abject and push towards us from the periphery where they contaminate the sight with their wretchedness. In her

¹⁹ Silver, E. <http://art-history.concordia.ca/cujah/pieces/14-missing-presumed-dead>. Accessed on 20 April 2010.

²⁰ This relationship is developed further through a discussion centred on Sally Mann later in this thesis (see page 58).

book *Powers of Horror*, Julia Kristeva (1982:141) suggests that the abject emerges, “when the boundary between subject and object is shaken, and even when the limit between inside and outside becomes uncertain”. The abject needs regulation but it can never be completely contained. When this effort of confinement becomes unbearable, the abject radiates, seeps and contaminates beyond containment. The paupers exist in this realm. The proficiency with which death and the dying are isolated suggests that death itself is seen as abject let alone paupers who remain in limbo between death and internment. The question then might arise as to how complicit we could be in the ‘making’ of the street person or pauper, and therefore in the provision of ‘material’ for this exhibition.

COMPLICIT OR COMPLACENT?

Art critic Harold Rosenberg argues that, “the culture of any society at any moment is more like the debris, or ‘fall-out’, of past ideological systems, than it is a system, a coherent whole” (Rosenberg in Turner 1974:14). Reinhardt, Edwards and Duganne (2006:8) recognise this and suggest that, “much of what is called ‘culture’ (in the West) has always involved elaborating the complex conventions and expressive forms that make suffering comprehensible and give it meaning.” Depictions of passed humans, even when presented as natural, but lamentable events, as in Sally Mann’s work, are not as far removed from depictions of pain, suffering and decay as at first they might seem. Reinhardt et al (2006:7) suggest that “scenes of affliction” are today so commonly mediated that without them “the contemporary image environment would be nearly unrecognizable.” Yet these scenes “are often formally striking or beautifully rendered: everyday, without much effort, one may come across exquisite images of other people’s suffering” (Reinhardt et al 2007:7). The images of paupers in my work may well find resonance with this statement since they intend to be unflinching and yet honest by depicting the faces of the deceased. The connection with the individual through photographing the face is a conscious strategy that does not try to avoid the fact that

despite important underlying issues of dignity and poverty, these are real people who, like everyone else, also led lives full of experiences, some pleasurable and some less so.

Despite Reinhardt's warning that "[t]here are certainly times or ways in which turning the suffering of another human being into a beautiful or formally elegant image seems somehow indecent" (Reinhardt in Reinhardt et al 2006:15), Sontag (2003:82) assures us that there remains "an obligation to 'examine'". For her, compassion is not enough if it lacks action (Sontag 2003). As "exploitative" as it may seem to "look at harrowing photographs of other people's pain in an art gallery" (Sontag 2003:107), Sontag (2003:105) warns that, "The frustration of not being able to do anything about what the images show may be translated into an accusation of the indecency of regarding such images, or the indecencies of the way such images are disseminated"

Edwards (2006:8) reveals this "traffic in pain" as having "numerous agents and multiple beneficiaries ... be they journalistic, entrepreneurial, or philanthropic", but despite these multiple points of endorsement "the images themselves exercise the real power to configure and constrain emotional response". This emotional response is seldom concrete of course. Time, ideology, politics and individuality are all, and always, at work so that "what appears at first to be a concern about a particular kind of picture, then, often turns out, on closer scrutiny, to be a fear of picturing" (Reinhardt et al 2006:10). The "numerous agents", then, track these anxieties and the fear of picturing does not limit itself to the single 'act' of seeing, for once seen it can always be 're-pictured', recalled, even if reshaped and reconstituted through the solicitation of available memory. What is important is that scenes of death, pain or suffering *are* seen, or are at least presented to be seen for the unseen is in danger of being ignored or lost. Through establishing an audience, since it is only an audience that can decide upon action, questions of accountability can begin to be asked.

That there is such a wealth of trade in these types of images, perhaps attests to the fact that some people do indeed act upon their conviction and do feel that there is something to be done. There are certainly “pitfalls” for the artist when “deal[ing] with the physical reality of death” (Heartney 2005:55) not to mention pain and suffering. In her article “The Forensic Eye”, Heartney (2005:55) poignantly sums up the dilemma:

If the images are too graphic artists risk being criticized on moral grounds—their work is accused of being morbid, voyeuristic and sick. A related complaint is ethical—here the artists are accused of defiling and disrespecting the dead. On the other hand, if the images are perceived as being too beautiful, they are said to romanticize death and remove its sting.

When photographers present their audiences with images of suffering, pain, trauma or the “aftermath” (Rugoff 1997:104) thereof, an invitation is made that is damning. In our quest as viewers to simplify by making sense we become spectators too (Sontag 2003). But photography is not always as noble as Sontag goes on to suggest: “Harrowing photographs do not inevitably lose their power to shock. But they are not much help if the task is to understand”. In an article centred on Sebastião Salgado titled “The Prophetic Act of Bearing Witness”, Puleo (2010:6) says those photographers who address the pain and misery of people by photographing them, “carry on the prophetic task of announcing and denouncing—announcing the human dignity of the other and denouncing those conditions that afflict the human community”. Sontag (1977:6) supports this sense of social duty when she says, “Even when photographers are most concerned with mirroring reality, they are still haunted by tacit imperatives of taste and conscience.” Sontag also quotes Clarence John Laughlin who suggests “the creative photographer ... imparts humanity to the inhuman world around him” (Laughlin in Sontag 1977:187).

Photographs of suffering are what link the real to, broadly speaking, the absence of humanity, its failure, or its compromise. This is achieved in part, via the object, the

photograph itself, and particularly when the object is profound²¹ (Scarry 1999) and therefore convicts. These images of pain, trauma, suffering and death, often seem to have an inherent plea that Perreault (Kadar, Perreault & Warley 2009:69) suggests steers us towards “honourable witnessing”. This “honourable witnessing” implies the action that Sontag requires but it is important to note the capacity for images to reach and connect via a complex series of exchanges between the subjects of photographs, their photographer, and the image. Perreault (Kadar et al 2009:69) is helpful in her take on these trade-offs: “These photographs are great and intentional gifts, made often at great cost to the giver”. Though she does not indicate specifically if the “giver” is subject or photographer or both, this cost she suggests is what yields the sought after “thick knowledge, the difficult knowledge that works with the immediacy of emotional reaction [horror, pity]²² through to a grasp of complex and contradictory realities” (Perreault in Kadar et al 2009:66). One of the results of these realities is the recognition that “reality is our responsibility” (Perreault in Kadar et al 2009:69) simply because we have been made aware of another’s experience. We know because they *are*, and we know because of the event that saw their experience being photographed.

In the next section I move away from issues of complacency, being complicit and “honourable witnessing” (Perreault in Kadar et al 2009:69) and reflect upon ethical and legal concerns with regard to representations of pain and suffering referenced by my photographic work. To highlight some of these concerns more clearly, I refer to the media for its efforts to govern the presentation of, sometimes problematic, content.

LAW, ‘LIFE’ AND THE MEDIA

The law as it stands in South Africa, and indeed most countries, does not bestow any rights upon the deceased. Similarly, judicial rights do not extend to the immediate or

²¹ The profound image is the image which is more than superficially meaningful. It resonates on a personal level, and cajoles and urges the viewer to do more than be indifferent.

²² Parenthesis in original text.

extended family members or acquaintances of the deceased. Thus, no legal framework exists that would protect the 'rights' of the deceased, since they are incapable of possessing any. Simply put, possession of life is a prerequisite for legal rights. Thus, a strong case can be made for paupers being the most vulnerable people on earth. The fact that they remain on earth and not in or beneath it (that is, they are victims of incomplete rites of passage) is again worth noting.

On the other end of the spectrum, and apparently presenting itself in opposition to the law, are the ethical considerations²³. Since ethics and the law are flexible, part of the intention for the artwork is to interrogate negotiated, but normative, constructions of 'acceptability'. As a starting point I will consider the legal and professional perspectives as they might apply to photojournalists since I have a history²⁴ in this discipline and I use the *South African Press Code of Professional Practice* (6 April 2001) to initiate discussion and to develop further arguments.

In clause 1.7 the *Press Code of Professional Practice* encourages the press to present reports, photographs and sketches relating to matters involving indecency and obscenity with due respect to the "prevailing moral climate". This intends to offer protection to the public – the media's 'watchdog' role of tradition, but through an honest lens of capitalist consumerism, members of the public become little more than punters. With this in mind, the question that needs to be asked centres on what exactly is meant by "prevailing moral climate", according to whom, where and even when? The illusive answers to these

²³ I say *apparently* as a simplified distinction made between ethics and law might consider that ethics are often individualised and personally navigated, whereas law is enshrined and defined, implying non-negotiation. However this is a paradox, as we know that so called 'democratic' law is always negotiable, the negotiability is *de facto* a prerequisite for 'fairness' and 'equality', hence lawyers and affiliated legal positions of representation. So the difference might only be that 'rightness' is debated or negotiated and decided upon, on your behalf when it comes to the law, whereas our ethics are constructed and composed by the individual. Seen in another way, power is diminished away from the individual being questioned legally, but power remains in the hands of the ethical decision maker.

²⁴ I hold a Bachelor of Journalism Degree and teach in the School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University.

questions lie outside of the scope of this thesis but the point I want to make is that it is within this, our present “prevailing moral climate” that street people die and decompose, often as paupers, in state mortuaries, a “prevailing moral climate” that allows for shunning, contempt and marginalization. Indeed, this is a “prevailing moral climate” that allows for abject poverty to not only exist but proliferate. Wollen calls this state of affairs “a radical desemanticization” where the “sense of a unified community and a welfare state” is being replaced by a “deregulated market and a philosophy of competitive individualism, in which civil rights are reconceptualised as consumer options, [and] in which winners win and losers lose” (Wollen in Rugoff 1997:27).

In clause 1.10 of the *Press Code of Professional Practice*, the press is required to respect the privacy of individuals, but recognises that the right to privacy may be overridden where there is a “legitimate public interest”. Images, our primary interest here, can then be legitimated and disseminated through negotiating this concern. Hence, we can see how the journalism mantra “if it bleeds it leads” can take purchase. From a capitalist perspective and playing into a position of voyeuristic morbidity one might translate this as “if it repels it sells”. So perhaps, the greater the danger of an accusation of disrespect or lack of privacy, the more careful (or creative?) the media must be. Said in another way, the greater the potential for impact or resonance, the stronger the motivation to justify its use and representation.

This is an unstable state in which established boundaries are challenged and tested through the decision to publish and the justification to do so. There is risk involved in crossing and in coming close to these social guardrails, but the importance of the challenge is both necessary and desirable “in all tolerably orderly societies” lest “the proliferation of taboos that hedge in and constrain” become claustrophobic (Turner 1974:14).

Clause 1.11 of the *Press Code of Professional Practice* provides wide discretion in matters of taste but stresses that this should not justify lapses of taste so repugnant that they bring the freedom of the press into disrepute or that are extremely offensive to the public. The concern here seems to be the inadvertent or accidental 'seeing' by an unwilling public, unannounced and unsolicited as in for example, front pages of newspapers or images flashing up on television screens. In a gallery space, of course there is a very different type of interaction that takes place between works and a viewer, one that rests upon the general willingness to enter and therefore acquiesce to view what is being offered. I discuss this further with regard to Sally Mann's work, which helps to illuminate scenes of everyday domestic life in her exhibition *Immediate Family* (1992), and scenes of the forbidden and hidden in *Matter Lent* (2000–2001).

BODY FARMS AND BODY WORLDS

The poor, as a socio-political group that suffers, is not difficult to accept, but I now turn to the physical and representational use of the deceased in art. The cadaver as a source of inspiration as well as artistic material is not a particularly recent development (Jones 2011:18) and in this section I hope to demonstrate some disequilibrium between academic notions of acceptability and practice as apparently evidenced by the everyday. I also look at the shadow areas that lie between beneficence, non-maleficence and professionalism, pertaining to the cadaver generally, but with attention given to the street person and pauper as referenced by my photographic work. I begin by outlining the historic contribution made by the cadaver outside of art, and then develop commentary referring specifically to work by Sally Mann and Gunther van Hagen. By doing so I also introduce a discussion developed in the next chapter that draws upon science and forensic investigation.

The body, especially that of the deceased pauper, has a history tied closely to medicine (and specifically anatomy), especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The

need for ethical treatment of human subjects living and dead is both necessary and important, especially when the track record appears so tainted. Historically speaking the scientific pursuit of human form and function has given rise to heinous incidents of body snatching, grave robbing and even commissioned murder (Jones 2011:18). Describing the far from ethical emergence of anatomy as a modern discipline, Jones (2011:18) notes that “One does not have to be a professional bioethicist to be appalled at some of the practices, sponsored and even undertaken by senior members of the anatomy establishment”.

The deceased bodies of the poor and criminals have been prime candidates for work by scientist and artist alike, and the 1832 Anatomy Act in England was important in that it introduced and formulated “the concept of unclaimed bodies, since these were viewed as the most acceptable source of bodies” (Jones 2011:18). Today there is a philanthropic popularity in donating one’s own body to science but it is not anything new. Even at the time of passing the Act there “had been a steady stream of bequests” (Jones 2011:18), but as Jones (2011:19) notes, “Quite simply *poverty* became the sole criterion for dissection”. Since this remains relevant today, weight is added to the claim that paupers (as in the unclaimed deceased) form the most vulnerable segment of society.

To question and monitor the ethics regarding the use of cadavers seems responsible, but this is a change from times when to question the ethics surrounding the use of unclaimed cadavers would have been odd. It is as if the unclaimed-ness vetoed any serious concern. Today it is the donated body that seems to hold irreproachable ethical esteem. In the next section I continue within a framework that questions dignity by looking briefly at Sally Mann’s work at the University of Tennessee’s forensic research centre but also draw in the very different work, intentions and considerations of, and concerning Gunther von Hagen.

Part of Sally Mann's *What Remains* exhibition²⁵ (2004) includes work that she did as a result of time spent at the University of Tennessee's anthropological facility at Knoxville where decomposition of the human body is studied scientifically for forensic purposes. This is perhaps the only apparent exception, an important one, in which human decomposition is not only permitted, but is viewed closely, seen and studied intricately. This exception is arguable of course as I am sure a strong case can still be made for adequate fulfilment of ritual, for when people donate their bodies to science this is in itself a process of preparation and approval. However, the ethical and legal security suggested by a donated cadaver remains problematic as there often seems no guarantee that the bodies viewed are indeed donated, let alone donated for display.

The safety offered by Van Gennep's (1960) rites of passage, even on a personal level, and the resultant disequilibrium when this is disrupted, is evident in Mann's dilemma concerning the dignity of her 'Body Farm' subjects as well as the heated debates surrounding Gunther von Hagen's plastination techniques. Both Mann and Von Hagen re-present the deceased body to an audience, and both have had to consider the implications of a donated corpse versus a cadaver of uncertain origin. Von Hagen's work, discussed in more detail shortly, has entered a much broader and far more fierce public debate unlike Mann's musing on a mostly personal level. Referring to cadavers at the 'Body Farm' (Fig. 6, 7 and 8), the subjects of both scientific and artistic investigation, Mann says, "In life, those people had pride and privacy... . So I expected critics to ask: is this right? I was ready with my answer: all these people had signed release forms. ... But then I discovered that some of the corpses were street people who hadn't signed releases."²⁶ For Mann, this re-opened an ethical dilemma that she had presumed to have dealt with. The dilemma occurs based on the assumed direct consent, given before

²⁵ *What Remains* is the title of a body of work and also gives its name to her 2004 exhibition opened in Washington. The body of work comprises over sixty portraits of her grown children, now in their twenties, "pushed to the front of the picture plane and enlarged to the point where their faces exceed the nearly 50 x 40-inch frame" (Ravenal 2010:40).

²⁶ Morrison, B. 29 May 2010. <http://www.photographsdonotbend.co.uk/2010/05/more-on-sally-mann>. Accessed on 12 February 2011.

death, by the individuals she is photographing. Somehow, knowing that her subjects were in full agreement makes the undertaking easier for Mann. When this is disrupted, so too is her sense of justification, and therefore accountability and privilege. Whilst what is *not* seen has a direct, but sometimes subtle impact on what *is* seen in the image, so knowing has a direct but subtle impact on what *is* not known, in this case by the photographer. Knowing that the cadavers being photographed had not all signed releases means that questions concerning them, their lives and histories could not be answered. 'Who were these people?' Mann might have asked. In a similar way this was a question that always plagued me during my work, but one whose answer, I had to acknowledge could not be found no matter the amount of dedicated investigation or photographic attention.

Much attention has been afforded to Sally Mann's series of images emerging out of the University of Tennessee Forensic Anthropology Centre, but the precursor for this work began more than a year earlier with the death of her beloved greyhound Eva in 1999. The dog died on Valentine's Day and Mann buried it in a large metal mesh container in the woods on her property (Ravenal 2010:71). About fourteen months later she exhumed the body and began photographing the traces and vestiges that remained of her pet. Small bones were collected and arranged like prizes after an archaeological dig (Fig. 24) and a toe with dirt-encrusted claw and wisps of hair is laid out like evidence on a forensic table (Fig. 25). The pieces were collected, recorded and photographed, carefully and scientifically, allowing Mann to contemplate "the beauty and efficiency with which nature assimilates the body once life is over"²⁷. By the time Mann moved from Eva to the Body Farm her 'home science' project with her dog had given way to a 'real' science that was larger and deeper, and with real people. It was no longer in the same league as her previous backyard experimentation.

²⁷ Wall Text. http://www.corcoran.org/exhibitions/PDFs/Mann_wall_text.pdf. Accessed on 12 February 2011.

For Mann the people at the University of Tennessee's Forensic Anthropology Centre are 'real' and they remain so throughout her photographic process. In an interview in 2004 Mann tells Steven Cantor that, "At the heart of *What Remains* is the question of decay and, I suppose if you get right down to it that's at the heart of any portrait as well"²⁸. She says "it was the human-ness that remained in spite of death ... they still had stories to tell and I wanted to hear them." This is a very different experience to that of photographing her greyhound, which Mann says was odd, "sometimes just the sight of a tiny tuft of Eva's hair would cause me to break into tears, but my rational mind told me that these things were not Eva, they were just objects, things divested of all life."²⁹ Mann's rational mind it seems was less helpful when it came to the hair colour, tattoos, lost limbs,³⁰ string bracelets and bobby pins³¹ of her Body Farm subjects. There is a subtle juxtaposition here that is worth closer inspection. The dog is known and personal to Mann, its death causing her grief, and yet Mann is equipped to mollify herself regarding the inevitability and finality of death. The deceased human bodies from Tennessee provide a "gritty meditation on the mechanics and aesthetics of mortality"³² but she is less easily placated. These cadavers are unknown to her and yet they maintain their individuality: "there still was the presence of their lives"³³ and Mann is unable to shake her affinity like she could with Eva. It is a personal dilemma, but an undoubtedly shared one, that speaks to an assumed common humanitarian thread that must be recognised as connective for, and of people. This is perhaps why Woodward's labelling of Sally Mann as a "confessional documentarian"³⁴ is not completely off the mark, having resonance in the early *Immediate Family* (1992) work as well as in, and stretching through, *Matter Lent* (2000–2001), *Last Measure* (2001-2002) and her *Untitled*

²⁸ <http://www.americansuburbx.com/2009/04/interview-dialogue-between-steven.html>. Accessed on 11 May 2011

²⁹ <http://www.americansuburbx.com/2009/04/interview-dialogue-between-steven.html>. Accessed on 11 May 2011

³⁰ *Ibid*

³¹ <http://www.timeout.com/london/art/articles/1265/sally-mann>

³² http://www.mocp.org/collections/permanent/mann_sally.php. Accessed on 5 June 2011

³³ <http://www.americansuburbx.com/2009/04/interview-dialogue-between-steven.html>. Accessed on 11 May 2011

³⁴ Woodward, R. <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/09/27/magazine/the-disturbing-photography-of-sally-mann.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>. Accessed on June 2011

Body Farm images in *What Remains* (2004)³⁵. This is a positioning where ill-fitting objective traditions of authenticity can meet with the individual subjectivity of the artist as personal, but also experiential narrator.

That the use of donated corpses is ethically principled can also be demonstrated by the continued debate surrounding 'plastination' exhibitions (Fig. 9). Gunther von Hagens developed a technique in the late 1970s that replaces body tissues with liquid silicon rubber³⁶. The plasticised corpses do not rot or deteriorate in any way and the tissues and organs maintain their original colour, structure and texture, apparently right down to the microscopic level (Linke 2005:13). This process has an immortalising effect in that decomposition of the body is cancelled and the plastinated corpse is permanent and imperishable. Thus, the volatile liminal period between death and burial, recognised as being so dangerous for society, is prolonged, apparently indefinitely (Van Gennep 1960). Another important function is performed by the process of plastination when "the exhibited specimens are not human bodies but lifeless matter, material objects. Thus legally defined as a 'thing', the plastinated corpse loses its humanity" (Linke 2005:18).

Starting in the late 1990s, these exhibitions presented around the world have become massive multi-million dollar industries³⁷. The exhibitions, especially at their onset, made use mostly of "flayed and preserved Chinese bodies" (Perkins 2010:1) in a variety of lifelike artistic poses as well as collaged presentations of bodies and body parts. At first all the bodies were allegedly either donated, unclaimed or unidentified cadavers but further investigative reporting revealed that this might not be the case³⁸. When one of Von Hagens' employees left and set up a rival company a number of court cases ensued

³⁵ *Matter Lent* and *What Remains* is discussed later in more detail.

³⁶ Roach, J. <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/pf/67077955.html>. Accessed on 27 April 2011.

³⁷ One such company, Premier Exhibitions, Inc is in opposition to Von Hagens and is traded on the NASDAQ under the prefix PRXI. Perkins (2010:1) reveals that the company's "fiscal report for the first financial quarter of 2008 indicates that 80% of its 8.2 million dollar gross profit margin was generated from its nine macabre expositions touring Argentina, Spain, and the USA."

³⁸ See abc News' 20/20 report. <http://abcnews.go.com/print?id=5528543>. Accessed on 27 April 2011.

and one of the results, important for this discussion, is the fact that neither company was able to guarantee that the bodies used and prepared for the exhibitions were wilfully donated, thus casting doubt on the cadavers being legally obtained.

*Bodies ... the Exhibition*³⁹, has been met with public protests in every city where it has been launched (Perkins 2010:1) and given China's poor human rights record there is concern that some of the corpses for this and similar exhibits, may be those of "executed prisoners punished for acts of political and civil disobedience" (Perkins 2010:2). The position taken by Von Hagens and like-minded promoters rest upon the scientific, anatomical and medical value of the exhibition, and it is worth highlighting this easy and sought after relationship between art, science and education. Kemp and Wallace (2000:150) note that current art practice that affiliates with science is at odds with historical relationships "of the Renaissance, Baroque and Enlightenment when fruitful collaborations between artists, draughtsmen and scientists produced rich fields of shared imagery." Instead of a collective of informed material they suggest that contemporary work separates itself by virtue of representing "the human body almost exclusively within the contexts for the display of 'Art'" (Kemp & Wallace 2000:150).

To address the ethical conflict arising out of plastination the educational value of the preserved corpses is pitted against bodies and body parts subsumed within the "(dis)empowering politics of commodification" (Perkins 2010:3). This discourse "obfuscates the social ...conditions under which the people on display lived and eventually died" (Perkins 2010:3). For Perkins (2010:4) the plastination and exhibition of "bodies that don't matter" denies the subjects of their experience as once living, *experiencing* people and is akin to society "cannibalising its own global underclass". It is the aestheticisation of the corpse that is key, otherwise, as da Fonseca says "it becomes

³⁹ *Bodies... The Exhibition* was first launched in 2005 and is run by Premier Exhibitions (see footnote 21, on page 23) and although they present and promote similar exhibits they are not affiliated with, or related to Von Hagens' *Body Worlds*. *Body Worlds* was first presented in Tokyo, Japan in 1995.

an object of revulsion and obstructs the unemotional gaze” (da Fonseca in Linke 2005:17). Von Hagens himself also recognises this when he says, “the aesthetic pose helps to dispel disgust” (Von Hagens in Linke 2005:17).

Almost wherever death is evoked and especially when the actual deceased body is referenced, a challenge is made upon immortality in ways that a constructed ‘false’ body might not. When confronted with our mortality, fear of death is triggered but I suggest it is not solitary in its presentation. Perhaps it might be better described as a ‘package of fear’. Klara Behrens was one of 24 terminally ill people who agreed to have pre and post death portraits taken by photographer Walter Schels. She said only a few weeks before dying, “I’m not afraid of death. The only thing that frightens me is the process of dying. You just don’t know what actually happens” (Martin 2008:1495). You also have no control over what happens and for some this might be even more horrifying. Perhaps this is why we yearn so much for dignity and are offended by its failure. With knowledge of one’s immanent death, comes the anticipation of entering the dangerous liminal space between death and destiny. This is disempowering and alerts us to the fact that there is little useful advice to be garnered concerning the *experience* of that next episode, if, indeed there is one. This is why dignity and its transference upon the deceased by the living is so crucial. Kastenbaum (2004:217) alerts us to “the principle that every human is one of our kind, and that any person’s death is an opportunity to express whatever humanity we possess”. Just as death confronts us with our own mortality so dignity is the only thing we can hope for when death arrives for us. Since death is unavoidable is it really *it* that we fear? Do we suspect that death jeopardises our dignity? If it does, then one of the methods we might suggest as being capable, even if not always successful, towards reinstating dignity is through photography. Stubblefield draws a useful distinction between “other imitative arts” and photography whose “mechanical image provides a veritable continuation of the subject of the photograph” (Stubblefield in Kadar et al 2009:169). Thus, in Schels’ portraits, we might recognise the “spiritual intensity that is

ecumenical”, suggestive of his success in fixing “the basic humanity” of his subjects (Martin 2008:1496). Even though she is not specifically referring to Schels’ work, Sontag (1977:15) seems to agree:

Most subjects photographed are, just by virtue of being photographed, touched with pathos. An ugly or grotesque subject may be moving because it has been dignified by the attention of the photographer. A beautiful subject can be the object of rueful feelings, because it has aged or decayed or no longer exists.

The capacity for photography to state, reinstate or deny, especially as it relates to representation and dignity, is a key concern in my next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION, MEMORY AND THE FORENSIC AESTHETIC

If death can be seen as a challenge to dignity, then representations of death might also be viewed in a similar manner. One way to deal with discontent is to try to understand it. The degree to which we might apply ourselves to an understanding of death is often in direct relation to its proximity to us. Often, it is only when death, loss or suffering is thrust upon us unavoidably, being brought to bear on us directly that we engage on a deeper level with mortality and individuality.

Ken Arnold recognises the “common intellectual curiosity” that exists between art and science and notes the learning that emerges from the shared approach of “taking things apart, making pictures of them, pointing at them and reciting their names” (Arnold in Kemp & Wallace 2000:166). This, he says, is where “the ritualization of knowledge and the visualization of ourselves begins” (Arnold in Kemp & Wallace 2000:166). In this chapter, I start with a discussion on the apparent contradiction of photography and the struggle it yields by purporting to offer ‘the real’, factuality undisputed, but which is in fact harshly flawed with a tendency to disguise, redefine, even remove ‘the real’. The fallacy of seeing as instructed by photography has an inescapable historical legacy that is addressed and discussed alongside the ‘nefarious’ camera and its operator. This chapter will consider the truth claims made by, and on behalf of photography, balancing this imbued status with representation and the project of the photographer. My own photographic work, as well as the work of Sally Mann, forms a reference point for these discussions. The transformation from ‘real’ to representation, as acted upon by the photograph(er), has social implications, especially on memory, experience and meaning, and on both an individual and collective level. A discussion drawing on Roland Barthes concerning meaning-making via the *punctum* helps to introduce the forensic aesthetic

as an approach that highlights the accumulation of apparently disparate fragments, on the quest to understanding some larger 'picture'.

The power of the photograph to occupy a place of veracity whilst, at the same moment, merely being a simple representation of it has been a frequent subject of discussion since the camera began to be popularised from the 1830's onwards (Sontag 1977:3). Photography's Cinderella-like contribution to theories of meaning-making is a malleable inheritance, but one that is inescapably historic. Mnookin (1998:4) notes two competing paradigms governing the understanding of the photograph emerging out of the second half of the nineteenth century: "One emphasized its ability to transcribe nature directly, while the other highlighted the ways in which it was a human representation". The photograph, from the first perspective is seen as "an especially privileged kind of evidence; from the second perspective, the photograph was seen as a potentially misleading form of proof" (Mnookin 1998:4). This opposition still haunts photography today and is further complicated by the advent and continued advancements of digital imagery. Photography is not what it seems. It is evidential but it is also extractive. It always *is*, but is never *only*. Barthes (2000:6) summarises the dilemma: "Whatever it grants to vision and whatever its manner, a photograph is always invisible: it is not it that we see". Photographic meaning, after all is "hardly produced in isolation" (Reinhardt in Reinhardt et al 2006:25). A photograph is not only a *present* representation, it is also a clipping from *another*, now dated, presence, and thus, "All photographs... take their meaning only from the broader economy of statements and discourses" (Reinhardt in Reinhardt et al 2006:25).

Sontag (2003:6) says that the notion of truth-entrenched photography is what imbues photographic images with their authority, interest and seductiveness. The deception in any photograph is that this interest is urged onwards just as much by what is *not* there, what is *not* shown, that which is hidden, perhaps lost. Indeed the subtractive, taken-out-

of-the-world, trace-like nature of photography means that the volume of 'absence' is always dominant. "But the photographic image, even, to the extent that it is a trace ... cannot be simply a transparency of something that happened. It is always the image that someone chose; to photograph is to frame and to frame is to exclude" (Sontag 2003:46). It follows then, that what is left out must work against the authoritative 'truth' so easily ascribed to a photograph. In addition though, that which is depicted remains only depicted, and can never be present. Or as Jean-Paul Sartre (1992:447) puts it, "the image is just the way an absent or nonexistent object presents itself". This is why photographing and presenting images of otherwise absent paupers is important to my work. Furthermore, by photographically considering the pauper's portraits alongside other 'softer' images of objects, like shoes (Fig. 10) and synthetic flowers (Fig. 11 and 12), the line between object and subject and the treatment thereof by the photograph(er) begins to blur.

This complication says nothing of the personal failings of the viewer. Elkins (1996: 95) acknowledges the individual's "inconstant seeing" that is "clotted with sexuality, desire, convention, anxiety, and boredom". He says, "No seeing sees everything, and no skill or practice can alter that" (Elkins 1996:95). In this way the photographic image begins to stand in for experience and parodies reality, consuming it and then interring it. Images, "as one of the principal devices for experiencing something, for giving an appearance of participation", Sontag (2003:10) suggests, "now provides most of the knowledge people have about the look of the past and the reach of the present" (Sontag 2003:4). The photograph assists us in thinking we *know*, and thus seems to be at least partially responsible for permitting distance between viewer and viewed. Turning this around we might say that the photograph is empowering in that it allows the viewer to negotiate their personal proximity—unlike immersion in the event. Frascina and Harris (1999:21) note the ethical and moral implications of this "sequestration of experience" when they suggest that "for many people, direct contact with events and situations which link the

individual lifespan to broad issues of morality and finitude are rare and fleeting”. Thus, photographic images “make up and thicken, the environment we *recognise* as modern” (Sontag 2003:3) and in this way they shape our perceptions and memory, helping also to shape personal ‘knowledge’ and ideologies along the way. Mann (1992:3)⁴⁰ echoes these views by acknowledging that “Memory is the primary instrument, the inexhaustible nutrient source” by which “photographs open doors to the past but ... also allow a look into the future” albeit in her opinion, a “withering perspective of the past [and] the predictable treacheries of the future”.

It seems though, that we are only able to “*recognise*” (Sontag 2003:3). Upon viewing an image we *know* that what we hold in the hand (or increasingly view as a collection of illuminated pixels) is not the actual worldly thing and yet it seems to be forgotten in the moment of viewing. This knowing is never far away, evidenced by the fact that stressing this point seems elementary, but it is never foremost either. This is the function of the “photograph being an illogical conjunction between the *here–now* and the *there–then*” (Barthes 1981:44).

Images as “slices” (Sontag 1977:69; Kemp & Rheuban 1990:112) can still only ever be the merest of representations of ‘the world’. “Truths ‘told slant’” Mann (1992:3)⁴¹ calls them, citing Emily Dickinson. Yet the power of images to furnish ‘evidence’, and therefore authority in the form of knowledge is difficult to shake. But what is the ‘evidence’ presented by an image? For one thing the image is evidence of what was there, and secondly what the photographer ‘saw’ given his or her “subjective selection of slices of reality” (Kemp & Rheuban 1990:112). It is a specific and personal appraisal of the photographer’s world (Sontag 1977). Sally Mann (1992:1)⁴² accounts for both positions in her foreword to *Immediate Family* (1992) relating how she found “a glass–

⁴⁰ Page numbers are my own.

⁴¹ Page numbers are my own.

⁴² Page numbers are my own.

plate negative picturing the cliffs in the 1800s. I printed it and held it up against the present reality, and the trees and caves and stains on the rock [were] identical". Broadly speaking, with or without the comparison (which in Mann's case, let us not forget, was a representation, of a representation, of a time eroded past), photography's historic truth-claim is to give us "an accurate and authentic view of the world" (Wells 2004:71). It is this position that forms the 'evidential' branch of debate, or what Duganne calls photography's "evidentiary and testimonial authority" (Reinhardt et al 2007). As noble as this might seem, photography as a collaborator with 'truth', especially scientific truth, can be a dangerous relationship. Consider, for example, phrenology, ethnophotography, other pseudo-sciences and their aftermath reaching especially into racialised studies and criminology.⁴³

MEMORY AND POSTHUMOUS PORTRAITURE

Responsible for driving much of the photographic endeavour is the impossible attempt to secure and therefore possess a present reality as it confronts time and the transience of life. Perhaps for insurance, Mann thinks of her *Immediate Family* work as her "aesthetic savings account" and to clarify she says, "...and I am not talking about money... those photos are worth much more"⁴⁴. Efforts to secure the photographic present, attempt to tame the future through memory by providing artefacts, evidence, from which the past can maintain a presence going into the future.

⁴³ See for example: Abrahams, Y. 1998. "Images of Sara Bartman—Sexuality, Race and Gender in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain" in R. Person & N. Chaudhuri (eds.) *Nation, Empire, Glory: Historicizing Gender and Race*. Bloomington, IND: Indiana University Press; Butchart, A. 1998. *The Anatomy of Power: European Constructions of the African Body*. London: Zed Books; Callaway, H. 1993. "Purity and Exotica in Legitimizing the Empire. Cultural Constructions of Gender, Sexuality and Race," in T. Ranger and O. Vaughan (eds.) *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa*. Basingstoke, Hampshire Macmillan; Iles, C. & Roberts, R. (eds.) 1997. *In Visible Light: Photography and Classification in Art, Science and The Everyday*. Oxford, Museum of Modern Art Oxford; Gilman, S. L. 1985. "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Towards an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature", *Critical Inquiry*, 12:204–242; Gilman, S. 1985. *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness*. New York: Cornell University Press; Pieterse, J. 1992. *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture*. City: Yale University Press;

⁴⁴ Morrison, B. 29 May 2010. <http://www.photographsdonotbend.co.uk/2010/05/more-on-sally-mann>. Accessed on 12 February 2011.

However, even these artefacts are in danger of becoming unreliable as Mann acknowledges, “Sometimes I think the only memories I have are those that I’ve created around photographs of me as a child. Maybe I’m creating my own life. I distrust any memories I do have. They may be fictions too”⁴⁵. After all, as Torres (2008:158) reminds us, “Remembering is non-consensual; it is unfiltered and uncompromising. It does not need to be accurate in order to be true.” Today the desire to own or present semiotic stimulants in the form of a “bountiful hoard of archival material” (Kemp & Rheuban 1990:120), as a “hedge presumably against ... vanishing” (Mann 1992), is not only possible but immensely desirable. It is driven by the fear of having “no factual copy of the once-present reality” (Mann 1992). My work, centred around paupers is perhaps a way of dealing with the horror of what it must be like to not be known, to leave no memento. The pointlessness and finality of considering this possibility with regard to self might be overwhelming. My work then is a way of attempting to recognise or create evidence for life in the dangerous face of erasure.

Many authors, including Barthes and Sontag affirm the inescapable relationship between death and the photograph, not purely from a sense of progressive time but also with regard to the death of the subject. According to Sontag (1977:15) “Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time’s relentless melt.” Sontag asserts that photography is always infused with the nagging knowledge of physical absence, but at the same time maintains a memorable presence. This is why the *memento mori* is important. For Sontag (1977:15) “All photographs are *memento mori*. To take a photograph is to participate in another person’s (or thing’s) mortality, vulnerability, mutability”. She says that “Memory is, achingly, the only relation we can have with the dead” (Sontag 2003:115). The photograph becomes a memory placeholder, something to have and to hold, physical but only a trace of the represented

⁴⁵ <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/09/27/magazine/the-disturbing-photography-of-sally-mann.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>.

subject. This is inexorable and is what feeds and flavours memory. The photographic subject is *always* historic, for the moment of 'capture' renders it so, and the competition between actuality and memory is developed and burgeoned by time. Thus death is present in every image, even at the level of the moment, and competition arises between object, the photograph, and the subject of the photograph.

In Maltison's chapter titled "The Construction of the American Daguerrotype Portrait", he cites Halttunen who notes the conflict between object and memory. Halttunen says, "[i]n the nineteenth century, the dead vied with those who mourned them for iconographic attention, and often lost the contest"⁴⁶. Here, Kastenbaum (2004:146) makes an interesting connection between photography as evidence, producing an item and cherished memento, and the historic practice of New Caledonians. These families, he says, "once collected the skulls of their kin. It was the three dimensional family photo album of pretechnology". Apparently this practice, perhaps for similar reasons, also once occurred amongst Equatorial Africa's Fang people who, on their various movements, carried the skulls and other bones of important people in a cylindrical container made of bark⁴⁷.

Historically, from a Western perspective, the portrait is associated with wealth, class and importance "as a direct consequence of the rise of individualism, secularism, and the burgeoning of an affluent merchant class seeking status" (Ruby 1995:27). It should come as no surprise then, that photographers quickly "acquired, perpetuated and modified pictorial traditions" (Ruby 1995:27) already in use and especially by painters. Thus competing for the "human likeness market" (Ruby 1995:27), nineteenth century photographers were able to offer 'realistic representations' to individuals formally excluded due to prohibitive social status as well as cost. The cultural exchange between

⁴⁶ Maltison, B. <http://www.americandaguerreotypes.com/ch3.html>. Accessed on 20 April 2010

⁴⁷ <http://www.zyama.com>. The Fang people are also known as Mpangwe, Pahouin, Pamue or Pangwe and come from Gabon, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea.

artist and sitter was no longer limited only to the affluent and this meant that portraiture, using the camera as a method towards the sequestration of memory, became widespread and entrenched across a far broader spectrum of society.

Posthumous or mortuary portraiture, loosely referring to images of “the dying, death and funerals” (Ruby 1995:1) is traceable in Western societies to as far back as the fifteenth century and has been a common practice amongst many social classes and ethnic groups (Ruby 1995). Following in the tradition of painting, photographic mortuary and funeral portraiture is “as old as photography itself” (Ruby 1995:50) and, although associated predominantly with the nineteenth century, is still practiced today. Gone though is the painted portrait of the deceased, largely overwhelmed by the emergence of photography. Posthumous portraiture (Fig. 13) offers “a chance to both remember and accept that which is final” and a photograph can “provide the mourner with a private reminder of that which cannot be changed” (Ruby 1995:7). The desire for representations of likeness spoke directly to affluence and the need to preserve and promote it. Sitting for a painted portrait was once preferable but posthumous photographic portraiture, with its speed and accuracy, filled a gap and painting was unable to compete. This was especially important when unexpected deaths occurred and the duration required for the ‘sitting’ was necessarily abbreviated. Photographers could be summoned quickly and the ‘collection’ of the likeness secured. This process is important for its negotiated course of capital, as well as social exchange. Whilst photography was very influential in swelling the “likeness market” (Ruby 1995:27), it is important to note that some sections of society, whilst aspiring, still remained peripheral, excluded from the transaction. It goes without saying that those least able to engage were those that were poor. Reynolds Price observes “before 1860, exceedingly few human beings were wealthy enough to possess any skilful graphic suggestion of their

looks, at least not beyond what the present moment's mirror could tell them" (Price in Mann 1992:6)⁴⁸.

In due course, even the expertise of the posthumous portrait photographer edged towards becoming superfluous as cameras and picture making gained popularity and increasingly entered the homes of individuals other than the wealthy elite. Photography became less and less a pursuit of the wealthy. More cameras, in more homes, meant more pictures and more 'memories' being made. Very soon, with the "huge, ongoing hill of memorabilia" (Price in Mann 1992:6)⁴⁹ it became increasingly less likely that people would die without being photographed at some point. The individual photographic death portrait gave way to an increasing abundance of images depicting life.

In the next section I draw on Roland Barthes and the *punctum*, a useful juncture to turn towards the reading of specific images, as a means towards understanding the interconnectivity of images, individuals and memory.

THE PUNCTUM AND PRESERVATION

Noting the historic popularisation of photography Haverkamp (1993:258) says, "There is no better 'souvenir', it seems, than the self-made photographic picture, which is meant to preserve individual memories from individual moments of an individual life". In a digital age where the impact of mechanical reproduction has spilled beyond Walter Benjamin's concerns⁵⁰, 'individual' today can just as easily become viral, massively copied and distributed within moments. But it must surely remain the hope of any photographer to present a personal view that can strike a chord, be meaningful, in any shallow or deeply philosophical sense of the word. It is the theorising around Roland Barthes' notion of the

⁴⁸ Page numbers are my own.

⁴⁹ Page numbers are my own.

⁵⁰ See Walter Benjamin's work from the 1930s "The Work of Art in The Age of Mechanical Reproduction" translated by Harry Zohn in *Illuminations*, London: Jonathan Cape, page 219-253.

punctum that helps us to understand how meaningful connections might be generated outside of the didactic content of the image, thus being brought to bear upon our concerns with presence, absence, loss and meaning.

Barthes (1980:26) refers to the *punctum* as the “element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me”. He likens it to a wound or mark, “that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)” (Barthes 1980:27). According to Lury (1997:90), the *punctum* is “the point of sudden and strong emotion, of small trauma, which wounds”. Without directly alluding to Barthes, Elkins (1996:121) arrives within the same territory when he writes about, “the way that little pieces of pictures slowly press forward and tear into the fabric of what we see”. For Elkins (1996:121) his “vision is trapped in pockets of detail or flung away from impossible objects that I can never see”. The *punctum* is thus a pause that emerges in the mind of the viewer somewhere between observation and contemplation, it is “the unexpected ‘small wound’, sting or cut that disturbs the conventional intelligibility” of the image (Lury 1997:88). In a sense we are “charmed by the insignificant detail [and] addicted to incongruity” (Sontag 1977:99).

The capriciousness of the *punctum* is a reader–centric affair that is instigated by the image but is “a consequence of [a] relation of suggestion between the objectively mediated image that anticipates and the viewing subject who hesitates” (Lury 1997:90). Perhaps this is why Elkins (1996:95) concludes “nothing is available for full leisurely inspection” whilst Game, in Lury’s (1997:88) chapter “Become What You Are” suggests that the *punctum* “disturbs the opposition between immediacy and mediation, presence and absence, subject and object, life and death”. The image becomes a potential trigger that sets off a referential succession of personalised cognitive activity; memories, experiences, desires and expectations. Thus, the experience of viewing “need not be equated with presence” (Lury 1997:88). The adequacy of the image rests upon the

power of the *punctum* to infuse, to suggest, to elicit already present subjectivities in the observer. The existence of personal biographies ensures that a “corresponding off–frame” (Lury 1997:90), all that is not didactically contained within the image’s borders, is summoned. This multiplicity, Lury (1997:88,103) acknowledges is responsible for the “unpredictable effect of the *punctum*” and ensures that the tiniest detail possesses “a power of expansion”. The *punctum*–informed perspective means that the viewer’s mediation, poised but loaded, becomes kinetic upon reading.

Herein lies evidence of the practitioner’s capacity to catalyse memories, to re–surface them and thus “accord value” (Sontag 2003:28) on an individual level via the resultant image and its presentation. Anne Wilkes Tucker says of Mann’s images, “[t]hey are not plain documents, but catalysts for the viewer’s imagination. They evoke rather than direct. They provoke rather than lead. And sometimes, they disturb rather than calm” (Tucker in Ravenal 2010:171). It is this multiplicity of readings and audiences that lends itself to “thicken[ing] the environment” that Sontag (2003:3) speaks about.

In her *Immediate Family* series, Mann mixes orchestrated portraits of her children with apparent carefree spontaneity all anchored in the serene and seductive rural existence of Shenandoah Valley in Lexington, Virginia. At times solemn, even ominous, her portraits remain infused with combinations of innocence and ambiguity, “nostalgia” and “hidden danger”⁵¹. Despite, or perhaps because of Mann’s hand in the (re)construction of the domestic scene, authenticity, even innocence, is lubricated. These scenes are domestic, not civic in their presentation and therefore might feel familiar at some level. Since the work of the *punctum* upon a viewer is always personal it is impossible to dictate or anticipate but from the two examples of *The Wet Bed* 1987 and *Jessie Bites* 1985, I suggest how the *punctum* might abruptly pierce the viewer, emerging first out of

⁵¹ Woodward, R. B. 1992. The disturbing photography of Sally Mann. In *New York Times Magazine*. <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/09/27/magazine/the-disturbing-photography-of-sally-mann.html?src=pm.<04/05/2011>>. Accessed on 5 June 2011.

the didactic content of the image, to then be carried and tossed by the personal experiences of the viewer.

The personal experience that is ensured by the work of the *punctum* must be balanced against the loss of such an encounter. Since the experience is both as a result of the individuality of the viewer and the didactic presentation within the image, it follows that some images will not be as poignant. Indeed, most will fall into the wash of the mundane majority. Through further attention to this 'individuality' of the viewing experience I have arrived at two series of works that speak to the power of the *punctum* and simultaneously to the notion of meanings lost.

In my *Unmarked* series of images (Fig. 15, 16 and 17), fragments of perished plastic grave markers, as litter scattered amongst graves and blown onto fences, were collected as found objects. Formally part of a whole, the grave markers were evidential and erected as memorials, bearing inscriptions of names and dates. They were physical locators, providing proof of identity and place, but also confirmation of life (and therefore death). Where they once served to facilitate remembrance, duty and dignity, the plastic-on-zinc grave markers disintegrate and disperse, separating from their intended purpose and become unbound traces.

As degraded pieces of once meaningful grave markers, the *Unmarked* collection memorialises the absent and forgotten, but at the same time questions the ability to do so. The work is presented as an assembly of about three hundred⁵², 18 x 20 cm individual images arranged in rows. The scale of the work as a whole (Fig. 14), and being made up of many unique pieces (Fig. 15, 16 and 17) speaks to the distinctiveness of the individual within a shared social order, but also the inevitability, unavailability and

⁵² Final numbers of images will be decided upon during final hanging given the relationship of the work to the space and other artworks.

abundant capacity for nature to reclaim its own through death and deterioration is also suggested. My approach in this series of my work is in line with Lury's (1997:84) opinion concerning a "pinboard" method which he suggests, "evokes a collage of affiliations, in which the representation of self is produced by and within the activities of the present".

Collected from the cemetery and photographed individually, some significance, even value, is reinstated through the grave markers and towards the people that were once identified and signified at their burial site. This transference is achieved not only through "the attention of the photographer" (Sontag 1977:15), but also by the photographic studio as a chosen setting⁵³. The product is the photograph, an object that attests at least to the encounter. Sontag assures us that "Photographs are, of course, artefacts" (Sontag 1977:69), that is, a human made object especially one that relates to and forms a record of the past⁵⁴. But she insists that there is more to their appeal than that, as photographs "also seem, in a world littered with photographic relics, to have the status of found objects—unpremeditated slices of the world" (Sontag 1977:69). Though alluding to the mechanical nature of the camera, the result of which seems to be an "unpremeditated slice", Sontag's language is reminiscent of Roland Barthes' *punctum*.

The many individual photographic relics in my *Unmarked* series, hanging together most likely in a grid, are united by proximity and past purpose. Individually photographing the fragmented and perished plastic grave markers speaks to individuality of the people buried, but also to the promises and messages made upon the grave markers: "our dearest"; "beloved", "in loving memory"; "remembered". Forming a new body in my work, they collectively speak to the common theme of the exhibition; loss, memory and abandonment. Collectively also, these shards of headstones can also generate personalised meaning in the manner of Roland Bathes' *punctum*. Individual pieces of the

⁵³ The choice of a studio setting and its pertinence to my work has already been discussed. (see pages 39 - 43)

⁵⁴ The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English. 1990.

whole stab at the viewer's attention in an "unpremeditated" (Sontag 1977:69) exchange of fragmented names, words and symbolically charged imagery. In this sense meaning is both evoked and attributed by the work and viewer alike. This 'kinetic exchange', is evocative and unavoidably personal⁵⁵. The personal and the individuality that is suggested in my *Unmarked* series, with the suggestion of unity through loss evoked by volume and number, is in contrast to the troubled solitude of my series of images titled *Unnamed*.

Unnamed is a series of my photographs that identify places void of any attempt towards a process of memory making. The deteriorated signs of memorialisation in my *Unmarked* series, gives way to works which identify the eventual place of burial for paupers. The *Unnamed* series consists of black and white images showing the last resting places of infant paupers, buried by the state in unmarked graves (Fig. 18 and 19). At these places there are no grave markers and in time the disturbed earth is smoothed over and reclaimed. The photographs do not reference the specificity of location and whilst deliberately ambiguous, the images of burial sites speak to the transience of life, the solitude of death, and the permanence of loss. In my sequence of pauper graves, the images are photographed from directly above suggesting a dominating, omnipotent view. The view however might appear to be harsh and angry as the earth's surface is seemingly scarred and scratched, grass blades and soil shards interrupt each other, perhaps suggesting a stellar expanse or a microscopic visceral scene. Scale is thus deceptive, further complicating the reading. The places depicted in *Unnamed*, show where Van Gennep's (1960) "rites of passage" were finally exercised and the 'evidence' of their completion becomes folded within the photographs. The evidence of life, brief as it was, is contained beneath the soil and the eradication of its trace is ominous.

⁵⁵ On a personal level for example, I cannot ignore the image showing "68" for this is the number of the single house that I grew up in and where my parents still live. Also, I am drawn to, but cannot ignore the deception involved in another piece that isolates the letters "EMO" and thus suggests the contemporary slang terminology for an emotionally vexing, problematic or strange individual, as in 'emo-kid'.

In the next section I look more closely at traces and the gathering of 'evidence' in the form of fragments that together, appear to build conclusiveness. The scientific forensic approach to gathering and seeing finality is juxtaposed with the deliberate looseness and open-endedness of the forensic aesthetic. I begin my investigation by outlining what the forensic aesthetic entails, before employing it as a strategy for deeper contextualisation of the themes in my work.

FORENSIC AESTHETIC

As the term suggests, the forensic aesthetic⁵⁶ is drawn from, or inspired by, forensic investigation. In many ways the forensic aesthetic toys with the science of forensics, which assumes that all scenes are explicable through diligent, methodical accumulation and interpretation of evidence. However, the forensic aesthetic is deliberately inconcise and suggests that conclusiveness is a myth. Forensic investigation accumulates clues from assumed prior events, brings them into closer proximity so that they might collaborate and inform each other. The forensic aesthetic on the other hand presents only debris and traces and so remains a fragmentary and incomplete picture of a greater narrative. It is about fragments from a diverse narrative that can only inevitably reference a deficient scene. By borrowing from crime scene photography, the forensic aesthetic eschews the neutrality of forensics, evoking instead a "moral witness" (Wollen in Rugoff 1997:29). The danger is that the multiplicity of meaning that comes from looking facilitates fear through the disruption of conventional 'reality' (Rugoff 1997). In other words "one's reassuring belief in a moral and rationally ordered universe [is] rudely imperilled" (Rugoff 1997:68). The forensic aesthetic, according to Rugoff (1997), is defined less by artistic approach and more by the ways in which the work engages with and positions the viewer. When successful, the aesthetic "inevitably returns us to the larger scene and allows a reading in which formal and social issues" (Rugoff 1997:90)

⁵⁶ Reinhardt, Edwards and Duganne discuss the forensic aesthetic in "Beautiful Suffering" (2006), as does Rugoff in his curated exhibition "Scene of the Crime".

implicate the viewers, pointing them back to society to reassess the spectrum of their “daily encounters with the world” (Rugoff 1997:104).

The implication of the viewer through a “picture plane” that can become an “arena of evidence” (Rugoff 1997:66) is suggestive of the *punctum* since a fragment that might prove remarkable emerges out of the collective, demanding attention. In so doing it sits with us and sears. Out of the whole a shard jumps out, pierces and thus rises in importance. Likewise a trace might emerge from amongst others, thus revealing and reconstituting the viewing experience. Photography then has the power to present the *punctum* as well as to capture and perhaps hide traces that point inwardly back to a ‘real’. Both *punctum* and trace are spring-loaded but need the viewer to trigger the dialogue.

According to Ravenal (2010:182), “one of the signal impetuses of photography from the beginning has been the desire to preserve a trace of things that will disappear, or change beyond recognition”. Duganne (in Reinhardt et al 2006:59), however points to some limitations:

Photography’s ability to bear witness cannot be reduced to either a ‘trace’ of the real or even a ‘trace of a trace’ of the real. Instead, the evidentiary and testimonial nature of the medium depends on complex habits of observation and a set of assumptions and beliefs that continually shift according to the culture and interests of those who use and read them, as well as those who make them.

Reconstruction is imperative for clarity, but even as accumulated evidence, meaning remains enigmatic. The traces, fragments and debris never seem to be sufficient. Rugoff (1997:62) suggests that by employing the forensic aesthetic “it requires that the viewer arrive at an interpretation by examining traces and marks and reading them as clues”. Thus the “unseen history” of the activity under ‘investigation’, its aftermath, “embodies a

fractured relationship to time” and so is “haunted by an indeterminate past” (Rugoff 1997:62).

In the following section I examine the physical trace as both forensic proof and forensic aesthetic in relation to my photographic work. The enigmatic that is suggested by the forensic aesthetic is viewed alongside the deterioration of memory and the physical acts and objects that we deploy in order to combat time.

SHOE MARKS AND FORGOTTEN FLOWERS

In my own work I have, at times, drawn from the forensic aesthetic to further interrogate loss and neglect. In one section of work, images of discarded, cast-off shoes⁵⁷ (Fig. 10) are used as signifiers of and for socially abandoned people. The shoe’s connection to the body is obvious, but I use the shoe to metaphorically speak of the transient nature of social values within society. Morals, principles, ethics, and the like, are valued, but too often in an academic sense where their worth can be merely officious and without conviction. These values can just as easily be abandoned too. The shoe is evidence of life and metaphorically represents the pauper’s body. Both shoe and corpse can be thought of “not as a coherent whole but as a site of prior actions, a collection of parts that tell a story” (Rugoff 1997:86). Without evidence, however this “story” is in danger of being irretrievably lost. The trace collected becomes a puzzle piece, corroborated alongside other clues similarly retrieved on their way to making up the picture. A missed trace endangers the conclusive nature of the evidential body. Once a cared for and cherished personal object, the shoe is forsaken, its usefulness exhausted.

Similarly, pieces of synthetic grave flowers were also collected and photographed in a studio (Fig. 11 and 12). These pieces are fragments of whole ‘plants’ having long since been dismembered by the elements from their bouquets and wreaths. As once freshly

⁵⁷ These images of shoes were edited out of the final exhibition submission.

placed objects of memorialisation, 'planted' at the grave, they reference love, loss, community and responsibility. However over time they deteriorate, fragment and are redistributed, by the elements one can assume, from their point of placement. This process is similar for the pieces of zinc and plastic tombstones in my *Unmarked* series as well as for the old shoes. As a 'memory–marker' the flowers attest to a specific historic event, the death ('loss') of a loved one. The synthetic flowers placed at the gravesite stand in for real flowers and suggest vitality and the present. Through my images of old grave flowers history is evoked not only through their deterioration and perished state, but also by being photographed in a manner reminiscent of a botanical illustration⁵⁸. Meticulous record keeping, strongly associated with the Victorian era, was carried through to the sciences where evidence and proof of findings were secured through documentation. Thus the scientific act of collection and accumulation bares some reference as well and contrasts starkly with the lack of both memory and physical record of the pauper.

PAUPERS AND THE FOUND OBJECT

In the following section I draw some parallels between paupers and the found object as "an existing object—often a mundane manufactured product—[which is] given a new identity as an artwork or part of an artwork" (Atkins 1997:99)⁵⁹.

For part of my photographic submission I chose to juxtapose the portraits of the paupers with studio portraits of objects. The shoes were collected, removed and photographed in the more clinical and controlled location of a professional studio. When retrieved, I ensured that the shoes retained debris as evidence of the site where they lay disposed. Apart from this debris, the site of disposal (which becomes a sight of origin for me, as a

⁵⁸ See for example Arnold, M. (Ed.) 2001. *South African Botanical Art: Peeling Back the Petals*. Vlaeberg: Fernwood Press.

⁵⁹ Whilst there are interesting comparisons to be made, it is of course, not my intention to objectify paupers in any way.

photographer) is absent and remains inaccessible via the image. The forensic trace is at play in both the marks left by the wearer of the shoe, on the shoe itself and the detritus carried within, and upon the shoe and into the studio. The studio, as a place of capital exchange⁶⁰, both financial as well as social, contrasts with the dispossessed shoes and the lives of socially outcast street people and paupers.

There are other parallels that can be drawn between pauper and shoe though. As the shoes become found objects, so too the pauper is found. Through a two-way process of 'peripherisation'⁶¹, the street person inevitably becomes increasingly distanced physically, socially, even psychologically: sometimes all three, sometimes one more than another. There is a deterioration of bonds and a loosening of ties and accountability. The street person is distanced, thus marginalised and hidden, in both a social and geographical sense. Even physically street people exist on the margin, their own deterioration seemingly matching their physical surroundings which might be deemed treacherous and unfit for 'occupation'⁶². Within these liminal and divided spaces, the pauper deceased is discovered having died outside of the conventional places (hospitals, the home, etc.) and thus resembles a 'found object' to be collected and removed by officials. Dying this way brings with it a level of indignity. Quite simply it is not a way most people would choose to die⁶³. Removed to the 'safety' of the temporary mortuary space, the pauper is then worked upon, analysed and reinterpreted by morticians and undertakers who collect, corroborate, and confirm the evidence. Through aggregated effort the pauper's story can end, finally transcending its liminality.

⁶⁰ See pages 39-43 for a discussion on portraiture.

⁶¹ Meaning that a street person's ostracism might be as a result of internal, passive choices as well as actively through external discrimination by society.

⁶² Streets themselves are boundary markers, thus liminal spaces, that divide 'places of occupation' and 'areas traversed', crossed, navigated through, on one's way to somewhere else.

⁶³ For a revealing account of the indignity of death see George Orwell's essay "How the Poor Die" (1961:341-352) in which he deliberates over the 'natural' death of patient Numéro 57 in a Parisian hospital in 1929: "As I gazed at the tiny screwed-up face it struck me that this disgusting piece of refuse, waiting to be carted away and dumped on a slab in the dissecting room, was an example of "natural" death, one of the things you pray for in the Litany."

OBJECTS FOUND, SUBJECTS LOST

The scientific approach to pauper collection is echoed in the act retrieving shoes for photographing. There is a search involved (as opposed to a location given) that requires method, scrutiny and intent. Often found out of place, far from homes, in open fields and commonages the shoes are separate from the home and so rest at the periphery of another space (a field, a path, a fence). This is not dissimilar to the recovery of paupers who also die on the periphery. Both remain present, as an abandoned, but tenacious relic none the less. They stubbornly withhold their history. Until they are 'found' these narratives cannot be interrogated. We might glean some information given the evidence provided by the traces that remain with subject. In the case of a shoe we might reason that 'this shoe was worn by a large, male, labourer' since it is a sizable, steel-capped work boot, but in the mode of the forensic aesthetic we are forced to "speculatively piece together histories that remain largely invisible" (Rugoff 1997:62) should we wish to investigate further towards deeper understanding. The details remain lost however. Who was this person and where did he live? What did he do and what happened to him?

The forensic aesthetic competes with the "oblique and detached point of view" (Reinhardt et al 2006:61) of the photojournalist, and in so doing it challenges photography's, and especially photojournalism's, "special relationship to the real" (Reinhardt et al 2006:57). These types of images proclaim that all one needs to understand completely is what is presented, framed and contained within the image's border. Images like these propose not to lie, yielding only the facts, the 'what is', and not necessarily 'what is *a/so*'. This is due to the subtractive nature of photography. Unlike the additive process of painting in which one starts with a blank canvas and adds to it, photography's canvas is the world and photographers remove details from it. Critically speaking then, what is left out can often be as, if not more important than what is contained within the frame's edges.

If discovery is critical for the forensic aesthetic, then its connection to science and not just criminology becomes stronger. Rugoff (1997:62) argues that the forensic aesthetic, “Taken as a whole ... puts us in a position akin to that of [the] forensic anthropologist or scientist”. But the forensic aesthetic does not promise to reveal, instead it “prompts us ... to ask how a given situation came about, [and] to wonder what unseen circumstances produce[d] the evidence before us (Rugoff 1997:73). Arnold, in *Spectacular Bodies* also sees the connection between art and science which he sees as expressions of “common intellectual curiosity—the profound human desire to know things, which often starts with the possibility of envisioning” (Arnold in Kemp & Wallace 2000:166)⁶⁴. Vision is certainly important, but for creation or clarity, interrogation is needed and interrogation needs an object. In science especially, but in art too, there is a sense that the protagonist enquires, picks apart and ascertains, but the investigation, the methodology, is of a particular kind due to the distinctive characteristics of the object/subject⁶⁵.

In the next section I continue to consider science and the trauma of bodily invasion. I discuss some of my photographic work that resulted from time spent at a mortuary and I address the forensic alongside the overwhelming capacity for the camera to aestheticise. In doing so I draw further connections between science and art, discussing blood as a particularly diverse metaphor.

BLOOD AS METAPHOR

When investigating life through the “common intellectual” (Kemp & Wallace 2000:166) curiosities of either art or science we can expect some casualties to occur and some evidence of the event to remain. With this in mind I approached the mortuary space as a location where very obvious intrusion and investigations take place upon the human

⁶⁴ Sally Mann, as the subject of the next chapter, had a father “with deep artistic instincts”. He was also a country doctor (Ravenal 2010:182).

⁶⁵ Barthes (1980:13) tells us that “Photography transformed subject into object” and Sontag (1977:98) explains how, being true for photography generally and portraiture especially, it has a “strategy of turning living beings into things, things into living beings”.

body. Lifeless, the body becomes a site of scientific and forensic investigation, methodically worked on, in and around. Somewhere upon or behind the skin, answers are held, apparently trapped and awaiting revelation through the work of the mortician. Blood can be used as a metaphor to represent and signify many things including life, death, danger, passion, anger, love and loss. Blood can also affirm kingship and loyalty as well as solicit notions of redemption, retribution and atonement. It also might mean something different for men and women as Mann suggests that, "Women see blood as 'blood ties', as family, ... while men think of violence" (Ravenal 2010:175).

Mann does not present blood in any direct way through her artworks, but it is an integral concept to a short series of work that she calls *December 8, 2000* as well as elsewhere in her work. Contemplating a pool of blood Mann resists temptation to touch and says, "[i]nstead, as I stared, it shrank perceptibly, forming a brief meniscus before levelling off again, as if the earth had taken a delicate sip"⁶⁶. Mann sought answers from this same piece of ground, within view of her house, on which an escaped prisoner had committed suicide on December 8, 2000. She realises that through the spilling of blood, "Death ha[d] left its imperishable mark"⁶⁷ but it is imperishable for her only as long she has memory of it. She senses this and acknowledges the fallibility of trying to piece together the past when she says, "Would a stranger, coming upon it a century hence, sense the sanctity of the death-infected soil?"⁶⁸ The soil becomes "death-infected" due to the blood that has been spilt upon it. Mann suggests that the scene is irreversibly tainted due to its encounter with death. Perhaps though, it is Mann herself who is tarnished by memory in the presence of that place and not nature at all which goes on it seems, unaffected and indifferent.

⁶⁶ Sally Mann: What Remains. Wall Text from http://www.corcoran.org/exhibitions/PDFs?Mann_Wall_text.pdf. Accessed on 12 Feb 2011.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Returning to my own work, in presenting images of blood as the aftermath of scientific and forensic inquisition, these aforementioned attributes for depictions of blood (love, violence, anger, redemption, etc.) might be evoked through the nature of the didactic content, that is, the presence of blood itself in the images. In my two related works, *Spill #1* and *Spill #2*, (Fig. 20 and 21) small droplets of post-autopsy blood have been photographed closely and in detail. During the autopsy, the blood has been disrupted, and smudged no longer resembling the perhaps more easily imagined round, therefore stable and contained drop. Instead they have taken on an individuality that is animated and energetic. The shape and form depicted evokes a personification that is difficult to avoid. With personification comes movement and life, and so contrasts with spilt blood, as a result of bodily invasion, and in this case, loss and severance of life. The images themselves further juxtapose each other as metaphors for a waging conflict between good and evil, life over death, sanction and condemnation. The forensic is referenced through these images, not only with regard to the actual mortuary space itself, but also with regard to the blood spillage, and marks and scratches left as traces on the stainless steel work surfaces. In addition the mode of collection is reminiscent of the collection of forensic evidence because the detail is sought and 'lifted' from "the scene of the crime" (Rugoff 1997:page) as evidence. In so doing effort is made to secure the transient or fragile against loss or contamination. A similar intent is realised by photographing these details as the image can then be used as a substitute for the real.

In the following chapter I focus on some of Sally Mann's work and look at ways in which the 'real' can be complicated through photography and artistic intent. Mann's *Immediate Family* series helps to begin the discussion and leads us into considering loss as an inevitable but painful experience. I also look at some landscape work through which Sally Mann addresses memory and historical loss, and draw on the importance of the earth in some of my practical work, particularly its cathartic contribution to my *EA 61, Mayfield Cemetery* series.

CHAPTER THREE: ALL IS NOT LOST

“BEING CORRECT, BUT DULL, IS DEADLY”

Anne Wilkes Tucker explains how, in the USA, Southern artists like Sally Mann, “understand that being correct, but dull, is deadly [and that] one can change or omit facts and still be faithful to an idea or a value” (Tucker in Ravenal 2010:171). Mann’s interest in “photography’s memorial capacities” leads Duganne to conclude, “Mann’s photography is not determined by its relationship to the real. Instead, it is a form of representation that allows her to ‘fashion an object’ from the real” (Duganne in Reinhardt et al 2006:64).

Mann, does not pretend that *Immediate Family* is spontaneous, unmanaged and therefore ‘authentic’. There might already be an admission that the embedded authenticity of the images has been surrendered, for what is left after the fictions and fantasies have been removed? She says “many of these pictures are intimate, some are fictions and some are fantastic” (Mann 1992:3)⁶⁹. The fictions and fantasies are not always necessarily solely contained within the image. The fictions and fantasies may be equally present in what we see, or do not see; in what we believe to be so, or what we believe ought to be so. Importantly however, we should not confuse the authenticity of intent or purpose with the method of construction of the object, the product, the photograph. Reinhardt et al (2006:64) describe Mann’s photography as “a form of representation that allows her to ‘fashion an object’ from the real”. This is what Sontag (2003:118) refers to as the difference between true expression and faithful recording. Marina Cashdan, writing for the *Huffington Post* calls this a “dichotomy of [the] real and not real”⁷⁰. She suggests that it is this “soft blow of reality ... that makes [Mann’s] work so

⁶⁹ Page numbering is my own.

⁷⁰ Cashdan, M. The Dichotomy of Sally Mann. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marina-cashden/the-dichotomy-of-sally-ma_b_675034.html.

powerful.⁷¹ Yet Mann knows all too well the fictions and fantasies that go hand-in-hand with the process-driven reproductive 'authenticity' of image making. Miller, quoted in Lury's *Prosthetic Culture*, equates Mann's process to a theatre that is "not inherently innocent" (Miller in Lury 1997:6).

IMMEDIATE FAMILIARITY: SALLY MANN AT HOME

The success of Mann's *Immediate Family* lies in the manner in which she presents the otherwise private domestic space of her home and children. She shows what others tend to hide. She permits viewing of the unseen with regard to her family and then with regard to mortality. Mann (1992:3)⁷² says of *Immediate Family*, "many of these pictures are intimate, some are fictions and some are fantastic, but most are of ordinary things every mother has seen". Anne Wilkes Tucker questions, "Why are Sally Mann's photographs of her family so engaging to strangers?" (Tucker in Ravenal 2010:172). The images may well be of the commonplace, familiar to mothers as Mann claims, but it would be "the ordinary things" (Mann 1992) of one's *own* family, probably not a stranger's, not the 'other'. Even if "every mother" has seen similar affairs played out in their respective families, these are *experiences* and are not objects *re-presented* outside of the domestic family space, that is, on the walls of a gallery. In other words, "the existence of the boundary between public and private is made explicit" (Lury 1997:82) and is therefore challenged by Mann.

In his essay *Eros, Psych, and the Mendacity of Photography*, Levi Strauss refers to Mann's images saying "They show what some would argue should not be shown" (Strauss in Ravenal 2010:179). Again, banal as it might appear, what is seen, (presently in Mann's images for example) is not the same as what has been witnessed by Mann herself. The experience of viewing a depiction of an experience is at least twice removed

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Page numbering is my own.

from the actual experience itself⁷³. In *Immediate Family* (1992), it is the manner of seeing, the manner of experience through depiction that has changed and which are important, not the (possibly) shared experiences actually being illustrated in a didactic sense. These two apparently conflicting notions of connotative and denotative truth are couched within Mann's personal concerns of inherent sexuality on the verge of expression in *Immediate Family*, and the lonely truth of individual mortality, as seen in *Matter Lent*.

Mann manages to tap into deep, but difficult concerns that contemporary society seems poorly equipped to handle: transience, loss, and our own mortality. Mann's work remains optimistic however despite the sincerity of her concerns. The innate sexuality of her children is seen against the backdrop of fading innocence and diminished blitheness. Youthful spontaneity seems fragile and transient. Mortality and memory, seen in *Matter Lent*, 2000, *Last Measure*, 2003 and *Proud Flesh*, 2009, is similarly viewed as inevitable and difficult, but necessary and yielding ultimately to freshness and renewal. Mortality is a subject that Mann treats as being all-inclusive, leaving out no-one. This approach is not dissimilar to her treatment of sexuality and the loss of childhood through maturity. That is, both puberty and death are seen to be inevitable, personal and global. They also happen to be sequential along the trajectory of life.

LAST MEASURE: MARKED BY HISTORY

Life for Mann, appears to be fragile but in constant flux as one moves from one life stage to another. It is perhaps then, the fullness of our experience of life that is Mann's concern. Anything other than fullness is in danger of being viewed as a loss. In my own work this 'fullness of experience' is important and nothing even remotely close to fullness

⁷³ The first version is the one that results out of the choices made by the photographer combined with the mechanical restraints of the camera at a particular moment in time. The second is the product of that union in the form of the resultant image, an object, memento or prize, the 'evidence' of what was wrenched from time past, still anchored in it, but always present as an interpretation of 'the event'.

can possibly be considered for the paupers, given the circumstances and state in which I found them and made their portraits. The sense of loss thus becomes compelling. It is this compelling sense of loss that motivates Mann in her *Last Measure*, 2001–2, series. In it, Mann investigates American Civil War⁷⁴ battle sites where she “creates dreamlike meditations on death, memory, and matter” (Smith, 2003:54). Through this work, viewers are encouraged to “contemplate the role of photography in documenting history, war, the passing of time, and death’s sanctification of the soil” (*USA Today*, July 2004:57). At Antietam Creek, Sharpsburg, Maryland, 23 000 men were killed, injured or declared missing after twelve hours of fighting in September 1862, marking the single bloodiest day in U.S. military history (Ravenal 2010:54). It is places like Sharpsburg, Fredericksburg, Manassas and Appomattox, marked by history and not by permanence, that Mann uses to present the landscape “not only as the literal resting ground for bodies buried where they fell, but as a repository for intangible traces of human emotion and experience” (Ravenal 2010:6) (Fig. 22 and 23). The sites are heavy with history and therefore memory, but the locations themselves, even where the fiercest fighting took place, are blank and indistinguishable from other less loaded landscapes.

Mann, with her antique camera, enters these spaces and “walk[s] among the shifting remains of humanity” (*USA Today*, July 2004:58) knowing well that what she seeks is unattainable. It is only fragments and traces that she will be able to wrestle and remove from the land “[to] create metaphors for struggle and suffering, extinguished hope and final breaths” (Ravenal 2010:6).

“Photography”, Mnookin (1998:4) tells us, “was recognized, almost from the time of its invention, as a potentially powerful juridical tool—perhaps even a dangerously powerful tool”. In the early 1850s, technological innovation meant that paper-based photography, in which multiple printed copies could be made with relative ease using the new

⁷⁴ The American Civil War started in 1861 and ended 1865.

collodion process, began to be popularised. As a method of recording quickly and accurately, and for being the producer of evidence in the form of the photograph, the camera's affair with forensics has been significant. Very soon after the development of the collodion process⁷⁵, as early as 1852, an American photographic journal records French lawyers already harnessing photography to help sway juries (Mnookin 1998:8). It is photography's "special relationship to the real" that has helped cement the medium's "evidentiary and testimonial authority" (Reinhardt et al 2007:59). This close affiliation is what both photojournalism and the courts have exploited. Thus, not far separated from the treasured personal memento, the photographic image can also become forensic evidence, also valued, prized and kept secure.

Sally Mann has specialised in antique photographic technology and uses, amongst others, an 8x10 inch bellows camera of the style used by American Civil War photographers including Mathew Brady, Timothy O'Sullivan and Alexander Gardner. The wet-plate collodion process requires laborious preparation of both glass plates and chemistry that also requires lengthy exposure times. Glass plates are cleaned, prepared, coated with collodion, partially dried, dipped in a bath of nitrate of silver, mounted and exposed, then processed in a dark room, and all before the mixture of silver collodion can dry on the plate. Exposures are normally long and the process and numerous steps often yield unexpected additions, especially where dust, chemical consistency and timing is concerned. These slippages are central to Mann's work. Musing on digital technology she says, "There is nothing whimsical about digital. No 'gifts' occur. It's too predictable" (Ravenal 2010:175).

The success of *Last Measure* is less about vision, what is present and what is seen/scene with certainty, than it is about memory and the investment made upon contemplation. "[T]he presumption of veracity that gives all photographs authority,

⁷⁵ The collodion wet-plate process was invented in 1851.

interest [and] seductiveness” (Sontag 1977:6) is embellished through Mann’s use of a camera and process that historically matches the American Civil War⁷⁶. Using an antique, wooden large format camera and the wet collodion process, she intentionally challenges “the convention of photography as a record of observable reality” (Ravenal 2010:55). Through the resultant imagery, after combining large format⁷⁷, large-scale⁷⁸ and the collodion process, Mann evokes “the nature of vision under extreme duress”, and thus “advance[s] the expressive capacities of her medium” (Ravenal 2010:54). The images have the traits and characteristics that one expects from damaged, historic photography from the time of the Civil War; scratches, tears, dust marks, stains and blemishes. Mann’s images, thus laden with clues are a breadcrumb trail leading us into the past, but the ‘evidence’ is planted and the images prove to be historically ‘fake’ after all. The images from *Last Measure* are particularly “dark and brooding” (Ravenal 2010:54) and thus provide a reference to the carnage of this transitional period in American History.

Interestingly though, these images might be more ‘truthful’ in fact than we might recognise alongside some of her other work. In *Last Measure*, Mann is less able to directly apply her reconstructive hand to the battlefield landscapes as she could in *Immediate Family*. No amount of clenching teeth or carefully poured cups of water will alter the seeping fields and wooded valleys of Antietam. Instead Mann adopts a documentary landscapist’s approach and relies on the assumed integrity of the photograph. By doing so she disguises her intent and mastery behind the camera, but she also harks back to a bygone imperial era of scientific inquest, discovery, documentation and proof emerging from the exploration and conquest of foreign lands. Ravenal (2010:1) suggests that, “One of the apparent paradoxes in Sally Mann’s work is

⁷⁶ “The collodion wet-plate process was invented in 1851 by Frederick Scott Archer and dominated photography through the end of the Civil War. By the late 1880s, several new inventions, including gelatine emulsion, celluloid film base, and roll film, had made it obsolete” (Ravenal 2010:8).

⁷⁷ Normally 8 x 10 inches in the case of Mann’s preferred antique camera.

⁷⁸ Around 40 x 50 inches (102 x 127 cm) for most in the *Last Measure* series.

her desire to show what lies beyond vision by using a medium invented to record reality's surface."

BLOOM AND DECAY

Mann's desire to 'see beyond' resulted in *What Remains*, a five part series that "explores the ineffable divide between body and soul, life and death, earth and spirit"⁷⁹. "The body", Ravenal (2010:3) says, "has continued to serve Mann as an essential vehicle for considering the vagaries of human existence". Mann demonstrates the most obvious and perhaps literal evidence for this in her *Matter Lent* series which forms a section of *What Remains*, 2004 (Fig. 6, 7 and 8). Ravenal (2010:6) rightly suggests that "these images stand out in Mann's oeuvre for their direct treatment of a subject that pervades much of her work but is often expressed by illusion and metaphor". This work is the result of Mann's "decades-long interest in cycles of bloom and decay as metaphors for the arc of human life" (Ravenal 2010:6) and it thus, directly confronts the brevity of life. It is where she steps out from the "twilight [of her] art" (Sontag 1977:15), where she has been scrutinising the inevitable shadow of death cast by photography⁸⁰ (Ravenal 2010:40).

When Mann entered the 'Body Farm', the University of Tennessee Forensic Anthropology Centre, she entered a scientific space where "as one of the few centres of its kind, unclaimed and donated bodies are left to decay for the purposes of scientific and forensic study" (Ravenal 2010:70)⁸¹. An important aspect to Mann's *Untitled* series from the Forensic Anthropology Centre is the coming together of a scientific (re)constructive process "to test and document the decomposition of human flesh" (Ravenal 2010:70) with an artist who employs the same approach, also collecting evidence in the face of degradation and impermanence.

⁷⁹ Sally Mann: *What Remains*. Wall Text from http://www.corcoran.org/exhibitions/PDFs?Mann_Wall_text.pdf. Accessed on 12 Feb 2011.

⁸⁰ Roland Barthes, in *Camera Lucida* says, "Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe" (1981:96).

⁸¹ Ravenal says, "the bodies are buried in shallow graves, deposited in the open air, hidden in wooded areas, covered with plastic wrap, submerged in pools of water, or placed in rusting cars" (Ravenal 2010:70).

Mann, like the forensic anthropologist, crafts or recreates likely scenarios then steps back, distancing herself so as to begin the recording process. In the domestic and 'familiar' scenes of *Immediate Family* Mann uses this strategy to lace together "the innocence of childhood with intimations of injury, sexuality and death" where "lithe bodies ... posit the evanescence of childhood against the long slope of adult decline" (Ravenal 2010:1,24). For the staff at the Forensic Anthropology Centre this crafting and re-creation is at work when "a wide range of simulated natural, accidental, and criminal circumstances" are constructed and arranged (Ravenal 2010:70). In both undertakings though, the adulterated organising hand of construction is diminished, even absented so as to maintain authenticity, or apparent purity of result. Through a process of exclusion, contamination is ignored and the illusion of control is maintained. The scientific results are validated, as are the scenes of fleeting childhood innocence in the path of "time's incessant flow" (Ravenal 2010:41). The hand of Mann is omnipresent but hidden. It is at work with her children directly and theatrically and it is working off stage behind the curtain, powerfully exorcising the potential from her antiquated photographic processes in *Last Measure*.

Through her prolonged study and methodical approach, Mann attempts to secure moments, fragments from time, which can recall and reconstruct the evidence of her children's elusive innocence and unstoppable march towards adulthood. Mann can call upon the memories of her greyhound Eva, the battlefields in Antietam, the discarded physical shells of her subjects at the Body Farm. The arrested fragments collected by her camera become nostalgic evidence of a past that not only proves but also immortalises.

In the forensic aesthetic seemingly mundane residues, clues from assumed prior events are addressed in a similar manner. It seems Mann constantly tries to secure the ephemeral before it is too late. She does this for her children's early years and she does

the same in *Matter Lent* for those slowly seeping back into the earth at Tennessee's Forensic Anthropology Centre. It is also her desire for her Civil War series, *Last Measure* and it is what she seeks when she returns to the area where the escaped prisoner shot himself in *December 8, 2000*. Mann is in constant conversation with the transient, always hoping to anchor it, or at least delay the inevitable, knowing full well the futility of the endeavour. Collecting 'evidence' with her camera Mann is determined in the face of loss.

The forensic aesthetic presents only debris and traces and so remains a fragmentary and incomplete picture of a greater narrative. It reveals fragments of a fragmentary narrative that can only inevitably reference an incomplete picture. Mann seems to know this and so embarks on a process of picture taking, capturing on film and implying permanence, creating evidence and generating mementos. Change is always just off stage in the drama of life and no amount of images will prevail against time. For Mann though, the threat of loss, whilst acknowledged, does not mean defeat. Her surrendering to inevitable loss is made possible only through conscious construction for the camera. It is made possible by taking a piece of her world and substituting this 'real' for an impression of it. This "slice" (Sontag 1977:69) takes the form of a physical and endlessly recallable photograph. In doing so she better enables the transition between states for her subjects and for herself. Liminality is limited, memory 'secure', and Mann can better come to terms with the transience of life and its shifting chapters.

CONCLUSION: EA 61, MAYFIELD CEMETARY.

Lea Vergine (2000:9) suggests that, “Only by experimenting a little at a time with death does one come to understand a little bit more about life—only by showing the precariousness of everything that we are accustomed to call normal”. Life is normal. So is death. This is understood and is acceptable. But what about pain and suffering? It happens, perhaps more than we would like to acknowledge, but can one call it normal or acceptable? Acceptable? Any issue being interrogated in this way, occupies a liminal state between approval and condemnation (Van Gennep 1960). It is disruptive to the social body and thus requires a resolution. If condoned, acceptance brings with it a kind of blindness as it is brought into, and towards the folds of conventionality. Thus located it is interrogated less, having become ‘normal’. The hope for dignity, our own as well as for others, is a normal expectation, but it seems poverty trumps dignity when it comes to street people or paupers.

In the seven or so years since I first came to be aware of the liminal state of the paupers I have been confronted with a great number of dilemmas. Some logistical, some bureaucratic, but the hardest have undoubtedly been the personal and ethical considerations that I have had to work through and remind myself of constantly. In many ways I see this work, both thesis and art practice, as a cathartic experience, one in which I can exorcise and hopefully lay to rest the keenly felt hypocrisy that first drew my attention to the pauper’s plight. In many ways I myself have been occupying a liminal space, caught between what I have seen and the uncertainty and unsettled period of what to do. My unease is a result of knowledge without action, “the frustration of not being able to do anything about what the images show” (Sontag 2003:105). In my case the frustration was centred on my experience, my knowledge, and the images became the beginning of a process of address borne out of the perceived inability to act. This

pursuit has, I feel, been at least partially successful in tempering the frustration, albeit perhaps through a transference of frustration via imagery to an audience.

Paupers from Grahamstown, and the surrounding areas, are buried in Mayfield Cemetery a few kilometres outside the town. Here the land is cheapest and the grave plots hardest to dig. Not surprisingly then, this cemetery services poorer communities and has traditionally done so. Mayfield is not a pauper-dedicated burial site however. There are a number of cemeteries that service the Grahamstown community many of which can be seen to reflect the racial, social and political divides that were so strongly woven into South Africa's history, and which continue to lace the present. For example there are about seven cemeteries in Grahamstown all in various stages of operation. Traditionally Kingswood Cemetery, also called Anderson Street Cemetery and Old Cemetery, has serviced white and wealthy sectors of Grahamstown and is fairly centrally located. Waainek Cemetery, also called New Cemetery⁸², is located to the west on the outskirts of the city but has also generally served a wealthier clientele. Egazini Cemetery is no longer in operation after having historically served black, and poorer communities⁸³. Now fulfilling this role are four other cemeteries; Lavender Valley, Extension 7 and Extension 1 (also called Extension 2) and Mayfield Cemeteries.

At Mayfield Cemetery a team of 'freelance' gravediggers work weekly to have plots ready for burials to take place, mostly over the weekends. Using their own picks and shovels, they are paid R300 per grave. Pivotal to my process was the decision to personally dig a grave in which a pauper could be buried (Fig. 26–30, and Fig. 35). In addition to physically digging the grave myself, I wanted to record the process through stop animation, a photographic technique that involves numerous exposures from the

⁸² These names can be misleading. Old cemetery is indeed old and is basically at capacity. The only burials that take place there are those lots that have been previously reserved. New Cemetery implies a link to Old Cemetery but this is in fact disingenuous as it is also an old cemetery having graves dating back to the nineteenth century. Presently it is the preferred choice of affluent Grahamstonians.

⁸³ Egazini, ironically means 'place of blood' and is named after the site nearby where the Battle of Grahamstown was fought in 1891 between the British and Xhosa.

same location over time. In the resultant black and white stop animation, the projected images flicker past sequentially giving the illusion of movement. In so doing it references historic documentary approaches in both photography and cinematography, but it also evokes the roughness of the land, the tactile nature of the soil, the violence of the digging and the cruelty of neglect. During the stop animation process, I chose not to appear in any of the images in reference to other absences or only partial appearances that have been the concern of this thesis and art practice. Some of these include diminished dignity and fleeting empathy, exclusion, marginalisation, deterioration, and impermanence. Like the Civil War battle sites that appealed to Mann in *Last Measure*, the cemetery is a hallowed place, a demarcated zone where the “death inflected soil”⁸⁴ is inescapable. In a similar way we know that the grave is inescapable and that nature will have its way. When it comes to the self, nature’s way is always located in the future. It is never in our present. When it reaches the past it is always a reflection upon others and the memory of them. In the present we can only reflect upon our own deaths as some event in the future.

The exclusion of self from the stop animation also references the complicity of self in the *status quo*. The accusation that meaningful alleviation of the street person or pauper’s situation is absent is referenced by my own absence in the content of the animation and the inadequacy of my philanthropic effort. This absence in the work also draws some parallels to the removal, then absence of the body after death. My physical absence in the work also alludes to the absence of due process for paupers, the rites of passage that Van Gennep discusses.

The necessity for burial to take place, the magnitude of the rites of passage, “implicit” as they might be “in the very fact of existence” (Van Gennep1960:3) seemed to remain

⁸⁴ Sally Mann: What Remains. Wall Text from http://www.corcoran.org/exhibitions/PDFs?Mann_Wall_text.pdf. Accessed on 12 Feb 2011.

largely academic and out of reach for me personally. Death is too easily considered 'an event', personal perhaps, but easily externalised. Like many I suspect, my thoughts on death are fleeting and seldom with regard to self. Death is generally not something we like to think about, much less dwell upon. It is also something that happens to others, in both a philosophical and physical sense. Similarly I realised that many of my thematic concerns (loss, abandonment, dignity, accountability) lacked physicality, therefore personal proximity. My concerns tended to occupy an academically weighted 'head space' at the expense of a, perhaps more truthful, experiential 'heart place'. Preparing the ground for "death's sanctification of the soil"⁸⁵ brought the intangibility and depth of my work within reach. The conceptual, through proximity to the ground and its reorganisation by pick and shovel, became increasingly perceptual the deeper I went.

Like Mann I looked to the earth for answers. Mann constantly addresses the passing of time, that which is out of view or out of reach, transition, loss and regeneration through reference to the land(scape), earth and Nature. Mann buried her dog, Eva in a cage, unearthing her over a year later to photograph her for what was to become part of the *Matter Lent* series. She was also fascinated by the earth which seemed as if it "had taken a delicate sip"⁸⁶ in *December 8 2000*. In *Last Measure*, Mann searches battlefields from the American Civil War where soldiers fell to the ground fighting for 'their land'. The area, the land, the foothills, fields and creeks form an expansive backyard that is as important to Mann's children's lives as they (both children and home) are to Mann. In Tennessee the body becomes a landscape as researchers and Mann do their work, centred upon the deceased and the environment in which the cadavers have been placed.

⁸⁵ Sally Mann: What Remains. Wall Text from http://www.corcoran.org/exhibitions/PDFs?Mann_Wall_text.pdf. Accessed on 12 Feb 2011.

⁸⁶ Sally Mann: What Remains. Wall Text from http://www.corcoran.org/exhibitions/PDFs?Mann_Wall_text.pdf. Accessed on 12 Feb 2011.

In many ways the physical labour involved and the hardship of digging through compact, rocky ground references the hardship (or perhaps, more accurately, the perceived hardship) of the street person's life, especially their life's end. There are other important parallels that emerge out of the process too, that are worth highlighting. The disruption that the pick brings to the earth has some connection to the disturbance that death offers society, whilst the violence and intrusion involved in the scientific, 'answer-driven' process of the autopsy, likewise has some correlation. The physical disruption of the earth allegorises the rupture and decomposition of the pauper's body at the hands of time but it also references the arrow that shoots out and pierces (Barthes 1980:26), the *punctum*, that "small trauma that wounds" and "tear[s] into the fabric of what we see" (Lury 1997:90).

Just as digging a grave is a process, so too is life as well as its nemesis, death. The repetition of the swinging pick, the pendulum-like swing of the shovel, the repetitive click of the shutter, all allude to the passing of time, the ongoing cycle of life, death and reclamation. It seems nature's claim is our loss and in the pauper's case especially, removal, absence and the brevity of memory is brought sharply into focus. So too, once the unknown pauper is laid to rest, the repetition of the shovelling speaks to the transience of life and the active effort to cover up, to conceal that which is unappealing: poverty, death, decay and the disruption they bring. The 'periferisation' of both street person and pauper, their migration to the periphery of society, physically, visually and socially, ironically played itself out in the process of this pauper's burial. The pauper's plot allocated to me for digging was at the very eastern edge of Mayfield Cemetery, plot EA 61, closest to the boundary fence leading out of town.

Digging a pauper's grave and burying the deceased, brought an end to their state of liminality, but it also ended my own liminality by enabling a transition to take place. The rites of passage, so lacking but remaining so desperately in need, were finally realised.

They were finally performed and the hazardous liminal period was brought to a close for both pauper and performer. This 'performance' was an interesting slippage, as the notion of the burial being a performance and I being a performer had never occurred to me. This insight now places me far closer to the event and the disruption of deferred internment that, in 2006, had first intruded upon my thoughts. I performed the rites and was responsible for the activity that brought closure for a pauper. I dug the grave, I lowered the coffin, I covered it over, and I prayed over the grave of a person I never knew, probably never even 'saw'. I remember, I will remember, and I forget.

ILLUSTRATIONS



Fig. 1. Paul Greenway. *Mayfield, Block G*. Digital scan (2012), 106 x 140 cm.

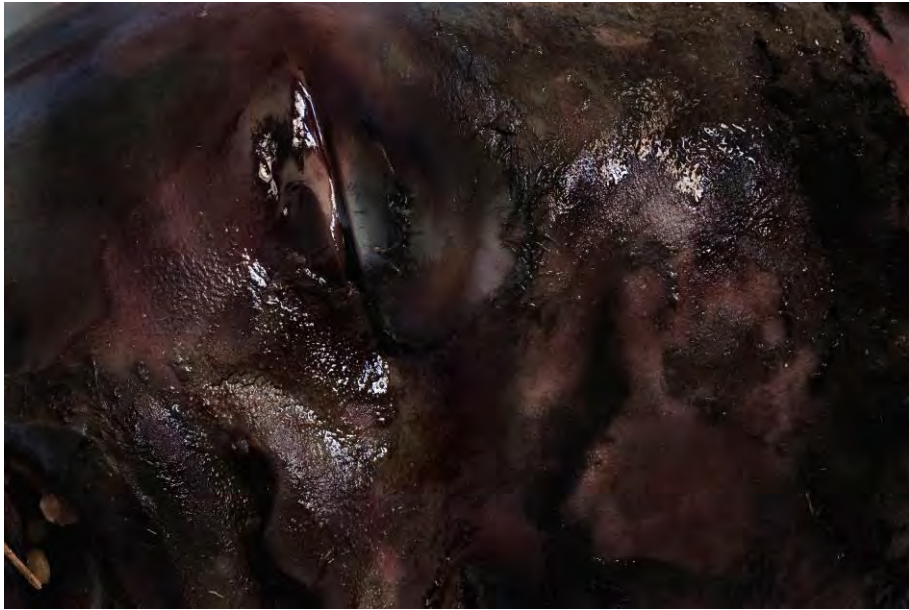


Fig. 2. Paul Greenway. *Untitled* from “*Pauper 2006–2012*” series, Digital print, 10 x 6.6 cm.



Fig. 3. Paul Greenway. *Untitled* from “*Pauper 2006–2012*” series, Digital print, 10 x 6.6 cm.

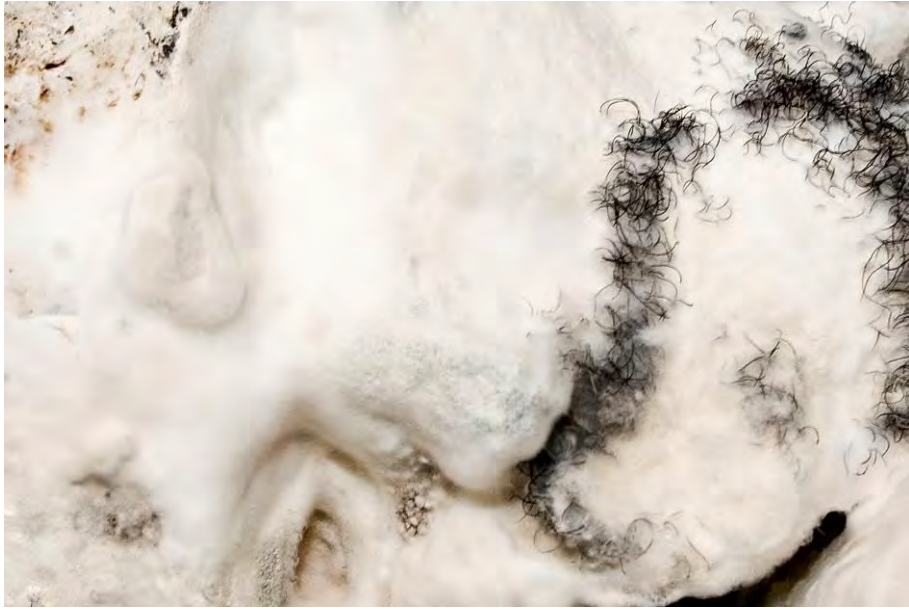


Fig. 4. Paul Greenway. *Untitled* from “*Pauper 2006–2012*” series, Digital print, 10 x 6.6 cm.



Fig. 5. Paul Greenway. *Untitled* from “*Pauper 2006–2012*” series, Digital print, 10 x 6.6 cm.



Fig. 6. Sally Mann. *Untitled* from “*Matter Lent*” series (2000–2001), Gelatin silver enlargement print from 20 x 25 cm collodion wet–plate negatives, with Soluvar matte varnish mixed with diatomaceous earth, ca. 76 x 102 cm.



Fig. 7. Sally Mann. *Untitled* from “*Matter Lent*” series (2000–2001), Gelatin silver enlargement print 20 x 25 cm collodion wet–plate negatives, with Soluvar matte varnish mixed with diatomaceous earth, ca. 76 x 102 cm.



Fig. 8. Sally Mann. *Untitled* from “*Matter Lent*” series (2000), Gelatin silver enlargement print from 20 x 25 cm collodion wet–plate negatives, with Soluvar matte varnish mixed with diatomaceous earth, ca. 76 x 102 cm.



Fig. 9. Gunther von Hagens. *Reclining Woman* from “*Body Worlds*” (1995), Silicon rubber preparation of human body. (Reproduction taken from <http://www.chinasmack.com/2012/stories/hagens-human-cadavers-exhibition-bodies-from-chinese-prisons.html>) Accessed on 18 August 2012.



Fig. 10. Paul Greenway. *Sole #6* (2010), Digital print, 50 x 70 cm.



Fig. 11. Paul Greenway. Untitled from "*Placement*" series (2011). Digital print, 70 x 50 cm.

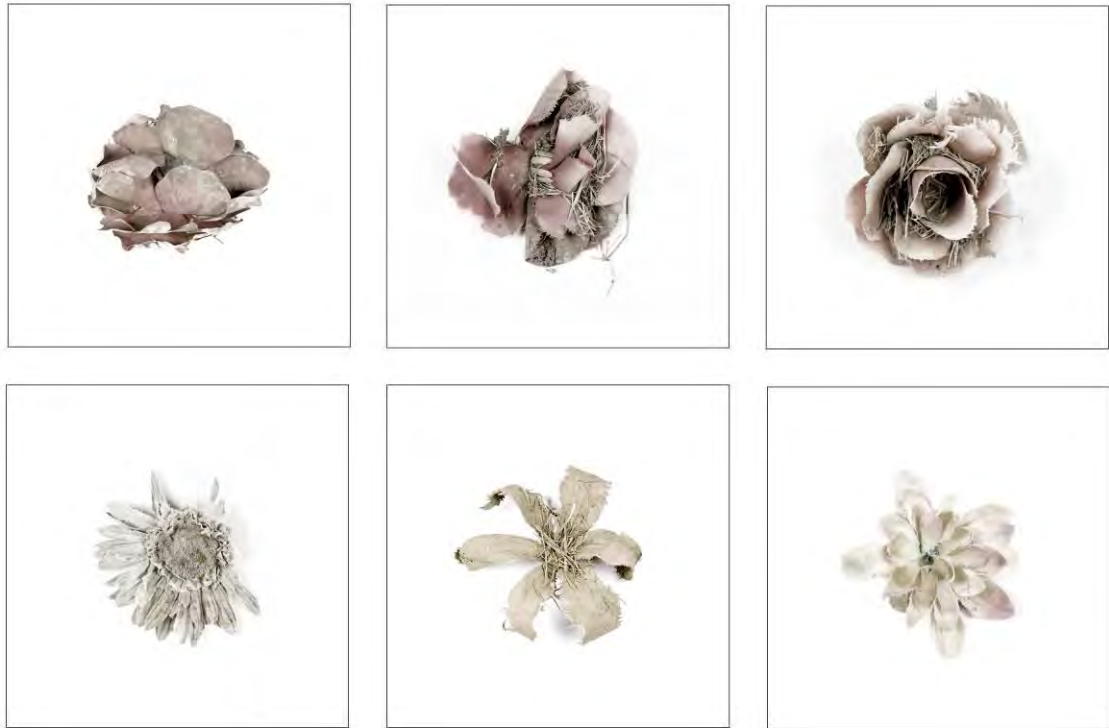


Fig. 12. Paul Greenway. *Placement #7, #51, #38, #11, #29 and #43.* (2011), Digital prints, 40 x 40 cm.



Fig. 13. Johannes (Johns) Michael Prinsloo De Jager, born 3 October 1901, died 14 October 1901. Photo courtesy of Maureen De Jager. Digital scan from original print.

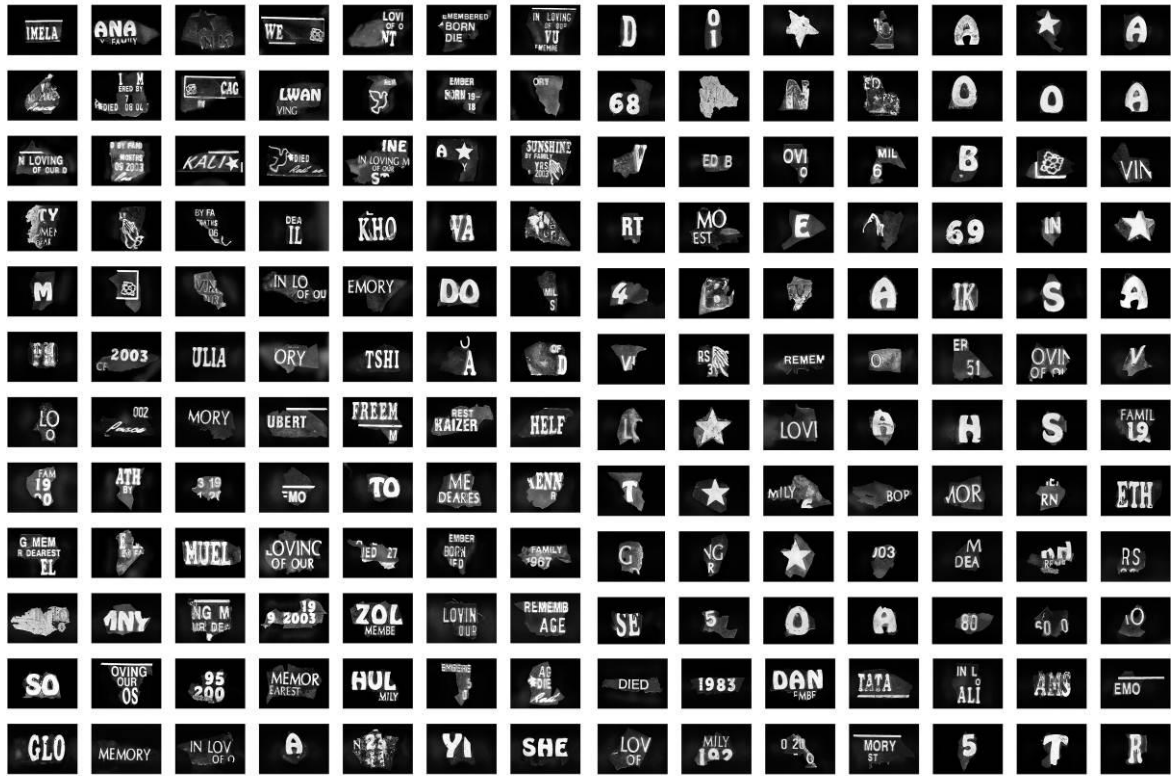


Fig. 14. Paul Greenway. *Unmarked* (2011), Digital prints on block board, detail. Approximately 200 x 320 cm total work size.



Fig. 15. Paul Greenway. *Unmarked* (2011), Collage of digital prints on block board, detail, 18 x 20 cm.



Fig. 16. Paul Greenway. *Unmarked* (2011), Collage of digital prints on block board, detail, 18 x 20 cm.



Fig. 17. Paul Greenway. *Unmarked* (2011), Collage of digital prints on block board, detail, 18 x 20 cm.

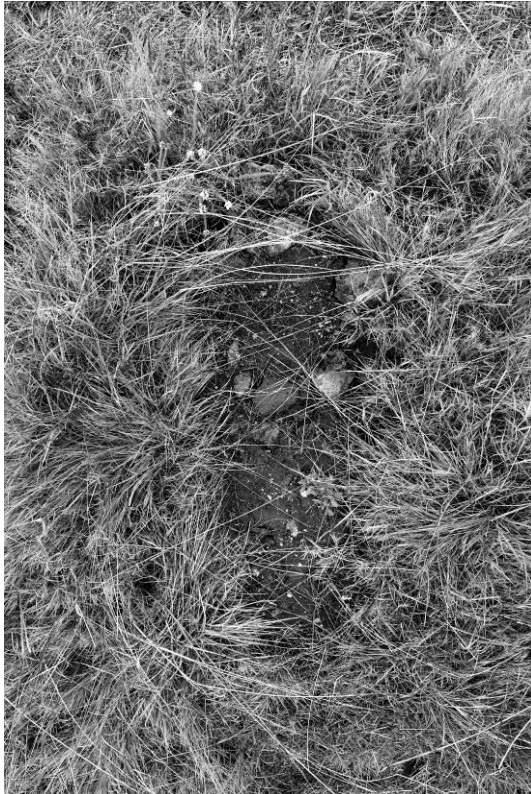


Fig. 18. Paul Greenway. *Unnamed #2* (2011), Digital print 50 x 70 cm



Fig. 19. Paul Greenway. *Unnamed #6* (2011), Digital print 50 x 70 cm



Fig. 20. Paul Greenway. *Spill #1* (2010), Digital print, 60 x 90 cm.



Fig. 21. Paul Greenway. *Spill #2* (2010), Digital print, 60 x 90 cm.



Fig. 22. Sally Mann. *Untitled #9 Antietam* from “*Last Measure*” series (2001), Gelatin silver enlargement print from 20 x 25 cm collodion wet–plate negatives, with Soluvar matte varnish mixed with diatomaceous earth, ca. 76 x 102 cm. (Reproduction taken from Ravenal, J. 2010. *Sally Mann: The flesh and the spirit*. Aperture and Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, page 69.)



Fig. 23. Sally Mann. *Untitled #26 Antietam* from “*Last Measure*” series (2001), Gelatin silver enlargement print from 20 x 25 cm collodion wet–plate negatives, with Soluvar matte varnish mixed with diatomaceous earth, ca. 76 x 102 cm. (Reproduction taken from Ravenal, J. 2010. *Sally Mann: The flesh and the spirit*. Aperture and Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, page 62.)



Fig. 24. Sally Mann. *Untitled* from “*Matter Lent*” series (2000–2001), Gelatin silver enlargement print from 20 x 25 cm collodion wet–plate negatives, with Soluvar matte varnish mixed with diatomaceous earth, ca. 76 x 102 cm. (Reproduction taken from Mann, S. 2010. *What Remains*. Bulfinch Press. New York, Boston, London, page 19.)



Fig. 25. Sally Mann. *Untitled* from “*Matter Lent*” series (2000–2001), Gelatin silver enlargement print from 20 x 25 cm collodion wet–plate negatives, with Soluvar matte varnish mixed with diatomaceous earth, ca. 76 x 102 cm. (Reproduction taken from Mann, S. 2010. *What Remains*. Bulfinch Press. New York, Boston, London, page 25.)



Fig. 26. Paul Greenway. EA 61 #120. (2012). Stop frame animation, detail.



Fig. 27. Paul Greenway. EA 61 #327. (2012). Stop frame animation, detail.



Fig. 28. Paul Greenway. EA 61 #1351. (2012). Stop frame animation, detail.



Fig. 29. Paul Greenway. EA 61 #1424. (2012). Stop frame animation, detail.



Fig. 30. Paul Greenway. Untitled from EA 61 series. 2012



Fig. 31. Paul Greenway. *Restitution*, Alumni Gallery, Grahamstown. 2012



Fig. 32. Paul Greenway. *Restitution*, Alumni Gallery, Grahamstown. 2012



Fig. 33. Paul Greenway. *Restitution*, Alumni Gallery, Grahamstown. 2012



Fig. 34. Paul Greenway. *Restitution*, Alumni Gallery, Grahamstown. 2012



Fig. 35. Paul Greenway. *Untitled* from *EA 61 series*. (2012).

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