

52.1 Futures of Trauma: Theoretical Innovation and Genre Crossings (2008)

Special edition edited by Merle Williams (*Witwatersrand*), Stefan Polatinsky (*Johannesburg*) and Michelle Adler (*Witwatersrand*).

In recent years, the examination and representation of trauma – whether in fiction, film, autobiography, or in scholarly studies – has coalesced around a set of recognizable thematic and theoretical concerns. Trauma affects memory owing to a complex configuration of emotions that may render the individual unable to recollect or to integrate experience into consciousness. Cathy Caruth has suggested that the challenge posed by trauma and its aftermath uniquely and ineluctably compels one to be receptive to the realities of trauma's departure without reducing its impact. This central impasse has drawn varied responses from creative writers and poets, literary critics, psychologists, sociologists, neurobiologists, filmmakers, and the like. Trauma ultimately unsettles assumptions and forces one radically to rethink notions of experience, communication and representation.

This special issue of *English Studies in Africa* (guest-edited by Michelle Adler, Stefan Polatinsky and Merle Williams) calls for essays, fiction or poetry that not only engage with the debates outlined above, but that more importantly consider the possible 'futures' (or 'future programme') for representing or writing about trauma. The journal number has been commissioned at a time when there is serious attempt at imagining a variety of new and exciting multi-modal critical responses, which may emerge in the wake of the dominant intellectual movements of the twentieth century (such as poststructuralism, deconstruction, feminism, Marxism, postcolonialism, psychoanalysis, explorations of culture and ethnicity, New Historicism, and so on). The intention is to involve contributors from a range of disciplines and to 'cross' genres and domains, in order both to explore trauma's textual futures as comprehensively as possible and to facilitate a dialogue across a range of experiences and subjectivities.

All papers should reach the editor of *English Studies in Africa* (Michael.Titlestad@wits.ac.za) by 30 April 2009.