Violence and Non-Violence in Africa

Edited by

Pal Ahluwalia, Louise Bethlehem and Ruth Ginio

Routledge Advances in International Relations and Global Politics

Violence and Non-Violence in Africa

This unique book seeks both to historicize and to deconstruct the pervasive, almost ritualistic, association of Africa with forms of extreme violence, the latter bordering on and including genocide.

The volume highlights political, social and cultural processes in Africa which incite violence or which facilitate its negotiation or negation through non-violent social practice. The chapters cover diverse historical periods ranging from fourteenth-century Ethiopia and early twentieth-century Cameroon, to contemporary analyses set in Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria, Cameroon, the Ivory Coast and South Africa. The contributions presented challenge the tendentious association of Africa with extreme violence in the popular and academic imagination alike. This book makes a crucial contribution to a revitalized understanding of the social and historical coordinates of violence – or its absence – in African settings.

Violence and Non-Violence in Africa will be of interest to students and scholars of African history and anthropology, colonialism and post-colonialism, political science and Africanist cultural studies.

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Introduction

‘Unsettling violence’

Pal Ahluwalia, Louise Bethlehem and Ruth Ginio

Africa is tendentiously associated with violence in the historical, political and anthropological imagination, as well as in contemporary media representations. At the same time, forms of non-violent practice, significantly under-represented in theoretical and historical discussions, are integral to African social and historical experience and constitute an important dimension of African personhood. The present volume seeks both to historicize and to deconstruct the pervasive, almost ritualistic, association of Africa with forms of everyday as well as extreme violence, the latter bordering on and including genocide. But it also holds up to scrutiny occluded histories of non-violence that must be restored to our scholarly narratives of the African past and present. The contributions to this volume are accordingly directed at political, social and cultural processes in Africa which incite violence or which facilitate its negation through non-violent social action, whether or not explicitly formulated as such.

Sooner rather than later, an intervention of this kind must negotiate its own epistemological and methodological assumptions, especially where these emerge into conflict or contradiction. While violence is often imprinted on the human body in intractably material form, the attempt to read backwards from the body as the terminus of violence runs the risk that only certain forms of violence will emerge into visibility for theoretical scrutiny. Violence is nothing if not performative, but the performance of violence is insufficient to delimit it. ‘We should not,’ Samuel Weber cautions us, ‘. . . take for granted that we always and indubitably know what violence is when we see it or think we see it’ (1997: 81). According to Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois, writing in the introduction to their volume *Violence in War and Peace*, violence challenges categorization (2004). It can be legal or illegal, visible or invisible, necessary or redundant, illogical or rational and strategic. The most that can be said about violence, Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois insist, is ‘that like madness, sickness, suffering or death itself, it is a human condition. Violence is present (as a capability) in each of us, as is its opposite – the rejection of violence’ (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004: 2). At the same time, it is important to stress that the ‘*continuum*’ of violence, as Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois put it (19, their emphasis), as indeed the continuum linking violence to non-violence, does not stand aloof from its own social and cultural constructions. While the

interventions collected in this volume are resolutely directed at Africa, they are nevertheless broadly aligned with the repositioning of violence currently under way in the social sciences more generally.

In his intervention, *On the Postcolony*, Achille Mbembe argues that a defining characteristic of contemporary Africa is violence. That violence is the defining trope for Mbembe is not surprising given that the West's engagement with Africa has proceeded on the basis that Africans are somehow less than human, only comprehensible in terms of the bestial, strange and monstrous albeit at some deep-seated level intimately recognizable in Western experience – hence, familiar and ultimately able to be domesticated (Mbembe 2001: 1–2). Violence, and the colossal suffering associated with it, is viewed by its opponents as degradation into irrationality, barbarity and horror, an anathema to the very ideals of the Enlightenment – justice, humanity and freedom (Glover 1999: 6–7). And yet, as Mahmood Mamdani argues, 'the modern political sensibility sees most political violence as necessary to historical progress' (2005: 3).

It is this notion of historical progress that ensures that our modern sensibility is not repulsed by the endemic violence that has marked the modern condition. Mamdani points out that what disturbs this sensibility is that violence which 'appears senseless, that cannot be justified by progress' (Mamdani 2005: 4). Such violence in the postcolonial world is characterised as ' "communal conflict", as in South Asia or "ethnic conflict", as in Africa' (4). In the West, however, such violence is conceptualized in theological terms and is simply rendered as 'evil'. If violence in the postcolonial world, and especially in Africa, is conceptualized only in these terms, the notion of non-violence is rarely given credence other than being linked inextricably to Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Gandhi, who saw violence as a dangerous shortcut on the road to the realization of political goals, linked non-violence to such virtues as courage and self-discipline. Thus non-violence, or *ahimsa*, a refusal to inflict injury upon others, is not so much the inversion of violence as its transcendence (1920a: 240). While Gandhi's doctrine of civil resistance, or *satyagraha*, in its guise as 'Truth-Force' (Gandhi 1914: 301) is widely conceded to have reconfigured the political utility of passive resistance – with which it is not wholly synonymous (Ghandi 1920b: 318) – there is seldom a corresponding acknowledgement that non-violence has been an effective form of social action. When we speak of non-violence in this volume, whether in the colonial or postcolonial context, we refer to it as a conscious decision to act in defiance of oppression, injustice, or of a violent reality, while deliberately choosing not to resort to violence. In much of Africa, the end of colonial rule was effected precisely by non-violence. In South Africa, for example, where it was thought that apartheid could only end through violence, far more progress was in reality made after the armed struggle gave way to non-violent action (Zunes 1999).

Whether the avoidance of violence in a particular context is related to scepticism regarding its effectiveness or to moral inhibitions, non-violence is clearly not to be identified with mere passivity. Nor is violence to be identified with deviance. Emergent reconceptualizations of violence have begun to render salient

an interrogation of the conditions under which violence comes to be naturalized as non-deviant, or is enfolded within the sphere of 'virtuous action in the service of generally applauded conventional social, economic, and political norms' (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004: 5). This revaluation goes some way towards undoing the stigmatization of an endemic African violence bound to the supposedly deviant ontology of the African subject and bounded by a continent whose circumference is as much discursive, Valentin Y. Mudimbe has reminded us, as it is a matter of geography (Mudimbe 1988, 1994). To parse what Mudimbe calls 'the idea of Africa' is to recognize its deep imbrication in a European will to truth which Mudimbe claims has, from the fifteenth century onwards cadenced, justified and compromized a corresponding European will to power that manifested as the slave trade, colonialism and nazism (1994: 212) – 'monstrosities', to use Mudimbe's term (ibid.), whose own violence was rendered normative. That the historiographic effacement of Western practices of extreme violence and genocide supports a longstanding tradition of supposed African exceptionalism emerges strongly from Mahmood Mamdani's highly regarded study of the Rwandan genocide. Noting that many researchers write of the Rwandan genocide 'as if genocide has no history and as if the Rwandan genocide had no precedent even in this century replete with political violence', Mamdani cautions us about a form of historiography that might make of the case of Rwanda 'an anthropological oddity. For Africans, it turns into a Rwandan oddity; and for non-Africans, the aberration is Africa. For both, the temptation is to dismiss Rwanda as exceptional' (2001: 7–8). African violence, in other words, is embedded in differential economies of visibility or occlusion; of approbation or disavowal which themselves need to be recognized and historicized.

Steven Kaplan's chapter, 'The glorious violence of Amdä Seyon of Ethiopia', which opens this volume bears precisely on the question of the valorisation of violence for a region and at a period of time that largely bypasses the trajectory which Mudimbe and Mamdani outline. Kaplan examines Ethiopia – one of the most ancient states in the world and the only African country never to have experienced colonial rule, barring the relatively brief duration of the Italian occupation between 1935–1941. The events Kaplan recounts occurred many hundreds of years before the advent of the particularly colonial or postcolonial conflicts that form the main substance of the collection. At issue is the manner in which the historical record presents the violence of Emperor Amdä Sion (r. 1314–44). Why is his violence valorized? Why it is so vividly and positively recalled? Kaplan interrogates crucial facets of the prevailing attitudes of fourteenth-century Ethiopian Christianity to violence. He targets several major trajectories, such as the relations between violence and sainthood, or violence and sacrifice, and their bearing on the link between violence and the construction of masculinity – the latter an abiding concern of this volume for all its regrettable silence in the face of women's experiences of violence in Africa.[1]

Kaplan's incisive examination of the historiography and representation of violence in Ethiopia prepares the ground for an additional but very differently

situated historiographic investigation. Lynn Schler's 'The unwritten history of ethnic co-existence in colonial Africa: An example from Douala, Cameroon' addresses the tendency of African historiography to focus on overtly nationalist anti-colonial struggles to the neglect of other realities and strategies under colonialism. The contemporary image of Africa as a continent ridden with ethnic conflict and political violence might derive from the electronic media but it is quietly sustained by the historiography of Africa in contemporary scholarship. As a corrective measure, Schler interrogates the hitherto untold story of the immigrant community of the New Bell quarter in interwar Douala, Cameroon. Whereas much of the history of colonial Doula has treated the Duala elite and has been oriented towards issues surrounding the confiscation of lands, the construction of the New Bell quarter which was composed of a large community of non-Duala immigrants has been ignored by historians. These immigrants originated from different regions across West and Central Africa and belonged to various ethnic groups. During the interwar era they nevertheless co-existed peacefully, shared the same public space and communicated in Pidgin English. Although the history of this community lacks the drama of the Duala elite's anti-colonial struggle, it offers a point of departure for revisionist inquiry since, according to Schler, 'histories of nationalist organizing and uprising overlook alternative communities and trajectories of experience and do not usually represent the majority of African experiences in the period of decolonization'.

Non-violence is given salience in this 'history of good neighbors' in relation to Schler's specifically historiographic agency. The rationality of the co-existence which she describes is not derived solely from the reversal of relations of violence, however. Violence is, in any case, too unsettled, too profligate to permit the binary – violence/non-violence – to forecast redemption through the device of a simple inversion, however closely violence might suggest redemption as its unspoken complement. This complement is explicitly formulated for Africa in the voice of the damned, as it were, in Frantz Fanon's doctrine of purifying violence – 'for the native, life can only spring up again out of the rotting corpse of the settler' (Fanon 1967: 93). Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* can be read as an audacious reworking of the pre-existent connection between violence and redemption in the liberal imagination, an understanding sedimented in the Hobbesian charter involving the State's monopoly on the use of legitimate violence.[2] To re-encounter Fanon's invocation of the purifying force of violence is not to capitulate to forms of analysis exhausted by moral approbation on the one hand, nor repudiation on the other.

In his preface to *The Wretched of the Earth,* Jean-Paul Sartre directs attention to the manner in which a new generation of colonial subjects challenged their European masters: 'You are making us into monstrosities; your humanism claims we are at one with the rest of humanity but your racist methods set us apart' (Sartre in Fanon 1967: 8). In Fanon, Sartre finds the voice of the Third World which does not speak to Europe but speaks to itself. He points out that Fanon's book does not need a preface because it is not directed at the colonizer but that he has written it to bring the argument to a conclusion:

> for we in Europe too are being decolonized: that is to say that the settler which is in every one of us is being savagely rooted out . . . we must face that unexpected revelation the strip-tease of our humanism . . . It was nothing but an ideology of lies, a perfect justification for pillage; its honeyed words, its affectation of sensibility were only alibis for our aggressions.
>
> (Sartre in Fanon 1967: 21)

Fanon recognized that above all else decolonization was a violent phenomenon because it entailed 'quite simply the replacing of a certain "species" of men by another "species" of men . . . there is a total, complete and absolute substitution' (Fanon 1967: 27). It is through decolonization that a new people are created and a new humanity emerges.

The question of violence in Fanon's project, Lewis Gordon points out, is one which arises out of the very condition of colonialism. For the colonizer, his or her place in the colony is not unjust but the idea that they be replaced constitutes an injustice. From the perspective of the colonized, prior to the arrival of the coloniser his or her place was just and their replacement is what constitutes an injustice which entails living under a system of violence. As Gordon puts it, 'the situation begins to take on tragic dimensions when the discourse on method–mediation–emerges with teleological import: "the last shall be first"' (Gordon 1996: 304). It is in this context that the call for non-violence by the colonizer is seen to constitute violence because it is a continued way of ensuring that colonialism is preserved. It is this notion of losing that can be seen as constituting violence. It is in this way that both the colonizer and colonized can be seen to 'converge as sufferers during the period of liberation' (305). The price of a new humanism lies in the 'tragedy of the colonial and racist situation' (ibid.).

Ato Sekyi-Otu argues that those who label Fanon as primarily a theorist of violence often forget that he was concerned to show that the colonial situation was much like a state of nature where there was no civil and political sphere. Fanon was suggesting 'with the most classical of political philosophers that where there is no public sphere, there is no political relationship, only violence, "violence in a state of nature"' (Sekyi-Otu 1996: 86–7). While we seek neither to detract from the political necessity of Fanon's doctrine in the context of the anti-colonial struggle in Algeria, nor to evacuate the political horizons of academic research,[3] we might provisionally concur with Fredrick Cooper that 'the point of historical analysis is not to commend one kind of politics or condemn another but to spell out the range of possibilities of different trajectories following upon particular combinations of action' (Cooper 2005: 232).

For all that colonialism is often presented as a 'pure' form of violence which, according to the leaders of various anti-colonial struggles must call forth a single response and a single response only – stronger violence – it is important to bear in mind that colonial rule was not monolithic and that great differences existed between various colonial contexts. The existence of European settlements, for example, had a major influence on the character of colonial rule. It made it much

more intrusive, brutal, violent and inflexible. Settler colonialism typically imprinted its presence forcibly on those sections of the colonized population with whom the settlers came directly into contact, whereas areas in which no such settlement existed were sometimes virtually unaffected by colonial rule and its agents. The responses to colonialism in settler colonies were thus also much more violent and inflexible. But again, certain historical paradoxes arise. Extreme violence in a certain colony sometimes facilitated simultaneous non-violent resistance in another. During the Algerian War, for example, the French became more lenient with regards to demands raised by African political and trade union leaders in French West Africa, wishing to prevent deterioration into violence in this area as well. Although the contemporary focus of this volume does not fully allow for an explicit engagement with the wide spectrum of historical situations summarily condensed as 'colonialism', it is worth remembering that Africans confronted colonial violence through employing strategies that cannot always be reduced to 'the use of more violence' as the most banal understanding of anti-colonial struggle might have it. Both violence and non-violence were co-implicated in the everyday project of survival for Africans under colonial rule. They remain thus enfolded in the long shadow of colonialism and under the direct and indirect pressures of globalization.

The legacy of colonial governmentality provides the specific background behind Pal Ahluwalia's contribution to this volume. Ahluwalia explores how ethnic violence has been used as a political tool in contemporary Kenya. The unity that brought President Moi to power was severely undermined by the manner in which politics in Kenya has become increasingly ethnicized and characterized by violence. Coupled with this violence is endemic corruption that touches virtually every member of society. Ahluwalia traces the roots of this violence to colonial modes of governmentality that were underpinned by coercion, violence and impunity. Indeed, it was this very form of governmentality that was bequeathed to the post-colonial governments at independence. The 2002 elections were a watershed in Kenya's political history. They effectively removed a long-serving authoritarian incumbent government through electoral means. Nevertheless, Ahluwalia argues, politics in Kenya has become vulgarized through the deployment of violence and, if the new government of President Mwai Kibaki is unable to restore confidence through real policy changes, the vulgarization and ethnic violence could well continue to be a determining factor in Kenyan politics.

A certain shift in governmentality in West Africa, specifically 'an increased diversity in the itineraries of political ascension' there, together with an attendant normalization of violence, serves AbdouMaliq Simone as the point of departure for a reading of antagonism and social collaboration, of disintegration and recomposition in the urban spaces of Abidjan, Côte D'Ivoire and Doula, Cameroon. Through minutely detailed engagements with the lived fabric of these cities, Simone lays bare a geography of 'sacral spaces' where urban actors transact with one another in volatile and loosely defined configurations that nevertheless preserve the conviction, even between antagonists or socially

distant individuals, that they are 'operating in concert'. Simone asks us to consider how the city functions to remake politics – how, for instance, the *agora* (Abidjan's public discussion forums of the street) fleetingly staged the possibility of political action in a context where the majority of the residents of an increasingly divided city 'either have little to say or little opportunity to say it'. But his discussion is equally attuned to new conventions of what he calls 'making oneself a real person' in the face of the rationalities and irrationalities of the African city. Affect and embodiment are crucial factors here as social actors pursue goals that may be orthogonal to formal political agendas. Simone's contribution underscores certain of the core problematics of this book in that it asks us to consider how the West African city, despite evidence of its own enclaved violence, nevertheless enables its inhabitants to configure '[ways] of becoming that [exceed] the particularities of ethnicity, race, and culture that were the instruments of colonial domination'.

David Pratten's discussion of youth culture among the members of the Nigerian *agaba* groups (secret spiritual cults that use violence to protect their members) resonates with the focus on quotidian forms of self-realization that AbdouMaliq Simone stages for this volume. Pratten begins by challenging existing configurations of the relation between youth and violence in Africa, to argue that the connection is less 'a reflex to state disintegration or global political trends' than what he terms 'a culturally informed response to the challenges of everyday life in the post-colony'. He brings these insights to bear on a reading of *agaba* performers and performances in Port Harcourt and Calabar in southern Nigeria. *Agaba* members' exploits since the late 1990s, Pratten notes, have been variously framed as the deeds of 'masqueraders', as 'area boys', or 'local militia'. The various and changing labels applied to *agaba*, he goes on to claim, are illustrative of a widespread discursive process of categorization concerning young men's organizations in Nigeria which is itself a key device in stigmatizing and incriminating the collective actions of young men. Against such criminalizing attributions, Pratten situates the existence of the *agaba* groups within a landscape of social devices constituted to support urbanites and discusses its function as part of a range of extra-judicial mechanisms that have developed in southern Nigerian cities. The *agaba* societies which he examines reconfigure the aesthetics of Igbo masquerades, incorporating song and dance performances in a creative interrogation of conditions of social marginality, alongside far more overt expressions of 'popular' violence.

Questions of so-called popular violence provide a bridge between Pratten's chapter and the contributions by Steffen Jensen and Megan G. Plyler, both of whom focus specifically on the phenomenon of vigilante justice. The two amplify concerns regarding the perceived impotence of the African State in particularly concentrated form: What happens when the State fails to be able to defend the prevailing socio-political order from forms of alleged sedition? How are the resultant non-institutional forms of crime control and justice to be appraised, whether from the perspective of hegemonic values or, alternatively, in the service of a collective that might be constructed as the 'moral

community'? Jensen presents the case of Nkomazi, located at the extreme north-eastern corner of the Mpumalanga Province in South Africa close to the border with Mozambique and Swaziland. Nkomazi has been the frequent site of outbreaks of 'vigilantism', 'mob' or 'popular justice'. In his discussion, Jensen interrogates the everyday practices of violence, and the discourses surrounding violence, together with its cognates and antonyms, say 'crime' and 'security', on the frontiers of the post-apartheid state where police protection is often less than effective. He draws our attention to the conflictual dynamics of vigilantism such that the staging of popular violence through public performances aimed at eradicating 'criminals' from the midst of a certain community secures the moral standing of that community while simultaneously entrenching the public display of violence. Violence, in this reading, oscillates between its localization in the putative 'criminal' – whom Jensen describes as the embodiment of the constitutive outside of the moral community – and its internalization within the community whose moral standing cannot be realized by its members without their own recourse to violence. But the policing of the moral community does not take place in a vacuum. Jensen shows how the actions of both rural elites and relatively disempowered groups with regard to the boundaries of the moral community are closely bound to a reconfiguration of class structures in the former apartheid homelands.

Like Jensen, Megan G. Plyler treats instances of popular vigilante justice, drawing her observations from instances of thief killings in Tanzania. Plyler reinforces the understanding that Jensen shares: mob justice is not simply a violent means of crime control, but a site of social interaction where 'individuals and groups construct and redefine community, morality and justice'. The collective nature of vigilantism, Plyler argues, makes it 'particularly relevant for understanding the ordering and shifting boundaries of social systems'. In a counterpoint to Jensen's analyses of the moral community and to Pratten's analysis of the criminalization of *agaba* members, she discusses the emergence of a category of 'punishable people'. Although mob justice appears to be directed at the involved individual or individuals in response to perceived deviant actions, Plyler shows how it contributes to the construction of more encompassing categories of social identity. The force of the accusation against an individual dramatizes the differential power of inter- or intra-community connections, as it binds certain community members together, while alienating others. Targeting the insidiousness of a perceived social evil or of an individual deviant is crucial to the stabilization of the boundaries of the collective, Plyler maintains. It simultaneously serves as a means of deflecting attention away from inappropriate government policies, personalized patron–client relationships and administrative corruption, for instance, that contribute to structural inequality in Tanzania.

The last cluster of chapters in this volume is devoted to apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. This focus unfolds against the understanding proposed by Harris *et al*. that 'Apartheid created *race* as a mechanism for violence. Race, *in and of itself*, was the social and psychological reality through which repres-

sion and violence functioned' (2004: iv). This section comprises three chapters – by John Peffer, Vanessa Barolsky and Adam Sitze – each of which takes up aspects of the continuing repercussions of the material and structural violence of apartheid. John Peffer begins this section by investigating the iconography of the urban assault vehicle and the popular imagery of anti-apartheid protest art from the late 1970s to the early 1990s. He tracks the image of the riot-control truck through various media and different social contexts, showing crucial shifts in its ongoing interpretation and rendering. What is at stake when children construct wire toys replicating the menacing armoured trucks that were a metonymy for white power in apartheid South Africa? The wire toys crafted by the children, Peffer claims, do not merely reflect the world but must be read as a reflection upon the world of oppression and its signs. In an engaging set of descriptions, Peffer deciphers sets of ambivalent narratives – of fear but equally of pleasure, of competition but equally of identification – in the children's responses to the immediacy of violence in their lifeworld. He describes the manner in which the 'multivalent potential of an imagery of occupation' was harnessed 'against the violence of the occupation itself'. In the conclusion to his chapter, Peffer explores what might be termed the long stasis of transition in South Africa as he traces the wire truck into its post-apartheid afterlife where it becomes a symptom of a phantasmatic international investment in revisiting aspects of the masochistic relationship of the South African police to black activists in apartheid South Africa.

The wire truck that survives the demise of apartheid whether in testimony or in material form obliquely announces the spectral presence of those children who might have owned it, the child survivors grown now into adulthood who are the protagonists of Vanessa Barolsky's investigation. Barolsky looks at the experiences of young black South Africans whose life histories subtend the transition from apartheid to democracy, from war to peace. In her attempt to bear witness to the narratives of her child-become-adult informants, Barolsky seeks to contest both the glib overwriting of the memory of violence routinely encountered in the political appropriation of pain for power, as well as the silencing effect of trauma on its bearers. She points to the semantic and phenomenological displacements that fracture the adult discourses of children whose everyday lives were radically reconfigured by war and violence. Barolsky's sympathetic reconstruction of the biography of one child-soldier dramatizes the fault lines that the individual must negotiate in order to render formative experiences of atrocity commensurate with the duties of the 'good citizen' in a democratic South Africa.

The unevenness of the process of self-reconstitution as it emerges from the testimonies that Barolsky relays points to a certain resistance to closure with respect to the apartheid past that Allen Feldman has emphasized in a recent critique of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Feldman cautions that 'the act of testifying out of violence both exposes often hidden oppression, and ironically replicates the relational structure of that violence pathogenically' (2004: 191). He questions the extent to which 'the exclusive

chartering of national community on the commemoration ground of apartheid victimage [legitimized] the post-apartheid regime's denial of the human rights of persons infected and affected by HIV-AIDS' (194). Adam Sitze's work represents an ongoing attempt to grapple with this very problem (2003, 2004). In his innovative contribution to this volume, Sitze considers how a certain deflection of what Foucault might have termed the 'care-of-the-self' (1986 [1984]) intersects the sovereign violence of the reconstituted South African state. Sitze considers South African activist Zackie Achmat's 1999 pledge not to take antiretroviral HIV/AIDS medications until those medications become available in and through the South African public health care system. Juxtaposing Achmat's pledge not only with his earlier writings on film and sexuality, but also with the forms of testimony institutionalized in and by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Sitze argues that it amounts to a form of truth-force that is reducible neither to stoicism nor to *satyagraha*. He suggests that the way that Achmat's pledge opens a relation to the virus also implies a relation to the very limit of State violence, and as such gestures towards a form of living with HIV/AIDS that is not reducible to politics conceived in the state form. Sitze's contribution breaks new ground in conceptualizing of HIV/AIDS as, among other things, a catalyst for a non-violent politics that is of undeniable importance to other African intersections. His argument is exemplary for the kind of theoretical re-conceptualization that this volume has tried to foster. Sitze's notion of 'living, with' seems to us to announce the possibility of a political programme that is incommensurate at every turn with the deterministic teleology of violence we have inherited from the established theologies of Western religion or from their secular-liberal or Marxist counterparts, a trajectory wherein cycles of violence begetting violence seem to anticipate something like that final escalation of violence which apocalyptically suspends violence (see Vogler and Markell 2003). Along with Vogler and Markell we have asked of Africa, 'To survive violence, to find a way forward under its weight: is this less or more radical than the dream of overcoming violence in a final exceptional stroke' (3)? Our African interlocutors, colleagues, compatriots are bound, as we are, to the charge (*cost, commission, detonation*) of a scarcely enunciated radicalism that promises, in countless everyday ways, to unsettle African violence.

Notes

1 In partial mitigation of this silence, we refer the reader to Sheila Meintjies, Anu Pillay and Meredith Turshen's volume *The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transformation* (2001).

2 See Candace Vogler and Patchen Markell for one formulation of this connection: 'While the liberal state aims to control our violent tendencies by depriving us of the right to use force against one another, it also takes into itself the right to use violence in pursuit of this goal, exemplifying the capacity of redemptive aspirations not only to suppress but also to motivate and direct the coercive use of force' (2003: 2).

3 It is surely relevant to note that some of the impetus behind this book dates from an April 2003 conference hosted by the Harry S. Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, entitled 'Violence and Non-Violence in

Africa: Comparative Perspectives', where Lynn Schler's foregrounding of 'good neighborliness' borne in the chapter she has contributed to this volume took on additional resonance. The conference was in part an attempt to stage a theoretical engagement with the violence of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in the forms specific to the second *Intifada*.

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1 The glorious violence of Amdä Seyon of Ethiopia[1]

Steven Kaplan

Hero Amda Seyon
To and from the frontier
Like water in canal
To and from the frontier. . . .
. . .
Who is left for you at the frontier?
Whose face have you not disfigured?
Whose wife and child have you not captured?
Hero Amda Seyon,
To and from the frontier.[2]

Ever since his soldiers sang his praises almost seven centuries ago, King Amdä Seyon (r. 1314–44) of Ethiopia has been one of the central figures of Ethiopian history. In the context of this volume, it is particularly noteworthy that Amdä Seyon is remembered, not primarily as a great patron of literature[3] or a gifted administrator, but for his use of violence. Two episodes are particularly noteworthy in this respect: the first, his wars against his Muslim neighbors (Perruchon 1889; Huntingford 1965; Ducati 1939; Kropp 1994; Marrassini 1993; Dillmann 1884; Tedeschi 1978–9; Cerulli 1968: 5–70; Taddesse 1972: 132–45); the second, and perhaps the more surprising, his persecution of "rebel" monks who criticized his marital practices and his intervention in church affairs.[4]

In this chapter, we shall attempt to investigate both these episodes. Our primary emphasis, however, shall not be on attempting either to reconstruct these events or the history of their transmission in the literature. Rather, we shall attempt to understand the manner in which the sources represent these events and the reasons why the king's use of violence is remembered so vividly and in most cases so positively. We begin, however, with a few words regarding the historical setting in which these events took place.

Historical background

The earliest roots of Ethiopian civilization can be traced to the centuries prior and immediately subsequent to the beginning of the Common Era. Already in

this formative period the monarchy, a local Church and documents written in a Semitic language (all elements found until the last decades of the twentieth century) were in place (Munro-Hay 1991; Phillipson 1998; Kobischanov 1979). The rulers of kingdom of Aksum who dominated the northern regions of modern Ethiopia and Eritrea from the first to the seventh century were succeeded, following a lengthy period of weak central rule, by the Zagwe dynasty, which reigned from 1137 to 1270 (Sergew 1972; Tedeschi 1990). They were followed in turn by rulers who depicted themselves as heirs not only to the Aksumite heritage, but through Aksum to King Solomon of Israel and the remarkable figure of the Queen of Sheba. This so-called "restoration" of the so-called "Solomonic" dynasty ushered in one of the golden periods in Ethiopia history. The borders of the kingdom expanded, the Church grew in strength and numbers, and original works in Ge'ez (Ethiopic) were composed in unprecedented numbers (Taddesse 1972; Kaplan 1984; Derat 2003a).

Although Yekunno Amlak (1270–85) is remembered as the founder of this old–new dynasty, his grandson Amdä Seyon is remembered as "the founder of [its] might and power" or even "the founder of the state" (Levine 1974: 73; Trimingham 1968: 70; Ullendorff 1960: 64). With the ascension of Amdä Seyon, Ethiopia entered a period of remarkable political stability. During the period of almost a century, from 1314 to 1412, only four emperors ruled in Ethiopia.

Amdä Seyon (r. 1314–44, regal name Gäbrä Mäsqäl) is considered to be one of the greatest Ethiopian emperors. During his reign he confronted several issues which had strategic consequences for the entire region of Ethiopia. In 1316/17, shortly after he assumed the throne, Amdä Seyon undertook large-scale successful military campaigns to Gojjam, Damot and Hadiyya[5] (these last two regions strongly influenced by Islam) and levied an occasional tribute on them (Taddesse 1970: 95). He then turned his attention to the rulers of several northern regions, who had meanwhile obtained considerable independence.[6]

Yekunno Amlak and his descendants received only grudging recognition from the rulers of Tegre province. Resistance was especially strong in the region of Entärta, where the governors held almost independent power. Ya'ebikä Egzi, who governed this region during the early years of Amdä Seyon's reign, did not even mention the king when he granted land to a local church in 1319 (Conti Rossini 1901: 200–1). About this time, he organized a revolt against Amdä Seyon, the results of which have been recorded for posterity: "King Amdä Seyon decreed and deposed them and destroyed the rebels. Moreover, to eliminate the pride of their hearts and to remove their honors, [he] appointed over their land men who were not born from Adam and Eve who were called *Halästiyotat*."[7]

Amdä Seyon's campaign in Entärta was a crucial step in the consolidation of his dynasty's rule. Not only did it remove a major military threat and place the heartlands of the Aksumite kingdom under the firm control of the descendents of Yekunno Amlak, but it also enabled them to assert clearly and unequivocally their claim to be the heirs of that ancient kingdom. Heretofore, the nobles of

Tegre had harbored serious doubts as to the legitimacy of the Amharan dynasty. Indeed, it was at the instigation of the aforementioned Ya'ebikä Egzi' that the *Kebrä Nagast* (The Glory of Kings) resurfaced in the early fourteenth century.[8] This epic, which claims that the kings of Aksum descended from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, was well suited to serve the quest for recognition of a Tegrean prince. However, there can be little question that whatever the intentions of Ya'ebika Egzi with regard to the *Kebrä Nägäst*, with his defeat "Solomonic" descent became the distinctive heritage of the heirs of Amdä Seyon. As we shall see below, these traditions are significant insofar as they also legitimate some of Amdä Seyon's later military campaigns.

While Amdä Seyon was consolidating his power in northern and southwest Ethiopia, in the south a group of Muslim principalities backed by nomadic tribes and basing their power on the control over long-distance trade from the Red Sea coast to the Ethiopian highlands, was growing (Braukämper 1977). A central position was held by powerful Ifat in the southwest Shäwa, ruled by Walashma sultans, which absorbed the Shäwan sultanate of Mahzumi dynasty at the end of the thirteenth century. For their part, Christian kings gradually subdued border Muslim areas, which had to pay tributes but were always ready to rebel (Taddesse 1972: 130f). This gradual expansion from both the Christian and Muslim sides inevitably led to a large-scale military conflict. Amdä Seyon's wars of the year 1332 against Ifat and other Muslim principalities are known from the famous account of this campaign.

Despite the publication of numerous editions of the *Wars*, there is still no scholarly consensus as to the precise circumstances under which this text was composed and produced. While there appears to be a general agreement that many elements date from the time of the events it recounts, there is no such consensus regarding the period of the redaction, which has come to us. Paulo Marrassini's recent suggestion (echoing August Dillmann) that the text we possess came to prominence during the sixteenth century as part of the Christian kingdom's struggle against the Muslim conquest of Ethiopia led by Ahmad b. Ibrahim al-Gazi (better known as Gran) is intriguing.[9] According to this thesis, the final redaction of the *Wars* was intended to rally the Christian troops of the sixteenth century in their own struggle against their Muslim enemies by recalling the successes of one of Ethiopia's greatest warrior kings against his Muslim foes.

Whatever the precise circumstances which produced the *Wars*, the text offers valuable insights into Christian Ethiopian attitudes towards war and the violence it carried with it. It is to some of the themes found in this text that we now turn our attention.

Violence and masculinity

It is important to remember that Amdä Seyon was not just an armchair warrior, but a field commander who stood on the battlefield and personally engaged the enemy. Indeed, such personal involvement was common throughout Ethiopian history and several rulers lost their lives in combat. Thus his bravery and mili-

tary feats were not mere hyperbole, but reflections of his actual achievements in battle. Although there were certainly cases in which he sent generals to quell rebellions or pacify enemies in distant provinces (Huntingford 1965: 62–3; Kropp 1994: 15tr.=11tx), Amdä Seyon was very much a hands-on military leader. For this reason he, and many of his successors and predecessors, had no permanent capital, but rather a roving camp which could be mobilized for combat at a moment's notice (Horvath 1969).

In this context, it is important to remember that martial values, what some have called a "warrior ethos" or "warrior tradition," played a dominant role in Ethiopian civilization. "This was not just a matter of according high prestige to military men; it involved the diffusion of martial attitudes, virtues, and ambitions throughout the population."[10] This was particularly expressed in notions of masculinity, which stressed ascetic virtues such as the ability to endure suffering in silence and to perform great feats of endurance.

The identities forged on the battlefield were not limited to titles which were awarded in the wake of victory. One of the innovations with which Amdä Seyon is credited is the organization of the royal army into pan-territorial units whose primary loyalty was not to any regional ruler, but to the king himself (Taddesse 1972: 89–94).

One of these units is said to have been particularly "beloved" of the king, while another is said to have pledged their allegiance to the king, who "nourished us from childhood and brought us up to die with him" (Huntingford 1965: 94; Kropp 1994: 55tr.=51tx).

Participation in battle was, moreover, a crucial test of manhood – in some cases quite literally. According to the *Wars*, a number of the king's soldiers were captured and castrated by their enemies. The king, who grieved for them, sent his troops to raid these brutal enemies. This they did with much success, bringing before him not only the weapons and clothes of their foes, but also the genitals and ears of their dismembered colleagues (Huntingford 1965: 104–6; Kropp 1994: 66–9tr.=63–5tx.). While in this instance it was the Ethiopians' enemies who mutilated their captives and the Ethiopians who restored their manhood, there is ample documentation in later periods of Ethiopian Christian soldiers taking such trophies (Pankhurst 1994: 84). Indeed, castrations performed by Christian fighters are documented as late as 1894, and according to some accounts continue in some southern regions to this day. While there is no evidence that in Amdä Seyon's time "the act of killing was . . . regarded as a prerequisite for the status of being married and the ability to procreate" (Braukämpfer 2003: 695), such associations may have already existed.

Defeated soldiers were not the only ones who faced emasculation. Although it dates from a century after Amdä Seyon's wars, the words of one of his successors, Zär'a Ya'eqob (1434–68), explicitly call to mind earlier treatments of deserters. The theme of emasculation of the coward is vividly depicted. After being stripped naked, pierced by a sword through the nose and buttocks, the deserter would have animal parts held on him and dogs would be let loose. However, he is warned,

> The disgrace for you will be worse than death. The minstrels will mock you. They will also parade you around among the women who will laugh at you. There will be some who will say of you, "His belly looks like (that of) a pregnant woman." There will be some also who will say of you, "(His) bottom has no itch." And they will insult you looking at the shame of your penis . . . and the memory of your ignominy will last for all generations.
>
> (Getatchew Haile 1991: 77–8tr. = 97tx.)[11]

Although the specific idioms and language such as "his bottom has no itch" may not be familiar to the modern reader, the intent is apparent.[12] A deserter was an object of ridicule, whose place and appearance all recalled the feminine, rather than the masculine realm of the true soldier.

Indeed, Amdä Seyon himself is said to have articulated this dichotomy when it was suggested that he remain in his camp and not go out to battle because of illness. "Shall I die the death of a woman, I (the king)? I will not die the death of a woman, for I know [how to die] the death of a young warrior . . . and the elder queen said to the younger . . . Let him go forth and die the death of a man" (Huntingford 1965: 84, Kropp 1994: 43tr. = 37tx).

Based on all of the evidence above there can be little question that, in addition to its political and economic significance, the violence of Amdä Seyon's wars carried with it meanings connected with heroism, bravery and masculinity. The Emperor and his soldiers were not merely protecting their kingdom and expanding its borders, but also demonstrating their own worth as warriors and men. However, these were not the only values at stake on the battlefield, and we now turn to the interface between war and the sacred in Christian Ethiopia.

Violence and the sacred

If these clear threats of emasculation were not enough to dissuade potential deserters, it should also be remembered that in highland Ethiopia, as in many other places, war was rarely if ever treated as a purely secular affair.[13] The forces which clashed on the battlefield were frequently accompanied by religious practitioners of their choice. For Christians, this usually meant members of the monastic clergy, particularly abbots of important monasteries. The involvement of the clergy in a specific campaign often began well before the actual clash of forces on the battlefield. In deciding whether to set out against a particular enemy, rulers frequently sought the advice and blessing of the clergy. Before setting out against his enemies, Amdä Seyon quoted appropriate scriptural passages,[14] announced the favorable prediction of a monk, Zä-Amanu'el, and personally blessed his troops (Huntingford 1965: 70, Kropp 1994: 27tr. = 23tx).

In another document in which the king granted land to the monastery of one of his allies, he states, "I went to war trusting in the prayers of [St.] Stephen and my father Krestos-Täsfana" (Taddesse 1970: 96).

Once the battle had begun, the clergy were particularly important in maintaining morale and unity. The army commanded by Amdä Seyon was powerful

but fragmented, and he was at times deserted on the battlefield (Huntingford 1965: 89, Kropp 1994: 49tr.=44tx).[15] This was at least partially remedied by a priest named Hezbä Egzi'abher, who revealed that the Son of God himself had personally intervened on the side of the Christians (Huntingford 1965: 98; Kropp 1994: 59tr.=56–7tx). Indeed, when the lure of booty faded, soldiers were told, "For long you have fought for a transient kingdom, for gold and silver and fine clothing, now ready yourselves to fight for Christ" (Perruchon 1889: 311).

To be sure, we should be cautious about accepting such accounts at face value and positing that this sacred legitimation is "the reason for Ethiopia's having in many cases the upper hand over her enemies, even when fighting against larger armies" (Getatchew 1980: 216). Nevertheless, there is little question that Ethiopia's Christian armies believed that they acted with a religious sanction which extended far beyond any political or economic motives.

In the case of Amdä Seyon's wars this legitimation extended even further. In the charter legend of his dynasty, the Kebrä Nagast, one of the first acts of Menelik I, the son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, upon his return to Ethiopia is said to have been a campaign against Hadiya (Budge 1922: 165).[16] Not surprisingly, perhaps, this southern region was also attacked and conquered by Amdä Seyon in the fourteenth century.

The Gädl: combat and ascetism

Religion, violence and masculinity also figure prominently in the second series of events for which Amdä Seyon is remembered. The Ethiopian sources testify to a serious conflict between the Emperor on the one hand, and the Bishop and the clergy of the regions of Amhara and Shäwa on the other. The full background to this conflict is still not quite clear. Formally it was provoked by the attempt of the ecclesiastics to force the Emperor to abandon old marital customs and follow the norms of Christian morality. However, this specific issue appears to be symptomatic of the increasing tension between Church and State as the Emperor sought to curtail the administrative and economic independence of the Church and its monastic institutions. Amdä Seyon persecuted the rebel monastic leaders, violently punishing them and then exiling them to different parts of the country.

Although several of the texts concerning this episode have been published, only with the recent publication of Marie-Laure Derat's important study of medieval Ethiopian monasticism has an attempt been made to place them in a historical context which dates each text and discusses the dependence of one text on another.[17]

This is neither the time nor place to evaluate Derat's chronological schema. The "perpetual renewal" of hagiographic texts makes any statement regarding their date of composition highly problematic and easily subject to challenge (Kaplan 1984: 2–4). However, what appears beyond any doubt is the fact that the motif of the monks' struggle against Amdä Seyon not only survived the initial period of the conflict, but also continued to captivate audiences many centuries

later. As Derat documents with exemplary care, over a period of more than a century successive authors and editors sought to portray their saintly heroes not only as defenders of orthodoxy, but also as victims of the wrath and violence of a Christian king. Moreover, as time passed the accounts of the events were elaborated and even came to be included in the lives of saints who were not themselves directly involved in the conflict with the king. Each scribe, while preserving the basic outline of the story, presented it in a way which was most favorable to his hero, and best served his educational and literary purposes.[18]

Before we proceed to the examination of specific depictions of this episode, it is useful to take a minute to examine the genre in which they appear and the values inherent in such texts. In Ethiopic (Ge'ez), the term used for the *Acts* or *Life* of a saint is a *gädl. Gädl* derives from the root *gädälä*, which means to strive, wrestle, struggle, fight, battle, combat (Leslau 1987: 182). The emphasis accordingly is not on the biographical or even hagiographical character of the text, but rather on his (or her) (spiritual) struggle. The ascetic monk is implicitly associated with the "fighter, combatant, wrestler." Moreover, it should also be noted that the closely related second form of the root *gädälä* means "kill, slaughter, immolate" (Leslau 1987: 182). Thus, while the violence inflicted by the saint is overwhelmingly the self-inflicted violence of ascetism, the holy man's image is not that of a pacifist.

Moreover, this "ascetic hardness", "the ability to walk barefoot, go long without food" (Levine 1997: 665), is a link between the behavior of a soldier described above and that of a monk. In the *Wars*, Amdä Seyon is described as one night "eating no food, drinking no water, not ungirding his loins, and not sleeping. He did not even lie down that night . . . because of his experience as a soldier" (Huntingford 1965: 63; Kropp 1994: 17tr. = 12tx). Significantly, most of these behaviors – fasting, sleeplessness, and refusing to lie down – are all part of the holy man's arsenal of ascetic practices (Kaplan 1984: 11).[19] Thus, both the holy man and the soldier-king appear to have participated in a shared vocabulary of struggle, combat, and endurance.[20]

Of course, there were distinctive behaviors that separated the monk from the warrior king. One element about which there appears to be a consensus is that the monks in question reproached Amdä Seyon for his polygamy and in particular an incestuous liaison with his father's concubine.[21] As we have discussed in some detail elsewhere the tension between the monastic ideal and the monarchy particularly concerning the issue of forbidden sexual relations recurs throughout Ethiopian hagiographic literature (Kaplan 1984: 10–14). However, in light of our discussion above it would not be far-fetched to see these episodes as a clash between the celibate holy men and a hyper-masculine warrior king.

The war against the saints

This analysis is supported by some versions of this conflict. *Gädla* Bäsälotä Mika'el's depiction of the king's attempts to intimidate his critics seems more suited to the account of his *Wars* than a hagiographic work.

> The king ordered his governors and his princes, the heads of his army, to come to him while they were adorned their ceremonial garb: the *saragalit* in their mail coats and with their bows and their spears, and the cavalry in their coats of mail and with their spears and shields, and the cavalry with their arms ready for combat, and the infantry equipped with their weapons their lances and their bows. They stood before him in their equipment and he ordered that they chain before him terrible and terrifying lions. The king did all this to frighten the monks, so that they would abandon their criticisms. As for him, he wore a garb that caught the eye and he placed the majesty of his kingdom on his head and bracelets of gold on his legs and his arms.
>
> (Conti Rossini 1962: 24tr. = 27–8)

Given the wide variety that exists between the various accounts of the conflict between Amdä Seyon and the monks, we should not place too much weight on the claim that the emperor and his troops confronted them in full battle array. Nevertheless, when read in the light of our previous discussion of the multiple meanings of war and violence, these texts offer an interesting indigenous understanding of the episode. Indeed, this view is supported at least in part by the *gädl* of Abba Anorewos, where we read,

> On that day, king Amdä Seyon, having heard that the saints were coming to fight for justice, understood that they were united. He commanded and said [to his troops], "Wear your fine garments, prepare your horses, take your shields and lances and send for the terrible lions."
>
> (Conti Rossini 1962: 72tr. = 82tx)

Whatever Amdä Seyon's concerns may have been, he can hardly have believed that his monastic opponents represented some sort of physical threat. Clearly his massing of his troops was intended for intimidation and display, rather than for defense or deployment in battle. In the light of our discussion above it would not be out of the question to interpret the emperor's summoning of his troops in response to a critique of his sexual behavior as an attempt to display his potency in both the *martial* and *marital* realms.

He could not, moreover, have chosen two more sensitive targets. According to their hagiographers both Bäsälotä Mika'el and Abba Anorewos displayed a concern for sexual probity which extended well beyond their critiques of the king's behavior. Both are said to have been fiercely critical of the custom whereby monks and nuns, rather than living in separate monasteries and convents, shared a single residence. Each in his turn demanded and achieved the abolition of this practice in the communities under his control. Amdä Seyon's decision to call out his troops in defense of his adulterous and incestous behavior must have been particularly galling to these two (Conti Rossini 1962: 36, 71–2tx).[22]

Sacrificial violence

However, the military–masculine spin put on this episode by these authors is only one version of the events. No less interesting is the depiction of this conflict found in the life of Abba Aron. According to his *gädl*, much of the confrontation between the clergy and the king was played out as a struggle over the administration of the Eucharist.[23] Abunä Aron and his disciples refused to give the emperor the Host because of his sinfulness. Despite his exalted political status, Amdä Seyon was refused the "grace of Christ which is greater and is superior to the honor of earthly kings" (Turaiev 1961: 131, 140–1).

He could, of course, have received communion from his loyal retinue of court clerics, but this would not have resolved the wider issues behind the refusal to acknowledge his supremacy in ecclesiastical matters. The next day the metropolitan Ya'eqob and all his followers, including the recently consecrated Aron, refused to offer Amdä Seyon the Eucharist because of his impure state. The outraged emperor stormed out of the church and the service was completed without him. Amdä Seyon then ordered that the recalcitrant monks be brought before him on his home turf, the imperial court. There he rebuked them and asked how they could refuse the king of the land the Host on the advice of a foreign (Egyptian) cleric brought to Ethiopia at his request and expense. They replied, "He is our Lord and you are our King." Aron (singled out by his hagiographer for special attention) is said to have announced in a double entendre clearly referring to the Eucharist that the monks would, if necessary, present their heads "as a righteous sacrifice in your hands" (*maswa't sedeq ba'edwika*), rather than administer the Host to him.[24] The emperor had them bound and flogged.

Although the cultural references here may not be as obvious as the military language of our previous text, there is little question that this text's depiction of violence revolves around the multiple meanings of the term *maswa't* (sacrifice). As Bryan Turner has noted in a different, but related, context the "refusal to offer the Eucharist to sinners is a form of symbolic violence because the ban excludes lay sinners from access to divine grace" (Turner 2003: 98). More immediately, in our text the Eucharist which recalls and substitutes for the ancient Jewish animal sacrifices is linked with the violent punishment of the rebel monks. Thus in this depiction of the episode three different forms of violence – sacrifice, Eucharist, and martyrdom – are connected through a single term. The king who is refused the sacrifice of the Eucharist is offered in its place the sacrifice of the monks.

In this context it should be noted that in the teachings of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church the Eucharist was understood as "real," rather than symbolic. In other words, although the Ethiopians did not follow the Catholic Church down the path of a doctrine of transubstantiation, they firmly accepted the idea that the sacraments became the body and blood of Christ. Indeed, in one memorable hagiographic account the Host is transformed into an infant as communion is about to be served. The transformation is sustained even when the pieces of bread (flesh) are torn from the child (who nevertheless remains whole and intact

throughout). The saint explained that it took place to resolve doubts which arose in the minds of the brethren when they said, "the bread becomes the flesh of Christ and the wine becomes his blood" (Conti Rossini 1962: 24–5, 96–7; cf. Kaplan 2005). Whatever the purpose of this narrative, clearly we are not dealing merely with violence legitimized through recourse to the sacred, but with a central religious act which has sacrificial violence at its core.

Moreover, we would be remiss in this context if we did not note, at least in passing, the important debate which began with scholars such as Robertson Smith and Freud and has continue to our own day with René Girard. All of these have discussed the violent roots of religion and the key role of sacrifice in the emergence of culture (Hamerton-Kelly 1987; Burkert 1983; Girard 1977). In this context we cannot ignore the fact that the *Gädla* Aron version of this story revolves around the twin themes of (the king's) incest and the monk's sacrifice, shades of *Totem and Taboo*!

In the case of Amdä Seyon's conflict with the monks we appear to be dealing with a single episode which is remembered in numerous versions, each claiming a central role for a different monastic hero. To have suffered violence at the hands of the king became a badge of honor which successive scribes attributed to their heroes and shaped to their purposes. Despite the obvious indigneous fascination with this episode, foreign authors, neither contemporaries nor modern scholars, do not appear to have shared this interest. In contrast to the numerous editions of the *Wars* all of these texts have been the subject of only a single edition/translation, and only recently have the episodes been subjected to sustained analysis. Perhaps the complex issues behind a Christian king's persecution of orthodox monks were not so easily incorporated into conventional historical narratives concerned with states, trade and inter-religious struggle.

Although some authors have sought to describe these narratives as variations on the quintessential Christian account of violence – martyrdom – it should be noted that the the Ethiopian *gädlat* lack many of the classic elements of that genre (Derat 2003b). In particular, and of immediate relevance to our concerns, the violence of the Christian king Amdä Seyon is nowhere described in the harshly negative tones reserved for pagan persecutors of the Christians. Thus even in texts which celebrate the holiness of the king's victims rather than the military success of the king, his use of violence is not the subject of sustained condemnation.

The limits of this chapter do not permit us to proceed further in our exploration of violence in either the particular case of Amdä Seyon or its more general importance in Ethiopian history.[25] As we have attempted to demonstrate above, far from being isolated acts of "senseless" violence, the activities attributed to Amdä Seyon can be clearly situated in the context of Ethiopian Christian concepts of masculinity, warfare, ascetism and sacrifice. Not only does the exploration of such concepts assist us in understanding his wars and confrontations as separate episodes, but they also serve to reveal surprising links between the two. Monks who engaged in an ascetic "struggle" similar to that of the

soldiers were present on the batttlefield to provide prayers and blessings. Armed warriors and ferocious beasts were present not only in times of war, but also when the King sought to intimidate his monastic critics. The violent shedding of blood whether in battle, ritual or punishment, was a common feature of medieval Ethiopian life, particularly in the reign of Amdä Seyon whose deeds are no less celebrated today, than they were in the days when his solders sang:

> Amda Seyon, may the name be spread
> In Waj to Bater amora
> He swings the sword, the sword like a fly-whisk
> He puts round it a hedge of men.
> In Hadya to Guedela
> In Bali to Hedera
> In the Lake (province) to Ertera
> Amda Seyon, the name is spread
> (Huntingford 1965: 132)

Notes

1 I would like to thank Louise Bethlehem, Ruthie Ginio, Meley Mulugette, Leonardo Cohen, Donald Crummey and Denis Nosnitsin for commenting on earlier drafts of this chapter.
2 From the 'Soldiers' songs' as translated in Huntingford (1965: 129). Cf. Enno Littmann (1914, 1943). Here as elsewhere Huntingford's translation is problematic (Ullendorff 1966). However, in an English language book intended for a general Africanist audience I felt it best to refer to the only translation in that language. References to original texts with a recent German translation have been provided throughout.
3 Despite attempts to treat his reign as an important period in the history of Ethiopic literature, this is far from certain (Stoffregen-Pedersen 1990: 54; Ferenc 1985: 261–8, Cerullli 1968: 70; Mantel-Niećko and Nosnitsin 2003). As we shall discuss below the (re) appearance of the *Kebrä Nägäst* was not at his instigation, and the account of his wars may, in fact, date to almost two centuries after his death.
4 It is interesting in this context to note that in the indigenous chronicles some versions emphasize Amdä Seyon's military campaigns, while others stress his conflict with the monks. For a survey of texts see the discussion in Dombrowski (1983: 153, n. 27). These "short chronicles" were probably the product of monastic authors.
5 It is interesting to note that the campaign against Hadiyya is also found in the Kebrä Nagast.
6 Although these early campaigns could be considered a third (and chronologically first) example of the king's use of violence, none of them have left as clear a mark on either traditional or modern historiography.
7 Taddesse (1972: 74, n. 1) writes that the term *halästizotat* "literally means 'bastards of mixed or low origins,' and its use here certainly reflects the unpopularity of the military colony." According to Leslau (1987: 230) the term means "ape, baboon, wild ass" (cf. Taddesse 1972: 20, *alasteyo,* "ape, baboon") and he suggests it is derived from Arabic, "of mixed colors, hair having whiteness mixed with its blackness."
8 For editions of the Kebrä Nagast see Bezold 1909; Budge 1922; and most recently Colin 2002.

9 Marrasini 1993: 39–43; Kropp 1994: XXVIII–XXXV; Among the elements which are crucial to the debate are the references to the kings or saints Tewodros or Claudius (Huntingford 1965: 98–9; Kropp 1994: 60tr.=56tx) and to Amdä Seyon as still being alive (Huntingford 1965: 109; Kropp 1994: 73tr.=69tx). See also Muth 2003.

10 Levine (1997: 664) speaks of a "warrior ethos." Cf. also Levine 1974: 53–5 and 2002; Mazrui 1977.

11 Note the word translated as "penis" means simply "genitalia." The choice of the generic (non-gendered) may be intentional.

12 I am grateful to Denis Nositsin for his suggestion that the term translated as "bottom" (*zänäb*) "means both 'anus' and 'tail,' and … the same word, perhaps, can also be a euphemism for 'penis'."

13 Although this may appear as something of a commonplace, it should be remembered that many forms of violence were condemned by religious authorities. The subject of how certain forms of violence were "domesticated" through religious institutions is, unfortunately, outside the bounds of this chapter.

14 On the use of scriptural passages in Ge'ez literature see Pankhurst 1986. Cf. p. 15, "The Almighty, as conceived in the Ethiopian chronicles, was essentially the Old Testament God of war." On the use of such quotations to justify and glorify violence see in the *Wars*, cf. Huntingford 1965: 92; Kropp 1994: 52tr.=48tx: "As David (saved) Israel when he killed Goliath and saved Israel and himself prevailed, and the women sang, 'Saul has killed (his) thousand and David (his) ten thousand' (I Sam. 18: 7), Likewise Amdä Seyon king of Ethiopia killed ten thousand and thousands with the help of God. Men's blood flowed like water, and bodies lay like grass on the earth."

15 On the motif of heroic solitude on the battlefield see Marrassini 1993: 26.

16 See also the poem at the end of this chapter.

17 Derat 2003a: 144–52; see also the list of primary sources provided in her notes. Both the *Wars* and the hagiographies were undoubtedly written by clerics. It should, of course, be noted that in contrast to the *Wars*, which were produced in the framework of the royal court, the hagiographies are monastic works intended to glorify the monks and not the king. See also Derat (2003a: 164), where Derat briefly but explicitly addresses the issue of violence.

18 "Il s'agit d'une histoire stéréotypée, employée dans les textes pour attester de la sainteté d'un moine" (Derat 2003a: 152). In the "Short Chronicles" additional monks are mentioned who lived during much later periods. In some of these cases, no mention is made of this conflict in the saints' own hagiography. Cf. Dombrowski (1983: 153, n. 23).

19 I perhaps should have realized that the soldiers in Gädlä Täklä Haymanot who eat, sleep, and lie down are being presented in a negative light.

20 For an important recent discussion of these themes see Turner 2003.

21 In an act which could only have outraged the king, *Abunä* Ya'eqob is said to have ordered the relics of Bäsälota Mika'él brought to Sägla. The hagiographic traditions concerning Bäsälota Mika'él have yet to receive the critical attention they so richly deserve. Several elements in his biography, including training at Däbrä Damo and conflicts with Amdä Seyon over the king's marital practices, are strikingly similar to themes found in other texts of the period. It is difficult to determine the historiocity of these events.

22 Of course, we must be open to the possibility that these similarities between these texts are a result of their literary dependence on each other.

23 I am grateful to my colleague David Satran for pointing out the similarities between the manner in which this episode is depicted and the confrontation between Ambrose and Theodosian in the fourth century. For a more detailed discussion of this episode and the social significance of the Eucharist in Ethiopia, see Kaplan 2005.

24 At several points in the narrative the king uses the term "sacrifice" (meswa't) to refer to the Eucharist and requests it from the hands of the Patriarch.
25 Various aspects of violence in Ethiopian societies have been dealt with extensively by G.J. Abbink in a series of important publications (see asc.leidenuniv.nl/publications/gjabbink.htm).

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2 The unwritten history of ethnic co-existence in colonial Africa

An example from Douala, Cameroon

Lynn Schler

Cities of colonial African have been described as sites of competition and 'hardened rivalries' between ethnic groups (Anderson and Rathbone 2000: 8). In the case of Douala, Cameroon, this has resulted in historiographic emphasis on ethnic identity politics and violent conflicts in the years leading to independence. The outcome is the shadowing of the dynamic of ethnic co-existence and the pervasiveness of non-violence in the period leading up to and including the final stage of colonialism. The political expressions of ethnic identify formation have interested historians as part of a broader narrative of nation-building in colonial Africa. The narratives presented in nationalist histories are narratives of conflict, often detailing acts of violence between local populations and colonial rulers, and between specific interest groups within local populations. But these histories of nationalist organizing and uprising overlook alternative communities and trajectories of experience and do not usually represent the majority of African experiences in the period of decolonization. The search for what has been left out can lead us to a more inclusive understanding of local experiences in the later years of colonial rule. The effort to outline African experiences outside the nationalist paradigm can also help us understand post-colonial mobilizations, as the social and cultural networks imagined and established by Africans under colonialism have persisted over time and continue to enable 'wide dialogue and common action among people with diverse pasts' (Cooper 1994: 1545).

Using colonial Douala as an example, this chapter first reviews the historiographical preoccupation with nationalist protests and uprisings in Cameroon, and then moves to demonstrate the types of cooperatives and solidarities left out of the nationalist drama. Historians of Douala have documented the Duala elite anti-colonial struggle in the interwar years and the nationalist uprising led by the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC) of the post-World War II era, but many alternative alliances and communities playing an active role in urban life in this era have eluded their attention. This chapter argues that in contrast to nationalist political agitation, the immigrant community residing in the quarter of New Bell beginning in the interwar period represented an alternative consciousness around which immigrants organized their communal life, but the history of this community beyond its role in the violent anti-colonial struggle has been largely overlooked. Current historiography would have us believe that

nothing happened in New Bell before World War II and that the vast majority of immigrants were identified with and active in the agitation initiated by the nationalist movement of the post-World War II period. My examination of New Bell during this period will help to demonstrate why some alliances and experiences do not find their way into the historical record, and what steps must be taken to reverse this trend. We will examine issues of access to sources facing historians of peaceful co-existence, and ask: How can histories of non-conflict and non-violent cooperation be reconstructed despite their relative invisibility in the colonial archive? The goal is to broaden our categories of analysis to allow for a better understanding of how Africans have lived together in multi-ethnic collectives not necessarily corresponding to nation-state boundaries.

Histories written: elite and working class nationalisms

Prior to the post-World War II era, historiography concerning the city of Douala is largely focused on the history of the Duala male elite. This is an often colorful history of ambitious African entrepreneurs who attempted to manipulate the colonial encounter to their benefit from the very first arrival of Europeans to the coast of Cameroon during the sixteenth century. Residing next to one of the best natural harbors in the region, the Duala people were well-positioned to receive docking European vessels and to act as middlemen in the trade between Europeans on the coast and Africans of the interior. Operating initially as slave traders and later as participants in the 'legitimate trade,' the Duala facilitated the exchange of export goods such as slaves, ivory, and palm products brought from the interior for European alcohol, beads, textiles, tobacco and salt (Austen and Derrick 1999: 70). The city of Douala, named for the ethnic group, grew and expanded along with this trade.

The establishment of formal colonial rule had tremendous consequences for both the Duala people and the city of Douala. First under the Germans (1884–1914) then, and following World War I, under the French regime (1916–60), the city of Douala played an important role as an administrative capital until 1901, and throughout the colonial era as the economic capital of Cameroon. Increased activity at the port of Douala, the largest and most active on the coast, created employment prospects in large merchant houses, and Duala independent traders enjoyed the benefits of augmented economic activity. The Duala of the early colonial era also generated a significant income from real estate, as they demanded compensation for the use of their urban property. The Duala also served as interpreters and bureaucrats within the colonial administration and presided over native courts, and this increased their power over other local populations.[1] Both colonial administrations relied heavily on the Westernization of the Duala in order to make them suitable assistants to European administrative officials and independent merchants. Knowledge of European languages and a mastery of the norms and habits of Western culture encouraged the Duala to see themselves as participants in the same cultural milieu occupied by their colonial patrons.

The position of the Duala between colonial and local cultures was analogous to that of Western-educated elites throughout colonial Africa, as was their ultimate disillusionment with their European benefactors. While close proximity to colonial trade and culture clearly advanced their economic and cultural standing, the Duala soon confronted a profound loss of political power under colonialism. Faced with policies institutionalizing racial boundaries in the areas of cultural and political life, the Duala protested, and this anti-colonial sentiment has been identified by historians as the first seeds of nationalist activity in colonial Cameroon. As such, the Duala 'pioneers' in the development of nationalist politics have attracted an impressive amount of scholarly attention (Austen and Derrick 1999: 2).

The main catalyst of Duala dissatisfaction with colonial rule was linked to the expropriation of Duala lands in the city center by the German administration. In 1910, the German administration formulated an urban renewal project designed to preserve the city center for Europeans by relocating the local Duala population and the growing population of African strangers[2] to newly built quarters on the outskirts of the city. The Duala protest against the expropriation, dealt with in numerous studies, has been identified as proto-nationalist, and a pioneering step toward the establishment of the Cameroonian nation-state (Eckert 1991; Joseph 1977: 37; Derrick 1979: 433; LeVine 1964: 116; Austen and Derrick 1999: 2, 144). The unrelenting opposition to the expropriation was responsible for its postponement, but the Reichstag ultimately voted in favor of implementation, which began in 1914. The outbreak of World War I and the ousting of the Germans from Cameroon prevented the completion of the expropriation, and only the Duala Bell clan was removed from their native lands and relocated into the new African quarter known as New Bell. The Bell clan did not accept their new circumstances passively, and the struggle to regain their customary lands continued into the French Mandate period, albeit without any real success.

Historians' identification of a nationalist agenda in the Duala agitation can be explained through an examination of the specific language utilized within the actions and claims of the Duala throughout the campaign. In struggling for their own rights, the Duala made treaties and addressed petitions as representatives of a 'population' or 'people' beyond the ethnic Duala (ANC–FF n.d.). In one petition, the Duala claimed to speak on the part of 'the natives of Cameroon and their chiefs' (Derrick 1979: 144). In 1929, the Duala even demanded national sovereignty (Derrick 1979: 303). Their appeals to leaders of other local groups for assistance and support in an anti-German struggle have also bolstered the identification of the Duala with ethnic coalition building during this period (Derrick 1979: 84).

Critics of nationalist historiographies find these types of linkages endemic to the histories of colonial elites. As Partha Chatterjee, a scholar of nationalism in South Asia, has argued, colonial middle classes such as the Duala that were situated simultaneously in positions of subordination and domination typically constructed a hegemonic discourse that supported their cultural leadership over local populations as a means of combating their own political weaknesses

(Chatterjee 1993). As European power chipped away at Duala influence, the Duala asserted themselves by warning Europeans to maintain their distance from 'our Bushmen' (Rudin 1968: 423). Franz Fanon has articulated one of the sharpest critiques of these elites – 'dusted over by colonial culture' – in their efforts to assume power by representing the entire race: 'in spite of fine-sounding declarations which are devoid of meaning since the speakers bandy about in irresponsible fashion phrases that come straight out of European treatises on morals and political philosophy … The Western bourgeoisie, though fundamentally racist, most often manages to mask this racism by a multiplicity of nuances which allow it to preserve intact its proclamation of mankind's outstanding dignity' (Fanon 1963: 47, 163).

The labeling of this protest as nationalist has privileged Duala experiences over the experiences of others and given the Duala a prominent status in the history of Cameroon. The Duala themselves have recognized the potential of this historical narrative to empower their community as they compete with other groups for dwindling resources. In conducting oral interviews with residents of the city, I was struck by how many of my Duala informants were in the midst of writing their own manuscripts of Duala history, and several produced detailed transcripts of oral histories and genealogy charts on request (Ngangue 1998; Epée 1998; Moumé-Etia 1998). Interviews were smooth processes, with Duala informants seasoned in the interview process, and able to easily recant oral histories dating back to the pre-colonial period, with some able to testify to events from the fifteenth century. There are also Duala archives controlled by ruling families in the city, and access and use of these are limited and monitored. Well-trained in western intellectual traditions, the Duala know how history can be used. These efforts at preserving and reproducing the illustrious narrative of the Duala past are part of an effort to legitimize Duala cultural and political claims of the present.

With regard to the years following World War II, the historiography relating to the city of Douala reflects a shift in focus from the Duala elite anti-colonial protest to the nationalist organizing among residents of the city. Douala, and particularly the immigrant neighborhood of New Bell, has been portrayed a hotbed of anti-colonial agitation in the post-war era and an important base of support for the UPC (Union des Populations du Cameroun). Established by trade unionists with strong Marxist leanings, the UPC supported an anti-colonial, anti-capitalist agenda and opposed tribalism. The party called for full independence from France, and for the reunification of British and French controlled territories of Cameroon. Within Douala, the immigrant community of New Bell played a pivotal role in expanding the membership of the UPC, as the working class population rallied behind the UPC agenda to end colonial exploitation (Joseph 1977: 241–2). The UPC leadership in New Bell protested against police brutality and worked to defend the workers' rights, thus gaining the support of many residents of the quarter (ANC–FF 1949). The UPC eventually set up their Douala headquarters in New Bell (Joseph 1977: 268).

In 1954, New Bell residents took part in violent clashes with colonial forces. The historian Victor LeVine described the events: 'some three thousand rioters,

armed with nail-studded clubs, machetes, axes, iron bars, and some firearms, stormed the central radio station and spread havoc' throughout the quarter (LeVine 1964: 156). The rioting lasted for several days, with UPC residents attacking non-UPC groups, storming the prison and administrative offices, and setting cars on fire. These actions met with brutal retaliation by the colonial police, who used shock grenades and firearms to disperse the crowds. The police seized UPC headquarters and rounded up hundreds of UPC members residing in the quarter. By the end of hostilities on May 27, seven New Bell residents were killed and scores more wounded (Joseph 1977: 266–8). In the wake of the May 1955 riots, the government banned the UPC and forced the party underground.

The history of UPC activity in New Bell in particular, and in Cameroon more generally, has attracted historians as an example of staunch resistance to colonial rule. The radical movement has provided historians with a dramatic history of violent resistance and a clear foil to politics of pro-French collaborators comprising the political leadership in post-colonial Cameroon. Thus, while the UPC movement was ultimately defeated by the French, the history of the movement provided an imaginable alternative to the disappointing reality of the post-colonial Ahidjo regime. In documenting the history of the radical nationalist movement, Richard Joseph made his ideological intentions clear: 'there is the moral question concerning the role of academic scholars in constructing elaborate apologies for a highly authoritarian régime' (Joseph 1974b: 429). Likewise, Achille Mbembe argued that the history of the UPC under the leadership of Ruben Um Nyobe could provide insights into a distinctly African political morality. Um and his leadership of the UPC was proof of the resilience of local cultural and social institutions in their confrontation with colonialism (Mbembe 1991).

Without negating the historical significance of the UPC, post-colonial historiographic attention to the movement has inflated the significance of the party in the broader political landscape, particularly with regard to New Bell. Victor LeVine has claimed that throughout Cameroon, the UPC is 'neither as powerful nor as attractive as it clamed to be' (LeVine 1964: 149). The central elements of the UPC platform, calling for reunification with British Cameroons and an end to the trusteeship, were issues that most of the local population 'showed little inclination to become excited over' (LeVine 1964: 149). According to Joseph, many New Bell residents who took part in violent riots and protests under the UPC banner were not wholly identified with the nationalist agenda, but rather exploited the political momentum to release their own frustrations with economic hardships (Joseph 1977: 357–9). Thus, the identification of New Bell as a hotbed of UPC activism masked a more ambiguous relationship between immigrants and the nationalist agenda. Beyond their distorting effect, nationalist historiographies have also limited the scope of historic inquiry and led to a widespread forgetting of alliances and communities that were peripheral to or excluded from this political activity. In the case of the city of Douala of the interwar period, this can be seen in the history that has *not* been written, the history of African immigrants in the strangers quarter of New Bell.

Histories not written: the strangers of New Bell

As seen above, the expropriation of Duala lands in the city center has been a major focal point for historians of the colonial city, but the existing narrative of this event and its aftermath portrays the expropriation as an emergency threatening the interests and soliciting the response of only the Duala clans. There is little mention of the role the African immigrant population of the city played in the events surrounding the 'crisis.' The historiography leaves us with the impression that the expropriation was a tragic episode in the colonial history of Cameroon, a patent example of colonial oppression valiantly, but unsuccessfully, opposed by the local population (Vansina 2000). This version of events is only plausible when the history of the stranger population is ignored. A closer look at the events surrounding the establishment of the new quarter reveals that in fact more strangers than Duala were implicated in the actual implementation of segregation and, more importantly, the colonial state faced no opposition at all from these non-Duala masses.

For the non-Duala African population of the city, the creation of New Bell within the framework of the expropriation came as a relief. Unlike the Duala, the population of strangers had nothing to lose and everything to gain from the plan. In fact, many eagerly seized the opportunity to relocate to the new quarter and the administration received many requests from non-Duala Africans seeking authorization to live in New Bell immediately following the demolition of the Duala quarter in Joss. Colonial officials supervising the expropriation documented the great enthusiasm of the stranger population regarding the new quarter. As one administrator commented, 'One indigene already living in New Bell told me that everyone is very pleased. The nights are much fresher in the new quarter' (ANSOM 1913). While it is easy to suspect German motives in portraying a content indigenous population in New Bell following the controversial expropriation, there is abundant evidence to suggest that the non-Duala residents of the quarter were indeed gratified by their new surroundings. Escaping the high rent of Duala quarters was clearly refreshing. In addition to the abuses of landlords, the stranger population had also suffered at the hands of corrupt Duala chiefs who habitually abused their tax collecting privileges in extracting fraudulent sums from non-Duala tenants (ANC–FF 1920; Nguidjol 1998). Settlement in New Bell also freed the non-Duala Africans from the jurisdiction of Duala chiefs exploiting the legal system and demanding high justice fees from newcomers (ANC–FF 1920).

Alongside the financial and political grievances felt by newcomers toward their Duala hosts, there were perceived cultural differences between the immigrant populations and the Duala. The Duala liked to think of themselves as aristocrats and nobles, and they openly referred to members of the immigrant population as *bakom* (Moumé-Etia 1998). To avoid friction, most newcomers preferred to simply maintain space from Duala neighbors; as one oral informant claimed, 'It was not possible to live next to the Duala who called us slaves' (Ngobo 1998). The residents of New Bell also sensed the cultural distance

between themselves and the Duala imposed by western education. The Duala were seen as culturally closer to colonizers, even as white. One long-term resident of New Bell explained, 'Marrying a Duala was like marrying a European' (Ngobo 1998). Once New Bell was established, relations between the Duala and immigrants were limited, with many residents of the immigrant quarter during the colonial period claiming there was little contact between the two groups. As each quarter had its own market, and immigrants occupied different jobs than the Duala, there were scant opportunities for proximity, and the public and private spaces occupied by the Duala and stranger populations remained, for the most part, distinct and separate.

While the Duala employed proto-nationalist rhetoric to serve their narrow interests, the community of New Bell actually represented a multi-ethnic collective solidarity throughout its history. From the start of the colonial period, immigrants originating from both the interior of Cameroon as well as other colonies throughout West and Central Africa arrived at Douala with manifold economic, political, and social objectives. During the German period, West Africans came mostly from Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Dahomey, and Togo. With the start of the French Mandate, African bureaucrats and merchants began arriving from Senegal and Guinea. Immigrants from within Cameroon represented over two hundred ethnic groups, but there were particularly large concentrations of Beti, Bassa, Bamileke and Hausa, the relative population of each varying over time. Most came voluntarily, as employees of large commerce houses or the colonial administration, but others were brought to the city as prisoners, soldiers or forced labor (ANC–FF 1917–25). Many found work within the colonial economy as dockworkers, porters, manual laborers, and civil servants, but various sources reveal that the vast majority earned their livelihood in New Bell's 'unofficial' economy as artisans, petty merchants, prostitutes, and alcohol brewers.[3] The immigrant population grew steadily from the beginning of colonial rule, and constituted a clear majority of Douala's population by 1930, if not earlier (Derrick 1979: 360; Schler 2001: 107–9).

Despite the numerical significance of New Bell as the most populated quarter in the city, there is little mention of the quarter in any historical account of Douala prior to World War II. But, as seen above, even when the immigrant quarter does makes its entry into the historiography of Cameroon, it is portrayed as a hotbed of agitation and divisions, with the growth of tribalism also associated with this period of New Bell's past. Several historians have made a connection between the growth of modern politics in Cameroon and the banding together of political activists along ethnic lines (LeVine 1964; Joseph 1977; Austen and Derrick 1999). This was due both to colonial efforts to encourage ethnic divisions as part of a divide-and-conquer philosophy, and to the reality that Africans found it easier to identify with divisive ethnically-based affiliations rather than more universal groupings pronounced in multi-ethnic political organizations.[4] This history would have us believe that ethnicity was the most determinant principle organizing participation in public life in the strangers' quarter, thus leading to increasing competition and conflict between groups.

Ethnic affiliations did indeed play a central role in individual lives and in the process of community building in New Bell. Most newcomers to Douala relied on kinship or village ties for assistance in acclimating to life in the city. Many came with brothers, sisters or cousins, and joined an aunt, uncle, or fellow villager already residing in the quarter. Newcomers lived with their relatives until they saved enough money to buy their own huts. By and large, these long-term guests did not pay rent to their kinsmen, and as oral informants explained over and over again, one did not take rent from a brother (Ongono 1999; Ndjock 1998; Monthe 1998). Huts could even be given to relatives gratuitously, and were only exchanged for money when the new resident was a member of another tribe (Ongono 1999). In this respect, the associations an individual had with kinsmen played a central role in his or her arrival and integration into city life. Beyond housing, newcomers received instruction and orientation from relatives, helping them to adapt to an urban lifestyle. Ethnic ties also played a role in the historical relationship between immigrants and work. The connections a newcomer had with relatives often facilitated him or her in finding employment in the city. As a result, some occupations were disproportionately represented by one particular ethnic group, such as the preponderance of Bulu among the general population of prostitutes, or the domination of the Bamileke among petty commercants known as Market-boys, or Bayam-Sellem (pidgin for Buy them, Sell them) (Moumé-Etia 1998; Ngobo 1998; Dizain and Cambon 1956). The link between ethnic affiliations and the economic sustenance of communities in New Bell can be seen in the history of the well-documented credit associations and popular banks known as *tchua* instituted among the Bamileke. Through these financial cooperatives, members of the same village groups or age sets were able to obtain capital for investment in business ventures. The celebrated Bamileke 'dynamism' and economic success throughout colonial and post-colonial Cameroon, and in Douala in particular, can be attributed in part to these ethnic-based associations, confirming the significance of kinship ties in the development of economic and social communities (Dongmo 1981; Gosselin 1970).

While recognizing the significance of ethnic affiliations among newcomers to New Bell, ethnicity must be regarded as a time- and place-specific construct, rather than an unproblematic signifier of identity. The instability and fluidity of ethnicity in New Bell throughout the colonial period renders the historical significance of the concept particularly difficult to evaluate. The colonial period witnessed the continual realignment of solidarities, as well as the concurrent association of individuals with seemingly incompatible ethnic identities (Joseph 1977: 148, 174–8; Atangana 1998: 76–8). While it is clear that some form of ethnic identification was of paramount importance to most immigrants at some points in their lives in New Bell, the slipperiness of these identities makes it very difficult to attribute ethnicity with any long-term impact on the history of the quarter.[5] In addition, religious, gendered, and class-based distinctions, to name a few, played prominent roles equal to that of ethnicity in building solidarities and communal boundaries in New Bell.[6]

But from the time of New Bell's establishment, public space in the quarter was not exclusively regulated by solidarities based on ethnicity, religion, class, or gender. While sub-identities proliferated and impacted community-building, there were also factors and forces converging to create a multi-ethnic collective rooted in the strangers quarter, garnering power over time and ultimately exerting that power in the form of a *New Bellian* identity adopted and implanted on those who participated in its public space. The multi-ethnic community in New Bell of the interwar period was not mobilized for any political cause, and it is precisely this mobilization that has given subjects historical relevance until now. For the historian, the study of New Bell requires a reorientation of the 'conceptual cartographies' framing earlier histories of the city (Mohanty 1991: 3). But an attempt to document the history of New Bell in this period also requires the historian overcome methodological obstacles, as public discourse in the quarter was not preserved in the same fashion as the Duala petitions. The question remains, how can we write a history of non-conflict, cooperation, and shared experiences when traces of these alliances are not readily found in colonial archives?

The challenge of recovering the New Bell interwar past can be demonstrated by an analysis of spoken language in the quarter during the period under question. As noted in Duala history, language plays a pivotal role in the construction of public culture. In New Bell, the heterogeneous community of strangers spoke pidgin English as a means of verbal communication within the quarter. Pidgin made its first appearance in Douala in the seventeenth century and became firmly established in the coastal region by the nineteenth century (de Féral 1989: 23). As prominent traders, the Duala were the first Africans in the coastal region to use pidgin for international business transactions and political action, and this established the language as the primary mode of communication with foreigners in the city. The Germans did not easily accept the prevalence of the language bearing anglophone influence, and as the colonial presence was extended, all contact with the indigenous population was conducted in German exclusively. The French were equally sensitive to the symbolism embedded in spoken language, and for 'patriotic, utilitarian, and humanitarian reasons,' the administration set to work immediately to instruct Africans in French, and the use of French in schools was mandated soon after the establishment of the French regime.[7]

Despite colonial efforts, European languages were not adopted in New Bell and their absence in the quarter marked the boundary separating the immigrant community from colonial authority and resources. The continued use of pidgin within the immigrant community symbolizes a break from these authorities, particularly when considering colonial efforts to impose European languages, and the Duala mastery of German and French as a means of participating in colonial public spaces in the city center. Unlike Europeans languages, pidgin was not taught by colonial authorities or missionaries, and it was not, therefore, linked to or regulated by any power. Pidgin was not written, but only spoken, and this enhanced the flexibility and fluidity of the language. Knowledge of

pidgin was learned in the street, the center of public life in New Bell (Goethe 1999). This made it a perfect tool for the immigrant population. As one oral informant recalled, 'I did not know a word of pidgin when I came to New Bell, but three months later, I could speak perfectly. It was a very easy language for communication' (Ngoko 1998). Others recalled that while French was difficult to learn, and only taught in colonial schools, anyone could speak the 'bad English' (Chantal Chenu 1998; Dibango 1998; Ngoko 1998).

The immigrant community viewed pidgin as a symbol of the distance separating them from the European presence in the city. One informant who had been a resident of New Bell during the colonial period explained, 'there was French spoken in the city, but pidgin was the form of communication for inferior people' (Ngoko 1998). The presence of pidgin in the quarter demonstrates that immigrants employed creative, localized strategies for bridging differences in a highly diverse community of strangers, and this was an important step enabling the evolution of a multi-ethnic collective. The collective solidarity slowly emerging in the space of New Bell in the interwar era was even hinted at by one oral informant as an alternative form of nationhood when he remarked, 'pidgin became a sort of national language during the colonial period' (Ousseni 1998). The nation demarcated by pidgin bore little resemblance to the nation imagined by the nationalist elite, and constitutes a fruitful starting point in the vital search for expressions of public life not conforming to Western political models, but enabling the construction of multi-ethnic solidarity and co-existence. Thus, the problem of writing histories of multi-ethnic communities not mimicking Western forms is located in the need for both theoretical language and methodologies for uncovering this local domain of popular political discourse (Chatterjee 1993: 226).

The search for alternative source materials must include a reading of the spatial configuration of the quarter both during and after the colonial period. The historic evolution and exploitation of physical space in New Bell can provide us with important insights into immigrant initiatives over time and the evolution of the community. Ignored by colonial urban planners until the 1950s, the landscape of New Bell in the interwar years resonated with diffused authority and short-term planning. The strangers of New Bell established their presence in a spirit of temporariness, haphazardly creating living quarters and neighborhoods to meet immediate needs using limited resources. Unlike in Duala and European quarters, land in New Bell was never privately owned. In the early years following the establishment of the quarter, land was readily available and residents simply claimed plots and built huts. As the community expanded, new hierarchies of power sprang up, and colonial appointed chiefs would claim control over tracts of unclaimed land, requiring newcomers to obtain permission to build. But the native chiefs' control was incomplete at best, particularly prior to World War II, when the legitimacy of these chiefs handpicked by the colonial regime was questioned (ANC–FF 1941; Koloko 1999; Dieudonné 1998). Most informants claimed that immigrants had little trouble securing plots, which were never sold but simply claimed by immigrants or granted by the chiefs (Moumi 1998; Eyobo Essawe 1998; Ongono 1999). As newcomers took land wherever

available, neighborhoods in New Bell were ethnically mixed, with residents claiming, 'We all lived together' (Assama 1998; Nguidjol 1998; Ongono 1999; Onana 1999; Angono Ebe 1999). Colonial maps of the quarter mask this reality. Drawn for the first time only in 1955, the maps designate each neighborhood of New Bell by the local chief serving the area, leaving the impression that the quarter was firmly divided into ethnicized neighborhoods.

Thus, an examination of the exploitation of space in colonial New Bell can give us important information about community life, providing a footprint of the quarter's past. Physical space in New Bell served as a foundation to the immigrant community and by outlining the ways in which space in the quarter was imagined, engaged and shared by immigrants we can begin to understand how the immigrant quarter evolved into a common ground, and a home to the immigrant collective. Both oral sources and colonial documents relating to the nature of public spaces in New Bell can inform us of the public culture operating in the quarter and bounding residents into a greater whole.

Lacking monuments of modernity prominent in the city center, public life in New Bell was centered in the street. It was in this arena that rules of urban living were broadcast and masses of unfamiliar individuals integrated into a shared experience. Residents could engage in this public space simply by walking through it, and strolling (*balader*) emerged as a main form of entertainment in New Bell (Biloa 1999). The discourses operating in New Bell's street-centered public space were not necessarily verbalized, but rather visual, performative, and impersonal gestures. In this formation of public space, consumption played a crucial role, and the acquisition of material goods aided individuals in securing and displaying their membership in the community of strangers (Glassman 1995). Status was deeply tied to a certain 'look.'[8] Shoes were particularly important markers of status, as many of the newcomers came to the city barefoot[9] (Loga 1998; Tchope Tassi 1998; Ndjock 1998). White tennis shoes gained particular popularity (Loga 1998). Similarly, European-style clothes were highly sought after, and were the first purchase immigrants made in the city (Tchope Tassi 1998; Kapendia 1998). Meager salaries paid to most immigrants did not grant unlimited purchasing power, but those who did succeed in obtaining fine imported clothing wore them proudly. This can be seen in the following description in a 1936 article from *L'Eveil du Cameroun*: 'if you see native couples better dressed and smart, they are Strangers, "non-Dualas"' (Derrick 1979: 408). Derrick has correctly argued that this was not an accurate portrayal of the vast majority of poorly-paid immigrants. Nonetheless, it is clear that immigrants learned not only how to dress in the street, but how to carry themselves and behave in an urban way, thus distinguishing themselves from recent arrivals. As one woman explained, 'They would just stroll. They bought their new clothes, nice shoes and hats, and they would go and be gentlemanly in the streets' (Mbe 1998). Body language served as a primary vehicle of communication between strangers in the streets of New Bell, and oral informants claimed it was easy to distinguish between newcomers and long-term residents simply by the way they walked (Ngobo 1998; Eko Flobert 1998).

Beyond the street, bars served as primary sites for the construction and dissemination of popular culture and public discourse in New Bell. The daily, collective assembly of immigrants in public spaces constituted by bars played a central role in fostering a sense of community among New Bell residents. Bars provided the only off-hours distraction in the quarter, and nearly all oral informants responded to questions concerning leisure time activities with, 'we drank' (Mbita 1998; Mbe 1998; Tchope Tassi 1998). The consumption of alcohol in New Bell was so universal that drinking with others ultimately became a symbol of community membership, as could be seen in one informant's description of policemen: 'when they were not working, they would come and have a drink like everyone else' (Biloa 1999). For most of the colonial period, alcohol was manufactured illegally by women and sold secretly in their living rooms, creating opportunities for large gatherings where urban popular culture was invented and shaped. In these bars, ethnicity did not determine or limit participation in communal life. Members of all ethnic groups would sit and drink together, tell stories in pidgin or gamble (Ndjock 1998; Ngono 1999). Bars thus constituted local cultural spaces around which the multi-ethnic community of strangers convened and crystallized.[9]

The evolution of the highly local, transient public spaces de-emphasizing ethnic, class, and religious-based distinctions in New Bell of the interwar years perhaps seems, at first glance, a matter of limited significance. As an historical event, it certainly lacks the drama of urban riots or even Duala petitions to the League of Nations. But this history of neighbors, good neighbors, can nonetheless teach us about African lives and strategies in the colonial era. And while the ethnic co-existence characterizing community life in a highly diverse New Bell is perhaps not a monumental event in the building of the nation-state of Cameroon, it is highly significant in the lives of those who have lived there and helps to explain how the present nation-state prevails. Colonial archives provide rich information on violent confrontations, but remain largely silent on peaceful co-existence. But, we should not conflate the lack of documentation of African solidarities, cooperatives and alliances of the colonial era with an estimation of their insignificance. This examination of the community of strangers in this period provides us with an alternative conceptualization of a multi-ethnic Cameroonian identity, and lays the groundwork for understanding the participation of Cameroonians in post-colonial spaces. Historic inquiry has often searched for the origins of 'exclusive ethnic categories' as a foundational characteristic of the history of independent African nations, but a shift in the historiographic focus to the existence of neighborly relations between ethnic groups can perhaps reveal more significant aspects of everyday experiences among local populations in post-colonial settings.[11]

Notes

1 Historians from other parts of Africa have acknowledged the power exercised by interpreters in the colonial period. For an example from Guinée Française, see Osborn (in press). See also the introduction in that volume.

2 Enid Schildkrout's work on the stranger as a West African social institution stressed the fluidity of the term across time and place, and argued that the relevant definition depended on local political conditions. Throughout African history, the term stranger could refer to those from a distant locality, visitors deserving hospitality, neighbors with different customs, enemies, allies, or even wives. See Enid Schildkrout, 'Strangers and Local Government in Kumasi,' *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2 (July 1970) 251–69: 268.

3 For example, Douala's 1929 annual report cited approximately 6,000 immigrants employed in colonial enterprises, while a campaign against sleeping sickness that same year estimated the stranger population as exceeding 20,000. See Gouellain 1975: 220; Derrick 1979: 356.

4 For a detailed discussion of the links between ethnicity and political affiliations in colonial Africa, see Vail 1991; Bravman 1998. For a specific discussion on ethnicity and politics in colonial Cameroon, see Austen 1992.

5 On the volatility of ethnic identities in colonial Africa, see Vail 1991; Chanock 1985; Bravman 1998; Spear 1993.

6 This could be seen, for example, in the strong religious affiliations binding together Muslims originating from inside and outside Cameroon, and the associations uniting Catholic converts from many different ethnic backgrounds within the colony. On Muslim unity, interview with Ousman Nouhou (1998). On the Catholic community, see ANSOM 1931. Gendered solidarities could be seen among women in colonial New Bell, as women from different ethnic groups lived and worked together as prostitutes. Interview with Lydie Zang (1999).

7 See Stumpf 1977 and interview with Valère Epée (1999). Similar dynamics have been noted in colonial Togo. See Lawrance 2000.

8 Several historians of colonialism have shown that the adoption of European dress represented an appropriation of power by indigenous populations. For example, see Hendrickson 1996; Martin 1995; Tarlo 1996.

9 Interviews with New Bell residents Rigobert Loga (1998), Barthelemy Tchope Tassi, (1998) and Michel Ndjock (1998). Evidence of the popularity of shoes among immigrants in Douala can also be found in import statistics for the early years of the French Mandate. In 1921, a total of 4,104 kilograms of shoes, valued at 164,515 francs were imported into Cameroon. In 1923, these quantities increased to 9,824 kilograms of shoes, valued at 415,066 francs. By 1926, the volume of shoes imported had jumped to 61,766 kilograms, valued at 2,080,676 francs. See Rapport Annuel au Conseil de la Société des Nations sur l'administration sous mandat du territoire du Cameroun, 1921, 1923, 1926.

10 The history of alcohol in colonial Africa has attracted historians as a metaphor for power struggles within local societies as they underwent radical change as a result of the colonial conquest, as well as an expression of African resistance to colonial rule. See Ambler and Crush 1992; Akyeampong 1996. I have argued elsewhere that alcohol consumption in colonial New Bell was not solely a form of dialogue between colonizers and colonized. See Schler 2002. Yvette Monga (2000) has argued that in post-colonial Cameroon, popular culture continues to reveal multi-ethnic allegiances and co-existence, and thus provides an alternative to the discourse of tribalism employed by political leaders.

11 At the end of his study of the hardening of ethnic/racial identities and differences in Zanzibar, Jonathon Glassman (2000) reminds us that conflict was not the only characteristic of inter-ethnic relations. See also Ghosh 1995.

Interviews

Angono Ebe, Jacqueline: Mendong, Sangmelina Province, March 1999.
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3 The vulgarization of politics

Ethnic violence in Kenya

Pal Ahluwalia

> After liberation the one desire was to sleep, to forget and to be reborn. At first there was a wish to talk incessantly about one's experiences; this gave way to silence, but learning to be silent was not easy. When the past was no longer talked about, it became unreal, a figment of one's imagination.
>
> (Aharon Appelfeld)

> If I am asked to hide weapons
> I shall obey without questions.
> If I am called upon to serve this organization
> By day or night,
> I'll do so!
> If I fail to do so
> May this, the people's oath, destroy me
> And the blood of the poor turn against me.
>
> (Ngugi wa Thiong'o)

During the latter part of 1994 and early 1995, in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide, in the refugee camps surrounding Goma I encountered hundreds of the so-called perpetrators, Hutus, who had allegedly killed Tutsis. There is no doubt that there were amongst these refugees many who had taken part in the frenzied killings. The Rwandan genocide is clearly a major failure of the international community in the twentieth century, for it was a genocide that could easily have been prevented (Ahluwalia 1997). The most vivid memory I have of the refugee camps is that no one wanted to talk about what happened, to acknowledge what they had done, or to address the question of responsibility. I was struck by the silence as much as I was amazed at the resilience of the human spirit that finds within itself the basic instinct of survival. These people most probably were involved in violence against their fellow citizens, or at the least they had witnessed perhaps the most horrific acts of violence imaginable. They were now beholden to a leadership that had ensured their compliance through modes of surveillance and coercive methods of policing much the same as they had been in Rwanda itself.

What has disturbed me since then are some unresolved questions, such as how could neighbours who had coexisted for so long turn on one another? What about the leadership of such campaigns of violence? In reflecting on the Rwandan situation, I have often tried to understand why the instigators of communal riots in India, for instance, particularly around partition, were never brought to book (Varshney 2002; Nandy 2002). The linkages between such communal violence and politics might appear obvious in the way that such unrest favours certain political ends. However, what interests me is how violence is made part of the everyday life, the manner in which politics is vulgarized and used as an effective technique of governance.[1] In the following pages, I explore how ethnic violence has been used as a political tool in contemporary Kenya.

Violence and the vulgarization of politics

In a region dominated by coups, genocide and war, Kenya has appeared as a stalwart of political stability. Despite the country's considerable ethnic diversity, it has remained relatively stable. However, the return of multi-party politics in Kenya in the early 1990s has been linked inextricably to two factors that have become the defining tropes of the political culture – corruption and violence. These tropes have become so pervasive that they have been normalized into the very practice of politics. The political institution of the Moi presidency was underpinned by both ethnic forces and class interests. This occurred primarily because the factions engaged in the power struggle came from the same elite that wished to maintain its economic and political position (Ahluwalia 1996a).

The unity that brought Moi to power, however, has been severely undermined by the manner in which politics in Kenya has become increasingly ethnicized and characterized by violence. Coupled with this violence is endemic corruption that touches virtually every member of society. While certain levels of corruption have always been part of the political culture, by the early 1990s, every part of the state sector had succumbed to it. Public servants unable to cope with escalating prices and inadequate wages established their own system of levies aimed at achieving at least a living wage. It appeared that all the rules that had previously governed modes of corruption had been eroded. It was clear that people were sick of the pervasiveness of corruption. They wanted some sort of rationalization of corruption to make it more predictable so that they could get on with their everyday lives.

In his later work, Michel Foucault elaborated the theme of modern political power. What Foucault sought to create was a re-evaluation of the state/civil society nexus whereby the state was conceptualized as the site of power and civil society as the site of attaining freedom. As David Scott aptly puts it, what concerns Foucault 'is the emergence in early modern Europe of a new form of political rationality which combines simultaneously two seemingly contradictory modalities of power: one, totalizing and centralizing, the other individualizing and normalizing' (Scott 1995: 201–2). It is this rationality which

Foucault terms 'governmentality'. It is about the 'problematic of government' – about how to rule and how to be ruled. In order to illustrate his point, Foucault examines Machiavelli's *The Prince*. He stresses the absolute power and authority of the prince, whose sovereignty is exercised on a territory and on all the subjects who reside within that territory. Government, for Foucault, is a 'question not of imposing law on men, but of disposing things: that is to say, of employing tactics rather than laws, and even of using laws themselves as tactics to arrange things in such a way that, through a certain number of means, such ends may be achieved' (cited in Scott 1995: 202). Governmentality, then, can be seen as a process through which a population can be categorized and regulated into manageable groupings and hence come to be policed and subject to bureaucratic regimes and disciplines (Foucault 1991).

Under colonialism, the objective was to create productive subjects who could be governed efficiently and effectively. This was achieved by altering the political and social world of the colonized. As Scott points out, the 'political problem of modern colonial power was therefore not merely to contain resistance and encourage accommodation but to seek to ensure that both could only be defined in relation to the categories and structures of modern political rationalities' (1995: 214). In contrast to such modes of power is the new art of government which is characterized by self-regulation and the manner in which individuals are constrained, leading to new forms of knowledge, analyses and discourses through which individuals are 'disciplined' and 'civilized'. In such a configuration, the modern state, the panoptican state, normalizes its citizens by deploying a host of complex disciplines, practices and discourses. Although Foucault was concerned with Europe, his work can be instructive within the African context. As Scott points out, in order to 'understand the project of colonial power at any given historical moment one has to understand the character of the political rationality that constituted it . . . what is crucial is trying to discern the colonial power's point of application, its target, and the discursive and non-discursive fields it sought to encompass' (Scott 1995: 204).

Colonial governmentality was underpinned by coercion and violence. Achille Mbebme has aptly captured its predominance as part of the banal and ordinary, 'which played so important a role in everyday life that it ended up constituting the central cultural imaginary that the state shared with society, and thus had an authenticating and reiterating function' (2001: 25). The modes of violence used to police the subject population led to the development of authoritarianism and a culture of impunity. It was this form of colonial governmentality, characterized by violence and impunity, that was bequeathed to the post-colonial governments at independence. As Ashis Nandy points out:

> Colonialism had a special role to play in the growth and legitimation of this sanitized violence, both as a source of such violence and as a system that encouraged its victims to mimic the style of violence practised by their oppressors.
>
> (Nandy 1994: 20)

It is precisely in this way that violence has become part of everyday life. In an ironic twist, multi-party politics re-established violence as an important technique of governance, one that is used to garner political support and establish ethnically exclusive zones. As Mbembe points out, 'the post-colony is also made up of a series of corporate institutions and a political machinery that, once in place, constitute a distinctive regime of violence' (2001: 102). In short, politics in Kenya has become vulgarized through the deployment of violence.

Majimboism and ethnic violence: tools of governance

Since the 1990s a great deal of violence in the country has been evoked in the name of *majimboism*.[2] In the Rift Valley, such calls of *majimboism* have been accompanied by the expulsion of non-Kalenjins from the area. *Majimboism* has its roots in the 1960s when the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) party advocated a system of federalism in Kenya. However, as the then Chair of the Law Society of Kenya in 1998 explained:

> majimbo does not exist in constitutional theory as a system of government. Its authors have the misconception that it is actually a federal system of government which, in addition to federalism as it is known ordinarily, also means the displacement of non-indigenous communities from their region to wherever they came from.
>
> (Human Rights Watch 2002: 20)

Majimboism was used in the lead-up to the 1992 elections to drive away members of ethnic groups who were expected to vote against the ruling party. This violence pitted the Kalenjin and Masaai, who were supporters of the Moi government, against the Luo, Luhya and, in particular, the Kikuyu communities. A number of high-ranking government officials were involved in the formation, training and arming of the 'Kalenjin warriors' who carried out these attacks. The violence that they wreaked claimed more than 1,500 lives and displaced more than 300,000 people. In a government inquiry, top KANU members of parliament and cabinet ministers were implicated in those ethnic clashes (Republic of Kenya 1992; Republic of Kenya 1993). The impact of the ethnic clashes was profound, even affecting the reporting of such clashes. For example, reporters from Kenya's press who belonged to certain ethnic groups refused to cover stories for fear that they would be targeted (Adar 2000).

There was a striking coincidence between ethnic violence and the electoral strategy of the Moi government. Attacks and incidents of violence occurred primarily in areas where Moi required a minimum of 25 per cent of the vote, in order to meet the constitutional requirement that a Presidential candidate receive a minimum of 25 per cent of the valid votes cast in at least five of the eight provinces. When viewed in that context, it was vital for Moi to secure the minimum stipulated votes in three areas – the Coast Province, the Rift and the Western Provinces; these were precisely the areas where the most virulent

attacks took place. In the 1997 elections, had he failed, Moi would have had to undergo a run-off election in a second ballot which he would have almost certainly lost (Steeves 2002: 122).

Kenya's return to multi-party politics was marked by President Moi's apocalyptic prediction that the country would be rent by violence (Ahluwalia 1993). Since 1991, Kenya has succumbed periodically to ethnic violence, vindicating Moi. The violence has left many thousands dead, with tens of thousands injured and hundreds of thousands displaced. Significantly, the country appears prone to ethnic conflict around or immediately after the elections. The 1997 elections were conducted under an effective gerrymander and characterized by significant violence in certain areas of the country which ensured both a KANU as well as a Moi victory. Although the gerrymander delivered such a victory, the election results illustrated the fragility of the government's hold on power, whose majority of 82 parliamentary seats was reduced to just four. The effect of the 1997 elections was that politics in Kenya further entrenched the ethnicization of politics. Critically, voting patterns reflected the close alignment with ethnicity. As a consequence, Central Province became a Democratic Party (DP) stronghold whilst the Rift Valley Province was identified closely with the Kenya African National Union (KANU).

In 1998, following the elections, violence once again erupted in the Rift Valley Province where predominantly Kalenjin supporters attacked what were dubbed as 'pro-opposition' ethnic groups. What was particularly disturbing about this violence was that it was a result of inflammatory speeches by three senior politicians, Biwott, Ntimama and Kipkalya Kones, all of whom had been implicated in instigating the violence of 1991–94 despite the official inquiry that failed to apportion blame (Southall 1999: 99; Adar 2000). Unlike, the earlier violence of 1991–94, a significant change occurred whereby members of the Kikuyu ethnic groups, who were the targets of Kalenjin violence, were armed and prepared to retaliate albeit that they were unable to repel the much stronger state-supported attackers. The major effect of this violence dubbed by the media as 'ethnic clashes' was that it reflected the political conflict between the two political parties, the KANU and the DP. This tension became all the more apparent when the violence that ensued was localized in three DP constituencies, Laikipia, Molo and Nakuru Town. It was in these areas populated mostly by the Kikuyu ethnic group that the DP won parliamentary seats. Hence, it is not surprising that the violence in the Rift Valley province was conceived as one between the Kalenjin and the Kikuyu. The DP saw *majimboism* as an attempt to disenfranchise Kikuyus living outside Central Province, which was portrayed as their 'natural home' by the Kalenjins and other smaller ethnic groups.

The violence in these areas needs to be examined also in light of the fact that the then DP leader, Mwai Kibaki, filed a petition that challenged the legitimacy of the 1997 elections. Initially, other presidential candidates also challenged the results but eventually capitulated to strong pressure and did not lodge a petition. The diminished electoral support for both KANU as well as President Moi meant that their supporters felt threatened and consequently turned to violence

as a technique of intimidation. A further factor that appears to point towards the political motivation of such violence is the lack of will amongst the police to bring the perpetrators of violence to account. This lends support to the common perception that the police have been instructed, by those in power, not to interfere (Article 19, 1998).

The government's response to handling these problems was discriminatory, with opposition leaders likely to face penalties for such actions.[3] This pattern can be clearly discerned in politically inspired ethnic violence in the lead-up to the general elections of 1997. In particular, there were violent attacks in Kenya's Coast Province where armed raiders, backed by the KANU, targeted opposition supporters. A pattern emerged whereby politicians urged their particular ethnic group to take action against another ethnic group that failed to vote for them during the elections. In a recently released report, Human Rights Watch detailed the attacks in the Coast Province showing that once again there were strong linkages to the upper echelons of the KANU (Human Rights Watch 2002).

In 1998, under considerable pressure from the opposition as well as NGOs, a presidential commission of inquiry was established to ascertain the causes of ethnic violence between 1991 and 1998. The Akiwumi Commission was charged specifically with the task of identifying those who were responsible for violence, and to examine the actions of the police and other security agencies. It was also asked to look into the capacity in which the law enforcement agencies had to prevent and control such violence. The Commission gathered evidence and sought testimony from more than 200 witnesses. The Commission itself was beleaguered by problems such as refusing to hear testimony implicating politicians involved in the Rift Valley violence and only allowing any testimony that implicated the President on the basis of prior notification. Nevertheless, what is remarkable is that, despite the Commission completing and submitting its report to the President in August 1999, it was not made public. This inevitably fuelled allegations that senior government members were implicated in inciting the violence.

Despite the overwhelming evidence implicating senior politicians, ethnic clashes continued to plague Kenya in 2001. Two areas in particular stood out. First, there was conflict between pastoralists and farming communities over land and water resources in the Tana River district of eastern Kenya. In a two-week period in late November, the violence between Orma pastoralists and the Pokomo farming community in this area saw more than 50 people killed and at least 3,000 displaced by fighting, bringing the total killed to well over 130 people. The violence over land occurred where the Ormas complained that Pokomo farmlands were too close to the banks of the Tana River, and therefore made it difficult for herders to access water, whilst the Pokomos accused the Ormas of allowing cattle to wander onto their farms and destroy crops.

Second, violence in the Nairobi slum of Kibera also erupted in late November 2001. Some 12 people were killed with 3,000 residents rendered homeless. The problems in Kibera were over high levels of rent charged by landlords. Tensions in the area were heightened further during a visit by President Moi on 31 October, when he directed the Nairobi Provincial Administration to explore

ways of reducing rents. Consequently, many of Kibera's 700,000 tenants refused to pay rent. The rent issue also took on an ethnic dimension because most of the landlords are Nubians whilst the majority of tenants are Luo. Kibera falls in the constituency of the then NDP leader Raila Odinga, a Luo himself. The violent clashes in both Tana River and Kibera were part of the pattern of escalating violence across the country ahead of the 2002 elections and appeared to be replicating trends at the last two elections.

In March 2002, following a wave of violent killings in Nairobi, the government banned 18 youth gangs and vigilante groups including *Jeshi la Mzee* (the Old Man's army). This was a group closely aligned with KANU and its youth wing. In the past, both had been utilized to intimidate and attack political opponents. In the case of this organization, it was Assistant Minister Fred Gumo who was accused of financing the group, a claim that he vehemently denied (Human Rights Watch 2002: 22; Southall 2000: 215).

The patterns of violence that emerged around the country were reminiscent of the techniques deployed during the Rwanda genocide. In Rwanda, politicians incited violence by exploiting fragile ethnic divisions and mobilized supporters to carry out acts of targeted violence for which they were granted complete impunity. In particular, the Interhamwe militia, a party-based youth group, led the carnage and were supported by civilians trained and armed by security agencies (Ahluwalia 1996b). In Kenya, it was precisely these techniques that were and continue to be deployed. Local politicians exploited disaffected youth in areas where there were extremely high rates of unemployment by blaming their lack of opportunities on 'foreigners' and rallying these supporters around calls of *majimbo*. As Human Rights Watch pointed out:

> Some members of the Digo community were keenly aware that one way to achieve majimbo was to use intimidation and violence to expel non-indigenous residents. This had been the lesson of the violence in parts of western Kenya that began in 1991, when majimbo was a lightning rod for politically instigated 'ethnic' clashes in Rift Valley and neighboring provinces. This lesson had already been applied in the Coast region prior to 1997. In fact, in the early 1990s, as the Rift Valley violence was underway, a group of Digos attempted to use the same tactic on a smaller scale in the Likoni area.
>
> (Human Rights Watch 2002: 25).

During the election year 2002, violence became an important tool in a number of areas. In the North Rift Valley, deadly clashes between pastoralist communities over armed cattle rustling rapidly escalated into large-scale violence, with no effective government intervention. The Kenya Human Rights Commission argued that violence was part of a strategy of intimidation that KANU used to re-establish political dominance in parts of the Rift Valley Province prior to the 2002 elections. What was and is particularly disturbing is that violence increasingly involves the use of automatic weapons.

In recent years, Kenya has been surrounded by countries that have endured a great deal of political instability. The wars in the neighbouring countries have had the effect of making arms readily available in Kenya. This inflow of weapons has had a profound impact on Kenya. There has been an increase in violent crimes and overall insecurity in Kenya. In addition, in areas where ethnic conflict has been prevalent, there has been a tendency for groups to acquire firearms. This proliferation of firearms has made it difficult to distinguish between crime and conflict in several areas. The government has been unable or unwilling to stem such widespread crime and conflict in the country. This, coupled with rampant corruption in the police, has meant that public trust in the security agencies has been all but eroded. In addition, politicians have exploited ethnic tensions thereby further exacerbating violence. As one observer group has noted, 'by neglecting to take action against the dangerous role played by politicians who stoke communal conflict, the government itself contributes directly to the insecurity that drives small arms proliferation' (Human Rights Watch 2002: 19). Consequently, communities are arming themselves and in some cases maintaining private militia where the community itself owns weapons (Human Rights Watch 2002: 16).

Constitutional reform

In the lead-up to the 1997 elections, the National Constitutional Executive Council (NCEC), an umbrella organization of non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations, placed the government under considerable pressure to reform laws in order to make the electoral process fair. The efforts for constitutional reform were aided also by the suspension of $215 million by the IMF and aid by the European Union. The government's response to this internal and donor pressure was to allow the formation of the Inter-Party Parliamentary Group (IPPG) which comprised members from both the KANU and the opposition. The IPPG held negotiations with the government, as a result of which the latter agreed to carry out some amendments in the constitution in order that the 1997 elections could take place. The significance of the establishment of the IPPG was that the KANU effectively succeeded in preventing the NCEC from engaging in the constitutional reform process leading up to the election. While the IPPG had some success in having some repressive laws repealed, including the particularly repressive Public Order Act which restricted the right of assembly and the law of sedition, it failed to address major issues such as the President's powers and the imperfect electoral system, issues which the NCEC actively sought to change. The election results of 1997 clearly vindicated the NCEC's position.

In April 1998, the NCEC and the churches took the lead once again in calling for constitutional reforms. The NCEC went so far as to threaten a national strike and civil disobedience in response to the slow progress on constitutional reforms that were promised under the promulgation of the Constitution Review Act in September 1997. Although the strike did not receive the kind of support that the

NCEC had expected, the government, nevertheless, announced the establishment of an Inter-Party Constitutional Committee (IPCC) to undertake the task of public consultation aimed at reforming the constitution. The government conceded to the greater involvement of civil society in the constitutional process but made it subject to a veto of the Parliament.

In a series of meetings held at Safari Park Hotel in Nairobi, the Attorney-General agreed that the Review Commission would be expanded to include the NCEC. At Safari Park (1 and 2), the original IPPC was replaced by a constitutional draft committee consisting of the KANU and opposition members as well as representatives of civil society. However, in light of controversy and suspicion, Safari Park (3 and 4) meetings became the basis for the final settlement of the review process. Central to this was the establishment of a 25-member Constitutional Review Commission that was to be chosen from both political parties as well as civil society and became the final basis for a Constitution of Kenya Review Bill that was passed by the Parliament in October 1998. The effect of the Bill was the sanctioning by the KANU that the Constitutional Review Process was to be civil society-driven (Southall 1999; 2000; Ajulu 2001).

Nevertheless, the constitutional review process fractured over the composition of the Commission. The opposition and representatives of civil society as well as internal divisions within KANU over the number of representatives, to which each group was entitled, ultimately derailed the review process. The government seized the opportunity of thwarting the consultative process and returning the review of the constitution entirely to Parliament on the ground that the Commission was not an elected body.

In late 1999, in a deal with Raila Odinga, the leader of the NDP, a Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) on constitutional review was established. The Raila Committee was constituted exclusively of KANU and NDP members. The effect was immediate with the opposition, churches and elements of civil society forming a parallel constitutional body – the Ufungamano initiative. The Raila Committee, in its report to Parliament on 20 April 2000, recommended that a parliamentary committee would identify 21 people, of whom President Moi would appoint 15 to establish the Constitutional Review Commission. As Rok Ajulu has pointed out, 'the Select Committee thus handed over the entire constitutional reform process into the laps of the President and the ruling KANU party' (Ajulu 2001: 203–4). In January 2001, the internationally acclaimed constitutional expert Professor Yash Ghai was sworn in as Chair of the government-appointed Constitutional Review Commission. Under the Chairmanship of Professor Ghai, President Moi once again was able to outmanoeuvre the opposition and, despite having announced earlier that the KANU would have 11 members, the NDP 2 and the rest of the opposition the rest, he had somehow managed a merger of the government-driven process of constitutional reform and the civil society-driven *Ufungamano*. In the short term, this gave the constitutional review process an air of legitimacy albeit that the agenda appeared to be controlled by Moi. This also had the effect of giving rise to speculations that the President might still embark on a campaign aimed at changing the constitution

in order that he might be able to contest a third term (Southall 2000). Significantly, in March 2002, the Commission announced that it would not be able to complete its deliberations prior to the presidential elections scheduled for 2002.

Nevertheless, on 18 September the Ghai Commission released its report, *The People's Choice* (Republic of Kenya 2002). This shortened version, published ahead of the full three-volume report, was essentially the draft constitution that proposed major changes to the governance of the country. The commission proposed significant changes that attracted a great deal of controversy and debate. The key changes included the following:

- Parliament is to consist of two chambers, the current 210 member National Assembly elected from constituencies, and a new 100 strong member upper house, the National Council with members elected from district and provincial representatives;
- The President to be directly elected but must have 50% of the popular vote and 20% of votes in a majority of provinces. If no candidate achieves this, then a run-off between the two top candidates, with the candidate who gets the higher vote to be elected President;
- The government to be headed by a Prime Minister and two deputy Prime Ministers chosen by Parliament;
- Parliament has the power to sack a non-performing Prime Minister;
- Presidential powers to be substantially curbed;
- The first-past-the-post system is to be abolished and replaced with a new electoral system;
- Independent candidates to be allowed to contest all public offices;
- The role of Parliament is to be significantly strengthened with greater powers over the budget, approval of Presidential appointees and the ability to monitor government operations;
- The appointment of Cabinet ministers as in the US system, not as MPs in order to relieve them of constituency responsibilities;
- Parliament empowered to impeach the President and sack a non-performing Prime Minister;
- The independence of the judiciary enhanced;
- Power to be devolved to local authorities and the provincial administration abolished; and
- Armed forces and the intelligence agencies to be made more accountable to Parliament.

(Republic of Kenya 2002: 23)

It is clear that the constitution is aimed at reigning in the vast powers that the presidency has accumulated since independence. However, there appears to be a problem in that the president, who will command a great deal of popular legitimacy by virtue of being directly elected, is relegated to picking the leader of the majority party to form a government and signing bills into law, being a symbol of the nation and ensuring that the government is constitutionally responsible.

The Cabinet and the Parliament control all other functions of the President. The tensions of trying to wed a presidential system with a Westminster system are all too apparent. In trying to check the powers of the presidency, the commission placed a great deal of faith in Parliament. And yet, in recent years, that institution has demonstrated that it has the potential to abuse its powers.

The succession and political machinations

Under the present constitution, President Moi was not eligible to contest the forthcoming elections as he already had served the maximum two terms permitted. However, it was not entirely clear that he would relinquish the presidency. In June 1999, upon returning from South Africa, he announced that he would retire at the end of his second term. Yet, by the next year, he was saying that, if it was the wish of the people, he would not be in a hurry to vacate the office. The impending succession resulted in intense jockeying for positions within the ruling party. There were two predominant factions within the ruling party, KANU-A and KANU-B. The KANU-A faction was led by the former finance minister Simon Nyachae who, until he retired in 1988, was the Chief Secretary. He was seen as someone who was not tainted by the scandals of corruption and violence that had engulfed senior members of the ruling party. KANU-B was closely associated with the President's so-called kitchen cabinet comprising Nicholas Biwott, Joseph Kamotho and Vice-President George Saitoti. This faction was regularly at the centre of controversy and financial scandals and was named in a Parliamentary Select Committee's *Corruption List of Shame* (Ajulu 2001: 201).[4]

In 1997, it appeared that KANU-A had won favour with Moi when he demoted Saitoti from the vice-presidency to Minister for Planning and National Development. At the same time, he appointed Nyachae as finance minister in order to secure donor confidence in the economic management of the country. Nyachae was given a mandate to curb corruption and build public confidence in the economy. Nyachae proved to be an effective minister who not only produced a balanced budget, a first in many years, but also was one who was committed to dealing with the rampant and endemic corruption. However, in 1999, when he began exposing the linkages between cabinet ministers and KANU parliamentarians in bankrupting the National Bank of Kenya largely through bad debts, he was removed as finance minister. Although he was offered another ministry, he declined and became a backbencher, from where he increasingly criticized government policy.[5] The new finance minister closely associated to KANU-B was not accepted readily by the donor community. Consequently, in order to give the government some credibility, Richard Leakey was appointed to head the civil service with the brief of rationalizing and keeping corruption in check.

The position of the vice-president remained unfilled and it was not until 1998 that George Saitoti was re-appointed to the position that he had held since 1989. The position of vice-president was seen as being crucial to succeeding the president in case the incumbent died whilst in office. Saitoti's re-appointment

signaled that KANU-B had recovered from the challenge of KANU-A and that Nyachae was in the ascendancy. Saitoti, however, sought to distance himself from other members of the kitchen cabinet in order to be seen as a credible candidate for the presidency. This meant forging alliances with the Kikuyu opposition that supported him during a vote of no confidence in Parliament. This had the effect of straining relations within KANU-B. With both Nyachae and Saitoti on the outer, the succession issue divided the ruling party and illustrated the importance of President Moi as the only power broker capable of holding KANU together.

In November 2001, President Moi, keenly aware of the political machinations within his party, once again reshuffled his cabinet. The Minister of Finance, Chris Okemo, was demoted to the position of Minister of Energy, a position that he held in tandem with Raila Odinga. Odinga was the leader of the NDP that had aligned itself in an effective coalition with KANU. The former Foreign Affairs Minister, Chris Obure, was put in charge of the important finance portfolio. The reshuffle was an important attempt by the President to get a minister into place who was able to negotiate with the donor community. The former Finance Minister's credibility was under strain following his criticism of the World Bank and the IMF for causing Kenya's economic problems.

The reshuffle allowed also the inclusion of two new ministers, Uhuru Kenyatta and Cyrus Jirongo. Both in their early forties, they were described by the Kenyan Press as 'Young Turks'. Their inclusion in the cabinet appeared to confirm Moi's assertion that he wished to hand over power to the younger generation. Kenyatta was appointed as Minister of Local Government and Jirongo as Minister of Rural Development. However, it was never entirely clear which faction or individual President Moi was supporting at any particular time. Nevertheless, the President had been constrained by pressures from the donor community that effectively denied the government aid because of its poor economic record and continuing corruption.

In order to deal with donor concerns, President Moi established the Kenya Anti-Corruption Authority (KACA). KACA was involved in investigating and prosecuting corruption cases but was declared illegal by Kenya's Constitutional Court in January 2001 in a ruling brought about by a challenge by two civil servants who had previously been charged by KACA. The court ruled KACA unconstitutional on the ground that it undermined the powers of the attorney general and the police commissioner. KACA was seen as an important initiative to combat corruption and an essential step towards restoring aid that had been suspended since 2000. In order to re-establish KACA, the government required a constitutional amendment. In order to secure the 65 per cent majority needed to change the constitution, in an unprecedented move President Moi personally went to Parliament to vote and lobby for the passage of the amendment. Nevertheless, the government failed to get the 145 votes necessary. The failure to secure the amendment meant that the government was unable to introduce two other Bills seen as essential to its overall anti-corruption strategy, the Code of Ethics and the Anti-Corruption and Economic Crimes Bill. The opposition's

objection to the amendment was that the Bill was too weak to make any significant difference, demanding that the KACA be given full autonomy. The DP shadow attorney-general argued, 'what we don't want is a lame-duck Kenya Anti-Corruption Authority, a KACA that will be shrouded in constitutional and legal problems' (IRIN, 15 August 2001). In an attempt to further appease the donor community, President Moi appointed two British consultancy companies, Corporate Risk Services and the Risk Advisory Group, for independent advice on how to deal with corruption (*Africa Confidential*, 25 January 2002: 4).

On 18 March 2002, some 6,000 branch delegates from both KANU and the NDP met in Nairobi to formally merge the two parties. The merger had deep ramifications for the elections. Ironically, this was the second time that KANU was involved in such a merger. In 1964, KANU absorbed KADU, a party that was led by Moi and was concerned about dominance by the larger ethnic groups. The merger appeared once again to be about protecting the smaller Kalenjin ethnic groups who had held the mantle of power in KANU since President Moi assumed power. The merger between the two parties had formally been in train since at least August 2001 when a KANU/NDP conference agreed to implement a full merger. The NDP received cabinet positions with Raila Odinga and Dr Adhu Awiti being appointed ministers and two other MPs belonging to NDP appointed as junior ministers. Following the 1997 elections, one local commentator argued that:

> it is precisely because of the Kalenjin factor in Kenyan politics that the country could well see some shifts in alliances before the next general election. The Kalenjin-dominated Rift Valley Province represents the single largest provincial block of votes and parliamentary seats in Kenya. In the foreseeable future, that block will remain a KANU block. Given the arithmetical and ethnic realities that have now twice embarrassed Kikuyu and Luo presidential aspirants, it is clear that no ethnic alliance of any two tribal groups that does not include the Kalenjin can succeed in a presidential race. Sooner or later, Kikuyu and Luo leaders will come to this realisation too. Some of them may decide that KANU is the only road they can take to State House.
>
> (*The Weekly Review*, 9 January 1998)

The new party was portrayed as the new KANU, much like the revitalized Labour Party in Britain. The merger signalled that there were attempts afoot to engage in a devolution of power to Kenya's regions under a federalist or *majimbo* model. Critically, President Moi was elected National Chairman of the merged KANU. This position was similar to President Julius Nyerere who resigned as president but retained his chairmanship of the party, effectively allowing him the opportunity to retain a guiding hand over the new political set-up (Ahluwalia and Zegeye 2001). The Vice-President, George Saitoti, appeared to have been marginalized in the new party structure, as did Joseph Kamotho who lost his position as Party Secretary to Raila Odinga. Four vice-chairmen

from different ethnic groups, Wycliffe Musalia Mudavadi (Luhya), Uhuru Kenyatta (Kikuyu), Katana Ngala (Giriama) and Kolonzo Musyoka (Kamba) were elected. These vice-chairmen had no specific functions or powers outside of those assigned to them by the chairman who himself came to assume unprecedented powers (*Africa Confidential,* 5 April 2002: 3). The President's trusted ally, Nicholas Biwott, became the party's organizing secretary.

While KANU appeared to be positioning itself for the forthcoming elections, five opposition parties also signalled that they would join forces and work together to nominate candidates and, if elected, share power. They announced the formation of a coalition – the National Alliance for Change (NAC) – and established a committee of 12 members of the main opposition parties to work out a power-sharing formula. The NAC was comprised of the DP, the National Party of Kenya (NPK), the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy – Kenya (Ford-K) and the smaller Ford-Asili.

The new KANU with its increased majority in Parliament began paving the way for its electoral success by forcing through legislation. In April 2002, the government introduced a Bill in Parliament to establish a new independent body to fight corruption. The new body, Kenya Corruption Control Authority (KCCA), was to replace the defunct KACA that was deemed to be unconstitutional. The government was desperate for the resumption of aid so that it could use some of these funds to acquire patronage so vital for its electoral success. However, the donor community did not budge from its position that the government needs to deliver on anti-corruption measures and constitutional change. In addition, the government's new media law passed in May 2002 did little to impress the donor community. The media law that passed through Parliament was aimed at muzzling the press in the lead up to the elections. Although the Bill was introduced into the Parliament in 2001, it was retracted largely due to both local and international pressure. The new law was an amendment to the Book and Newspapers Act. It raised the cost of the libel insurance bond from US$128 to US$12,800. It required publishers to submit two copies of each publication to the attorney-general's office prior to sale. Failure to do so meant that offenders could be fined up to US$256 or face three years of imprisonment.

KANU's internal wrangles and opposition unity

Just when the merger of the NDP and KANU appeared to signal that KANU was poised to retain power, the party was thrown into turmoil. In part, this was the result of the fall-out of the merger where the Vice President, George Saitoti, was marginalized. President Moi eventually sacked Saitoti from the vice presidency on 30 August 2001 in a move seen to be linked to his public disagreement over the choice of Uhuru Kenyatta as the preferred successor. Saitoti had also aligned himself with a group of other presidential contenders within KANU known as the Rainbow Alliance. This group included two other ministers who were sacked by Moi, Joseph Kamotho and Fred Gumo, as well as cabinet ministers Raila Odinga, Kalonzo Musyoka and William Ntimama. It was unclear, however, as

to how long they would be tolerated in the ruling party given that President Moi sacked several of his ministers and assistant ministers who expressed dissent at his choice of successor. Furthermore, President Moi expressed his desire for them to be suspended from the party.

KANU was originally scheduled to choose its presidential candidate on 8 October but that was postponed to 12 October. It was the first time in the party's history that an election for the party's presidential candidate took place. Each candidate was expected to pay a fee of Shs.250,000 to contest the nomination. It was expected that there would be five candidates – George Saitoti, Raila Odinga, Kalonzo Musyoka, Moody Awori and the President's favoured candidate, Uhuru Kenyatta. Given the volatility of the situation and Moi's desire not to have a contested election, it remained unclear whether the KANU delegates conference would even take place on 12 October at Kasarani Stadium in Nairobi. The presidential candidates from the Rainbow Alliance demanded that the election be conducted as a secret ballot, a demand that Moi refused. Furthermore, the Rainbow Alliance indicated that it would join the opposition if it did not get justice at Kasarani. When Uhuru Kenyatta was elected at the behest of President Moi, KANU began disintegrating with senior members defecting to the opposition.

While the ruling party appeared embroiled in a deep rift over the presidential nomination, the opposition NAK coalition united and presented itself as a credible alternative. The NAK named Mwai Kibaki as its presidential candidate, Wamalwa Kijana as his running mate and Charity Ngilu as prime minister. It also continued discussions with Simon Nyachae's Kenya People's Coalition and the Rainbow Alliance (*Daily Nation*, September 2002). The alliance grew stronger as defections and sackings led to a further consolidation of the opposition. The opposition eventually ended up encompassing a coalition of 15 political parties and adopted the name the National Alliance Rainbow Coalition (NARC).

The 2002 elections

For Kenya, the 2002 elections represented a watershed. The elections saw the departure of the incumbent president and ushered in an opposition coalition that had come together for the sole purpose of defeating the ruling KANU party. What was remarkable about the election result was the overwhelming majority with which the new President Mwai Kibaki was swept into government. Although there were deep suspicions that KANU stalwarts would not relinquish power, the transition was remarkably stable. What cemented the opposition's victory was the defection of Raila Odinga and nearly half of Moi's KANU cabinet. In concert with Kibaki, Michael Kijana Wamalwa and Charity Ngilu, Odinga ensured that the opposition vote would not be split. In contrast, they had all stood as presidential candidates in previous elections, thereby splitting the vote and handing KANU victory. In the end, the election was not fought on policy issues but rather on a strong desire for a change of government.

President Kibaki's first few months in office were marked by optimism, with

a great deal of goodwill extended to the new NARC government. The new cabinet that he selected was seen as the best that the country had seen since independence. It was not only representative of the geographical areas and ethnic interests but genuinely included talented members. Nevertheless, the coalition has remained fragile since its inception given that the Memorandum of Understanding between the LDP and the NAK was breached over the allocation of cabinet positions.

By 2004 the NARC coalition looked particularly vulnerable, with the LDP crossing the floor to vote with the opposition. However, it was over constitutional reform that the most significant fissures occurred. The draft constitution that was presented to Parliament was significantly different and caused great tension between the coalition partners. Although it passed through Parliament due to an opposition boycott, it faced considerable opposition at the national referendum on the constitution.

The campaign for the referendum once again was marked by claims of violence, with both sides arguing that their rallies had been targeted by one another. The referendum was characterized by symbols, with the Banana representing the 'Yes' camp and the Orange the 'No' side. The Orange campaign, led by dissenting ministers as well as the majority of civil society organizations, was aimed at demonstrating that the government had abandoned its commitment to democracy and was taking the country back to its authoritarian ways.

On 21 November 2005 Kenyans voted in the national referendum, overwhelmingly rejecting the government's constitution. The referendum results, with 3.55 million voters or 57 per cent rejecting the constitution and 2.51 million voters or 43 per cent supporting it, severely undermined the Kibaki presidency (*Africa Confidential*, 2 December 2005: 1). The Orange campaign, organized as the Orange Democratic Movement, gave the President 180 days to agree to constitutional reform. In response, President Kibaki sacked his entire cabinet and prorogued Parliament, fearing a motion of no-confidence in his government. He eventually appointed a new cabinet excluding the dissident ministers who had led the Orange campaign. However, the appointment of the cabinet was marred by the rejection of 23 members of parliament who had been warned by the opposition not to be co-opted into the government. The appointment of some 34 ministers and 50 assistant ministers appears to be a desperate measure to secure support for a government under siege. The Kibaki government has been further besieged by corruption scandals with John Gitongho, the former Permanent Secretary in the Office of the President, releasing his highly damaging report to the British media in January 2006 which clearly implicated a large number of the President's close allies and cabinet appointees.

Conclusion

The 2002 elections were an important moment in Kenya's political history. Less than a year before these watershed elections, there was little certainty about how the various political machinations aimed at a Moi succession would pan out.

It was not even clear that Moi would step down as required by the constitution. Given his acute political sense and ability to outmanoeuvre all around him, the merged new KANU appeared to be poised to deliver Moi continued power in the face of an opposition that seemed certain to fracture as it had in the past. Moi's position as Chairman of the new KANU meant that he continued to set the political agenda. Significantly, politics in Kenya under his rule had been vulgarized to such an extent that two features stood out – violence and corruption. Critically, violence has been used as an effective tool of governance and as a means of ensuring electoral support.

Remarkably, President Moi lost control over his party and was unable to play different factions within the ruling party one against the other. This was no doubt fuelled by his miscalculation of declaring Uhuru Kenyatta his successor. The opposition, divided in both 1992 and 1997, was able to forge unity and field a single presidential candidate thereby ensuring victory.

The new government, however, faced immense challenges. The Moi regime essentially left them a country that was bankrupt and had little confidence left in its public institutions. Furthermore, the country was traumatized with the morale of the population severely undermined. A high priority of the new government was to complete the constitutional process and put a new constitution in place. In what was an opportunity to reform the country's political institutions and embrace real democracy, the leadership once again capitulated to personal interest and ethnic allegiances. Inevitably, the NARC coalition has failed to deliver the promises that swept them into power. The government has also failed to meet the most basic of needs and its inability to contain corruption places it in conflict with donors who are pushing for financial restraint, economic management and a curbing of corruption. If the Kibaki government is unable to restore confidence through real policy changes, the vulgarization and ethnic violence could well continue to be a determining factor in Kenyan politics.

Notes

1 Although I will not be examining violence in Kenya's refugee camps, it is important to note that a culture of violence is deeply rooted there. For details, see Crisp 2000.
2 The term *majimboism* essentially denotes a form of federalism.
3 The role of the judiciary has been less then exemplary. For an excellent review of how the judiciary has become subservient to the executive, see Mutua 2001; Adar and Munyae 2001).
4 A number of senior KANU-B officials were also associated with the Goldenburg scandal. See Ahluwalia 1997.
5 There have been numerous attempts to challenge Nyachae's power base including removing him and his supporters from the Kisii Kanu branch offices. However, given his stature amongst the Abagusii people, he remains a potent force, further indicating how ethnicized politics has become in Kenya.

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4 Sacral spaces in two West African cities

AbdouMaliq Simone

Introduction

The implicit compromise that has characterized relationships between rulers and ruled in West Africa during the postcolonial period is no longer capable of maintaining a functional semblance of social cohesion within existent nations. The compromise that curtailed political contestation and investment in social development in return for allowing elites from diverse social categories to feed off the accumulation availed to the states pursuing strategies of extraversion has given way to political and economic restructuring mandated as conditionalities for access to needed resources and legitimacy. Even though former regimes have proved adept at remaking themselves to adapt to new conditions, the increased diversity in the itineraries of political ascension gives rise to new actors, as well as increased levels of social inequality and the normalization of violence in some national contexts as a modality of social recomposition.

Given an intensified fracturing and privatization of state functions, a widening rupture among generations, and pervasive uncertainty as to what constitute effective practices for securing livelihood, religion has become the predominate narrative through which West African residents now attempt to account for and structure what is happening to them. Through its transnational networks, religion also becomes an important locus of accumulation with many murky ties to political regimes, in some instances rendering the spaces between the state and the civil highly ambiguous, particularly where religious institutions become vehicles for illicit economic activities and forms of political mobilization otherwise foreclosed (see Banegas and Fratani-Marshall 2003).

The discussion here is centered on Abidjan and Douala, the largest urban areas of two West African states. Each manifests a contrasting expression of national anxiety and responses to the prospects of social upheaval. Côte D'Ivoire has, for the past three years, experienced a violent contestation of nationalisms where religion, ethnicity, generation, access to land and economic practice assume multiple and competing configurations. The result has been to fracture the country's largest urban area into shifting and overlapping territorial particularities that give rise to broad-based local participation in neighborhood rule but within increasingly narrowing socio-spatial parameters (see Banegas and Losch

2002). In Cameroon, fear of the social disintegration exemplified by Côte D'Ivoire has produced a politics of inertia, where the preservation of an image of political stability secured through the regime's highly visible practice of seeming to involve as many actors as possible in matters of policy- and decision-making means that few decisions are actually made. Everyone thus becomes convinced that invisible forces are behind any significant endeavor. For most citizens it is not clear how anything happens, and in the rampant expansion of the sense that things are not what they appear to be, there is little confidence in any form of mediation which would enable residents to have a working sense that specific actions they undertake are likely to produce certain results.

In both cities – one experiencing heightened levels of violence, the other heightened levels of inertia and dissimulation – social collaboration in all but the most basic of tasks appears increasingly dangerous and provisional. Captured increasingly by designations such as 'young patriot' or 'congregant' and manifested through highly emotional displays of nationalist and religious fervor, such collective collaboration becomes increasingly homogenized in urban situations requiring large measures of heterogeneity in order to make a living where there are few resources to go around. What are the incipient if largely underplayed and uncoded opportunities where new forms of sociality can be reworked and where opportunities are kept open for such reworking to emerge into broader areas of application?

This chapter focuses on a range of sacral spaces – minor configurations of highly kinetic sociality existing in the shadows of otherwise highly visible nocturnal zones – that confer to participants wide latitude of performances and stylization while still enabling them to sustain the conviction that they are operating in concert. This is the case even when there is no overarching narrative that provides their transactions a clear purpose or sense of coherence. These spaces are not strictly liminal, transgressive, or diasporic. Rather, they exist as a concretization of the possibility of individuals circulating continuously through seemingly incommensurable forms of tentative subjectification. Convened, for example, in long half-completed housing developments or in the back courtyards of small boutiques contiguous to volatile yet political neutral nightlife domains, these spaces permit gatherings of urban actors who are otherwise antagonists or socially distant to transact and collaborate with each other for purposes and with practices that remain intentionally vague and malleable, but always capable of keeping them in face of each other in an affective politics.

The key question is how these spaces 'insert' themselves in the interstices of urban balkanization occasioned by the increased deployment of violence as a means of articulating political claims in Côte D'Ivoire. Additionally, how are they inserted in the cultivation of a collective social paralysis in Cameroon whereby political rule is cemented by making as much of everyday life as ambiguous as possible? While these spaces may remain minor to the overall political trajectories along which city life in West Africa is being substantially recomposed with heightened degrees of immiseration, they constitute steadily

prolific sites where the irruption of certain landmarks from their encapsulation in formations of both state and religious practice are being reworked.

Backgrounds and backdrops: Abidjan

Until his death in 1993, Houphouêt-Boigny, *Le Vieux,* was Côte D'Ivoire's sole head of state, its paternal guarantor of the link between workable diversity and prosperity, as well as a pre-eminent tactician in using the state as an instrument of national coherence. Ever since, the country's politics have become increasingly fractious. Even in his waning years, the Old Man constituted such a source of gravity, that key political actors never made sufficient investment in configuring viable alliances amongst themselves. Whereas Alassane Ouattara was appointed prime minister during the last years of Houphouêt's reign in order to effect a drastic restructuring of the state's finances and economic policies, presidential power fell to Konan Bédié, a much less capable administrator, whom the Old Man, nevertheless, had groomed to succeed him (see Akindès 2003 and Sindzingre 2000).

Despite the regional devaluation of the local CFA franc[1] currency in 1994, which cut deeply into the salaries of civil servants and urban residents in particular, the country's dynamic export sector, buttressed by Ouattara's structural reforms, enabled Bédié to maintain power in the 1995 presidential elections. To ward off competition from Ouattara, a policy of *Ivoirité* was enshrined in electoral law, mandating that a candidate was only eligible for presidential office if both parents were born in Côte D'Ivoire and that the candidate must have resided continuously in the country for the past five years. As Ouattara had taken a senior job in the International Monetary Fund in Washington the year before and available records stated that his father had been born in Burkina Faso, Ouattara was ruled ineligible to stand. The only other significant political grouping, that of the Front Populaire Ivoirien, led by the perennial opposition figure Laurent Gbagbo, stayed out of the 1995 elections (LePape and Vidal 2002).

Meanwhile, prices of cocoa and coffee declined drastically, and the frameworks that had rationalized producer prices, commercial sales and investments were increasingly distorted and prone to corruption, significantly weakening the country's relationships with multilateral institutions. Thus began a steep decline in living standards. When Ouattara returned to Côte D'Ivoire in 1999, he assumed the mantle of *Rassemblement des Republicains* (RDR). This marked intensifying efforts by the Bédié government to eliminate Ouattara as an electoral threat, leading to the detainment of the entire leadership of the RDR and Outtara's flight from the country. In December of that year, the head of the army Robert Guei staged a coup forcing Bédié to flee for France.

Guei attempted to form a government of national unity in preparation for drafting a new constitution and holding new elections. However, in October 2000, Guei, against his previous stated intentions, decided to run for the presidency and disqualified almost all presidential candidates, leading the RDR and

PDCI (Democratic Party of Ivory Coast) to boycott the elections. Massive dissatisfaction in the military led to widespread purges. Gbagbo won a truncated presidential election, but Guei initially refused to step down, leading to a popular insurrection in Abidjan where hundreds of people were killed, and forcing Guei to return to his hometown near the Liberian border. Gbagbo moved to further entrench a policy of Ivoirité, and in doing so disqualified Ouattara's candidacy for parliamentary elections – elections marred by widespread violence (Langer 2003).

It is clear that if elections were free from boycotts and manipulations, the RDR would have substantial support, primarily in the north, but in many of the urban areas of the south as well. Gbagbo's support did not run deep, and he was forced to take an increasingly strident populist stand in order to reinforce his political prospects. While the state had often been a key integrating mechanism for the country's diverse ethnicities and regional interests, the economic contraction of the state apparatus forced many civil servants and much of the political class to turn to alternative methods of accumulation.

As the agricultural sector remained the key domain of economic productivity and capital investment, many urban actors attempted to acquire land in their ancestral areas. But for much of the prior century, Ivoirian productivity had been dependent upon the *métayage* system, a harvest-sharing approach where usually migrant laborers from the Sahel retained fixed percentages of the proceeds as they worked across an interlocking network of farms and plantations, eventually acquiring land of their own. Thus these returning 'indigenes' found little land to be acquired. Struggles over land thus became a key element in the manipulation of ethnic tensions. Additionally, there was a growing perception that Muslims were significantly overtaking the Christian population of Abidjan and that the purported dominance of trade and entrepreneurship by the Dyulas, historically from the north, was squeezing out the economic capacities of the Baoules and the Betes in the country's economic capital (Steck 2002).

Disaffected soldiers launched a failed coup in September 2002 which ramified across the country, displacing several hundred persons from the northern region and its largest city, Bouaké, and instituting a practice of what could be considered ethnic cleansing in Abidjan, as entire popular quarters of residents whose lineage was from the north of country, as well from other West African countries, were destroyed. The country has been effectively divided into two from that date, with the *Mouvement Patriotique pour la Côte D'Ivoire* in charge of the north, with two ancillary rebel movements, *Mouvement pour la Justice et la Paix* and *Mouvement Populaire Ivoirienne du Grand Ouest*, nominally in control of varying regions in the west, while turning the frontier areas bordering on Liberia into highly insecure and fluid zones.

Despite a wide range of military and diplomatic efforts to end the conflict, most notably the Linas–Marcoussis Accord signed by all parties to the conflict in January 2003 – which provided a road map for disarmament, a government of national unity, the appointment of a prime minister acceptable to all sides, and presidential elections scheduled for 2007 in which all major political actors

would be eligible to participate – the crisis showed little sign of abating. A United Nations peacekeeping mission of 6,000 troops was deployed in 2004 to supplement 4,000 French peacekeepers (Reporters Without Borders 2003).

Although a government of national unity has been formed the *Forces Nouvelles*, as the conjunction of the three rebel groupings is known, has largely boycotted ministerial meetings, accusing Gbagbo of repeatedly violating the Marcoussis agreement and demonstrating no interest in rectifying the conflict, at least until he tries to win a new presidential mandate in 2007. Abidjan has witnessed periodic convulsions of violence, with the deployment of death squads targeting opposition leaders and ordinary civilians, and then the targeting of French residents in November 2004, following the destruction of the country's military air force in retaliation for the government's purportedly accidental attack on a French military base near Bouaké. These led to the evacuation of the bulk of the French expatriate population. While the French are widely seen as complicit with the events of the last several years, and are widely despised among many Abidjanais, French involvement in Ivoirian commerce has intensified in recent years, as French interests have acquired major holdings in water, electricity, and telecommunications.

Current resolution efforts, led now by President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa on behalf of the African Union, have largely hinged upon revising the constitutional provisions that prohibit the candidacy of Alassane Ouattara. Circumventing the mandated referendum necessary to make changes to the constitution, Gbagbo has invoked a clause that gave him the powers, under times of national crisis, to override the prohibitive section of the constitution, and thus Ouattara will run in the coming elections of 2007. But this hinge, although politically significant, is clearly overdetermined – made to stand in and for the extensive fissions that make Côte D'Ivoire a highly turbulent society, where religion, access to land, practices of livelihood and accumulation, claims to urban space, and competing networks of regional articulation are significantly entangled with each other. In Abidjan especially, the levels of populist hysteria, the entanglement of local democracy with xenophobic attitudes, the arbitrary violence, and the interweaving of powerful parallel structures such as major churches and youth movements with the state, will require radical governance renovations in order to deter the further implosion of the city (International Crisis Group 2005).

Douala

Douala is a sprawling, ramshackle city of 2.5 million named after the original inhabitants of the area. From its inception, the city has reflected an intricate contestation as to what it is to itself and to the larger world. In other words, the unfolding and construction of the city has contained multiple levels of argument about suitable images. What is the image of the city that works; what should a city be, and how?

As the commercial center of Cameroon, Douala certainly has a broad range

of political institutions located within it. But as the city has not been primarily focused on administrative activities and the concomitant salaries upon which large numbers of extended family members throughout urban Africa have come to depend, surviving in Douala entails a larger measure of individual entrepreneurial initiative than is characteristic of many other African cities (see Bayart 1985). Even with large numbers of people who are unemployed, the overall sense of the city is one where residents are trying to make livelihoods happen.

At the same time, the relative absence of political institutions and a dependency on public employment means that important instruments of urban socialization (i.e. domains around which social collaboration and solidarity can be fostered) are absent. Historically, cadres of civil servants, public sector unions, and networks of local authority that were forged through their efforts to secure positions in the state and negotiate resources from it played a critical role in fostering a sense of social cohesion in many African cities. As the burden of survival in Douala is much more incumbent upon individuals and households, a greater value is placed on the autonomy of operations rather than on fostering social interdependency (Warnier 1993).

This tendency also produces a greater divergence in the characteristics of individual quarters. Without strong gravitational fields generated by critical political and civil institutions, quarters are more inclined to 'go their own way.' Some are characterized by a strong sense of social cohesion forged through particular histories of settlement, ethnic composition, location, access to resources, and the nature of local leadership. Other quarters have little to distinguish them as coherent places except for either an administrative designation or a particular reputation (Orock 2005).

Without either strong institutional supports or impediments, some quarters have been able to proficiently mobilize local initiative and resources to provide essential urban services in a judicious and cost-effective manner. On the other hand, for some quarters, the absence of strong political incentives means that there is little basis for residents to come together for any significant form of cooperation. In these instances, quarters can easily become overwhelmed by the absence of regulation and planning, as there are few mechanisms for land use and waste disposal – particularly thorny problems given Douala's tropical climate and riparian setting.

While urban households may be adept at securing livelihood and opportunity, the largely ad hoc manner in which this is pursued means that there are massive problems with critical urban functions, such as circulation across the city, drainage, refuse collection, and security. At the same time, it is difficult to foresee how applicable the array of local solutions often effective as stopgap measures in many other African cities with more substantive histories of social cooperation would be in Douala. So the city combines heightened ingenuity, a high degree of urbanization of behavior and social outlook, a largely inadequate institutional framework for regulating urban processes, and a highly contentious relationship to the political regime in power – all dynamics which make innovative urban development planning both necessary and difficult. Long afraid of

the city as both a center of opposition and a countervailing force to its reliance upon ethno-regional divides and privileges as a method of maintaining rule, the state has frequently come down hard on Douala over the past two decades. This has often meant the use of extrajudicial killings and detentions of problematic figures. In recent years more 'silent' yet insidious methods have been used to promote fear at the local level, including the delivery of large amounts of cash to unsuspecting households in the middle of the night, the appointment of local opposition activists to insignificant yet highly visible and symbolic positions of authority without their knowledge – in general manipulations aimed at promoting unease as to who is doing what to whom.

Distorted publicities: Abidjan

The agora, public discussion forums of the street, originated in Abidjan's commercial center, Plateau, during the mid-1990s as a place where young men in particular would gather. Although the discourse centered on politics, it was not so much a place of political speeches as it was of efforts to debate prospective popular frameworks for understanding current political events. The agora that initially attained the greatest notoriety was called Sorbonne, and the emphasis here was to utilize the redundancy of the gathering and its growing audience as an instrument of crystallizing a dynamic voice for 'the people.' Accordingly, while young militants from existing political parties would engage the process, the agora was not strictly a battle for political affiliation, but rather a convergence of very diverse social identities upon an emerging political critique (Bahi 2003). Heavily stylized performances, bordering on the irreverent and the mad, were intentionally deployed so as to mask attention to specific social or political identity attributions. This surface self-effacement and humor sought to cultivate camaraderie and openness among the participants, which could then allow for certain battles of words, intensifications of contested viewpoints and positions.

As the agora was situated in a protracted period of problematic political transition, it became the object of sporadic political repression. The continuity of the Sorbonne in face of such repression, and its rededication to the freeing of speech substantiated its reputation widely throughout the city. As its influence becomes more extensive, it also had to balance the pressures of maintaining its status as an informal manifestation of the street and seize the opportunity to capitalize upon its activities through more formal means, making it a clearly legitimate interlocutor with other major political actors. As a body willing to read the political trends and events, translate them into a language popularly comprehensible, and then specify probable futures that ensue from these political actions, it provided a context of action itself. It did not incite participants to a particular ideological viewpoint as much as it reiterated the possibility of action, of taking the future as a changeable object of consideration because a heterogeneity of voices could be heard and thus serve as elements for any political recomposition.

Yet, in the imaginations of those responsible for reproducing this opportunity –

as a kind of public university, a place of open and thoughtful exchange that operates as a forceful political conscience – there arose the dilemma of how this particular spatialization of politics would extend across an increasingly divided city or, more precisely, where the politics of ascendancy were increasingly invested in accentuating divides among the city's inhabitants. Its existence then also accentuated the degree to which the majority of residents either have little to say or little opportunity to say it, and so a range of asymmetries were amplified. If the agora served the function of popularizing the sense that politics is something to be made – through demystifying the pronouncements and obscure analytics issued by the state; by reading through the ideological narrowness and hysteria of the predominant newspapers; by bringing to the fore the possibility of political voices that could make their mark outside of the calcified bureaucracies – then the city is opened up onto a wide range of instruments for the remaking of that very politics. Thus what ensued was the proliferation of street demonstrations and the claims and pronouncements of a widening network of actors taking various public stages, particularly that of the written press.

But it was in this very tension between maintaining the spatial parameters that would continue to ensure its openness and the organizational logics that would constitute the main agoras as a formal interlocutor that allowed them to become available to major political entrepreneurs who insinuated themselves into their operations as a means of steering free deliberations into increasingly strident populist messages, themselves corresponding with the tactics of the now ruling *Front Populaire Ivoirien* of Laurent Gbagbo. From 2000 on, following Gbagbo's ascendancy to power, these agora would become the primary instruments of popular mobilization for the *l'Alliance des Jeunes Patriotes* managed by Charles Blé Goudé in an attempt to standardize political thought and focus upon reclaiming Abidjan for Ivorians – a nationality now reserved for non-Muslims and non-Northern Ivoirians.

The sacral in the volatile city

Conventional notions of municipality have tended to emphasize the progressive gathering up of discrete urban places and experiences into a scalar order capable of generating a comprehensive image of the possible intersections of these urban elements – how they can and might interact and affect each other. This is what, in another context of discussion about methodology, John Law calls a 'romantic complexity' – a successive incorporation of different elements that formally attempts to make explicit how these elements are related to each other and the complex reality that emerges from these relationships (Law 2003). As Serres indicates, this is the conviction that there is an open path from the local to the global, and by breaking up the city into its various compartments, administrative districts, economies, and identities, an overarching logic of organization can thus penetrate throughout the urban flux as it is differentiated into calculable units which refer back to an all-encompassing global (1995).

In conventional modes of apprehension, then, specific places, practices and

inclinations can only be productively viewed in a process of recomposition, potentiation, and affectation through the 'integrating' maneuvers of scalar supposition. What is ruled out in these conventional modes is viewing any instance of territorialization and urban social composition as a multiply textured and shifting architecture of openings, enclosures, recesses and incursions. This is architecture of transductive relays of sensation and impulsion capable of mixing along all dimensions and inciting new materialities and experiments of living – not only those specified by the geometries of embedded scales. Subsumed by cadastrals, zoning regulations, truncated historical narratives, infrastructural reticulations, and the calculations of economic decline and renewal, urban quarters nevertheless participate in an ever-proliferating set of lateral connections across the city and other cities. These connections bring to the city (and bring it to) overlapping possibilities and actions, regardless of the modes of regulation and surveillance applied. Systems of calculation clearly make visible and discursive specific sets of relations, which come to be references for how people understand what is taking place.

Yet the materiality of discrete elements – places, experiences, actors – is itself opened up onto, connected with and made to embody an innumerable series of relationships with other elements. If these relationships are always shifting, the specificity of each element is itself constitutive of and constituted from a complexity of intersections that makes an event or object of consideration in a neighborhood or organization always volatile, always open to and overflowing onto wider activities. Indeed, if we consider urbanization to be a thickening of realities through the intense circulations and interrelationships of place, body, discourse and object, it is through this process that cities expand their capacities.

But this complexity cannot be represented in a totalizing, comprehensive picture that comes across as an array of stably differentiated elements. The specificity of a quarter or urban activity may be inclusive of a vast range of urban elements, there is no bird's-eye view or account that could sum up the entirety of such an intersection of elements. Inclusiveness cannot be made explicit in the way logical frameworks that attempt to model whole systems attempt to do. What is at work is the linking of something contingent, something always to be explored. As these connections proceed then outside any natural or fixed relationship to a larger whole – and therefore outside the perspective that renders particular urban processes as either productive, implosive, fragmentary or cohesive – the inexplicability of their force means that they can only be caught, associatively or indirectly, at the edges of perception – in what I designate a sacral dimension, something elusive and excessive of sanctioned urban ordering (see Law 2002).

This sacral dimension is partly captured in notions of embodiment – a process where actors can conjure up an as-if world, a kind of self-referential totality, by taking up and transforming features of particular place and setting in order to portray a style of life that shows itself what it is, and where the actors themselves are reconfigured in light of the possibilities that flow from them, but

yet remains a world which does not exist beyond the particular setting of this act (see Thrift 2000). That is, there are moments and scenarios across everyday life that exert themselves as critical events – collectively enacted disjunctions from the ways in which normative social transactions are marked and regulated.

Here, the particular histories, styles, memories, desires, and anticipations specific characters carry with them into a particular arena are put into play, are 'bounced off' each other in ways that put each actor 'on the line' – i.e. faced with having to exceed how they have come to account for or know themselves; to literally be something different in the event that is being affected. The instrumentality and affective textures of individuals may be moved into new directions. Or, actors may recoup from such differentiating events by returning to that which is familiar or normative, but even in such instances, whatever sensorial, cognitive or affective resources they were 'equipped' with are inevitably recalibrated.

There are two related ways of looking at this spatialization of the sacred. In one sense, with Bataille, the sacred has no specific space, but rather is a bringing of the spiritual into the profane, and the profane into the spiritual – a leakage in the act of attempting to contain or seal off an agenda, a demand or a concerted attempt to overturn, a non-event in the midst of an assemblage and, as such, a potentially convulsive communication (Hegarty 2003). A gathering up of intentions and aspirations that transgressed – yet as a movement that is always in operation, as what is gathered is not subsumed under some overarching attentiveness or stillness in face of some promise of coherence, but rather a trajectory of contagion, a crossing of lines back and forth (ibid.).[2]

It is also possible to experience the space (or time) of the sacred as the very practice of doing the everyday – its routines, circumnavigations – yet re-enchanted with a different mode of inhabitation or style of articulation that is felt. Something that is affective rather than discursive. Here, seemingly everyday objects are gathered up into a relational topology of movement, senses, rhythm and affect. In this intermixing of elements, each has its own intensities and programs that impact upon the experience of enacting the sacred in that they induce moments that are full of potential outcomes (Holloway 2003).[3] As such there can be the irrupting of the sacred into the everyday in such a way that every aspect of the everyday can potentially reveal the sacred.

Spaces and times of the sacral: Youpougon

Long before the present crisis in Abidijan, I lived in one of the city's largest quarters, Youpougon II, with a partner who was finishing her masters degree at the university. We lived in university housing, which basically consisted of a seemingly endless series of contiguous compounds sharing walls. The maze-like assemblage always seemed intimidating in that it threatened to swallow up the capacity to discern entrances and exits – leading the novice residents to inevitable mistakes on their way to or from home until they came to feel their way to the right house. Yet, it seemed to, through cheap architecture, enforce a sense of even-handedness to the motley composition of residents, including stu-

dents, entrepreneurs, civil servants, factory workers, all of varying ethnicities and nationalities.

As the bulk of domestic space was outdoors, daily life was enacted in the midst of a cacophony of instructions, arguments, mundane commentaries, and even shouted intimacies coming from all directions, and which always constituted a wide trajectory of responses for whatever discursive requirements might have emerged from one's own highly localized deliberations. At times it was literally impossible to assume a point of view that would not be punctuated or steered away by fragments of disembodied talk circulating across the suburb. Even any ranked order of audibility seemed to disappear, as the faintest whispers sometimes were able to supercede the blaring radios or televisions. What got amplified at any particular juncture often did not make sense, even though the semantic strings were perfectly clear and capable of wafting their way around any effort to work out who would cook that night.

Living at the edges of this concrete puzzle, one was at somewhat of a disadvantage in precisely locating the destinations of those who got into and out of the taxis or who bought cigarettes and soft drinks from the Mauritanian shacks that were scattered throughout the narrow passageways. Taking a drink at the local bars or buying fish and *alloko* from the lines of *maquis* around the corner, I would always try to pay attention to the voices, to determine familiarities of sound and link them to faces, out of curiosity if nothing else. But it rarely worked, and the aural landscape retained its strong autonomy from visual performance. Besides, there was enough to deal with at home. Domestic life was nearly always stormy and subject to quick exits at any time of day. As this was in part a function of an over-close relationship, in part driven by the fact that we had to keep our relationship fairly invisible as my partner was escaping an engagement to a powerful Ivoirian politician, every time one of us walked out, the other soon followed in pursuit.

Even with a substantial head-start, changing from taxis to buses back to taxis, and seeking a quiet night's sleep in the grungiest of rooming houses in the quarters on the other side of Abidjan, my partner would always find me. It might have taken up to six hours but she always managed to knock at the right door or appear at the back of the right bus. Although it was always easy to attribute this skill to sorcery, it was a little too easy, for such attribution really doesn't answer the key questions, and tends to leave you out of the equation. I was never sure how she did it, and she was always eager to explain in such precise ways that her systematic manner could never be credible.

But I recall how she had a close friend who lived some 30 meters behind our compound, crossing another household, a small lane, and then two additional courtyards cum kitchens, eating and laundry areas. As far as I remembered her friend had never visited our compound, even though we shared many drinks and dinners at local *maquis*. There were no apparent impediments to such visits; she lived with a younger sister, there were seemingly no domestic complexities at her end either.

Yet almost every night each of them dragged chairs and washbasins and

stools to some unsteady elevation over the walls and spoke. My partner would act as if she was engaged in a conversation, but I don't see how it could have taken place. I tried to raise myself over the compound wall to see if they actually could hear each other, but the distance appeared to great and the interruptions too prolific. Even though the neighbors never seemed to object too strenuously to the apparent invasion of privacy, as both, in their elevation, had visual access to at least 20 different households, they were not going to keep quiet about it, or, more accurately, in face of it.

The volume of the everyday chores and chatter seemed to go up considerably every time she scaled the walls. But it didn't seem to matter, and my partner would always treat me incredulously if I queried her about the conversation, or why she just didn't go around the corner and down the road, or why they persisted in this particular arrangement. Certainly my partner didn't need to draw any more attention to herself, as we had already been the talk of the neighborhood for some time. For a long time I made no association between these talks and her search party skills, and even now hesitate to make excessive claims for them. But it seems that these nearly nightly interchanges, girlfriend to girlfriend, might have been a way of practicing a kind of lateral apprehension, a way of sensing and feeling across a field of discrete interchanges, discrepant histories, repeated banalities, machines blaring in the background, and kids shouting their rhymes. That between her and her friend existed many pitfalls and detours, many diversions and trajectories, delays and accelerators, attractors and thresholds–all making any semblance of an unmediated correspondence impossible. But not necessarily a sense of intimacy, for obviously my partner, in the few things she was willing to say about these encounters, claimed to value the special closeness she felt.

What could be attributed to whom, whose words belonged to whom? What in this field of sound, words, longings, and anxieties was affecting who, and who could offer a definitive interpretation of what was or could be said? It is clear that both positioned themselves in a certain way, facing each other, in a stylization that both could convincingly put them into some kind of direct line and transmission. Yet the evidentiary pool which constituted the anticipation of each other's anticipation – necessary for any dyadic articulation – did not rest in their own speech, but rather in some collective that had no existence separate from these exchanges but which, at the same time, had little to do with the actions of the 'conversants.'

And so a certain movement of the conversation and exchange is being rehearsed – not marked by the usual discursive or cognitive characteristics dependent upon the semiotic but by the referencing of the exchange to its own variations, its own changes in intensity, rhythm, and affect. As my partner moved around the swirling field of words, sounds, and sensations in keeping her friend in view and engaged, what maybe, just maybe, came to her was this capacity to sense her way through the sectored urban world in a mixed up way so as to always track me down despite my best efforts to mix her up.

Treichville

Abidjan was becoming an increasing dangerous place in the years leading up to the present conflict. Everyone with guns – from police to militias to gangs – responded with greater nervousness. It was harder to get a sense of what was going on in anything called the city as a whole since individual quarters, no matter how heterogeneously composed, seemed to accentuate their own specificities. Some became nearly balkanized enclaves; others merely took on heavily exaggerated styles of walking, talking, rhyming or of doing nothing.

Although the coastal layout of the city and its historical interpenetration of West Africans from everywhere mean that it is nearly impossible to deter all mixtures of circulation, an inordinate degree of calculation started informing just how residents navigated their movements across urban corridors. In addition, policing agents interrupted any fluid circulation of traffic during the night, making travel between Adjame and Treichville, Marcory and Vridi Canal, Youpougon and Koumassi tedious and unpredictable. As the everyday interweaving of visits, shopping, sojourning, and trade dissipated in face of the overcoding of identity and the valorization of ethnic particularity, crime quickly filled the interstices, further marking out boundaries of relative safety, proliferating no-go areas and redrawing the geographies of individual networks.

Even the Abidjanais' obsession with outdoor dining, particularly for the middle classes, was channeled into one-stop large parks with scores of *maquis* and secure parking. While increasingly railed into their historic domains of operation, the sex trade – always important in times of prosperity and decline, peace and war – continued to be one of the few anchors of night life. While Zone 4C in Marcory in recent years may have supplanted the southeastern corner of Treichville as the dominant night spot, particularly for expatriate and middle-class consumers, the impending sense of political doom tended to restore a large measure of possibility to the place. Although part of a larger 'leisure district' in past years, its size had shrunk considerably, particularly with the closing of cinemas and dance halls. Only *Cabine Bambou* and *Whiskey A Go Go* remained to anchor a series of small restaurants, bars, and coffee houses that covered not more than two square blocks. An all-night bakery added to the traffic, as did stalls of hawkers constituting the place as some form of an all night market. In years past, there were rasta clubs, upmarket cocktail lounges and even theme bars, but these were all gone. The Treichville zone clearly survived on the basis of prostitution, and no matter the disposition of a city, there are always casts of characters looking for sex – if the businessmen go, the soldiers will come, and vice-versa; there are always different externalities that find particular articulation to a city via sex.

Lingering at the fringes of this zone, are small bars and coffee shops. Many are waiting lounges – for boyfriends of the sex workers, taxi drivers, and gangsters, who are the reserve army for the club owners in the event they need to supplement the staff already present. There are hangers-on, insomniacs, and even intelligence agents. Who knows who they are exactly. These are basic

operations, but the coffee is strong, and some serve cheap food, shwarmas and burgers, maybe the occasional *attieke* and very dried fish. Most have an opening onto the back, small courtyards illuminated at moments with kerosene lamps, with basic metal tables and chairs strewn haphazardly; spaces that never close, and never really open.

Yet for hours, into the night, gatherings can count old men with faces crushed from various accidents dressed impeccably in red suits and yellow ties, young boys, no more than 13 or 14, in oversized *Ecko* track suits that give them undeserved bulk, academics with briefcases full of obscure works on European sociology, with texts underlined repeatedly in different colors and arrows linking words seemingly extracted at random; market women, whom one would surmise spend their days surrounded by cassava aside some peripheral truck stop who find their way to an completely unanticipated elegance with intricatedly brocaded, perfectly tailored dresses but whose occupants have none of the rehearsed arrogance of the elite; sex workers taking a night off with nowhere to go; bankers who appear so relieved to wear skullcaps and full white *boubous* as if conformity to Islamic stereotypes is finally the concretization of some new found freedom.

The ambiance is jumpy, never relaxed, and alcohol, although present, almost appears shunned. Initially the scene appeared as an accident, as if this assemblage of idiosyncrasies was the exaggeration of a Saturday night or the culmination of sleepless nights that struck at the heart of every social class or identity group, and where the city's constrictions left it no choice but to end up here. Even if such a presupposition indeed did account for their peculiar compositions, these backyards of coffee houses did stage, night after night, never the same content of jumbling but always a scene out of place. In part, the repetition was likely made possible by the fact that rarely did anyone say anything clearly intelligible to each other. I would find myself engaged in protracted conversations with near lunatics, street boys, maids, truck drivers, directors of statistical bureaus, clergymen, and software programmers where either the French was so distorted or idiomatic as to be incomprehensible to most gathered, where the *Dyula* was so mixed with English colloquialisms as to defeat the purpose of either language being mixed, or where someone spoke in his local dialect of *Abé*, *Grebo*, or *Wé* and no one else at the table knew the language, or where there was just gibberish.

But the absence of linguistic consonance didn't seem to matter; for all other signs would indicate that people were attuned to whatever was going on, paying attention, responding to and fro to an nearly effortless rhythm of interchange. Anger, joy, indifference, curiosity, and tenderness would all be exchanged and at moments that did not appear to be ineluctable to anyone; every affective response seemed to make sense although there was no surface evidence as to why particular feelings might come and go.

Although this 'event that is not an event' would seem foolish and trivial in retrospect, there was some powerful injunction at work that acted to deter making inquiries about it. No matter how curious I was about trying to identify

and understand what was taking place in these nocturnal sessions, I could never bring myself to perform the role of the social scientist and deliberate among the various potential tactics that might enable the participants to best represent, in a functional language, what was going on.

It wasn't that I believed that such sessions were devoid of a potentially discernible purpose. Nor was it that I was afraid that these proceedings would come down to being simply a game about duping the white boy. Nor was it some nagging unease that such queries would be construed as signs of disrespect for something I was allowed to experience but did not have the cultural resonance to comprehend. Rather it seemed that a great deal of effort was expended to constitute a site and experience where nothing was really going on, and that in this apparent vacuum – this absence of accumulating evidence and accounting – nothing and everything could be simultaneously risked. For it was difficult to qualify or frame whatever was felt or sensed.

As the possibilities of attribution scattered like shattered glass, whatever was said, whatever was in the air that compelled specific reactions, laughs, shouts, or silence, inevitably belonged to you, came from you as well as anyone else, and so was not so easily discarded, deflected or assimilated. And after all, it was clear that this was not just a 'neighborhood affair.' People came from distances, some were drenched from long bike rides; others carefully made arrangements to have their cars tended to.

However bored or restless, reckless and self-destructive, there was determination at work; people did set off for here. Some would come back every night; some had nowhere else to go; others would return sporadically; while still others might designate a specific night – and so the composition would always shift, but with no rise or fall in familiarity. Of course some gatherings were more taciturn than others; some would clear out after less than twenty minutes leaving a vacancy that was not replaced neither that night nor even perhaps the next; while some gatherings would last into the following day until no amount of caffeine could ward off utter exhaustion. How does this 'event which is not an event' ramify, circulate, find traces of its impact in other elsewheres; what does it mean for this city, always upping the ante in the prospects for implosion and violence? How does it find its place?

Trucks in the night: Bepanda Omnisport, Douala

Luise White, in a book on rumors of vampires in late colonial East Africa, conveys the popular alarm often expressed about certain vehicles and their technical implements – things like fire trucks and ambulances whose interiors were usually obscured from external view. These vehicles were equipped with an array of pumps, tubes, gurneys, tanks, and so forth as part of the emergency services they were supposed to deliver. But these implements were often interpreted as devices of extraction, deployed to drain blood from victims, particularly during nocturnal hours when their presence was most noticeable (White 2000).

Emergencies of course do not adhere to working hours, yet the availability of these vehicles at all hours seemed to designate more than their ability to intervene at moments of the general population's maximum vulnerability – when witnesses were few and collective defenses attenuated. White notes how these imaginaries served to coalesce multiple changes occurring within cities – such as the consolidation of a small yet stable urban population through civil jobs such as those which entailed working with such vehicles; the more visible and arrogant extraction of resources; the intensified deployment of racial categories as a modality of structuring urban space and economy; and the proliferating anxieties as to urban life in general and its implications for cultural transformation.

Additionally, the provisioning of such services in themselves, and the technical logics and networks through which urban services were provided, accentuated a sense that the contingencies and accidents incumbent in everyday urban life were becoming disembodied from the ability of a social fabric to effectively guarantee some conviction of continuity. Instead, technical systems seemed to rearticulate bodies, cognition, and spirit to highly individuated and bureaucratic apparatuses of control. At the same time, they provided a concrete image of an extensiveness of social connections – lives tied up into the stories and situations of multiple unknown others – that was always an essential feature of the lived reality of urban residents but which was imagined and managed in ways very different than that of these highly visible technical implements.

Trucks racing through the night, at speeds unimaginable at other hours on routes otherwise full of traffic of all kinds, proved to be particularly fearsome. These fears also point to the subsequent preoccupations with access – how accessible do urban residents make themselves to a wide variety of actors and institutions who might attempt to locate them, for whatever reason?

Although the layout of lanes and pathways on which residents traverse in order to reach their homes is more a matter of the intricate and incessant subdivision of land and compounds, the shortage of residential space, and the peculiar environmental conditions on which residential areas most usually are built, a subsequent by-product of the maze-like structure of most African urban quarters is the difficulty any stranger would encounter in trying to track someone down.

In Douala, this particular architecture of lanes – often leading nowhere – is called *mapan*, as is the futility of trying to accord any urban resident a definitive location and identity. It also refers to any effort that attempts to make some kind of definitive link between resident and place, resident and scheme, resident and any specific story one might be tempted to elaborate about them. As such, *mapan* links a description of space to a particular urban ontological condition. In a city that has a long history of pursuing highly varied forms of entrepreneurship largely unencumbered by the official economies and functions of the state, this critical component of the city's imagination also reflects a general concern about the operations of various apparatuses of control to which, no matter how much residents may deflect or circumvent them, attention must always be paid.

Bepanda Omnisport is a quarter in Douala particularly shaped by the various connotations of *mapan*. The quarter borders on the city's primary sports

complex and its construction produced an added densification of the residential area that has remained. As a primarily poor yet highly urbanized Bamileke neighborhood – in terms of its relationship to Bamileke authority structures largely concentrated outside of Douala – and one of the most militant in terms of opposition to the ruling politics, municipal authorities simultaneously neglected it, in terms of service provision, and subjected it to heavy doses of repression.

Many of the city's *bendskins* – motorbike taxi drivers – came from the quarter, so that their particular vocation gave the place a large measure of knowledge about what went on in the city as a whole. This quarter, along with Bakepe and Bonamoussadi, was critical in driving the grassroots push for political transformation that swept the city at the beginning of the 1990s and subsequently suffered the most in the state's efforts to prevent Douala becoming an effective center of such transformation. The bulk of arbitrary detentions, disappearances, and extrajudicial killings were focused on this quarter.

Along the route that passes the stadium are a series of markets and stores that service both the quarter and the traffic along this busy thoroughfare. Next to the large Catholic Church complex just to the south of the sports stadium are lines of used vehicles and vans that are for rent usually just for a few hours at a time, and with minimal deposit and documentation. This proves very convenient for those who do not have the time to rely on porters with their wagons or whose load is to large for them or too small to hire other carters. The vans are usually in bad shape, relegated to this role as their last conceivable function, and those who run these lots are clearly trying to squeeze the last bit of profitability from these vehicles.

Across the road are lines of noisy bars and cafes, full even in the daytime, and overcrowded at night. They embody the quarter's reputation for roughness, and are places where all kinds of observations about the city – mostly garnered by the *bendskins* – and turned into speculative exercises by thieves, poseurs, and tricksters eager to supply their unemployment with quick money. The circulation of information was also aided by the scores of prostitutes, young and old, who worked these bars for small change and had to drop as many hints and speculations of their own.

While the city takes on a rough visage in many different locales, the passing police vans and other security vehicles at night seemed to simply compel a surfeit of reckless posturing.

Late into the night the bars are usually still full. There are fights over beer and women; old family wounds are re-assuaged countless times. On some nights – there seems to be no clear pattern – a group will emerge from those assembled and head toward one of the vans lining the opposite side of the street. The crew will never be the same. There will be those that go out frequently, and others for whom this will always be the first and/or the last time. At first, for me, it was barely a blip in a loud and long night of subsidized drinking and keeping out of view, tucked into a corner of the bar with a bevy of research assistants and hangers-on. But after a while it seemed odd how different men of different ages would suddenly stand up and head toward the vans, seemingly without signal or

advance planning, without coordinating watches or waiting for a specific figure to take the lead.

Despite the reluctance of one of my assistants with a motorbike – reluctance born from the fact that nocturnal journeys are frequently interrupted by the harassment and shakedowns of police checkpoints – we began to follow the vans. There were usually at least three that would depart at the same time, and then quickly split up taking widely divergent routes. Given the checkpoints, and the fact that these vans and their drivers would in all probability never have the entirety of the insurance papers, ownership documents, inspection stickers, and commercial vehicle licenses demanded by the patrols, these vans took circuitous routes through various quarters and back roads. But they inevitably headed to specific sites, or as close to them as possible, where the occupants would proceed to walk, keeping shovels close to their chests, and never seeming to speak, though it was hard to tell from the distance we had to keep in trying to follow them.

Whether it was the New Bell detention center, Laquintinie Hospital, the naval base, the Bonanjo detention center, or the villages of Edéa and Petit Dibambu, or the cemeteries in Bonapriso where extrajudicial detainments, torture and executions were rumored to take place under the Operation Command, the occupants of the vehicles would fill empty rice bags with dirt, no more than two apiece, and hurry them back to the truck, the operation completed in a matter of minutes. They would then retrace their route almost precisely back through Bepanda and then take off again to various destinations. In the space of two weeks we tracked the bags of dirt to BonaMbappe, a precarious trip over the Wouri Bridge where checkpoints are normally constant, yet on this night nowhere in sight, and then to the local head of the ruling party, the *Rassemblement démocratique du Peuple Camerounais* in BonaMbappe – where the guardian was hit over the head, and the bags emptied by the entrance of the front gate. This scene would replayed in front of cheferies in Barcelone, entrepreneurs in Cité des Enseignants, and again party officials in Bonamouti Deido.

Having never interviewed any of the participants as to their motives or never able to determine how the recipients of these offerings, whose identity I was usually able to determine in retrospect on subsequent days, were affected, if at all, it is not clear what is taking place. Even so, it can be surmised, without much qualification, given the sites visited, the residential location of the occupants of the vehicles, the object placed in bags, and the identities of the recipients, that something about the disappearances, the hauntings of the various security operations, and the continued arbitrary detentions of various individuals, sometimes with nothing to distinguish them at all in terms of any actual crime or prospective danger, was being worked out.

Over the last 15 years, as various short-lived but vicious security operations have come and gone, have been forgotten, renamed, interrupted and made to appear as incidental, occasional, and exceptional, a continuous event of repression has transpired – something with no respite even if heavily punctuated. As conventional forms of political opposition have usually fallen apart and inertia

and fear predominate, not only is a certain memory kept alive, but it is put to work, as what has been attempted to be buried finds itself dispersed across various vectors of power and status. What ensues is impossible to know; yet the sacred makes its mark.

Concluding note

For many residents of Abidjan and Douala the city is a constant reminder of what could be but isn't. For some, extraordinary efforts are made, with generosity and ingenuity, to articulate the disparate persons and things around them in compositions of opportunity. If what is attempted does not always or seldom work, at least things are kept open, and there is sufficient evidence generated about the worthwhileness of effort. For others, the memory – of what might have been possible – is continuously effaced in the escalating dramas of desperate tramsactions played out in narrowing arenas.

As the old conventions of making oneself a real person seem to either no longer apply or are under seemingly permanent seizure by calcified political and social interests, many fellow residents are less seen as resources or virtuous elements than as blockages to a better a future that already—through machinations of religious devotion, cultural entitlement, or inflated personal destiny—has one's name written on it. The suffocation of living in an endless present is compensated by choking off the lives of others. But it also chokes one's own way out, chokes off the prolific entrances and exits that make up urban life no matter how depleted.

Yet as both these minor collective efforts taken from Douala and Abidjan show, inordinate risks are taken without great deliberation in order to use the city as a means of keeping alive the implicit promise of the nation – to configure a way of becoming that exceeds the particularities of ethnicity, race, and culture that were the instruments of colonial domination. If Cameroon and Côte D'Ivoire have largely given up the responsibility of definition – of securing even the physical integrity of the nation and of investing in defining the judicious and efficacious uses of territories, resources and persons – a stringent populism comes to the fore that overcodes how people and places are to be known. If the domain of the sacred is then found entangled in the mesh of the banal marking of time, the ambiguous actions and languages of seemingly useless gatherings and in the vacuums where neither church nor mosque think to go, then its siting occurs in the recesses of the often vast quantity of outworn buildings – hotels, restaurants, warehouses, nightclubs, storefronts, garages, and trunk roads – left behind by all – colons, nationalists, technocrats, military boys, preachers, tontines, ethnic foyers, and emerging stars. Only a fraction will ever witness something new, but surveys are still required and at odd hours; otherwise from where will a livable city come?

Notes

1 Francs de la Communauté Financière Africane.
2 'Only when made anachronistic, rather than timeless, impossible rather than useful, weak rather than heroic, can we start to think how Benjamin might have a notion of the "where" of something approaching the sacred' (Hegarty 2003: 113).
3 'This is not an embodied subject acting upon an inert world, but an embodied subject whose agency is constituted through a productive outsideness … If we focus our analysis upon the event of sacralisation we can shift our understanding away from an (already) ordered division of the sacred and the profane toward a heterogeneous ordering that relies on a practice of differentiation: a making of the sacred with the profane such that the distinction only emerges from the very practice of its making' (Holloway 2003: 1961–74).

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5 The 'rugged life'

Youth and violence in southern Nigeria

David Pratten

Introduction

Across the African continent the widespread mobilization of youth in violence and civil disorder is often articulated as a politics of insurgency. Militia groups in Nigeria have been precisely located in the militarization of patronage networks that have become an endemic feature stretching from the Guinea Coast to the oil-rich Niger Delta (Reno 2002; Agbu 2004). Nigerian militant youth movements capture divergent imaginings of and provide popular counter-narratives to the legitimacy of the Nigerian nation state. These groups represent pro-Sharia interests in the north, ethnic nationalism in the west, state-sponsored vigilante movements in the east, and autonomous resource control in the oil-producing Niger Delta region of the south. In southern Nigeria the scale of recent violence to which these groups are linked is indicated in three recent reports. Security consultants recently reported that with over 1,000 fatalities a year, the level of violence in the Niger Delta region of southern Nigeria is currently ranked alongside that of Chechnya and Colombia (WAC Global Services 2003). Violence during 2004 in the oil-producing areas of the Niger Delta between rival armed groups was cited as a key factor in sharp increases in global oil prices. And, amid concern at the Pentagon about emerging terror threats in what have been called 'the ungoverned areas of Africa', the US Navy deployed an aircraft carrier fleet to the off-shore oil fields of the Gulf of Guinea as part of 'Operation Summer Pulse 04'.[1]

A distinctive feature of these West African militias is the links that they articulate between youth, secret societies and contemporary conflict. In West Africa, notably in the conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire we are reminded of the ways in which the past plays out in the post-colonial present, and the way in which hunter militias on the Guinea coast have re-emerged as combatants in the fragmented spaces of West Africa's collapsed states (Leach 2004; Bassett, 2003; Richards 1996; Ellis 1999). In this context masquerades and warrior cults have become rich repositories of idioms of youth initiation, modes of collective covert action, and of the aesthetics of violence. The various movements of protest and resistance to the oil companies and the national government in the Niger Delta area have captured something of this process in the emergence of the Egbesu 'secret cult' which provides local youth

with a collective means of organization that cuts across the complex mosaic of identities found in the Delta. Egbesu is a resistance movement through which youth define an identity that challenges the state and the oil companies.[2] Consequently the Egbesu Boys have been branded as 'pirates' by state authorities because of their alliances and activities. Commentators have argued, however, that this recourse to the past in the present therefore provides a key context for situating counter-narratives to economic marginalization and environmental exploitation. The choice of representing claims to a pre-colonial legitimacy over rights to land and resource ownership in this form and in opposition to the state is significant. Egbesu constructs a moral community, it is argued, with the physical and spiritual security that this entails, and hence it determines when there is a just cause to use the force of the Egbesu deity for 'the good and protection of the community'.[3]

Egbesu forms part of a political landscape in the southern Delta region that in recent years has witnessed a marked increase in violence linked to various street gangs and militias. These insurgent campaigns have most recently been led by Mujahid Dokubo-Asari's Niger Delta Volunteer Force who claimed to have launched an 'all-out war on the Nigerian state' and the multinationals.[4] Ijaw nationalism and the resource control agenda have figured prominently in this movement among a range of other issues.[5] In particular, the tensions of political patronage have also fuelled recent violence. Various gangs and militia groups were mobilized, hired and armed by political candidates for the 2003 elections. The link between electoral politics and violence in the so-called 'south-south' zone of Nigeria is principally a result of a shift in the internal political economy of Nigeria's federation since the return to democracy in 1999 and to the associated re-distribution of oil revenues.[6] With increasing proportions of the revenue from high oil prices being directed at the middle tier of Nigerian government, the federal states, governors in the oil-producing states of Akwa Ibom, Rivers, Delta and Bayelsa have, and can expect, considerably more revenue than ever before. The zero-sum politics for access to these resources gave rise to the arming of street gangs in political campaigns during 2003, and the violence of September and October 2004 represented a falling out among the gangs and between the gangs and their former political sponsors over the failure of patrons to redistribute the spoils of office.

Rather than re-distribute, in fact, their response has been to take a stronger line against their former supporters. This clampdown has taken two forms. First, in Rivers State, for instance, the governor banned 103 secret cult groups. The Secret Cult and Similar Activities (Prohibition) bill was passed by the Rivers State House of Assembly and outlaws the Vikings, Buccanneers (Sea Lords), the Amazons, The National Association of Seadogs, Black Axe, New-black Movement, Eiye or Air Lords Fraternity, The National Association of Adventurers, the Icelanders and the KKK Confraternity. Second, the governor demanded the return of illegal weapons that were thought to have been used for the elections. Significant arms caches were claimed; at one press conference 130 AK-47s were said to have been 'voluntarily surrendered'.

Violence in the Delta region and its hinterland primarily concerns these youth gangs and militia that have been armed by political patrons (Human Rights Watch 2003, 2005b). Overall, it is suggested that there are around 100 gangs in the oil city of Port Harcourt whose members are said to represent 'a standing army of the dispossessed' (*Africa Confidential*, 10 September 2004; Concannon and Newsom 2004). Amnesty International claimed that up to 500 civilians were killed in fighting in and around the city during the widely reported violence of 2004. Among these various gangs, cults and societies is a group called *agaba*.

In addition to its association with forms of urban and political violence, *agaba* is popularly known for its drumming and dancing. As an urban dance society *agaba* expresses the 'adaptive' properties found in Beni societies across East Africa (Ranger 1975), the Kalela dance on the Copperbelt (Mitchell 1956) and the Goumbe dances in Ivory Coast (Rouch 1961). It encompasses a search for personal power familiar in Hauka in Ghana (Stoller 1997), and Ode lay in Sierra Leone (Nunley 1987). It is configured in an explicit relationship with state violence like youth masquerades in Cameroon (Argenti 1998). It is about the rediscovery of tradition in the context of masquerades that, for their young initiates, can be a situation of resource access like the *egigun* in south-western Nigeria (Rea 1998). Its diffusion across south-eastern Nigeria traces a relationship with the global capitalist economy like the Senegalese Kumpo (De Jong 1999). And *agaba* provides a commentary and critique of the Nigerian post-colony and represents humorous masks containing serious politics (Ottenberg 1972).

In focusing on *agaba* performance this chapter sets out to contrast macro analyses of the rise of militia-style 'war machines'[7] in Africa with an ethnographic account of the situated knowledge and internal imperatives of *agaba* members. At this level the relationship between youth and violence in Africa may be better represented not as a reflex to state disintegration or global political trends, but rather as a culturally informed response to the challenges of everyday life in the post-colony. In the context of *agaba* performance it is important to recall the need to highlight links between dance-form as performance, and the shifting contingencies of everyday life and of political structures (Ranger 1975; see also James 2000: 140). It is from this angle that we may better understand the choice of young men to invest their time, money and creative energies into particular forms of cultural performance and social fellowship that are otherwise maligned and criminalized. And from this perspective it is possible to move beyond the discursive labelling of youth associations and the politics of youth as a discursive category and to consider the ways in which such labels are tactically employed.

Such an approach, it is argued, also serves to collapse a common dichotomy in the analysis of the relationship between youth and violence. The political tactics of youth in contemporary Africa, we are told, reflect not merely their role as 'vandals' but also as 'vanguards' and not only as 'makers' but as 'breakers' (Cruise O'Brien 1996; Abbink and Kessel 2004; Honwana and Boeck 2005). This dual character is derived in large part from the very ambiguity of youth as a

category (Durham 2000), and from the marginal position of youth in the making of patrimonial modes of governance – at once innovative and creative and yet subject to cooption as clients by patrons (Gore and Pratten 2003). What is less evident are the ways in which this duality itself contains a political strategy. In many instances across the continent, from street gangs, secret cults, masquerade clubs and vigilante groups, the collective mobilization of youth concerns ways in which the marginalized deploy their very marginality to their own advantage. The association of difference with negativity invokes twin dynamics which are crucial in understanding how any form of marginality, disadvantage or divergence from a supposed norm can produce a political tension. These dynamics are composed of an inscribed hierarchy and a critical potential. The critical potentiality of difference is therefore manifested as a multiplicity of perspectives that decenters authority. If marginality is defined negatively, then it is this very negativity that injects a perturbing (and potentially transforming) impulse into the system. This double displacement makes an analysis of the dynamics of marginality more than just the study of abstract hierarchy or heterogeneity, and specifically establishes it as the register of material politics. The processes by which the marginalized enact and perform their very marginality serves as social critique and 'hollows out' other spaces within hegemony. It is precisely by presenting the violent potentiality of social disadvantage that African youth demand to be and are accommodated and taken account of. In this way youth are able to project an epistemological advantage onto disadvantage itself (De Certeau 1986; De Certeau and Giard 1997; Terdiman 2001). And it is in this understanding of difference that the dualities of youth as vanguards and vandals are fused.

Agaba

The activities of the various gangs and militia groups in Port Harcourt and the Niger Delta form a central part of the backdrop to this study of youth and youth organizations and in Annang villages in Akwa Ibom State. Young men's experience of gangs and cults as well as the violence they have witnessed and have engaged in over recent years is the 'rugged' life to which they refer. The focus of this chapter is a youth group known as *agaba*. Since the late 1990s *agaba* members have been variously framed as 'masqueraders', as 'area boys', and as 'local militia'. The various labels applied to *agaba* have overlapped and are constantly shifting, which is in itself illustrative of a widespread discursive process of categorization concerning young men's organizations in Nigeria. The primary categories are identified as 'area boys' (urban street gangs), secret cults (often associated with university campus life), militia (promoting ethnic agendas), and various types of vigilante group. While they each follow their own local and historical trajectory, most of these types of group are in fact very similar. They are all associated with the initiation of young men, identification with a particular location, invocations of spiritual power and with physical violence.

The public discourse on *agaba* and similar youth cults and gangs associates its members with wanton violence, and views them as a threat to the moral

fabric of communities in southern Nigeria that are imagined in predominantly Christian idioms. In public discourse *agaba* is a subversive, criminal, demonic and deviant force of disorder. The following newspaper cuttings illustrate something of the electoral and urban violence in which *agaba* has been engaged, with each report labelling *agaba* differently. In this incident, which took place close to where I conduct my fieldwork, *agaba* was identified with masquerade performance:

> A number of suspects have been arrested in connection with the alleged attempt to kill the Chairman of Etim Ekpo local government (Barrister Emmanuel Eno Idem), plus the past chairman of the council and the House of Assembly member-elect. The three were attacked by Agaba masqueraders at Ikot Esu in Ika LGA who blocked their vehicle. The chairman was stabbed. Two key suspects fled to Port Harcourt where they reside.
>
> (*Punch*, 13 January 1998)

In violence during 2001 in the city centre of Calabar, the label applied to *agaba* is broadened with the suggestion that the masquerade is really an 'area boys' street gang responsible for looting shops:

> Residents of Calabar now live in fear as people suspected to be 'area boys' have taken law into their hands unleashing mayhem on the innocent citizens of the city. A weeklong act of terrorism came to a head at the weekend with three people feared dead. The major cause of the crisis is unknown but may be linked to a conflict between two 'area boys' fighting to control the structure of government within the state capital. The action of the 'area boys' under the aegis of '*agaba* masquerades' completely paralyzed economic and social activities in the ancient city as markets and shops were forced to close, roads blocked while mass destruction, looting and vandalization of shops and vehicles were the order of the day. The boys moved in groups of more than 50 along the major streets and held dangerous weapons, such as machetes, iron rods, sticks, bottles, hammers, guns etc. to attack law abiding citizens and loot stores. They chanted war songs. ThisDay checks reveal that the present crisis in the city lasted so long because some people in government have hands in it. This is the second time in eight months that 'area boys' have held the residents of Calabar hostage.
>
> (*ThisDay*, 1 July 2001)

And finally, the following report from 2001, in which *agaba* is labelled a 'militia group', signalled the beginning of the worst violence that groups calling themselves *agaba* have yet been involved in. During later outbreaks of this political conflict in Ogu/Bolu in 2002 the *agaba* boys were reported to have used AK-47s, pump action shot-guns, and local pistols in their attacks on rival factions. By February 2003, just before the national elections, two sites set up in Port Harcourt were still hosting hundreds of displaced persons from Ogu:

> The All People's Party at a press briefing in Abuja yesterday addressed by National Secretary, Chief George Moghalu accused Mr. George Sekibo, the Special Adviser to Governor Peter Odili of masterminding the killing of an aide to the Ugu/Bolo council chairman. Moghalu alleged that the government's aide Mr. George Sekibo in concert with a local militia group 'Agaba Boys' under his payroll was responsible for the burning of the residences of party stalwarts in the area.
>
> (*ThisDay*, 2 May 2001)

In general, militant Nigerian youth organizations, area boys, vigilantes and secret cults have each emerged from or were transformed by the post-structural adjustment economic crisis. *Agaba*'s origins, however, are rather obscure. *Agaba* is associated with well-established though undocumented Igbo masquerades, but the groups discussed here do not recall or relate that connection. Rather they begin within the past decade in the industrial centre of Bonny's oil depots. Here a female water spirit, *agaba*, presented herself to a young man who would be recalled later in *agaba's* songs as Papa Lucky. Since this revelation young men have initiated new lodges of the society in the towns and villages of south-eastern Nigeria and *agaba* has extended from Bonny through the rivers of the Niger Delta to the major cities of the region, Port Harcourt and Calabar. In Calabar the *agaba* groups are known as the Bayside Boys and the School Boys; and in Port Harcourt as the Millennium Boys, 007 and Diobu United. From these centres the groups have spread to Ibibio, Ogoni, and Igbo villages across the hinterland including the Annang village of Ikot Akpa Nkuk where the *agaba* group with whom this fieldwork was conducted is known as the Ukanafun Base Boys. This regional, cross-ethnic dispersal is noteworthy when set against a context of apparently ever-deepening cleavages wrought by the politics of identity and belonging in democratic Nigeria. In fact the pattern of diffusion echoes that of protective cults[8] and pre-colonial secret societies, especially the leopard society (*ekpe*), itself constituted by the violence of the slave trade.[9]

The dominant idioms that *agaba* plays within are those related to masquerade and cult performances, ambiguously sited and in terms of styles, language, performance and action they construct and represents particular ideas of masculinity and the ruggedness of life. In unpicking the historical genealogy of the cult the *agaba* players actively draw on a range of registers, including the idiom of secret societies, urban cowboys and on varsity cults.

Agaba, and the violence it is associated with, is conceived in similar terms to that of the secret societies, *ekpo* in particular, which have been proscribed and constrained in their performances since the 1950s because of their violent assaults on non-members. *Ekpo* is the ancestral Annang and Ibibio masquerade society and has always been in conflict with state authorities and churches.[10] Over the past decade even chiefs in Annang Local Governments have condemned the *ekpo* masquerades, and have banned the play because of its associations with armed robbery, rape and violence. As a result, what was once the 'government' of Annang communities, secret societies are now threats to village

security. Those plays that do perform do so in a doubly secret manner. Not only are the identities of the masqueraders disguised and audience prohibitions upheld, but the masqueraders rarely gain official permits to perform and therefore play clandestinely.

It was at these *ekpo* performances that I first met some of the *agaba* members among the spectators, and many of the *agaba* players were initiated and played *ekpo* and other societies when they were younger before the local bans were introduced. Not only are the careers of *agaba* boys linked to these plays but the idea of a 'traditional masquerade' is also invoked in discourse on the legitimacy of the *agaba* cult. This is evident in the way in which the players represent their bodies and the connection between the charcoal and palm oil that is smeared onto the *ekpo* players, with the *agaba* uniform of 'black on black', black shirts, trousers and caps. The link between *ekpo* and *agaba* is also resonant because of the way masculinity is realized and represented in Annang society. Initiation into *ekpo* was a key phase in a man's life since it was part of the way in which a small boy (*eyen*) graduates to a youth (*mkparawa*), it defined him as a member of the community, and legitimized the use of violence by men. More generally then it could be argued that the way in which *agaba*, as an 'outsider' masquerade, has been brought into this local context allows young men to escape the control of elders who would otherwise hold authority over performances and fees (cf. Rea 1994).

When forms of traditional masquerade were taken to the expanding colonial cities from the 1920s onwards they were immediately linked to disordering violence. During the Second World War years, for instance, youth gangs and performances in Nigerian cities, especially those that performed at Christmas-time and New Year, were perceived as a menace to colonial law and order leading to the introduction of a new offence known as 'masquerade hooliganism'. One of the most noteworthy types of group, which was popular all over Africa in the late 1940s and 1950s, was the 'Cowboy' cult. After watching Cowboy movies urban gangs clad in cowboy clothes, riding bicycles rather than steers, called themselves the 'Bills' after Buffalo Bill (La Hausse 1990; Burton 2001).[11] More recent urban cults in Nigeria are those linked to the burgeoning university student populations.

The most proximate register that *agaba* plays on, then, is the 'secret cult' especially campus cults which have been both demonized and criminalized in recent years. On the university campuses there have been long standing associations of students like the Palm Wine Club (known as the Kegites) along with those organized as another American import, student confraternities. It was Wole Soyinka who, on his return to Nigeria, is credited with forming the Pyrates aka the National Association of Seadogs at the University of Ibadan in the 1960s. It is from these cults, the Kegites and the 'Fra Men' of the confraternities that *agaba* has appropriated much of the style, songs and slang (*jarassis*) present in their activities and performances. Prominent confraternities are male dominated and have a reputation for toughness accentuated by their initiations and pledges of secrecy. Today campuses play host to the Buccaneers, Black Axe,

Vikings, and Hooded Scorpions and a host of others each of which utilizes an idiom of secrecy as its basis for organization. They act to protect members' interests and have been active and violent in challenging university malpractices (Gore and Pratten 2003). The pattern of grievances they articulate is obscured, however, in the widespread discourse on their association with vendetta attacks, ritual killings and their supposed association with armed robbery (Bastian 2001; Kalu 2001).

In their songs, speech and in internet chat rooms members of these fraternities call themselves 'rugged' men. Importantly these groups cross-cut identities based on the politics of ethnicity and represent themselves in the use of secret slang based on pidgin or 'broken' English. The symbolic content of these groups shares two main themes – maritime and mafia. The Pyrates go 'sailing' when they have a meeting, their groups call themselves 'decks' and they are led by a 'Cap'n' or 'Capone'. The Family Confraternity are commonly known as the 'Mafia' or the 'Mob' under the leadership of a 'don' and 'capos'. And the Bucanneers founded in the early 1970s are identified as 'Sealords' and are led by a 'Grand Eye' or a 'Frigate Captain'.

Performance and power

These registers of urban, performative, internationalized, rugged masculinity are the key features manifest in *agaba* performance and concern the coding of youth as a political category. Young men actively manipulate the categories of cult and cultural play that are so fiercely contested in popular discourse, and how better to express the potency, the potential, the latent hostility of a marginalized group than in membership and participation of such a banned cult in which the marginalized can deploy their very marginality to their own advantage.

Agaba performance focuses on a shrine. The *agaba* shrine in Ikot Akpa Nkuk is about a mile out of the village along the stream road where people collect water and bathe and where the vigilantes execute armed robbers. The shrine is the home of the *agaba* spirit which the members explain by analogy, and say that it is like *mami wata*, a complex of beliefs and practices involving water spirits that bestow good fortune and protection or wreak personal disaster in return for maintaining a relationship, sometimes expressed as marriage with the spirit (Salmons 1977; Gore and Nevadomsky 1997; Drewal 1988). During most *agaba* performances one or two individual players, core and long-standing members, become possessed by the spirit. This is neither a curative nor an initiatory form of possession. It concerns, rather, an enriching of the relationship with *agaba*. As a protective cult *agaba* draws on the power of the spirit and the rules of group solidarity for protection. In the secrets of the group it is important to note those such as the injunction, 'You must not harm; or betray fellow members.' This is a rule that is tested by players running anti-clockwise (by the left-hand side) around the singers during their performances and which is confirmed in 'commensal solidarity' when players share schnapps from the same cup (see Gutmann 1997: 393).

The *agaba* performance, at Christmas and Easter, parades along the federal highway and through neighboring villages before stopping at a village square to sing, dance and later to drink. The drumming troupe parades behind a single masquerade figure. Dressed in black, the dancer carries a large wooden face 'hired' from the headquarters of *agaba* in Port Harcourt. It not a locally carved mask and none of the boys know where it came from originally or what the various characters depicted on it are supposed to be or represent. The members are therefore able to re-configure the meanings associated with the mask so that a male figure on the mask is a soldier; a woman is the *mami wata* spirit and a snake, leopard and antelope, all powerful figures associated with the wild, combine to portray and project power. It was suggested that purchase of the mask was simply a way of disguising the secret cult as a 'cultural play' and hence as a way of legitimating the group in the garb of traditional, harmless street performance. Such a ploy would be consistent with various other tactics aimed at concealing the identity of the *agaba* cult which include registering the group as a social club with the Akwa Ibom state authorities, and changing the group's name from *agaba* to Ukanafun Base Boys.

At weekly rehearsals and less frequent 'outings' the dance forms distinguish *agaba* from other masquerades. The aesthetics of *agaba* dance forms are illustrative of the social construction of masculinity. The dance performances are competitive and improvisational involving individual dancers approaching the main bank of seated drummers where they combine intricate steps with flashing swipes of unsheathed machetes and swords. One such improvisation is especially striking. Routinely at *agaba* performances a young *agaba* member dances on his tiptoes and swaying his hips he imitates a female form in a style the boys call *achawo* or prostitute. The apparent contradiction here of a 'rugged' young man dancing as a woman points to the ways in which the hyper-masculinity of West African young men is sometimes constructed by the conflation of gender categories. The form of performance may constitute, as Moran argues in the case of Liberian rebels, an attempt to retrieve the power of the indigenous warrior. Here playing with gender identity concerns drawing power from the deliberate conflation of categories, to demonstrate that qualities of courage, strength, and supernatural prowess are not limited by biological endowment (Moran 1995: 80). Cross-dressing, in fact, was a common performative feature for young male and female members of Annang initiatory societies (Van Allen 1972; Ifeka-Moller 1975; Salmons 1985). One of the crucial aspects in this context was that cross-dressing coincided with a transgression of boundaries. For instance, while male warriors (*ekoŋ*) dressed as women when they blessed a fattened bride (*mbobo*) with fertility, so the women's forum (*isoŋ ibaan*) dressed as men when they brought war to a man's compound. Hence, just as Liberian combatants often embodied a female other the key interpretative clue to this *agaba* dance is its figurative link to power. It is commonly held that women sap or 'cool down' the power of men, especially if their own powers are derived from the wearing of charms or the consumption of medicine (*ibok*). The antidote to male medicinal power therefore is sex with women. The prostitute dance is a statement,

therefore, that *agaba* boys possess and project sources of power that transcend their gendered embodiment.

Like *odelay* and the distinction Nunley (1987) identifies between fierce and fancy costumes, so the *agaba* uniforms, which involve mufti for peace, black for an outing and red for violence, represent intention in aesthetic. Unlike the youth masks Argenti (1998) writes about in Cameroon which he says mimic the state violence of security forces in their uniforms, the *agaba* boys, by wearing black on black, are not mimicking but deliberately confronting state security forces by assuming the garb associated with banned cults and armed robbers. These aesthetic distinctions of peace and violence, offence and defence, of aggression and protection are further rehearsed in *agaba*'s songs, and in a repertoire that combines calls to arms along with laconic sketches of misfortune and helplessness.

Like the Freetown Odelay masquerades of the 1970s that John Nunley describes, *agaba* performances have to be dangerous, they are a test. Successful masking is determined by overcoming the physical and metaphysical hurdles that may impede their progress. Hence encountering other masquerades or gangs or confronting the police are common to the ways in which successful masking is conceived (especially, though not exclusively, in the city at Christmas time). During their performance *agaba* members therefore sing:

> Make you no run eh,
> Make you no run away
> If you jam egbesu boys
> Make you no run

This song urges *agaba* members that if you 'jam' or clash with another gang such as the Egbesu Boys along the road then stand and fight. In order to empower the mask, and to prevent malevolent spirits entering the performer and scattering the performance players smash raw eggs onto the face of the mask, they spit and spray schnapps onto the mask and the head of the group touches the mask with a matchet.

Singing the 'rugged life'

Like its dance performance the *agaba* song repertoire is largely improvised, though it derives a core group of drum rhythms and lyrics from the palm wine drinking clubs ('Palmet') that many *agaba* members joined at school and college. The majority of the songs are in pidgin, though vocabulary from local languages, Ijaw and Igbo particularly, are freely borrowed. In terms of genre there are various styles. The diversity of the subjects, sources, languages and genres of the *agaba* songs captures the cross-ethnic diversity of *agaba's* own geographical diffusion along the coastline of south-eastern Nigeria. The most common forms are praise songs and songs of remembrance for the founders of the *agaba* masquerade itself and other prominent personalities. Songs also include chants, like '*Ekut Ama–Ekpa Ama*' ('I love axe-proof–I love matchet

proof') reminiscent of those rehearsed by the 'traditional' secret societies to remind initiates of the rules, and non-initiates to be wary.

As Mitchell said of Kalela, it is the songs that are the primary attraction. Despite the vigorous, noisy and empowered context of the songs' performance, and despite the often boastful attitude of most of the members concerning their own powers and conquests, the songs themselves reveal a surprising frankness about personal insecurities. The songs are rich in an irony that undercuts a stereotypical image of these young men's societies as sinister and violent groups of hoodlums, miscreants and street urchins. As the songs are performed, and as the power of the *agaba* spirit urges the performers on to ever more vigorous dancing displays the songs themselves reveal their own powerlessness in the face of the arbitrariness of urban rugged life. While the image of young men's cults is based on lawlessness and violence, the songs reveal an internal impetus to seeking support and solace in the company of cohorts. In a similar way to gang performance around the world, whether it concerns spirit possession, dance or singing, these events open up social spaces 'where tenderness, humor, hope and solidarity intermingle with everyday tragedy' (Ferrándiz 2004: 126).

The songs performed by the *agaba* masquerade speak to the daily concerns of young men with precarious livelihoods in the towns and villages of southern Nigeria. Their focus is on personal security, on solidarity between members, and on sex and drugs. This song, 'Dis rugged life', captures many of the themes common to the repertoire:

Dis rugged life
I wan fash e oh
Some people rugged
Sute lose their life – eh
Notorious BIG follow kill Tupac – oh
Tupac boys dey still de sail – oh
Some people rugged sute buy Mercedes – oh
As for me I go buy Pafinda
If no Pafinda na warrant I dey face – oh
Tupac boys still de sail – oh
Amo boy notin go happen

The 'rugged' life of this song is a life that the *agaba* boys want to leave (*fash* – Scottish for trouble or bother). The rugged life is akin, as *agaba* members see it, to that portrayed in the music and videos of American 'gangster rappers'. This is not a glamorized interpretation, however, since Tupac the singer mentioned in the song was a victim himself.[12] As young men do, the youth of this song muses on what type of car he might buy if he became rich. He would choose a Nissan Pathfinder jeep ('Pafinda'), a car associated with the *nouveaux riches* over the Mercedes brand of the old breed elites. Yet, with a note of resignation, he recognizes that in reality his 'rugged' life will more likely end on a police charge ('warrant') than driving an expensive car. Like many of the songs the chorus

line, the line that is repeated by all the dancers, lifts the song with a note of affirmation and reassurance. 'Amo boy', my man, my friend, it says, you need not worry about these things, nothing calamitous will happen to you when you have us to help you. This is a characteristic feature of *agaba* songs, a call to members to be assured that *agaba* will be there to protect its members and confront their enemies. Many songs call on *agaba* members to resign themselves to their fate, they urge them to 'jazz down' in the face of their plight even if they should die:

Agaba don't you worry
Agaba don't you worry
When you happens to die
In a worsky land
Never mind, chase dem people out.

'Worsky' here is *agaba* slang and is another way of describing the 'rugged life' war-like arbitrariness. In Annang the idea of the rugged life is captured in the phrase *anam mkpo ntime ntime* (something troublesome), or *mkpo akeme itipe* (anything can happen). Life in the city for a young man is arbitrary, unpredictable. Many of the *agaba* boys have lived or currently live in the 'down-below' shanty settlements, and work as commercial motorcycle taxi divers in the Diobu area of Port Harcourt. The worsky, rugged life of current gang-related urban violence in Port Harcourt forms a central part of these songs, such as this one, which relates a gang fight in Diobu:

Dese cult boys
Dey're stabbing a war
I tink I tell you
Dey stab you
Trouble go burst e oh
If e dey matchet you na rugged na your own
Dese cult boys dem don come again
Dey scatter sute reach at Akpe house amo boy
Dem tink say Diobu no go know oh
When dem know say Diobu boys don know
Dem know say trouble don burst
A trouble go burst e oh
I tell you
Somebody got wound eh eh
Body got wound
Na burial be dat oh oh
We no dey pity person oh

One of the key factors in the turf wars in Port Harcourt has been drugs, and this song 'No cocktail' pinpoints the shanty settlements of Abonnema Wharf and Elechi waterside as the centre of the hard drug trade, referred to here as the 'gold line':

No cocktail, no cocktail oh
No cocktail, Na bad drug oh
No cocktail, no cocktail oh
No cocktail, Na bad drug oh
Na for Issaka somebody tell me say
Make I no dey like cocktail oh
Na for Issaka somebody tell me say
Make I no dey like cocktail
After dem tell me
I still go buy gold line am
I tink say na heaven I dey oh
A me no know say na my money dey burn so
I tink say na heaven I dey
Abonnema Wharf boys na dem be my drug pushers
Anywhere dey must find and reach oh
Elechi boys oh na dem be my drug pushers
Anywhere dey must find and reach
Fit na to swear, me I go swear say
Dat cocktail for stress my life oh
Fit na to swear, me I go swear say
Dat cocktail for stress my life
Babo cocktail!

While there is a momentary high and he thinks he has reached heaven (*I tink na heaven I dey*), there is a frankness to how the *agaba* boy loses his money (*my money dey burn*) and messes up his life (*dat cocktail for stress my life*). Many *agaba* songs also relate stories of harassment from the police for possession and use of marijuana, or *kuma* as it is called in this song:

Police, eh wetin I do eh?
Police, eh wetin I do eh?
You carry Luger follow me
Say I blow kuma
You carry Luger follow me
Say I blow kuma

The police, here portrayed chasing the *agaba* members with their Luger pistols, in fact figure as one of the central characters in *agaba* songs. The arbitrary, random, vindictive, extractive character of the police whom *agaba* members struggle to evade in their daily lives is often rehearsed in *agaba* songs (Human Rights Watch 2005a). The police are configured in a concept in the pidgin language of the songs as ‘winchy’, a word that comes from witch and wicked. Former members of *agaba* that have died at the hands of the ‘winchy’ security forces are remembered in the songs. They include, for instance, an Okrikan

whose nickname or 'guy name' was 'Gowon' and who was killed by the police as a suspected armed robber:

Gowon – eh
Gowon no be thief – eh
Gowon no be robber
Na rugged Gowon rugged
Na winchy people gettin' money
Fire Gowon die – eh
Italian no vex – oh

This song recalls the 'rugged', hard life of boys like 'Gowon', along with the inequities of justice faced by the poor when the winchy people, the security forces can be manipulated by local elites. The reference in the chorus line to Italians conjures ideas of mafia gangs. There is also an ironic humor, however, in the *agaba'*s relationship with the police. On the subject of guns, of who has one and of what sort, young men might be expected to express a note of boastfulness. Yet as the following song illustrates, sometimes the reverse is the case:

I take my money
go buy Luger
never use am for one day
I see OP Flush
Alelele lelele Bamule

Just as soon as he bought a pistol ('Luger') and before he could use it, the *agaba* boy is caught by the Rivers State Police Operation Flush ('OP Flush') which is a well-armed anti-crime squad. In addition to the police, the *dramatis personae* of the *agaba* song repertoire recalls, in the form of praise songs, many prominent national and international figures. Nationalist heroes Azikiwe and Awolowo feature in the songs and *agaba* members also identify themselves with minority rights activists. The songs feature Ken Saro-Wiwa, the Ogoni rights activist, and Dele Giwa, the *Newswatch* editor, who both died at the hands of General Abacha's regime in the 1990s:

Saro-Wiwa na de only son of Ogoni – eh oh
Saro-Wiwa na de only son of Ogoni – eh oh
My mama like you, my papa like you eh oh
My brother like you, my sister like you eh oh
Nobody for this life abi I like – oh
Nobody for this life abi I like – oh
Na bin true?
Eh oh na true oh, eh oh
Na bin lie I talk ?
Eh oh na true oh, eh oh

In standing up to the Abacha regime Saro-Wiwa is more than a folk hero. He is also a tough, hard, rugged, powerful man. One of the more contemporary references to powerful men in the *agaba* songs includes a praise song for Osama Bin Laden:

> Osama Bin Laden – eh
> Osama Bin Laden – eh
> Osama Bin Laden – na powerful man – eh
> Osama Bin Laden – na powerful man – eh
> O mami answer your man

'We like "hardened guys",' the members say, 'and Osama "fire America" so we must sing him.' Annang and Ibibio cultural representations have a history of portraying otherwise universally vilified figures.[13] What these praise songs are relating is a particular set of ideas about power that resonate in Annang's performative concept of the powerful man, *ockposong owo*. 'Performance makes a person strong,' Annang say, and so the powerful men that *agaba* represent in the songs are those who have been tested, someone who has been able to suppress a rival's powers.

While the songs highlight the plight of Nigerian youth in relation to state violence and urban gang conflict, the underlying economic inequalities and inequities are never far from the surface. Here, *agaba* has used the shared regional symbol of illegitimate wealth, the vulture, in a story of a man who turned into a vulture in Port Harcourt in a pact to secure wealth as a way of reflecting on the illegitimacy of wealth in the city (Bastian 2001).

> Oh Igbo man turn to vulture, because of money
> Igbo man turn to vulture, because of money oh
> Igbo man turn to vulture, because of money
> Amo boy see more wey dem get im never satisfied
> I say a more wey im get e never satisfied

Just as women are enacted in *agaba*'s dances, so the images of women and self-representations of *agaba*'s hyper-masculinity figure in their songs. The most common female figure that appears in *agaba*'s songs is the prostitute, *achawo* or *okpongidi*. Those songs that refer to commercial sex workers draw out themes of misfortune and risk, and although HIV has yet to appear in the songs other sexually transmitted diseases are mentioned:

> Achawo no give me gonnorhea
> Achawo no give me gonnorhea
> I be senior man, no give me gonnorhea
> I be small boy, no give me gonnorhea

Agaba members are young men of course and many are of marriageable age but do not have the support from parents or their own money to pay brideprice. In general the songs are about loss and misfortune:

I want to marry one girl
Mi Mama no gree me oh
A beg am, a beg am, I tire
De girl turn to achawo for Abonnema
If you see Polly, If you see Polly
If you see Polly, Tell her say I de look for her
Polly write a letter, Polly put her picture
Polly picture do whatever she for do for me
Polly picture romance me, Polly picture kiss me
Polly picture do whatever she for do for me

The sense here and in other songs is to bemoan the trials and misfortunes associated with the rugged life which of course has to be set against an imagined normalcy, a projected future of marriage, of a job transfer, of getting a job with Shell. The biographies of the *agaba* boys do not always bear this out as a career trajectory, of course. Some of the older members are leaving, but the underlying sense is that opportunities to escape the rugged life are defined by the same sense of arbitrariness and chance.

Conclusion

The invocation of secret societies in contemporary violence would appear to confirm Bayart's (1999) comments on the social capital of the felonious state. Lineage-based societies, he argues, are peculiarly adaptive to new bureaucratic, economic and criminal environments, and those 'sodalities of initiates' represent countervailing centres of power which echo the shadow structures through which national political power is popularly thought to be exercised. The comparative evidence for these assertions is usually drawn from links between shape-shifting secret societies and contemporary conflict on the Guinea Coast. Within these trajectories of terror, secret societies are rich repositories of idioms of youth initiation, modes of collective covert action and of the aesthetics of violence. Yet the historical link tends to be more implied than documented and more dependent on embodied than discursive memories (Ferme 2001; Shaw 2002). In south-eastern Nigeria there is both a dynamic, contingent history of secret societies to trace and an active, discursive use of the past in the present.

Agaba primarily concerns two features. First, the quest for power and protection among young men, and of ideas of masculinity based on being tested and of proving oneself. It is here that the secret cult provides an appropriate idiom for the organization and protection of marginalized young men from the inequities of the rugged life and the violence associated with militant groups in the Niger Delta, the gangs in Port Harcourt, the cults on university campuses and the state's security forces. Second, *agaba* concerns the coding of youth as a political category. Young men are actively manipulating the categories of cult and cultural play that are so fiercely contested in popular discourse, and how better to express, to represent the potency, the potential, the latent hostility of a marginalized group

than in the form of cult groups that are banned. Its here, as young men inside *agaba* show themselves to be powerful and to be available as potential clients, that *agaba* is central to the contemporary politics of youth. Overall, while the *agaba* aesthetics and performance capture an unsettling, decentring and violent potential, so *agaba* songs define the marginality of youth as a category that is socially disadvantaged, hounded by the police, excluded from normal reproductive relations, as drug users, and supporters of radical political figures. Combined, *agaba* performance points to a specific self-realization of marginalization and of the blockages that prevent youth from participating in the social exchanges that constitute Nigeria's politics. Rather than identifying the dual possibilities of such youth as 'makers' and 'breakers', it is important to recognize that their critical and violent potentiality is configured in precisely the creative forms by which they represent themselves as marginal. The critique of the Nigerian social fabric which *agaba* presents is powerful precisely because it arises from the projection and performance of disadvantage and disempowerment.

Agaba, then, is a social network of non-ethnic expression. It is not mimetic of modern culture like Beni Ngoma, Kalela or Hauka were, but of a familiar, traditional form within which iconic elements from the outside, gangster rappers and Osama bin Laden, are refigured and resignified in a vernacular popular imagination. The continued salience of the use of the secret society in *agaba* performance lies not in the mere invocation of 'tradition', but in the manipulation of the ambiguous properties of power with which it is linked. The stress here is on historical trajectories and contingencies as opposed to reductionist explanations of 're-traditionalization'. This chapter, therefore, is about how masculinities and youth in West Africa engage with a crisis of patrimonialism through an aesthetic of violence and through quests for selfhood configured in the creative ambiguities of indigenous notions of power – of toughness and testing.

It is necessary to take account of these moral imperatives to violence and forms of organization configured in violence if the anthropology of violence is to map the different moral and aesthetic evaluations people in different contexts make of their actions on the bodies of others (Spencer 2003: 1568). Diffused in crowds and mobs and concentrated in groups and gangs, 'popular' violence tends to obey moral imperatives and is often structured in terms of 'legitimate' targets and appropriate punishments. These various moral communities produce notions of justice and law with different kinds of imaginaries from those available in the official sites and representations of justice and law (Das and Poole 2004: 22). Their views of justice are often 'retrospective vision[s] of a world restored to its proper order' (Spencer 2003: 1570), but this is not to say that they are based on unchanging notions of cultural norms and practice. Rather, the complexity of lived experience inflects both past and imagined futures into an ambiguous, dynamic and very powerful notion of the moral order and of the routines by which it should be upheld.

Notes

1 Gordon England, Secretary of the Navy (VOANews.com, 31 May 2004).
2 Along with the Ijaw National Congress, the Ijaw Youth Congress and others the Egbesu Boys issued the Kaiama Declaration on 11 December 1998 which demanded the withdrawal from Ijawland of all military forces of occupation.
3 Comments by Prof. E.J. Alagoa in Survival (Newspaper of Chikoko Movement), 2 October 1999.
4 The Niger Delta Volunteer Force takes its name from the movement that led a short-lived secession movement in 1966, just prior to the Nigerian civil war. Alhaji Asari Dokobu is the son of a High Court judge, a convert to Islam and an admirer of Osama Bin Laden and Nelson Mandela.
5 Oil theft from the sabotage of oil pipelines, a practice known as bunkering, also plays an important role as a source of funding for weapons. Overall, stolen crude sold to unscrupulous foreign refineries may account for a third of Nigeria's total output (*Africa Confidential*, 10 September 2004).
6 The figures are problematic but the principles and trends are not. Since 1999 the amount shared between the three tiers of government – federal, state and local – has moved in favour of the states, specifically the oil-producing states. On average the states received around 11–12 per cent under military rule (pre-1999), which has jumped to over 20 per cent since President Obasanjo came to power. This may rise to nearly 33 per cent because of a supreme court ruling on the allocation of offshore oil revenues. In real terms this represents a jump from US$120 million in 1999 to $1 billion in 2001.
7 For an Africanist reading of Deleuze and Guattari's 'war-machine' hypothesis see Mbembe 2003.
8 The protective cult of *anim ekim*, for instance, entered southern Annang communities through the trading rivers and was founded by Opobo merchants who had settled at Annang waterside markets. The cult provided protection against the predations of malevolent ancestral spirits (*idiok* or *afai ekpo*). It was not expensive to join, but it placed exacting demands upon initiates who, on pain of death, had to commit to a series of rules which included a charge of not harming (or even thinking about harming) another person.
9 On the diffusion of regional cults in Cameroon and south-eastern Nigeria see Roeschenthaler 2004.
10 On *ekpo* see Offiong 1984; Pratten in press. On *ekpe* see Ottenberg and Knudsen 1985.
11 This social phenomenon, 'Billism', sprang up in Kinshasa's working-class neighbourhoods around 1952 among idle young dropouts who, to stave off boredom, saturated themselves with westerns and identified with the actors – complete with its own codes, language (Hindubill), slogans ('live fast and die', 'whatever belongs to the people is mine') and its own references. They renamed their gangs, their leaders, and their neighbourhoods.
12 Tupac Shakur was pronounced dead on 13 September 1996 after a drive-by shooting six days earlier.
13 In 1952, a concrete tombstone was erected for the late chief of an Ibibio village that depicted a sculpted and painted image of Hitler in military uniform including swastika and Iron Cross (Animageddi 1953).

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6 Security and violence on the frontier of the state

Vigilant citizens in Nkomazi, South Africa

Steffen Jensen

Security occupies a privileged position on the South African political horizon. In poll after poll, crime and violence emerge among the top priorities for many South Africans. Although more pronounced among whites, coloreds and Indians, polls have found that black South Africans also list it near the top. However, there seems to be confusion as to what security means. Hence, we need to disaggregate the concept, not least its relationship to violence. In the first instance, it is useful to distinguish between two forms of security. First, security speaks to the everyday concerns about and experiences with crime and violence. According to multiple statistics, for example the ISS victimization surveys (e.g. ISS 1998), large segments of the South African population have been victims of crime. On the basis of these experiences they act in different ways, to which we shall return in detail below. This is the material side of security. The second form of security is discursive. It is the way people talk about security. As Ole Wæver from the Copenhagen School of Security studies asserts, neither security nor actors employing the term are pre-discursive or unproblematic entities of analysis. Who is defined as a security threat depends on the power relations in a given context, and certain groups are in a position to define other groups or individuals as a security liability. Security then becomes a 'speech act' where 'the word "security" is the act; the utterance is the primary reality' (Wæver 1997: 222). Although the utterance of security is political, it is a special kind of politics where for and against becomes a matter of survival. Wæver asserts the following about the speech act of security:

> By saying 'security' a state representative moves the particular case into a specific area; claiming a special right to use the means necessary to block this development. 'Security' is the move that takes politics beyond the established [democratic] rules of the game, and frames the issue within a special kind of politics.
>
> (Wæver 1997: 14)

Wæver's approach is highly state-centered. However, by positing security in this way it becomes a practice that can be studied ethnographically. As such it is not necessarily lodged in the state, but can be deployed by other groups, formations, or individuals.

The two forms of security are related but not in a simple manner. In South Africa concerns about crime began to rise exponentially in the mid-1990s in ways that did not correspond with a more moderate rise in reported crime levels. The same holds true for Western countries like the US where security as discourse has been on the rise despite falling crime levels. In this chapter I will explore how everyday concerns with crime correlate with security as discourse, and how this again intertwines in complex ways with violence in the production of what I call a moral community. The focal point of the analysis is the diverse and multiple forms in which people on the frontier of the South African state deal with violence and criminals in a context where the police are less than effective and often downright corrupt. These forms vary greatly from organized vigilante groups and respected individuals to mobs with different degrees of state involvement. The practices and discourses of these forms, all fighting crime and violence, are privileged entry points for unraveling meanings of security as well as understanding violence not only as an unfortunate aberration but rather as an integral part of producing and maintaining moral communities. In these remarks there is a theoretical argument about crime and violence and the moral community. Many of the formations claim to be representing the community and to protect it against crime. In this sense, crime has become the constitutive outside of the community. When crime disappears, the community might fully realize itself. Establishing or producing a moral community is hence about eradicating crime from the community – and the identity of those belonging to the moral community may shift dramatically, depending on which individuals or groups manage to stabilize crime.

The relation between physical violence and security discourses about the survival and materialization of the moral community is complex and riddled with ambiguity. Clearly there is violence and crime in Nkomazi, but how people choose to react to it is animated by the ways in which they integrate with or understand the sociality they are part of. In this way, material violence and security discourses are always linked but the relationship is not only determined by the act of violence or crime. Furthermore, violence plays a complex role in the constitution of moral communities. On the one hand, violence is what must be eradicated in order for the moral community to materialize. On the other hand, violence is an integral part to the realization of the moral community. Finally, being able to stabilize some people as threats to the moral community is not only about identity but also about livelihoods, as those categorized as criminals threatening the survival of the community forfeit their rights to resources.

The analysis of the different forms of everyday policing is situated in the Nkomazi municipality, the most impoverished part of the old homeland KaNgwane, close to the Mozambican and Swazi borders, and just south of the Kruger National Park. Nkomazi incarnates in many ways the former homelands and what happened to them after the breakdown of apartheid. As some groups have managed to secure better livelihood opportunities, especially as state employees and as commercial farmers (Cousins 2000), the political economy has been radically reconfigured. At the same time, the downward trends in employment

(Terreblanche 2003; Nattrass 2003) have hit hard, as jobs have been shed in farming, mining and manufacture. Consequently the unemployment runs sky-high (conservative estimates put it at 50 percent). The area has a very high prevalence of AIDS and poverty-related diseases. Although state resources have been made available in considerable amounts, service levels remain low. This is also true for the police. Coupled with corruption in local government and in the police, there is a very real sense that the state is not functioning well. It is in this context of radical economic restructuring, death, and state inefficiency that we must locate the emergence of alternative forms of policing. As I analyze the four different forms that I have identified I shall disentangle how processes of political and economic transformation are played out in everyday policing. The four forms of policing identified are, in quick succession, the concerned citizens, the tribal authorities, the mob and the uniforms.

The concerned citizens

As part of a larger endeavor to understand how people in South Africa address security concerns, a survey[1] was administered in two sections of Nkomazi: the rural area Flagstaff[2] and the peri-urban, declared town KaMhluswa, which is an administrative center of the Nkomazi municipality. In terms of socio-economic profile, governance, and provision of services, the two areas are quite different: many professionals, including those working in the schools and clinics of Flagstaff, live in KaMhluswa; Flagstaff has a chief whereas none such has direct authority in KaMhluswa; in KaMhluswa provision of state services is better and the standard of housing generally much higher. KaMhluswa is also livelier, which might be good or bad, and crime is perceived to be higher. The survey indicates that this is true to some extent although the differences in crime levels are relatively small. In KaMhluswa 30 incidents were recorded in 43 interviews as opposed to 29 in 55 in Flagstaff. However, the kinds of crime recorded were markedly different. In Flagstaff mostly chicken and other foodstuff were stolen, whereas the preferred objects of theft in KaMhluswa were electronic items. This relates naturally to the different socio-economic profiles. However, the most significant difference was how people dealt with security issues. On the question of to whom people would turn in times of trouble, about half of the respondents from KaMhluswa answered that they would go to the police whereas only one quarter of the respondents in Flagstaff named the police as the preferred option. In contrast, more than 60 percent in the latter area said that they would turn to respected individuals in the area. In almost all the cases, there would be a name attached to the answer. The names would change according to where in Flagstaff people lived, from Mr. Khumalo through Mr. Masuko to Mr. Lubisi. In both areas the local councillor came second as the preferred option. This also translated into practice. In 14 out of 30 incidents people in KaMhluswa had been to the police whereas only one out of 29 in Flagstaff had sought the help of the police in a criminal matter. The third most preferred option was to do nothing or go to a neighbor.

From these remarks we can gauge that authority is highly personalized in the rural area of Flagstaff. As indicated, there are three such respected individuals in the section of Flagstaff where the survey was conducted. A respected individual, or a concerned citizen as they were called in the translation of how they named themselves, is no straightforward character. They are respected because people trust that they can help them in times of trouble. In this way, their claim to being respected is based on how many people go to them. In some ways, they fulfill many of the roles that traditional authorities are supposed to fulfill. These three respected individuals had varying relationships to the tribal authorities. One of them was quite close to the latter whereas the two others were at odds with the chief. Nonetheless the chief did accept their role as crime fighters as long as they did not usurp his paramount authority. In spite of the recognition, none of them formed part of the tribal authority. Since apartheid was introduced, tribal authorities have been recognized at a price by the regime; they became the indirect rulers of the homelands. The three men had none of the state recognized accoutrements of tribal authorities and wielded none of the resources. The chief's recognition was therefore more a formalization of the present state of affairs than integration into his council. The chief stayed some distance from this most impoverished section of Flagstaff, and cared little for how it was run. Arguably, he allowed the informality of authority as long as it did not infract on his overall authority.

Personalization of authority seems to be relatively general for much of African politics (Chabal and Daloz 1999; Mbembe 2001), but there are also local specificities that perpetuate personalized authority. The section of Flagstaff where the survey was conducted is relatively new as it was only inhabited in the early 1990s. At the same time, Nkomazi experienced a huge influx of Mozambican refugees. Consequently, about half the population in the section are Mozambicans. Many of them are without documentation in spite of several drives from the Department of Home Affairs to legalize the group. However, most were, according to NGO workers, afraid that they would be expelled from South Africa if they were noted. Hence, police or other state institutions are seldom options for the Mozambicans in Flagstaff. Furthermore, state institutions are far away and traveling is expensive, which meant that even if they should want to go, the main option open to them is to go to a respected neighbor.

Let me provide some detail on the practices through the narrative of one of the respected individuals. He was originally a refugee from the war in Mozambique but worked in South Africa for long periods. He claimed to have two main responsibilities: he had to attempt to generate employment and livelihood, and he sought to 'look after criminals in my section.' His power to do anything about the first responsibility was limited given the socio-economic conditions in Nkomazi. Consequently, his main responsibility concerned the criminals. As he speaks it is evident that his understanding of criminals to a large extent revolves around generational categories. He observes, 'Those who steal are not the old people. It is the young – those in school or just after school. They are very difficult. I cannot begin to say how difficult they are.' In this lies a typical tale of decay, when he

asserts, 'The youth of before was much better.' He puts the increasing problems down to unemployment and lack of opportunities for migration, whether to the nearby farms or to the mines. In this sense, crime for him is a function of what we might call the crisis of masculinity, i.e. young men's inability to live up to entrenched notions of male responsibilities (see also Comaroff and Comaroff 2000). But for obvious reasons, he does not reproduce the stereotype of inherent Mozambican (Shangaan) criminality, and states that 'most of them we catch are South Africans.' To him, the typical criminal is a young, poor man.

The narrative provides insights into what constitutes criminal behavior. Logically, theft is one of the main categories of criminal activity. Most of the thefts were rather petty. He states, 'They steal because they do not have jobs. They even steal chicken. They put a lid on the chicken and you will never see that chicken again. They also go into people's houses to steal chicken.' He also deals with violent crime and domestic violence in the cases where the latter is seen to disrupt community life. Other categories of crime emerge in his narrative suggesting that crime is a moral category rather than simply a category relating to penal codes. In one particular meeting, called because 'there were some problems with criminals,' the issue of sexuality was discussed. Concerns about the apparent proliferation in relationships between older women and younger men had increased. He remembers, 'All the young men were put in the middle, and their parents were allowed to beat them with belts. But only the boys were beaten, but that was a mistake. The girls should also have been punished.' Apart from his second thoughts in relation to who should have been punished, the case also illustrates that crime as a material concern is interpellated through crime as a discursive category. This category animates crime-fighting practices, which revolve around the establishment and maintenance of a moral community.

By targeting immoral and/or criminal acts, the community may be cleansed. Acting against crime provides personal relief. He describes the effects of one public beating on what he terms the community:

> We did it because we got emotionally relieved. We can't just continue to talk. But it helped that the boys were beaten in front of the whole community. The parents are relieved because something is done for the victims as well.

This quote raises a number of issues. First, the practices of everyday policing involve violence as the only means through which Africans, as it was repeated to me on numerous occasions, can mend their ways. Second, violence is perceived as a means to relieve the community. It is crucial that the cleansing of the community be a community act – it must be part of a public community ritual. As Buur (2005) also notes, issues of sexuality are not personal matters, or matters pertaining uniquely to the family. By bringing them into the public arena, many of the harrowing generational conflicts within families in South Africa can be mediated as a community affair. In this way, my informant derives his legitimacy from representing a community and being able to solve generational conflicts.

However, the claim to legitimacy, which is constructed through linking community with parents, is not bought into by all families. In one instance, he and his associates, as representatives of the generational moral community, had caught a girl stealing. She was subsequently handcuffed and received several blows to her exposed buttocks in a public meeting. After the punishment, the girl's family reported it to the police who had to take action against the extra-legal punishment. To him this incident illustrated the dangers facing the representatives of the moral community: 'It is dangerous to look after criminals. One can get arrested and even killed. I have heard that some of the criminals are looking for my men to hurt them. It is difficult to lead.' This suggests that although he is a respected individual, this status is negotiated and even contested. Not all the parents that he claims to represent buy into his definitions of the moral community.

This relates to the final issue, which is the relationship to the state and to formal law. As the case with the young girl illustrated, the state can be evoked by those who disagree with the respected individual. Hence, the relationship with the state is inherently fraught,

> When we catch them, we do punishment. We beat them with sticks. But we only use sticks that can break, not *sjambok*, because then you might kill the person, and thereby you commit a criminal offence. When the police came, they just took the criminals away, and they said nothing. I am thinking that the police thought we had done a good thing.

Public rituals of violence are necessary and the police know this as well, he surmises, and condone the use of it. However, as the excerpt illustrates, there is a need for caution in order not to incur criminal charges against residents carrying out the disciplining. To take part in everyday policing on the margin of, and sometimes against, the state can be a harrowing experience.

The tribal authority

Flagstaff's formalized and state recognized tribal authorities reside in the adjacent village, KaMgweni. There is a distance between the two villages and the chief considers the adjacent village his core constituency, if not in discourse then at least in practice. Four out of the six headmen (or *Indunas*) within the chief's jurisdiction reside in the much smaller village, whereas one lives between Flagstaff and KaMgweni and only one, now deceased, worked in the much bigger Flagstaff. The perception in Flagstaff is that the chief is not interested in their village. However, the chief still wields authority in Flagstaff. One of his important responsibilities consists in solving community conflicts, including criminal matters. As crime was perceived to be on the rise from 2000, the tribal authority initiated a formation attached to the tribal council called the *Khukula*, which translated from SiSwati means the 'cleaning.' The *Khukula* began operating after a string of car thefts over the border (two kilometers away) into Swaziland. Since

then the *Khukula* had extended its mandate to other categories of crime, although the activities were on a relatively low, but fluctuating, level. After the initial spur of action the *Khukula* waned, only to resurface in 2002 with a vengeance in relation to the murder of two boys. The murders infuriated the chief who now, according to testimony, stated that 'crime must be done with.' The number of activities increased. More meetings were held and more people were beaten. The *Khukula* even went to the regional capital Nelspruit to catch a group of alleged criminals that were lured back to Nkomazi. As these remarks indicate, the *Khukula* is both an operation and a group of people working to combat crime.

Most people interviewed asserted that the *Khukula* was a good thing. One man, otherwise at odds with the chief, observed, 'The *Khukula* is good. If you must wait for the police they will always be late.' This was echoed by the local station commander. She is the head of a small station with 35 police officers covering huge tracts of land. Therefore, she depends on the cooperation of local residents, especially the tribal authorities. In the area where we find the *Khukula*, she is particularly satisfied: 'That is also why the sub-forum works well. They are really working hard. They do case handling. They investigate cases, apprehend the suspects, and then hand them over to the police. So as a result we only have had one case in the last month.' However, the *Khukula* does not always hand the suspect over to the police – at least not directly. The police commander admits that violence may sometimes be a part of obtaining confessions: 'Sometimes you have to turn the blind eye for the sake of crime. If you for instance have someone coming in accused of raping a three-year-old, and he has been beaten up, then you do turn the blind eye. You know that it is like victim support.'[3]

The reality is that the *Khukula* relies heavily on the use of violence to obtain confessions and as a means of disciplining. As the son of the chief showed me around in the tribal offices, we reached a small room. On the floor lay a disgusting and blood-soaked mattress. On the walls, there were more traces of blood. At the end of the tiny room, chains ran through an iron ring. 'This is where we hold those caught by the *Khukula*,' my guide informed me. However, as long as the police do not *see* the violence it has not happened, and the police only *see* the violence when somebody lays a charge. The station commander asserts, 'We get very few complaints about violence,' and, hence, she is not compelled to act. Sometimes the violence employed by the *Khukula* even becomes too much for people who agree with the aims of the *Khukula*. A man who is no stranger to the use of violence in disciplining young men critiques the *Khukula*:

> Sometimes the way they beat people is wrong. People can die. They use the *sjambok* and beat them badly. I only use a stick that can break, so you cannot kill anybody. I have not seen it myself, but have only heard about it. They also take people to a place they call the forest. If people are taken to the forest, they will tell everything.

The forest appears to be a particularly violent place. Its physical location is the bush around the villages, but it might relate to a more symbolic place associated

with initiation. Through the beating in the forest, people can be returned to a status of morality from which they have strayed. I shall return to this in the conclusion to this chapter.

The *Khukula* members are crime fighters but they are also representatives of the tribal authority as all the leaders belong to the tribal council. Hence what constitutes crime and who the criminals are largely depend on the way in which the tribal authority defines crime, not only against property and person, but also against the moral community and its representatives, the tribal authority. Evidence suggests that this relates as much to issues of preserving and perpetuating elite privileges, as it relates to crime as defined in the formal penal codes. Although it is not evident what constitutes the elite, especially as the political economy is reconfigured in the post-apartheid moment, we can identify certain elements of elite identity. Members of the elite possess land and cattle, and have relatively stable livelihoods. In part, this can be explained by the date of arrival. Very few accessed land after 1970 and most of the arable land is in the hands of the first-comers who were forcibly removed from just outside the former homeland in what today is a small white farmer-town. Furthermore, they have had the time to regenerate livelihoods after the removals. For the same reason the land belongs to a small number of families that appear to dominate politics today, although they are not always on the same side. Today many of the first-comers have converted their land to commercial farming where they grow sugar cane, which was one of the few avenues for substantial income until the late 1990s. Hence, the majority of commercial farmers are old. The successive waves of immigrants into Nkomazi came because of later removals, but as they came to Nkomazi, homeland patterns of ownership and entitlements had already been entrenched. A further defining element is ethnicity as the elite almost without exception consists of Swazi speakers, whereas the substantial group of Shangaan speakers is relatively marginalized. Although there were Shangaans in Flagstaff prior to 1990, most Shangaans were refugees from the war in Mozambique.

How is this related to and expressed through policing? First, there are many accounts of the *Khukula* beating up people who went into the cane fields to steal sugar, whereas other transgressions were not necessarily punished. Although this does not amount to conclusive evidence, it is an indication of priorities. However, the priorities of the tribal authorities and how they relate to crime emerge clearly through looking at instances where they did not react. A group of Mozambican refugees had obtained land for farming from a representative of the tribal authority who later fell into disrepute, allegedly because of his son's humiliation of the chief during a comrade witch hunt of 1992. The allocation of land to the group had fuelled ever present antagonism between newly arriving Shangaan and Swazi speakers, who alleged that the Shangaans had undeservedly obtained the land they had used for cattle-grazing. In mid-2002 the conflict came to a head when the cattle-owners close to the tribal authorities invaded the fields, tore down the fences, and set the fields on fire. Two of the three respected members that we met in the last section were part of the group that lost land. They went to the chief and complained that they had lost their land. They argued

that if the Mozambicans lost their fields they would have no other chance to survive than through turning to crime. To this the chief and the tribal council replied that as they were Mozambicans they were criminals already and that their lost land would make no difference in that regard.

As Mozambicans do not belong to the rural elite, no immediate action was taken. Rather than reacting against the perpetrators, the chief deferred the matter to perceptions of the innate criminality of Mozambicans. When asked about the Mozambican exclusion, the son of the chief asserted, 'We allow anybody in that follow our culture and our way of life,' hence opening the door for Mozambican inclusion. This is immediately qualified when in the next breath he asserts that there are eternal problems with the Mozambicans, that they are the ones committing the bulk of crime, and that 'they are not like us.' What emerges from the evidence is that security discourses help to stabilize who belongs to the moral community, and hence deserves to be protected. This is not only about identity but also determines access to resources and thereby to livelihoods.[4] These discourses draw on material experiences of crime. However, they are always mediated through security-induced perceptions of who deserves protection and who does not; those who threaten the survival of the community do not deserve protection. This is the unenviable position in which the Mozambicans found themselves.

The mob

At certain times crime and violence seem to be out of hand to an extent where normal insecurities are radicalized. Sometimes, although not always, this leads to the formation of mobs that urgently take action to block the threat. One such string of events took place in Flagstaff culminating with the killing of the man who was the alleged brain behind the crimes. Through a period of several weeks, robbers had waylaid passers by near an unfinished church building in the central part of Flagstaff. The first victims, two young men, had been attacked, abused and hit with a gun, while the attackers screamed that the victims must look away. The attackers stole everything including clothes, shoes, valuables, and cell phones. As they left, they demanded that the victims stay down until they had disappeared. Over the following weeks, similar incidents happened on a regular basis. Finally, people began to suspect a group of four boys and, more importantly, an old man trained as an *inyanga* (traditional healer). The police became involved and searched the old man's house. During the search they found a cell phone that could be positively associated with one of the robberies, as well as three unlicensed guns. The *inyanga*, however, was only charged with robbery.[5] At the bail hearing he was released in spite of warnings from the police that he might endanger witnesses or be in danger himself. While he was in police custody, a group of people from the area, mostly younger men, sought out the four men alleged to be the attackers and beat them up severely. Two of the four were later taken to hospital. When the *inyanga* returned he went to the nearby school and threatened groups of students. Petrified that he would wreak

his vengeance on them, they decided to kill him. Around 8 p.m. the following night they went to his house, set it on fire, and axed him to death.

The incident illustrates first of all how intimately crime and witchcraft were related. The police did not react against the witchcraft accusations but limited their investigation, in the first instance, to the unlicensed firearms and robberies, as these are within their mandate of formal law. Second, they focused on the murder and the beating of the two hospitalized alleged criminals. However, among the participants in the killing the witchcraft abilities of the *inyanga* were the ultimate threat that needed acting on.[6] If we follow the train of thought on securitization introduced above, the survival of the community was threatened by the illicit and secret activities of the *inyanga* who, in very real terms, became the constitutive outside to the moral community. Through this execution the mob, according to the testimony mostly of a group of young men, came to represent and perform as the moral community. However, the moral community did not revert to an earlier state of peace. It was changed as a consequence of the killing – the silencing of the event, the fear it generated, the police investigations were felt. This seems to be indicative of the mob: it emerges out of singular events; tension builds up and finally the situation erupts into violence. In the Flagstaff case, the mob dissipated afterwards. However, it does not have to. It might take other forms. As argued elsewhere in relation to People Against Gangsterism and Crime, a Muslim dominated Cape Town anti-crime formation (Jensen 2005), the organizational structure into which the grievances of crime enter is important. This point is also made by Buur (2005) where the moment of original violence in townships in Port Elizabeth was captured and institutionalized by political structures from the struggle against apartheid. In Flagstaff no such structures existed, especially because it is impossible to organize around and against witchcraft. As Niehaus argues, witchcraft fears have very few outlets in today's South Africa, and have not had so for years (Niehaus 2001: 190). Instead, repressed anxieties rise and may lead to formations of mobs.

Mobs are rare occurrences. The last recorded incident took place years ago. However, across Nkomazi mobs emerge with some frequency in the different villages. They seem to follow the same pattern. Tensions build up and what, with affection and fear, is termed the 'youth' takes action. As argued elsewhere (Jensen and Buur 2004), during the time of a mob ordinary structures of authority are suspended. In one string of incidents some ten kilometers from Flagstaff, a gang of robbers had stopped cars and pedestrians and robbed them of all valuables. After one man had been wounded in attacks, a mob emerged. Meetings were held in which alleged perpetrators and protectors of the robbers were beaten up. Several people were driven out of their homes with threats of violence and death. During one meeting, a middle-aged man, who normally held considerable authority, registered doubts about the actions, but he was told that if he did not agree with them, the youth, they would not listen to him anymore. This indicates that during such extraordinary times normal age-hierarchies can be turned upside-down, as young men for a while assume authority through their defense of the moral community.

In some instances, the age-hierarchies are directly challenged as young men

target representatives of the gerontocracy. One such incident occurred in the eastern part of Nkomazi when a successful businessman and sugar-cane farmer with close ANC connections was accused of murdering his wife and another woman in what is normally referred to as ritual killings or *muti*-murders. One weekend his house was besieged and he was told to leave the village. He went to the neighboring village where he continues to live. In interviews he indicated that it was part of a political ploy to have him removed (AENS 2003); however, the accusations revolved around witchcraft. The incident feeds into the argument proposed by Jean and John Comaroff (1999) and Peter Geschiere (1998). In their analyses, witchcraft accusations function as modes of explaining why some are getting richer while they, the accusers, are not. Through sordid nocturnal deeds witches take the lifeblood of the poor in order to enrich themselves or those whom they serve. If we take this argument – that the mob can be seen as a way of contesting the rule of a new elite – and add it to the argument proposed above that the *Khukula* intertwines with the preservation and perpetuation of rural elite privilege we see that policing, as a way of protecting and performing the moral community, relates intimately to reconfiguring class structures in the former homelands. Both sides of the new and deepening class divides produce and police the boundaries of the moral community in order to come to terms with, understand and preserve privileged access to resources and livelihoods. Yet again, experiences with material violence (although the materiality of witchcraft violence can be debated) coalesce with discourses of security in which the continued existence of the community is threatened. Hence, it needs to be defended by representatives of the community, be they young men or the tribal authorities, against whatever peril lies ahead.

The uniforms

Although the state has not been the primary focus of this article there have been several hints about the state and especially about the ambivalence of the state presence in Nkomazi. In this section I explore the ambiguities in more depth. First, the police are deeply ambiguous about the modes of policing performed by residents. In relation to the string of incidents described above where the 'youth' attacked the road-robbers, one police officer living in the area asserted, 'You see, when I am here, I am a resident of the area. When I put my uniform on, I am a police officer, and I need to uphold the law.' Another police officer, charged with investigating the incidents, confirmed this in an interview:

> We don't fold our hands. We attend complaints and open dockets. We arrest people from the community if we have to. To me crime is crime and nobody is above the law. If there is a crime there are procedures to be followed. These people took the law into their own hands and we investigate it. If it ever transpires that one, two, three were involved, we have no choice but to open a case. But we must understand that people are fed up with crime and violence. For me it was the right thing they did. It was a good thing. But law is law.

They knew about the happenings but not as police officers, and hence they did not need to react. The point here is that there are different ways of seeing. Only when one wears the uniform or is on duty, does one see like the state.

However, there are also incidents that indicate that the reverse happens; that the state, uniformed state officials, is drawn into policing without a clear legal mandate; what we might term the informalization or privatization of the state. The privatization often happens in relation to the police, as argued by Julia Hornberger (2004) in her analysis of how residents in downtown Johannesburg appropriate police officers to survive the mean streets of the metropolis. Often police officers are also, in their private time, part of security structures of a more informal kind. It is surprising that the informalization should also affect the military. Military personnel are allowed to take part in policing only on special conditions and with the police in a position of authority. In Nkomazi two distinct military groups participate: the commandos and the soldiers from the nearby army base. Commandos are like a home guard. Their interventions are supposed always to be information-driven. They work only in their spare time and arrangement with them must be made in advance. They can partake in raids, road blocks, and the like where they boost the number of the police. The commandos, beginning as a white paramilitary rural police, are today national with a majority of blacks in their ranks.[7]

Some local leaders in Nkomazi have reached an agreement with the army base so that the army can be called to assist the police should need arise. However, the relationship appears to be highly informal. As one informant alleged, 'You just drive up to the base and hoot at the gate. Then the soldiers come.' Others insist that they simply call the base for the soldiers to come. When asked why the soldiers would react some responded, 'The soldiers come here for beer and girls so they know the area well.' Apart from the fact that soldier involvement is clearly against army regulations if there are no police present, the example indicates that the soldiers (or the state) can be appropriated for local needs.

Although there are very strict rules that regulate army presence inside South Africa, one way the army and community circumvent the regulations is explained by another informant: 'We call the army. They tell us to ask the police if they [the army] can come. The police always says "yes". We tell that to the army and they come – always without the police.' In this way, the rules, to some extent at least, are adhered to. Most residents are happy with this particular arrangement. A woman explains:

> When people in the *shebeens* (informal liquor outlets) know that the soldiers are in the area, they close early so people must go home, because if the soldiers find them on the street they beat them there. They beat people because when they come from the *shebeen*, they come late and they have been drinking and then they do crime and housebreaking. . . . Sometimes they come to the houses of the people and search them, but it is very rare. I like the soldiers but for some it is bad. It depends on the

> kind of person you are. If you are a good someone, they will leave you alone. But if you are misbehaving they will beat you up. You will get what you want.

Although not all are as happy about army involvement as this woman, and the mandate on which the army acts is relatively thin, there are nonetheless still chains of command and some kind of superior sanction. However, evidence from an adjacent homeland area indicates that other practices occur as well. In a long-standing conflict between a group of 'concerned citizens' and a group of 'criminals'[8] uniforms played a significant role. One of the members of the 'concerned citizens' was a member of the commandos some 40 kilometers away. Nonetheless, he wore his uniform while patrolling with the group, which is a severe breach of commando regulations. The group of 'criminals' apparently had close personal contacts with members of the armed forces and the police. They used these contacts to arrest members of the 'concerned citizens.' As the arrest proceeded, the commando member was publicly stripped of his commando uniform. Symbolically, this came to signify the stripping of the state paraphernalia that gave him the authority to intervene in matters he and his group considered to be criminal.[9]

This evidence indicates that although many forms of extra-state justice feed on the state's perceived lack of capacity to police the South African countryside, they nonetheless employ the very symbols of state violence in their everyday modes of policing. When confronted with the suggestion that uniforms proliferate in extra-state forms of justice, the army asserts that is highly illegal and that any infringement of the codes will be severely punished. However, 'We cannot be expected to know everything about what the members do in their own time, nor can we control if other uniforms are used that resemble ours,' as an army captain phrased it. Although this is a valid standpoint, it seems likely that uniforms and soldiers form part of extra-state forms of justice. And at least in Nkomazi, they have become part and parcel of everyday policing. As my field assistant told me, 'We don't know the different units. To us they are just soldiers,' and hence they are endowed with the authority of the state.

In this way, local security discourses about the moral community are fortified through privatized state involvement. The privatized state clearly acts on what it considers to be real crime, but again it is mediated through the discourses of a threatened moral community that individual state employees often feel more affiliation to than the legal framework that should regulate their practices.

Concluding remarks: security, stateness, and the ambivalence of violence

In this chapter I have explored how different groups, formations, and individuals deal with security concerns on the frontier of the state. In so doing I distinguished between security as a material concern and security as discourse.

Security as material concern encompassed the everyday experiences of violence and crime and reactions to these: going to the police, although rare; seeking out the help of respected individuals or the tribal authority; resorting to mob violence; or calling on the army to assist in curbing the criminal threat. This indicates how complex the response to crime is on the frontier of the state. In this last section I will bring out three dimensions: the state, the moral community as the object of security and the ambivalence of violence.

The state is central to the analysis of these different approaches, as it is the state's prerogative and privilege to ensure the safety of its citizens. This is formulated in the Hobbesian social contract between a sovereign power and the people: the state exerts a monopoly on the use of legitimate violence and the citizens enjoy freedom from war against all. Citizens taking the law into their own hands challenge that monopoly. Hence, literature on vigilantism has focused on this challenge. These analyses are founded on a number of implicit assumptions about vigilante organizations and the state. Vigilante groups exist outside the state, i.e. extra-state and popular (e.g. Nina 1995; 2001), as well as outside legal frameworks, i.e. extra-legal. These assumptions are based on a notion that we can identify a clear-cut division between what is state and what is not state; what a state does and what civil society does. However, as the material from Nkomazi illustrates, the relationship between the two is ambiguous and blurred. The supposed dividing line is similar to a frontier, that is, a zone of intense contestation and negotiation. Most of the organizations explored above resemble what Lund (2001) has termed 'twilight institutions': While opposing the state, they draw on symbols, paraphernalia, and legitimacy in mimicking the state and its procedures. As argued by Hansen and Stepputat (2001: 36), the state has become the *great enframer* that, although often incapacitated and fragile, sets the standard for the exercise of legitimate authority and sovereignty.

Most often the focus is on those organizations that mimic and oppose the state (e.g. Lund 2001). However, the evidence from Nkomazi indicates that the state and especially its local representatives negotiate, appropriate and sometimes even shed their 'stateness.' The issue of 'seeing' – of when police officers 'saw' violence as state employees or as civilians – is indicative of the fundamental split in the state. Stateness, in this sense, is something one wears. In areas like Nkomazi state representatives need to negotiate danger, as they live in the area they patrol and need to negotiate notions of morality, as they often agree personally with the contraventions of the law.

The state representatives' response to crime fighting initiatives, the appropriation of the state, and the many different initiatives illustrate that dealing with crime has consequences beyond the immediate mandate of crime fighting. This is security as discourse. Security as discourse relates to naming the security threat. Through naming the threat, a constitutive outside to the moral community is produced. The outside – the threat – is constitutive in that it establishes the external boundaries of the moral community. As Agamben (1998) asserts, this means that the outside belongs to the inside, as the inside is constituted through

the dispersing of the outside. The moral community is not only protected through everyday forms of policing; it is in fact produced through its own performance. Hence, forms of everyday policing relate intimately to the production of political subjectivities, and, as we have seen, this is a question of more than discourse; it determines who gets beaten up and it informs what groups are entitled to livelihoods.

Violence occupies a highly ambivalent position in these power struggles to define the moral community. On the one hand, violence is the outside to the moral community. It is that which must be dealt with. It is lodged in the criminal, the embodiment of the constitutive outside. On the other hand, violence is the means by which a moral community is realized. The apparent paradox is resolved by distinguishing between the legitimate and the illegitimate use of violence. In his thought-provoking essay 'Violence, Ideality and Cruelty,' Etienne Balibar (1998) asserts that violence is only legitimate if it can be construed as counter-violence. For violence to be legitimate it has to be a response to an original, illegitimate moment of violence, which the counter-violence is designed to stop. This economy of violence applies regardless of whether we talk about the state or the formations of everyday policing that I have discussed in this chapter. When the counter-violence exceeds the original moment of violence Balibar calls it cruelty.

Cruelty is when violence is no longer legitimate. Talking from a philosophical standpoint, Balibar implicitly suggests that the economy of violence is measurable and that it can be objectified. Balibar's analysis resonates with a whole gamut of law (which is state counter-violence) and discussions about just war (as promoted for instance by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in its discussions of ANC insurgency). However, it is not possible objectively to define when counter-violence is on par with the primary violence, as that depends on who defines the primary, illegitimate moment of violence. As the economy of violence is not perfect, violence is excess or cruelty, in response to which new counter-violence is forthcoming. If we relate these points to Nkomazi, we see that violence employed by the formations of everyday policing (and the state) is premised on the existence of a primary moment of violence that renders the response legitimate. In some of the cases young men were targeted by the elite, while in others young men targeted the elite, or those assumed to suck the lifeblood of the people. Although the counter-violence did not play itself out in the same field, different forms shaped a part of the generational and gender wars of the homelands of today. Hence, violence occupies a restraining position within the social world of Nkomazi.

Violence is also productive; it produces sociability. The productive side of violence is particularly clear in the way in which it is premised and legitimized on the notion of violence as purifying. The productive, purifying side of violence is evidenced in social practices aimed at fighting crime in Nkomazi. Through the burning of the witch the moral community was purified; people no longer needed to die. However, the practices were also performances and

realizations of a community; they produced the community they allegedly defended. Arguing along similar lines as for example Deborah Poole's, writing on Peru (e.g. 1994), it is clear from the Nkomazi material that violence produces culture; it does not only destroy. Although violence is inherently social it works particularly on the bodies of individuals; in this form it aims to discipline the body. One telling instantiation of violence disciplining bodies is evident in one of the most famous rural-based vigilante organizations in South Africa, *Mapogo a Mathamaga*. Formed in 1996, the organization operated primarily in the Northern Province (today the Limpopo province) and Mpumalanga. Nationwide it claimed some 60,000 members (von Schnitzler *et al*. 2001). Famously, its leader, John Magolego, asserted in interviews and media reports that beatings administered by the organization were to be likened to a bodily medication. He referred to this as African medicine. By using a medical metaphor, he suggested that disciplining the body was integral to returning it to health. In this way, corporal punishment meant to punish in order to secure the reintegration of immoral bodies into the moral community.[10]

In the South African media this assertion was interpreted as if *Mapogo* suggested that Africans only understand the language of violence. However, the relation between pain and reintegration has deep roots in many African traditions and rituals, as pain and violence play integral parts especially in male initiation rituals (Heald 1999; Bloch 1986). During the course of this chapter, several incidents illustrated the role that punishment played in reintegrating strayed bodies. The beating of young men accused of having sexual relations with older women became a public ritual of re-integrating the young men as well as a cleansing ritual of community performance. The forest to which alleged criminals caught by the *Khukula* were taken even more explicitly draws on initiation metaphors. The forest signifies the bush and the initiation camps where young boys went to become men. During these trials they had to sustain, stoically, the pain and the violence inflicted upon them. Only through this violence could one become a man. Significant in this regard is the temporal dimension of the relation between violence and integration. Bloch (1986) argues that initiation rites have been transformed in line with historical developments. Similarly we might ask to what extent these anti-crime forms of community reintegration become parts of a reconfigured sociality.

Finally, let me return to an issue that I introduced above – the relationship between security as material everyday experiences of violence and security as discourse. This relationship is inherently complex. On the one hand, those who are associated with the primary, original violence – the constitutive outside to the moral community – can be acted upon legitimately, or, as Agamben suggests in his analysis of *Homo Sacer*, they can be killed without fear of prosecution. Violence becomes the way through which the exclusion is effected. However, violence may well be integrative; inherent in the potentially excluding violence is the ever present possibility of inclusion. Furthermore, and to complicate matters, in the discourse of the representatives of the moral community, 'concerned citizens,' the *Khukula*, or the mobs react to violence; they stop the viol-

ence of the criminal. However, those constructed in such terms might easily be faced with material security concerns, as they become the victims of other people's retributive or disciplinary violence.

Notes

1 The survey attempts to capture in more quantitative terms how people deal with security issues, crime levels, attitudes, and use of the police, and who people go to in times of trouble. A corresponding survey is being carried out in Port Elizabeth by Lars Buur in order to assess differences in terms of rural and urban settings. In both settings, the quantitative material is supplemented by long-term ethnographic field work. The quantitative survey techniques have been inspired in part by the Institute for Security Studies' victimization surveys in urban centres of South Africa, which were initiated in Johannesburg in 1998. In spite of their flaws (self-admitted), these victimization surveys indicate trends in victimization much better than official statistics.
2 Flagstaff is an invented name.
3 The interesting thing is of course that she is using child rape as an example – where there can be no compassion for the perpetrator – to make a general point.
4 Ironically, Mozambicans are among the few who actually rely on the land for survival. While employment has receded a new welfare regime hitherto reserved for whites, Indians and coloureds has been extended to Africans. However, as Mozambicans seldom have South African identity documents they are excluded from the welfare regime that bankrolls many others on the rural frontier.
5 The guns turned out to belong to customers of the *inyanga*, who had sent them to him so he could wash them in *muti*, i.e. magical substances. The police charged the men with dangerous negligence.
6 The *inyanga*'s powers were legendary. He allegedly orchestrated the death of a woman and used his considerable occult powers to woo other men's wives.
7 The commandos are highly controversial, and are currently in danger of being closed down. This is particularly due to how they have served white rural interest in often very violent ways against farm workers and other Africans living in rural areas (Steinberg 2002; Manby 2001, 2002).
8 I interviewed and spent time with the one group. Hence their description of the relationship dominates here. It seemed, however, that the local police would have liked to reverse the labels, as would the 'criminals.'
9 There were other instances as well where uniforms played an important role. In one instance, uniforms and personnel from one of the apartheid era's most feared battalions were used by private security companies to inspire fear among would-be criminals. This was Battalion 32, comprising veteran, elite soldiers of Angolan or Namibian descent. Together with the white *Koevoet* battalion, they fought in the front line of wars in Namibia, Zimbabwe and Angola. Only recently have they been able to return. Up until then they have been living on their reputation of extreme violence and skills in tracking people down.
10 See also Lars Buur's analysis of corporeal discipline in Port Elizabeth, where crowds of people would shout, 'Without beating, no discipline' (in Jensen and Buur 2004).

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7 ‘Keeping the peace’

Violent justice, crime, and vigilantism in Tanzania

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Crime and its control are central concerns in the lives of most Tanzanians. From the 1970s onward, petty and violent crime have increased, while local and state-level initiatives have sought complimentary, contradictory, competing, and conflictual strategies to control burgeoning crime rates. State-level initiatives have focused primarily on policing and bureaucratic legal norms, while many locally based strategies have centered on community policing, informal solutions, customary law, and, at times, mob justice. Accordingly, vigilante groups, whether structured or impromptu, are flourishing in spite of an ambivalent and, on occasion, openly conflictual relationship with various state agencies. The dynamic is further complicated by the successful reduction in crime in some areas as a result of vigilante actions.

Since the colonial period, the prominent literature on law, conflict, and crime in Tanzania has focused on the bureaucratic state-level forms of justice, ‘customary’ courts, or more recently, legal pluralism. Such studies, while important for understanding Tanzania’s legal institutions, frequently omit non-institutional forms of crime control and justice. Specifically, a dearth exists in the scholarly literature addressing mob justice as a form of crime control. It is one possible avenue that some Tanzanian men and women utilize to cope with rising crime rates and an unresponsive and overtaxed legal system.

Mob justice, however, is not simply a strategy of crime control, but becomes a site where individuals and groups construct and redefine community, morality and justice. In this sense, mob justice not only combats crime, but also polices key social boundaries. Such notions of justice are built on competing claims of community whereby justice reflects and reproduces hierarchical community structures based on gender, race, age, and economics, and runs contrary to liberal practices of law and due process.[1]

Situating vigilantism and mob justice

According to Jon Rosenbaum and Peter Sederberg (1974: 542) vigilantism is ‘simply establishment violence.[2] It consists of acts or threats of coercion in violation of the formal boundaries of an established sociopolitical order which, however, are intended by the violators to defend that order from some form of

subversion' (Rosenbaum and Sederberg 1974: 542). Thus, vigilantes respond to perceived threats to the dominant social order and this explicates why vigilantes do not commonly articulate an alternative societal vision – they are dependent upon and tied to the existing state establishment. Vigilante acts cannot be separated from the state in which they occur because they rely on the mores and societal values that are intrinsically linked to the state's social and political ideology. Furthermore, such actions are predicated on the assumption that the state cannot adequately defend the prevailing socio-political order from alleged seditious elements. Vigilantism, then, essentially propagates conservative ends as it attempts to support, restore, or restructure existing societal arrangements (Fleisher 2000).

While locating vigilantism within its historical, political, and social context is critical for understanding specific vigilante movements, some common features are identifiable. Specifically, vigilantism is a group undertaking stemming from local, 'self-help' initiatives (Abrahams 1987). Although tied to a larger state system, much of the impulse to defend the boundaries of that order derives from those on the margins of state control. Vigilante actions can be enacted by socially subordinate groups toward a dominant individual or group, and such actions can also occur from dominant groups toward the less powerful. The collective nature of vigilantism makes it particularly relevant for understanding the ordering and shifting boundaries of social systems, as it is frequently a moralistic response that has mass support and can, and usually does, seek redress for real or imagined grievances that reside in political, economic or social inequalities.

Mob justice, as I use the term, refers to a group of community members spontaneously coming together to mete out justice or revenge toward alleged offenders. Participants in mob justice can be neighbors, strangers, or friends. They can be adult men and women, teenagers of both genders and, rarely, children. While women have, and do, participate in mob justice, the episodes I witnessed have almost exclusively involved young and adult men in the violent acts, with women and children standing behind and either encouraging the attackers or silently observing the attack. Sometimes women would also yell invectives at the suspected thief or would spit on him.

Mob justice is a form of vigilantism against those people perceived as deviant or subversive to the social order. Mob justice is aimed only at the involved individual or individuals in response to perceived deviant actions. However, while such violence may focus only on the victim or victims in question, it also reacts to, and produces, a larger social identity – creating, defining, and remaking categories of punishable people. Even if the violence is only enacted on one person at a time, it is still essentially targeting particular 'deviant' groups. Moreover, mob justice offers a 'quick fix' to a specific situation, as opposed to sustained effort over time to reduce crime levels.

Mob justice is essentially a revenge-based perception of justice. Richard Wilson iterates that '*Revenge* applies to the unchecked violent acts of individuals and armed gangs motivated by the desire for vengeance with no element

of proportionality' (Wilson 2001: 162). In contrast, '*Retribution*, although often motivated by a desire for revenge, pertains to the type of justice as punishment dispensed by more institutionalized types of mediation and adjudication, found in township courts and magistrates' courts' (Wilson 2001: 162). To further an understanding of revenge, Wilson (2001: 162, following Nozick 1981) adds:

1 Revenge may be enacted for a slight (or apparent slight) and not only for a wrong.
2 Revenge places no ceiling on punishment in proportion to the gravity of the deed.
3 Revenge is personal.
4 Revenge does not engender general principles that mandate similar punishment for similar deeds and it is enacted on behalf of a specific group.
5 Revenge elicits pleasure through the affliction of the punished.

For example, a young man who steals something as small as a piece of fruit can be beaten to death for his crime. The punishment is up close and personal, and usually carried out with relish by the mob. In such situations, mob justice is enacted on behalf of 'the community,' which is seen as needing protection.

Revenge targets individuals and groups that are defined through particularistic social, cultural, and political understandings of deviance. Thus, forms of mob justice mirror cultural and societal notions of justice. However much mob justice in 1960s Kenya resembles mob justice in contemporary South Africa or colonial Ghana, each must be examined in terms of the specificity of time and place. While 'necklacing'[3] is all too common in contemporary South Africa, the thief murders I witnessed in Tanzania involved rocks, sticks, fists, and feet, and usually toward a single individual. Many Tanzanians voiced the opinion that a common solution was to use a thin wire to dig out the suspected thief's eyes so that they would be unable to steal again. However, I never witnessed this form of mob justice, nor the cutting off of limbs (which is common in witch killings), nor did I see necklacing, although many newspaper articles have referred to setting thieves afire. I did, however, observe many instances of mob justice in both Dar es Salaam (1997–98, 2000) and Mwanza (2000).[4] I make no claim that these cities and their residents represent the entirety of Tanzanian experience, nor do I wish to imply that Tanzanians are especially violent. However, even if only a small percentage of Tanzanians actively participate in mob justice, the Tanzanian state's refusal to take victims' rights seriously or punish the perpetrators makes shining a light on mob justice imperative.

Social and political violence in Tanzania

Unlike Tanzania's structured vigilante groups, tracing the beginnings of mob justice in Tanzania is a difficult task. Instances of mob justice show up in colonial records, but larger historical understandings are sparse. Most accounts treat the topic as a natural(ized) part of the landscape – a given. Instead of histories of

mob justice, the violence is hidden in its matter-of-fact expression; by acknowledging such violence as a 'matter of fact,' it is prevented from becoming an object of analysis. Yet, media, politicians, and local and foreign scholars are aware of mob justice. Indeed, it would be difficult to be unaware of such incidents in Tanzania, but these incidents are relegated to a category of regrettable – albeit acceptable – 'social' violence.

Caroline Moser readily draws a distinction between political and social violence. Political violence, according to Moser, is the 'commission of violent acts motivated by a desire, conscious or unconscious, to obtain or maintain political power' (Moser 2001: 36). Manifestations of political violence can be guerrilla conflict, political assassinations, armed conflict between political parties, rape as a political act, and, of course, genocide. Alternatively, social violence is the 'commission of violent acts motivated by a desire, conscious or unconscious, for social gain or to obtain or maintain social power' (Moser 2001: 36). Instances of social violence can be interpersonal violence or sexual assault.

Yet, as many scholars of political violence have noted, the concept of what constitutes 'the political' is in itself inherently a political and social question. Not only is the distinction difficult to maintain in practice, but the differentiation of the political from the apolitical becomes a key resource for legitimizing or delegitimizing violences and modes of oppression. States often link social and economic spheres to the political one in order to justify their intrusion into the everyday life and activities of their citizens. This same rationale can excuse states' non-interference in violence that they choose to label apolitical. As Carole Nagengast asserts:

> The state is not just a set of institutions staffed by bureaucrats who serve public interest. It also incorporates cultural and political forms, representations, discourse, practices and activities, and specific technologies and organizations of power that, taken together, help to define public interest, establish meaning, and define and naturalize available social identities . . . In most states, the struggle for consensus is not ordinarily contested in the realm of politics but rather in that of social life where consensus is built.
>
> (Nagengast 1994: 116)

The distinction made between political violence and social or apolitical violence in Tanzania is an important one. Violence that is labeled apolitical, social or domestic has been described by one Tanzanian man as 'not real violence,' and by another as 'better left to the community or family than the state.' Such violence is often not taken seriously by the Tanzanian state, because it is either seen as outside the state's purview or as quoted above – a family or community issue. By its very passivity, the state becomes complicit with such violence through lack of action, prosecution, deterrence, and protection on the part of state agents toward victims. By labeling such violence as apolitical or social, it overlooks the structural aspects of power, domination and privilege among and between women and men, social actors, perpetrators, and victims.

The ethics of witness

While I will spend the bulk of this chapter focusing on the strategic nature and distribution of mob justice, I have reserved this space to comment candidly about the ethical dilemmas entailed with studying forms of everyday violence. The personal and intimate nature of violence studies make it ethically problematic and, at times, dangerous to the researcher and most especially to the people whose actions researchers study. As an ethnographer, I have recorded acts of violence and even death. At times, I was ill-prepared to deal with the conflicting personal, ethical, and professional situations I encountered in my fieldwork.

Observing and recording mob justice and other forms of vigilantism is a dangerous business. My neighbors and friends sometimes felt threatened by my questions and presence, and were on occasion suspicious of my purpose.[5] Some worried that I might turn them or their loved ones or friends over to the police. Others worried that I might think poorly of them. Still others were concerned that I might accidentally slip and tell another neighbor something they had said to me in confidence. It was a tricky balance.

The everydayness of the violence also raised methodological and personal issues. At times I doubted my own perception of reality. To my neighbors, mob justice was illegal, but not illegitimate. Moreover, many of my neighbors who participated in mob justice were people whom I liked. They were fathers and sons and grandfathers. They were mothers and daughters and grandmothers. They were people I had tea with and shared neighborhood gossip. They were friends and acquaintances who worked hard, were truly afraid of losing what little they had, and knew they could not count on help from the formal legal sector. They worried about their children's education, whether they'd have enough money to help an ailing relative, and whether they'd have time after work to go visit a sick friend. It was difficult to keep a critical stance in my research when I continually saw the humanness of mob participants. And some of them I didn't actually see participate in mob justice. Either numerous sources had told me about it or they themselves had confided their past involvement to me. It was easy to castigate neighbors I didn't know well or did not like, but it became much harder to keep the focus on the violence and the victims when I liked the perpetrators. Antonius Robben calls this pull a form of ethnographic seduction, a shifting from (and I would argue a concealment of) the research focus (Robben 1995). Additionally, it was difficult to interview and continue contact with people whom I liked, but who I had subsequently seen participate in mob justice.

My role as a privileged outsider also raised many issues. Paul Farmer once said:

> It is difficult to merely study human rights abuses. We know with a certainty that rights are being abused at this very moment. And the fact that we study, rather than endure, these abuses is a reminder that we too are implicated in and benefit from the increasingly global structures that determine, to an important extent, the nature and distribution of assaults on dignity.
>
> (Farmer 1999: 1489)

My positioning as a foreign researcher, exempt from the violence and yet able to study and write on it because of inequitable global structures, is controversial to say the least. On the other hand, like Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992) and many other scholars, I feel it is imperative to write against violence and injustice wherever I find it. By not writing about it, I would in essence condone it. Such tensions create what Antonius Robben and Carolyn Nordstrom term uncomfortable contradictions, but ones I have learned to accept – or at least *live* with – as a researcher who studies collective violence and mob justice more specifically (Nordstrom and Robben 1995).

The 'ins and outs' of mob justice

In the Tanzanian context, mob justice primarily targets two situations and, more recently, a third: thieves, auto accidents, and 'hit-and-run' attacks on young women wearing 'immodest' clothing. For the purposes of this chapter, I will discuss only the instance of thieves, although articles on auto accidents and gendered violence are forthcoming.

From my observations, research, and conversations, it appears that there are some widely held views about thieves. One is the crowd's feeling that the killings are justifiable. By the very act of theft one's life may become forfeit. Murder of suspected thieves can be seen as community security. Even when a mistake is made (i.e. an innocent person is hurt or killed), justifications are cited that community security outweighs the rights of individuals. Yet, the notion of 'community' is not a neutral term. Power, influence, gender, ethnicity, and age intersect in ways that position individuals and families, and influence the contours of local, regional, and state concerns. Avenues that are open for some in the community are closed for others. Power and structural relations are embedded in society (and notions of community) and are largely self-perpetuating, but social agents can, and do, resist, accept, reformulate, and solidify (often simultaneously) such relations with differential success. The terrain of struggle, however, is frequently not of their choosing (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984; Long and Long 1991). Thus, who represents 'the community' and who is on the margins are hardly impartial questions. Moreover, allocating responsibility for theft moves between ideas about the personal and the political.

I also found a distinct patterning as to whom can be labeled a thief and that stealing per se does not automatically make someone a thief (Fleisher 2002). Young, poor men are the most prominent targets of theft accusation. Such men are rarely household heads and frequently have little access to household resources. In the last several years, gangs of young, armed bandits have cropped up in many urban settings. When caught, these youth are dealt with harshly – they are sometimes killed by police or community members instead of incarcerated. Notably, high-level officials or wealthy businessmen who steal from community projects or development funds are seldom, if ever, confronted by an angry mob and then beaten or killed for their theft. Occasionally, communities

will protest at misappropriation of funds, but rarely does a community leader have to worry about physical harm from an irate mob.

Women thieves are also unlikely targets of mob justice. As one older, urban man comments, 'What? Women? Women cannot be thieves. I've never heard of such a case.' When asked whether or not women were capable of shoplifting something from a store or pick-pocketing a passer-by, he responds,

> Well, yes, I suppose so. But women aren't likely to and they would never be attacked for it. Who would attack a woman? No, I've only ever seen a crowd beat a man . . . For women it would be a family matter. But who ever heard of such an instance?

Therefore, who can be categorized as a thief depends on economic, age, and gendered identities. To reiterate, Tanzanian thieves are generally young, poor men who lack economic security and the financial means to be self-sustaining. They are not random targets, but are (poorly) situated in social and economic hierarchies. As Heald states, 'It has not been recognized that to call a person a thief may be as potentially damaging to his or her reputation as an accusation of witchcraft – in many societies it is the idiom for placing the individual outside the limits of customary law and familial obligations' (Heald 1986: 65).

Whether they are cultural insiders or outsiders, thieves are perceived as dangerous to a healthy society. One group particularly vulnerable to accusations of thievery is refugees. In the last several years in Tanzania, public sentiment and media attention has become decidedly anti-refugee. Refugees are portrayed as violent perpetrators and ingrates. They are blamed for raising crime rates and are characterized as leeches on a poor country's already overtaxed resources. Similar to Tanzanian thieves, refugees suspected of thievery are primarily male, young, and poor.[6] A recent news article (Lawi 2003) details the murder of three policemen by armed robbers. One Dar es Salaam resident was quoted as saying, 'When I learned of how the police officers died, I knew those who killed them could not be Tanzanians.' The robbers were reportedly from Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, and the DR Congo. The article further relays that, within two weeks, all the robbers were either arrested or dead. Another woman from Arusha voices her opinion:

> Until the refugees came we didn't have as many problems. Now I read almost every day about some crime they've done. You know, it's a real problem. They bring in guns from their homes and use them or sell them to thieves here. We're generous people, but how long can we take foreigners taking advantage of us? If they want to rob and kill they should do it at home, not here.

A news article (Lawi 2003) takes the same perspective:

> The country is now suffering an unprecedented spate of armed robberies. Homes are raided nearly every night. Billions of shillings are grabbed from

> banks in broad daylight. Cars are snatched at gun point. Country buses are waylaid, passengers ordered out, robbed, and stripped naked. Conflict situations in surrounding countries have been blamed for this development . . . Many Tanzanians contend that if it were not for their country's generosity, the crime rate would not be so appalling.

In contrast, a 2002 multi-agency survey, by the UN Integrated Regional Information Networks (Africa News Service Inc. 2002), of the impact of small arms in Tanzania states:

> Crime rates are still generally low in Tanzania and what crime is committed tends to be theft, often opportunistic, involving house-breaking and cattle theft . . . However, certain key problems had a significant effect on perceptions of safety, including the spill-over effects of refugees and banditry activity in the northern regions . . . The relatively high numbers of respondents who felt refugees had a large impact on their community illustrate the negative perceptions that abound in Tanzania about the presence of [over 500,000] refugees in their country. These perceptions do not . . . seem to be supported by reality as the incidence of refugees moving into most regions is low.

Therefore, perceptions of risk are high, but actual incidences involving refugees are relatively low.

Additionally, allegations of theft, especially for young indigent men, can be particularly dangerous, but it also illuminates the contours of community. Accusation tells as much about the accuser and their interests as it does about the accused. It articulates the power of connections as it binds some community members together, while alienating others. Particularly in times of economic and social adversity, accentuating the positives of group membership may not be enough to maintain group unity and stability. Emphasizing the vileness or insidiousness of some perceived social evil can prove to be an effective way of defining community. It creates an Other that the state and its 'vigilant' citizens can then define themselves against. This approach has been utilized to place the blame for societal and economic problems on numerous groups, while concurrently shifting blame and responsibility away from inappropriate government policies, personalized patron–client relationships and administrative corruption that contribute to structural divides and hardships.

Once outside of the limits of social and familial obligations, community response can be, and often is, extremely harsh. Young men caught or accused of stealing are commonly beaten unconscious and frequently to the point of death. Those who survive the ordeal may be cast out from their families for shame and fear of harboring a known criminal. Additionally, if wounded, the victim must find a police officer who's willing to give him a PF3 (ref. Note 5) so he can have his injuries treated.

The failed state of security

Most scholars of Tanzania who write on mob justice and collective violence more generally have argued that the rise of vigilantism indicates a fundamental failure in the functioning of the Tanzanian state to protect its citizens. Abrahams adds that 'The very existence of vigilante groups may be plausibly interpreted as a criticism of the state' (Abrahams 1987: 180). While members of mob justice and their communities certainly criticize the Tanzanian state for providing inadequate security, they do not actually challenge the ideological hegemony of the Tanzanian state. They complain about the ineptness of the state in carrying out its mandate, but not the basic form of the mandate. Vigilantes simply step in to uphold the prevailing social order where the state cannot or will not do so – even though this, in effect, subverts that same social order.

The failure of the Tanzanian state to provide safety and law enforcement, according to liberal theorists, amounts to a breakdown in the social contract between the state and individual. The individual agrees to give up certain freedoms in exchange for protection and security by the state. If the state fails to meet the social contract, individuals sometimes feel justified in providing for their own security, even if their actions fall outside the legal margins set by the state.

Many Tanzanians have undoubtedly felt that the state has not upheld its end of the social contract. Since the pre-independence era, larceny has proved to be a very large and enduring problem, and armed robbery, breaking and entering, and grab-and-run theft are ever more common occurrences. As one older woman who runs a store in downtown Dar es Salaam expressed it, 'they're [i.e. criminals] everywhere, at home, in town, at work.' In Dar es Salaam alone, more than 60 percent of crime survey respondents indicated that they feel unsafe in their homes after dark. Many of these respondents had ample reason for their fears: between 1995–2000, 43 percent of respondents claimed to have been victims of burglaries, while 32 percent said they were mugged, and an additional 16 percent claimed to have been the victims of assault (Robertshaw *et al*. 2001).

Feeble enforcement of laws by Tanzania's judiciary and police force has added to citizens' fears. Both the judiciary and police force are highly centralized and are modeled after British institutions and common law, having their headquarters in Dar es Salaam with outposts in various regions and districts (Bukurura 1995). Such hierarchical systems have meant that state presence in many outlying areas is marginal at best. Moreover, police officers generally have been underpaid, understaffed, and provided with inadequate transportation. Police are often poorly armed and many have been cross-posted from other areas of Tanzania to keep them from becoming entrenched and corrupt. This conscious state strategy has been aimed at preventing police from forming local alliances with community members. The inadvertent result has been that many officers are unresponsive to community complaints and concerns, and lack a thorough understanding of local dynamics.

Additionally, law enforcement has frequently been based more on personal

gain and corruption than crime control. Lack of faith in the police or other formal state mechanisms prompted many communities to take matters into their own hands to address increasing crime levels. Not only were police slow to respond to crime, but they often wanted money to pursue a case. As Fleisher, citing a conversation with an informant, explains,

> Citizens exact 'mob justice' from cattle thieves and other criminals . . . because they know that if they turn them over to the police the lawbreakers will simply bribe their way to freedom. A policeman earns his livelihood, in essence through his ability to impose an illicit 'tax' both on victims of crime and on those who have broken the law.
>
> (Fleisher 2000: 220–1)

As Coulson observes,

> Petty corruption became so widespread in the police that the easiest way to defend a case was to bribe an officer to 'lose' the case file. This led to repeated adjournments, waste of witnesses' time, and even more inequality. It became hardly worth while [*sic*] prosecuting for burglary or assault, unless the unfortunate offender was nearly destitute.
>
> (Coulson 1982, cited in Bukurura 1995: 259)

Even if a thief is arrested and charged through the bureaucratic legal system, many worry that he will simply bribe the police, clerk or magistrate and that he will come back for revenge. As one of my neighbors in Mwanza said, 'if we do not kill him, he will come back.' Suspicion of such formal mechanisms coupled with fear of retribution can mean extremely harsh treatment and sometimes even death for the suspected thief.

I once observed a drunken man in his middle 30s trying to climb over the protective wall surrounding my house. Neighbors pulled him off the wall and began pummeling him with fists and feet. The crowd knocked out his front teeth, but he was allowed to walk away with a stern warning and dire threats if he should ever return to the neighborhood.

The next day he returned. He stood on the corner near my house looking for someone – I can only assume it was for one or many of his attackers. He came with a friend who was carrying a thick wooden rod. Within minutes the two strangers had been noticed by several of the women who were outside brewing beer. A cry of 'thief, thief' was heard, and neighbors appeared from all corners. Even the worker repairing my roof jumped down to join the fray. The friend was struck a few times, scolded for consorting with a criminal, and then released. The would-be thief received a severe beating and was left with two broken legs and probably some broken ribs. One of my female neighbors later remarked, 'You see! This is why it's necessary to deal harshly with thieves. If you don't, like this one, they come back. Imagine if no one had been around. What would we have done then?'

Today, many citizens are hesitant to report criminal incidences to the police for fear of being trapped in a cycle of bribing or harassment. With such antagonistic and frustrating relations with law enforcement, many feel justified in participating in 'impromptu task forces' to deal with thieves and other (trans)locally based social evils. Former President Benjamin Mkapa in a speech opening the Third Council of Home Affairs Ministers of the Eastern Africa Region (2002) acknowledges citizens' frustrations with rising crime and police and judicial corruption, but cautions them not to take justice into their own hands:

> For, clearly the war on crime and criminals cannot be fought and won by the Police Officers and constables alone. The eyes and ears of the citizens, and civil society at large, are key inputs for success, and should be involved through various community-based initiatives. But, as I said, citizen participation is predicated on the integrity and professional conduct of law enforcement agencies . . . A Police Force that is not courteous to people; that abuses human rights; that is corrupt and prone to reveal names of informers or tip off criminals on whom information is volunteered, will never earn the respect and co-operation of citizens . . . Mob justice may very well be the people's reaction to what they perceive, rightly or wrongly, to be police or judicial dishonesty. So they would rather dispense their own version of justice 'single-handedly,' than involve the police and the judiciary for fear they might be dishonest. But this is neither right, nor healthy.

Thus, even at the highest levels, police and judicial ineffectiveness and corruption are cited as primary justifications for mob justice.

The Tanzanian state's multifaceted relationship to mob justice

In view of the fact that mob justice operates outside of the rule of law and the liberal legal system, it provides ample reasons for the Tanzanian state to intervene. In theory, the Tanzanian state has a very clear stance against mob justice. The social contract is predicated on a state's ability to protect its population (equally), as well as its monopoly on the use of force to uphold its directives. Vigilantes rarely articulate an ideology that is detached from their state, but they do subvert some of the state's most basic directives. By providing social control, they circumvent the state's exclusive right to do so. Vigilantes, then, commonly violate the rule of law, due process, and bureaucratic justice.

Although mob justice is certainly illegal, lack of arrest, prosecution, and conviction of mob justice members rebut the state's assertion that this form of violence is illegitimate. The Tanzanian state and its agents may not have the capabilities to eliminate all social evils, but allowing mob justice to operate in Tanzania can also be a state strategy, albeit a problematic one. In practice, the Tanzanian state's relationship and those of its agents to mob justice is much more complex and fluid than its stated position. Individual state actors have diverse stakes in inhibiting or facilitating acts of mob justice. At times, some state actors

actively oppose mob actions in order to maintain their monopoly on law and the exercise of legal functions, while simultaneously other state representatives overtly and covertly condone mob justice as a self-reliant community-based solution to crime. Such agents (formally and informally) play significant roles in perpetuating and legitimizing violence and victims, very often instigating these actions to uphold advantageous (but inequitable) societal arrangements.

Mob justice is spontaneous and short-lived, and thus it poses little threat to the political stability of the government of Tanzania. It does not compete with the police or judiciary for prestige, nor do participants in mob justice siphon off the 'fees' and bribes many of the judiciary and police force demand for their services. More importantly, mob justice eliminates social undesirables without the Tanzanian state having to spend its money or other resources. Mob justice provides a convenient outlet for public anger against those who the state deems a problem. By condoning such actions, tensions are released at the community level. The state eliminates undesirables while maintaining its hegemony and basic social and political order. In effect, vigilantes are co-opted to serve state ends. Not only are undesirables eliminated, but it convinces citizens that the problem lies with certain marginalized individuals and not with the state itself. Local peoples blame thieves for social ills, ignoring the structural inequality (i.e. urban versus rural, differential access to resources, high level corruption) perpetuated by the Tanzanian state. In this way, the government of Tanzania is able to shift the blame for very real societal problems onto thieves and other undesirables.

The government's harsh stance toward suspected thieves, particularly armed bandits, only further fuels public actions. Frederic Sumaye (Lawi 2003), Tanzania's former Prime Minister, was quoted as saying, 'The government will go on fighting gangsters without mercy and whenever possible, excessive force will be used.' While Sumaye represents only one (albeit powerful) voice, his words ring true for many. His words provide vigilantes with justification for the harsh treatment of 'law breakers.'

Legal studies of contemporary nation-states demonstrate that many states – through inaction, intimidation, or overt or covert support of assailants – systematically disadvantage one or more group of their citizens/non-citizens, while concurrently privileging others. The Tanzanian state, subsequently, has not fulfilled its end of the social contract (i.e. equal protection) toward those who are victimized through mob actions. Labeling such acts as 'self-help,' 'community-based crime control,' or simply as 'keeping the peace' overlooks the structural aspects of power, domination, and privilege among state agents, community members, social actors, perpetrators, and victims. The Tanzanian state denies accountability for its role in perpetuating patterned instances of violence and victims by putting the blame back on the thieves, crime rates, or even its 'vigilant' communities. Thus, the Tanzanian state colludes with and condones such violence through deficiencies in systematic action, prosecution, prevention, and protection on the part of state agents toward victims of mob justice. In this way, the Tanzanian state takes a national socio-political issue (i.e. crime) and translates it into avenues of action and restraint at both national and local levels.

Community, justice, and the rule of law

Lack of confidence in the government's ability to contain and prevent crime increases the likelihood of other forms of crime control coexisting alongside the formal legal system. Furthermore, discontinuities between legal practices are commonplace in states that do not have a monopoly on force. Tanzania's national bureaucratic form of justice coincides and contends with customary courts, local patrimonial influence, mob justice, local militias, and international human rights law. Each of these systems attempts to define justice and its recipients.

Claims that the old British colonial legal structures and international legal agendas do not adequately reflect lived realities or respond to rampant social problems are regularly cited as justifications for mob actions. Whereas bureaucratic and international human rights law are predicated on individual rights, justice can also been seen through the lens of 'community.' Masanja, argues that 'justice defined as that which conforms to societal patterns and values is that which conforms and protects the community's well-being' (Masanja 1992: 213). He contrasts this to liberal practices of justice where:

> The liberal basic assumption is the central concern for the individual. The human being is conceived as being completely free and self-centered . . . Society has laws to protect the individual's self-interests. Justice then is that which protects the individual against being encroached upon in his pursuit of his activities . . . The legal principle that it is better to acquit nine guilty individuals, through lack of evidence, than convict one innocent person, stems from such a perception of society.
>
> (Masanja 1992: 213–4)

In acts of mob justice, protection of community is central even if an innocent individual should suffer in the process. This point was brought home during a particular encounter whereby a suspected thief had been apprehended by my neighbors and was beaten to death. After the young man was killed, the woman he supposedly stole from approached the corpse and said, 'Bahati mbaya [bad luck], it's not him.' 'Bad luck,' repeated my neighbors. His lifeless body was thrown into a ditch a short distance away, until his relatives could collect his body a few hours later. They arrived in twilight so that they would not draw undue attention to themselves. They were heartbroken, but also ashamed. I learned later that no one told the youth's family that he was innocent for fear that they might seek redress in the formal justice system. For all of my neighbors' talk of justice, they were unwilling to be held accountable for their actions. Ultimately, the innocent youth died because the mob decided to take 'justice' into their own hands; because he was not given a fair and impartial trial; because he would not admit his guilt; because he was unfortunate enough to fit the thief profile; and because the Tanzanian state and its agencies refuse to grant such instances of vigilantism the proper scrutiny and accountability that they deserve.

Subsequent interviews and discussions with my neighbors and friends elicited

lively discourses on community and its importance. Community was often essentialized and idealized by making it static, continuous, and harmonious. When discussing notions of community, there was remarkably little accounting for emergent power differentials within a community, nor the possibility of interest groups.[7] Likewise, there was only slight attention paid to disparities in financial and moral authority within families, neighborhoods, and communities. Yet, structural positions of social, economic, and political inequalities within communities curtail some members' abilities to be heard or even counted as part of those communities. What is labeled as 'community justice' is, in fact, the assertion of rights and freedoms by those positively situated, and frequently at the expense of other disempowered groups. Furthermore, members of mob justice do not only act as policing agents, but in many communities enforce forms of social control benefiting select interests.

Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that Tanzanians have had varying responses to mob justice. On the one hand, mob justice provides additional security measures at no cost to the state. In many instances, it has (at least temporarily) lowered crime rates in some areas. Community policing has been likened to a participatory democracy, whereby all citizens share the responsibility for their safety and take an active role in defining which values and types of people belong in Tanzanian society and which do not. On the other hand, such groups undermine key legal principles on which nation-states are built. They frequently deny the accused a fair trial and their punitive measures often go unpunished by the Tanzanian state. As long as revenge resonates with enough people's local understandings of justice, mob justice will continue to be a viable crime (and social) control option.

In Tanzania, realizing justice for all people equally becomes impossible when state sponsored vigilantes step in to administer their own forms of justice. Taking justice into one's own hands, instead of holding the government accountable for the lack of protection and enforcement, only increases structural divides.

The concepts of 'community,' 'rights,' and 'justice' can be, and often are, political tools used by select, privileged groups or individuals for strategic ends. Local and national power dynamics and negotiations illuminate how such violence is justified, for whom, and by whom. Concrete social struggles are the arena in which community, rights, and justice are constituted and constitutive.

The designation of who can or cannot be labeled a thief is a systematic societal construction. The categories are economic, gender, and age specific. Vigilante actions, thus, target specific groups of people, whom the state and local communities view as 'social problems.' Both vigilantism and the state's reactions to it are refracted through the lens of local and national power dynamics, reshaping and recreating categories of legitimized victims and violences. Moreover, accusations of theft articulate (trans)local alliances and identify conflicts

embedded in the social arena. James Mwalusanya, a Tanzanian High Court Judge, remarks:

> In this troubled world there is often a tendency to advocate draconian measures to protect society against real and imagined ills. The necessity for such measures can frequently appear plausible and the most well-intended citizens can be tempted to advocate the principle that the 'end justifies the means.' Suffice it to say that the history of the world is replete with the disastrous consequences of the law of many being replaced by the dictates of expediency.
>
> (Mwalusanya 1995: 303–4)

Whether through state neglect, expediency, or strategy, mob justice offers almost no accountability for participants' actions. Without accountability there can be no justice.

Although this chapter is specific to the Tanzanian context, structural and acute violence, rights, privilege, and the state's role in defining such understandings, are central concerns for us all.

Notes

1 Lest the reader think vigilantism as a form of social control is specific to Tanzania or Africa more generally, one only needs to look to recent news stories on Australia's race riots. As CNN ('Cars, Windows Smashed in Race Riot', December 13, 2005 www.cnn.com) reports, 'a mob of 5,000 white men, many of them drunk, attacked men they believed were of Middle Eastern descent in retaliation for the assault a week earlier of two volunteer lifeguards.' Similar mob actions were also seen in the US against Middle Easterners after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

2 For additional views on vigilantism see Johnston 1996; Huggins 1991; Abrahams 1998.

3 Necklacing is when a crowd sets fire to a tire which they've hung around the suspected thief's neck. The tire is usually stuffed with old rags that are soaked in gasoline.

4 Dar es Salaam, Tanzania's largest city, has a population of roughly two and a half million and is located on the central eastern shore, next to the Indian Ocean. Its inhabitants are primarily Muslim (estimated 60 percent), although Christians, too, are well represented. The peoples residing in Dar es Salaam come from most of its more than 120 ethnic groups, and recent figures indicate that 61 percent of the city's inhabitants live below the poverty line. Mwanza, in contrast, is Tanzania's second largest city with nearly half a million people and an annual population growth rate of 11 percent. It is situated in northwestern Tanzania – bordering Lake Victoria – and is characterized by picturesque rock formations. Historically, Mwanza has been a center for the movement of both peoples and goods, as its location next to Lake Victoria affords easy access to neighboring countries. Its inhabitants are primarily Christian or practice traditional religions, but there is a thriving Muslim population. Mwanza is largely, although not exclusively, peopled by the Sukuma ethnic group. It is in the context of these two diverse urban centers that my research on, and understandings of, vigilantism and mob justice have taken shape.

5 On some occasions I called the police. A Tanzanian friend of mine once asked why I bothered. After all, the police have never come any time I have reported mob justice. I suspect they did not see enough profit in it and, in retrospect, were probably concerned

that I would have hindered their ability to collect bribes. But accused thieves have little chance of survival without the police. In Tanzania, anyone who is wounded, regardless of the circumstances, must file a PF3 form before a doctor can legally treat any injuries. These forms are obtained at the police station, where an officer files the report, so that the victim can legally obtain admission to a hospital or clinic. Ostensibly, this is to catch criminals who have escaped detection or have yet to be caught. In actuality, many innocent people have lost their lives waiting for the PF3 form or have been unable to obtain one at all. This also in part explains the high number of fatalities after even minor accidents – many victims have bled to death long before being granted entrance to a hospital. If the PF3 is not filled out, the doctor treating the patient, or the person who brings the patient to the hospital for treatment, is held responsible for the financial support of the victim, as well as for the life of the patient. If the patient dies without having filed a PF3, a good Samaritan can be charged with that person's death.

6 The age of male refugees categorized as thieves varies somewhat more than that of Tanzanians. I suspect this is in part attributable to their upheaval and, for some, their loss of moral and economic authority in their communities and households.

7 In other contexts, my neighbors, informants, and friends were highly critical and aware of power and authority differentials, as well as interest groups and alliances. Yet, our discussions were shaped by the idea of community as ideal and 'pure' and in contrast (or perhaps in resistance) to liberal practices that protect the individual to the detriment of community.

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8 Mellow Yellow

Image, violence, and play in apartheid South Africa

John Peffer

> My heart is beating wildly. All I'm thinking of is the tear gas, the *sjamboks* (rawhide whips), the truncheons, and the bullets. Our leaders demand the release of all political activists. The police tell us to go home. The crowd starts taunting the police. A helicopter is hovering above us . . . They simply stand there, shotguns raised, watching us as we dance the toyi-toyi and chant:
>
> > Oliver Tambo, speak with Botha
> > to release Mandela.
> > Mandela, remain strong.
> > The day of your freedom will come.
>
> > . . . The police have their Hippos, tear gas, and bullets – we have our numbers, our revolutionary songs, and our rage.
>
> (Miriam Mathabane 2000: 187–8)

How was the violence of apartheid coded, resisted, recalled, and even turned into a commodity through its images?[1] This chapter seeks to explore this question by following depictions of the 'Mello-Yello,' the notorious canary-colored South African police truck, and its khaki armored car cousins the 'Buffel' and the 'Hippo' on their zigzag routes through recent history. My project was inspired by Miriam Mathabane's autobiographical description of the terror-filled days of her youth in Johannesburg's Alexandra township. In what follows, I look beyond 'the numbers and the rage' that she describes, in order to consider how the armored cars, the teargas, and the bullets of late apartheid were countered through the mediation of oral and visual culture. Especially during the height of the struggle period from roughly 1976 to 1994, songs and visual art negotiated the real violence of apartheid. Black township residents whose neighborhoods were harassed by the army and the police sought to shield themselves from the effects of living under siege, through a complex process of internalization and domestication of the outward signs of the apartheid war machine. As I will show, also, this displacement of street violence onto images in visual culture and song was not immune to cooption, inversion, or commoditization.

This chapter examines apartheid violence through its representation and

reproduction in the form of an armored truck. In South Africa the well-known models of urban assault vehicles, as they appeared on the streets and as they appeared in the popular imagery of protest art from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, are mythic today. After the youth uprising that began in Soweto in 1976, and with increased frequency during successive states of emergency during the 1980s, police and soldiers in armored personnel carriers (APCs) called Hippos, Casspirs, and Buffels terrorized residents of South Africa's black townships. These and other menacing-looking trucks were given humorous and descriptive nicknames like 'kwela-kwela,' 'nylon,' and 'Mello-Yello' in popular parlance and freedom songs. They were also turned into playthings, as miniature wire cars, by township youth. Across a wide range of representational modes, images of the armored truck were potent signifiers, as synecdoche, of the massive presence of the state war machine in the daily lives of South Africans living under apartheid. These images were reiterated and manipulated by children, activists, and artists and they countered the violence of the apartheid state with a delicate game of competition, identification, and displacement. Below I examine, via a series of vignettes, the forms of children's play, popular visual art, verbal humor, and songs that were invented in response to the military occupation of the black townships. These forms harnessed the multivalent potential of the imagery of occupation, against the violence of occupation itself. I begin by introducing the historical problem of policing black 'locations' in South Africa by speaking of insulting names. I describe the building-up of the apartheid arms industry and the development of the urban assault vehicle as a form of state terror. I listen in to protest songs. And I conclude with a long meditation on the war machine re-imagined as child's play, and later as a commodity in the international art market.

Terror's shield

> On May 4, 1956, six uniformed police, two white and four African, visited the home of Moses Kotane at 8 a.m. and arrested him on a charge of being in Alexandra Township without a permit. When the police arrived at his house they said they had come 'on behalf of the Government' and asked to see his chapters. After examining Kotane's tax receipt, they asked him to explain how he earned his living. Finally they asked to see his permit to live in the township. When he failed to produce one, they said they were arresting him on a charge under the Urban Areas Act and ordered him into the 'kwela-kwela' (police truck) drawn up outside the house . . . Kotane lost his appeal, but remained at his home in Alexandra. Accordingly, one night in September 1956, 19 police in a 'kwela-kwela' came to arrest him again. Kotane was ill in bed on this occasion, but the police told him to 'get up' and 'come' and he was then ordered into the police van full to the brim with men arrested in one of the township's periodic raids for passes and permits. The authorities had obviously decided he was to be harassed out of the area if they could manage it.
>
> (Bunting 1975: 221–222)

One of the more remarkable responses to routine violence and criminalization by the State, is to face it with itself, to throw up a mirror with mockery, and mimicry. The passage above, from the biography of the activist Moses Kotane, gives a good sense of how the actions of the police in relationship to the black residents of South Africa were characterized more by surveillance and influx control than by crime prevention or a keeping of the peace. After the establishment of National Party rule in 1948 and the gradual imposition of apartheid during the 1950s, the enforcement of increasingly restrictive urban areas pass laws designed to control the labor and the mobility of black South Africans progressively dominated the activities of the police. Moses Kotane's experience of being rounded up by the police for supposed contravention of the Native Urban Areas Act was the same as that of thousands of other South Africans from the 1950s to the early 1990s. Paddy wagons were regularly sent into the segregated black urban areas to haul those persons suspected of not carrying proper passes into jail. In a darkly humorous response to this stripping-away of personal dignity, the popular name given the box-shaped police lorry was *kwela-kwela.*

The imperative verb, *Kwela!* means 'climb up' or 'ride' in isiZulu. The term was formerly used to refer to riding a horse or other animal. The new name mimicked the rudimentary shouts of black policemen who would drive through the native location yelling Kwela! Kwela!' – 'get up!' 'climb in!' – ordering people into police vans to take them down to the station. The simple, repeated, mocking name *kwela-kwela* was thus a sign of the perceived stupidity and compulsiveness of the police, who rounded people up like cattle instead of protecting and serving them.[2] Later, during the 1960s, police lorries were also called 'nylons' – a similarly mocking reference. Police trucks had wire window cages to protect the vehicles from projectiles, and these criss-crossed wire coverings looked like a lady's fishnet stockings.[3] Both of these terms contain a sexually deviant connotation, one that adds to their subversive humor while also hinting at a historically quasi-masochistic relationship between the police and black South Africans. This was a relationship based on bondage and force that developed into forms of dependency and became naturalized over several generations. It is important to note that the symbolic emasculation of adult men and women – the stripping of their civil rights, and their reduction to subservient status under apartheid law – was also perversely inverted through the use of mocking terms like kwela-kwela.

On March 21 1960, the routine harassment of black residents in South Africa's townships suddenly turned more violent. A crowd of 20,000 gathered outside the police station at Sharpeville, a black dormitory 'location' south of the industrial city of Vereeniging. They had come to engage in non-violent protest against the imposition of apartheid pass laws, but their numbers intimidated the police. Jet fighters barnstormed the crowd, and 'Saracens,' armored personnel carriers (APCs) imported from Britain, tried to disperse the people from the area. Members of the crowd threw stones, and the police opened fire with machine guns, killing 69 unarmed people and wounding 178. After the

event the bodies of the dying were strewn haphazardly on the ground, and Saracen trucks loomed in the background.[4]

Following the massacre at Sharpeville, militancy rose within the anti-apartheid movement. Police banned the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress, effectively preventing further non-violent opposition to the government's racial policy. The following year the ANC adopted a policy of armed struggle, and by 1963 much of its leadership was in prison. South Africa's liberation movements were forced to go into exile. When African nationalists in the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique, and in white minority-ruled Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and South West Africa (Namibia) launched armed struggles, the ANC gained access to bases close to South Africa. In 1975, following a military coup at home, Portugal gave up its African colonies in Mozambique and Angola, and the South African army entered into a protracted covert war against the popular Marxist governments in the newly independent states.

Within South Africa, Black Consciousness, a resistance movement inspired in part by the black power movement in the US, had become popular among high school and college student unions by the mid-1970s. Then, during June of 1976, thousands of school children were emboldened by the movement, went on strike, and rallied in the streets of Soweto. The Soweto students initially meant to protest the imposition of Afrikaans as a primary language of instruction in black schools, something that was extremely unpopular since Afrikaans was a language associated with the police and with racial oppression. Student demands quickly grew to a call for an end to the entire apartheid system.[5] They were fired upon by police. Hundreds were killed, thousands wounded, and the country was engulfed by months of mass protests that made the black townships relatively ungovernable by the state. After 1983 mass resistance was resumed in a more organized fashion following the formation of the United Democratic Front, an alliance of churches, unions and cultural groups in opposition to apartheid. In 1985 a state of emergency was declared and was renewed annually until 1990. During this later period many of the black urban areas in South Africa became zones of military occupation and of internecine battles between competing revolutionary parties. Black schools were shut down, or boycotted, and the children of this era who were caught between the militants and the police came to be known as heroic 'comrades' (if they were committed partisans), or 'young lions,' or simply 'the lost generation.'[6]

One result of both the independence struggles beyond South Africa's borders, and the aftermath of the Soweto revolt was that the black population at home was viewed with greater trepidation by police and soldiers.[7] Local black residents, even children, were conflated with the 'enemy,' the 'communist terrorists' confronted over the border. The protest for civil rights at home must have some ulterior motive, it was thought. After 1976 black residential areas were often officially referred to as military 'operational areas.' This was a means for the government to exclude journalists from reporting on them (Merret 1994: 86). It was also the same term used to describe South Africa's military exercise zones

elsewhere in Africa. In effect, according to Gavin Cawthra's book *Policing South Africa: The SAP and the Transition from Apartheid* (1993), state policy moved the conceptual 'border' of the nation further away, in two directions, from the real geographical border of South Africa. While anti-Communist rhetoric had been standard Cold-War fare in South Africa since the late 1940s, South Africa's military assistance for campaigns against independence movements in South West Africa, Rhodesia, and Angola during the 1970s and 1980s served to reinforce the paranoia that South Africa was, more that ever, subject to an intensified Communist threat from black Africa. According to Cawthra, the image of conflict was brought closer to home, and simply called 'on the border,' though the actual fighting may have been 1,000 kilometers north of South Africa's geographic limit (Cawthra 1993: 18). The distant border with this looming Africa of the mind was brought closer to home, too, when South Africa's own black neighborhoods were occupied by the armed forces. By the 1970s, a culture of counter-insurgency permeated the South African police. It was police, not army, 'COIN' (counter-insurgency) units that were sent north to the border states to fight against the liberation movements, and these same units were brought into South Africa's black urban areas with their heavy equipment in 1976.

One of the nasty details of South Africa's Cold-War era conflicts 'on the border' was the extensive use of mine warfare, resulting in a military need for specially armored troop carriers.[8] In 1963 the United Nations declared a voluntary arms embargo against South Africa.[9] Thereafter, spare parts for imported armored trucks like the Saracen could not be easily obtained, and the state had to find ways to develop its own military equipment without dependence on overseas markets. As a result, Armscor, South Africa's parastatal arms development company, became well known in international arms dealing circles for a number of its 'field tested' mine-protected vehicles. During 1974 the Hippo Mark I, R-series truck was produced by the South African Research Defense Unit for the South African Police COIN units fighting in neighboring Rhodesia.[10] It was the first mine-protected personnel transport vehicle to be employed on a large scale. Several hundred Hippos were produced before they were superceded by the 'Buffel' in 1978, and the 'Casspir' during the 1980s (Figure 8.1).[11]

P.W. Botha was Minister of Defense from 1966 to 1979, and in that capacity he presided over the covert invasion of Angola as well as the use of troops in South Africa's own black townships. As head of state from 1979 to 1989 he introduced draconian states of emergency to the rest of the country. One record of the martial self-image of the tenure of P.W. Botha was the propaganda magazine distributed abroad by the South African Information Service: *South African Panorama*. *Panorama* carried half a dozen feature articles between 1982 and 1989 boasting of country's military and police strength.[12] In one striking example, President Botha's introductory remarks for the issue commemorating 25 years of the Republic consisted entirely of paranoid double-speak and euphemism: 'The RSA is a bastion against communist enslavement . . . [committed to] protect minorities from domination,' Botha claimed (1986: 1). The rest of

Figure 8.1 The Casspir Mk III APC, the most recent model (courtesy Jane's Information Group).

the issue was filled out by photo essays describing 'South African Security,' 'Formidable Military Power,' and the South African Police and Prisons Services. All of these were enlisted to protect the white minority from domination. These photo essays highlighted the global independence of South Africa's armed forces and the home-grown character of its arms industry. One article, titled 'South Africa's Shield,' extolled the history of the parastatal weapons manufacturer, Armscor (Groenewald 1982). It claimed that Armscor's vehicles outclassed those captured from the Russians and East Germans in Angola because they were made for African, not European, battle conditions. It also contained a picture of a Buffel APC underscored by a caption labeling it a 'formidable weapon.' Another picture shows black laborers in an Armscor factory making munitions for South Africa's 'border wars,' which may have actually included their own neighborhoods (Figure 8.2).

In addition to *Panorama* a number of large format military memorabilia-type 'coffee-table' books were published during the 1980s, with titles like *Taming the Landmine*, *South African War Machine*, and *Africa's Super Power*. These were dedicated to proclaiming the virtues of South Africa's mushrooming war machine. The security picture for South Africa, as portrayed in propaganda like *SA Panorama* and the coffee-table books, was dependent upon the strength of its 'shield,' defined as the parastatal arms industry. And this South African arms industry was epitomized by (and boasted) one of its most unique products: the home-made mine-protected APC.

ARMSCOR
South Africa's shield

Article: Coen Groenewald
Pictures: Armscor; Department of Foreign Affairs and Information; *Paratus*

THE Armaments Corporation of South Africa, commonly known as Armscor, is one of the country's largest industries. From 1974 to 1981 Armscor's assets rose from R200-million to R1 200-million. The number of employees increased from 12 000 to 29 000. In 1981 the Corporation produced weapons to the value of R1 400-million. Today, the South African armaments industry is the tenth largest in the world.

In 1980 the University of Georgetown's Centre for Strategic and International Studies under the auspices of Dr Chester Crocker, the present US Assistant Secretary of State, found that South Africa's industries and its Defence Force were its guarantee of survival, that the mandatory arms embargo against South Africa was a "miserable failure", and the country's vulnerability to oil sanctions vastly exaggerated. Furthermore, if the Republic were to be driven into a corner, it would be self-supporting within a few years.

Operation Protea in south Angola last year proved the effectiveness of South African weapons in wartime conditions. In the attack on a formidable fortification, Russian weapons valued at R200-million were captured. The enemy suffered severe losses while the South African units lost only ten men and a negligible quantity of equipment.

The chairman of Armscor, Commandant P. G. Marais, states that Armscor can manufacture 141 different kinds of ammunition for the Army, Air Force and Navy. At the recent opening of a munitions factory in Pretoria — the last phase of a considerable expansion programme — Commandant Marais said that Armscor can now supply all the ammunition needs of the South African Defence Force (SADF). Since the UN's arms embargo was imposed in November 1977, South Africa has spent R628-million on expanding factories to produce ammunition.

"This is part of the enormous amount which has been spent on arms, and which could have been used to develop the country if there had been no embargo. The arms industry has been built up to protect what is ours, our heritage. The

3

4

SOUTH AFRICAN PANORAMA APRIL 1982 9

Figure 8.2 A photo essay from *South African Panorama*, April 1982 (photos courtesy Armscor).

The bodies of all of these APC trucks sit far above the ground, because their narrow v-shaped hulls are made to deflect mine blasts. This design lends them a high-waisted, bulky gait. Landmines were not really a problem in South Africa's urban areas, and so the tall hulking forms of the personnel carriers stood out in residential neighborhoods, noticeably out of place in terms of both form and

function. When they first appeared in Soweto in 1976, the South African press called the Hippos 'anti-riot vehicles,' even though they were expressly built for protection against mines in the bush war outside the country.[13] In town these vehicles were bizarre looking and imposing, and their appearance on a city street corner was an upsetting sight, especially for young children. According to reports, the first sight of armored personnel carriers in Soweto was terrifying.

After 1976 armored vehicles were ubiquitous in the black townships and the presence of these agents of surveillance and harassment became a regular, but never welcome, feature of daily life. The police believed they were sent into the townships to put down unrest, but they were viewed by residents as disturbers of the peace (Cawthra 1993: 28). Marshall Lee claims the principals of four hundred schools met in July 1976 to demand 'removal of police "hippo" vehicles from the vicinity of schools because they were frightening off children who wished to return' (Lee and Magubane 1978: 133). In a remarkable set of photographs alongside Lee's text, Peter Magubane captured the dramatic change in atmosphere that accompanied the sudden frightening presence of Hippo trucks in the midst of a protest march. Three frames of a double-page spread (pp. 148–149) show the euphoria of Soweto's children, but in the top right frame two Hippo APCs lumber up the road, and the gathering crowd seems skittish, on alert for sudden violence (Figure 8.3).

These machines became a sign of the occupation itself. The January 1977 issue of the black picture magazine *Drum*, for instance, declared 1976 'The year

Figure 8.3 Photographs taken by Peter Magubane during 1976, from pages 148 and 149 of the book *Soweto* (courtesy Dr Peter Magubane).

of the Hippo.' The children of the 1980s would later hear stories of these menacing Hippos of '76 from their older brothers and sisters, and so a mythology was built up around these vehicles. When new types of mine-protected personnel carriers were introduced during the 1980s, these were sometimes popularly called 'Hippos' too, regardless of whether the model names of the newer machines were different. Activist photojournalists, such as those affiliated with the anti-apartheid collective Afrapix, contributed to the conflation of terms even while intent on publicizing the facts of the occupation of the black townships.[14] One famous example is Paul Weinberg's image of a lone woman shaking her fists at two trucks full of soldiers. Weinberg's composition cleverly contrasts the fragility of the human body (and the bravery of a solitary act of defiance) with the steel-plated menace of the avatars of the police state. The seeming futility of the woman's gesture, a sign of the structural violence of her predicament, is underscored when one notices that the servicemen mostly ignore her. This photo was widely reproduced and was included in the Afrapix anthology, *Beyond the Barricades*, on page 71. Its caption inaccurately described the trucks as 'hippos,' when they were actually army Buffels. (The former were bus-sized canvas-covered vehicles, while the latter were smaller and remained open on top like a big bathtub.) This compression of a number of vehicle types into the singular term 'hippo' created a novel iconic image that could deliver, at a minimum, an intentionally simple and straightforward political message: 'the state is occupying its black townships and using excessive force.'

The striking image of these outsized police trucks made its way into photojournalism, popular protest posters, and t-shirts. There it evolved into a simple code, a telegraphic sign for the military-style occupation of South Africa by its own army and police that the government denied.[15] This use of the direct statement can be seen in the stark imagery of David Hlongwane's linoleum cut print titled 'Khayelitsha' after the shack-filled resettlement area near Cape Town that thousands were forcibly removed to from informal settlements during the 1980s (Figure 8.4). In this print Khayelitsha township is indicted visually as consisting of nothing but flimsy shacks, invasive police Casspirs, and a sandy windswept plain. A similar use of the image of the APC appeared on a 1984 poster for the End Conscription Campaign, a movement founded by white youth to resist mandatory army service (Figure 8.5). In between the title, 'Troops out of the townships' and the subtitle, 'No apartheid war' a woman raises her hand in despair and an army Buffel looms behind her. The viewer is left to imagine the destruction of homes and the disruption of normal life that the silhouette of the stalking armored vehicle only implies.

The media, popular manifestations in the streets, and visual art were all critical elements of the struggle, since apartheid was a politics of visibility as much as it was a politics of space. In the words of Lacanian film theorist Kaja Silverman, 'it is at the site of the cultural representations through which we see and are seen that the political struggle should be waged' (Silverman 1989: 78). One of the few strategies available to those involved with the anti-apartheid movement within South Africa was the translation of oppositional views into artistic

Figure 8.4 David Hlongwane, 'Khayelitsha,' black and white linoleum cut print on paper, approximately 20 × 24 cm, *c.*1985 (courtesy David Hlongwane).

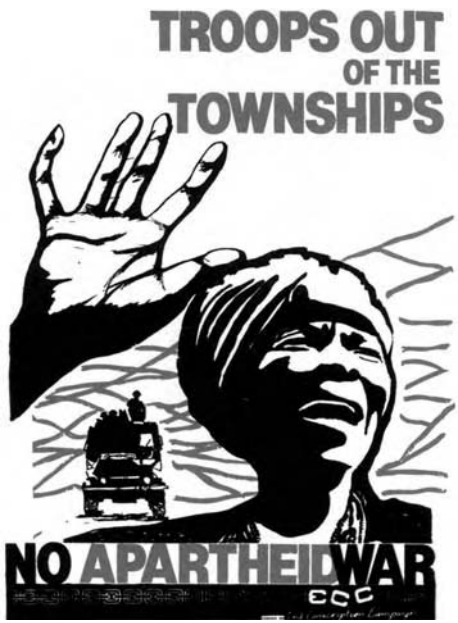

Figure 8.5 'Troops out of the townships,' poster for the End Conscription Campaign, 1984 (courtesy of the South African History Archive).

media, since open dissent was censored. The artist David Koloane has pointed to the critical importance of artistic expression in opposition to the legal, as well as the spatial, logic of apartheid: 'apartheid was a politics of space more than anything . . . much of the apartheid legislation was denying people the right to move. It's all about space, restricting space . . . Claiming art is also reclaiming space' (Koloane and Powell 1995: 265). For these reasons, during the last decades of apartheid alternative media, poster campaigns, and art exhibitions were organized to get the word out on the streets. They spread the word about the brutality of government crackdowns, about which companies to boycott, and about successful acts of sabotage that were officially censored by the government. These were things that were mostly invisible on TV and in the local newspapers.[16]

Here Comes Mello-Yello

Armored trucks hover around every page of Miriam Mathabane's autobiography, just as they haunted the street corners of her native Alexandra township. Halfway through her narrative, she tells of the horrifying vehicle called 'Mello-Yello':

> Suddenly out of the corner of my eye I notice a Mello-Yello armored truck racing down the street. My instinct is to run, but I instantly abandon that idea – I can't outrun the police. Since I'm carrying two liters of Coke, if they stop me and ask me what I'm doing on the street, I'll simply say I've just been to the store to buy Coke.
>
> The Mello-Yello comes to a screeching halt right next to me. Without warning, three black policemen leap off the truck and start whipping me with their sjamboks. For several seconds my feet fail me. Snapping out of shock, I scream at the sharp sting of the thick plastic whips flailing my back, buttocks, and legs.
>
> I drop the Coke bottles and run toward the nearest yard. 'Yo! Yo! Yo!' I scream at the top of my lungs. 'I'm not a comrade. I'm not a comrade.' . . . It is not until I reach home that I realize how badly I've been whipped. The sjamboks have raised huge welts behind my legs and across my back. Some of the welts are bleeding and it's torture to remove the blouse, which is embedded in some of the gashes.
>
> (Mathabane 2000: 192)

Selope Maaga was an artist living in Mapetla in Soweto when I interviewed him in 1995. Like Miriam Mathabane he was in high school ten years earlier. He told me that during the state of emergency in 1985, police vehicles that terrorized the children were given the nickname 'Mello-Yello.' A local subsidiary of the Coca Cola Company (whose trucks were favored targets for hijacking by comrades in need of cash, and cold drink) had recently introduced a new soft

drink to the township market. This highly caffienated, brominated, greenish-yellow beverage in a bright yellow can was called 'Mello Yello.' It is a taste clone of PepsiCo's Mountain Dew. The brand name describes the soda pop's color, with a nod to Donovan Leitch's bawdy strip-tease romp, the 1967 free-love song with a similar name:

> I'm just mad about Saffron
> Saffron's mad about me
> . . . It's bound be the very next phase
> . . . they call it mellow yellow.

Mello Yello. South African police trucks were painted yellow, too, with a band of light blue across the middle. In a morbidly jokey twist the trucks that used to speed into the township and collect the youth for detention were named after the soda can.[17] Selope Maaga taught me a song very different from Donovan's, one that the young comrades had invented at the nexus of mass-marketed soda pop and excessive police action. The verses changed depending on the occasion:

> Nayi imello yello (ma)
> se si se ngozini (mo we ma)
> [Here comes mello yello
> We are now in danger]
>
> Nayi imello yello
> mama mus' ukukhala
> ngoba Kuzo Lunga ma
> [Here comes mello yello
> mother don't cry
> because we'll be ready]
>
> Nanku uBotha
> se si se ngozini
> [Here comes president Botha
> we are now in danger]
>
> Mama suli nyembezi (we ma)
> ngoba sizo nqoba ma
> [Mother stop lamenting
> because we shall overcome]
>
> Mama sengiboshiwe
> mama duduzeka (we ma) . . .
> [Mother I've been arrested
> Mother be comforted . . .][18]

Maaga told me the kids used to break into this song when sitting around killing time because they were boycotting school. On occasion it was shouted out in

spontaneous referral to the soft drink that was held in their hands (an assertion that others denied to me). Otherwise when they were drinking together, someone would start up the song and the rest would carry it along laughing, as politicians or persons they knew were included in the lyric. Parts of this tune were cried out during moments of danger. After sighting the lumbering yellow paddy wagon from the corner, 'Nayi imello yello . . .' would be sung out, and the people collected in the street would scatter. Alternatively it was sung as a taunt when the Mello-Yello vehicles were in sight during marches and rallies.

The use of 'freedom songs' like these, along with the high-energy martial dance called the *toyi-toyi*, probably originated during the revolution in Zimbabwe, where they were heard by African National Congress soldiers training alongside Zimbabwean cadres. They became a distinctive part of the culture of the youth in South Africa during the 1980s.[19] The form of these songs intersects with a long local history. They adapt and modify traditional call-and-response tunes sung to build up camaraderie and courage at ritual occasions. The older forms were sung at weddings and circumcision camps, while doing hard labor, or when preparing for war. According to Jessica Sherman these songs 'lift one's spirits, give courage for the tasks ahead as well as provide entertainment. They release the tension of a situation without causing chaos. They produce unity amongst a group of people.' Additionally, they provide a simple form of political education, teaching the names and dates of important events and persons in the struggle (Sherman: 84–5).

The singing of freedom songs and the repetitious mocking and running from the police were part of one big brutal game for the township youth, a radically dangerous game, marked by tragedy, but not without its pleasures.[20] It would be a mistake to exaggerate this point. Some children from this generation in South Africa never returned from detention. Many were beaten savagely, electrocuted, tortured. The Mello-Yellos, nylons, and kwela-kwelas, and the armored cars that the police called Hippos, Casspirs, and Buffels were no joy ride. They were the carriers of the brutal abuse of state authority under apartheid. The only funny thing about the Mello-Yello was the name.

Toying with violence

> [T]here are many children's games in which through the metamorphosis of the subject into a dreaded object anxiety is converted into pleasurable security. Here is another angle from which to study the games of impersonation that children love to play.
>
> (Freud 1996: 111)[21]

When the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights published its 1986 report on the treacherous daily living conditions of children in South Africa's black neighborhoods, they noted, among other tragically absurd details of township life, that on several occasions entire schools had been arrested *en masse*. Schools, they said, had 'become battle grounds as the security forces have attempted to put

an end to the widespread school boycotts. Many pupils, including those not participating in the boycotts, have been arrested, injured and even killed in these attacks' (1986: 29). The situation summarized by the Lawyers Committee was dire:

> Play areas in the townships are practically non-existent and children often play in the streets, making them vulnerable targets for random arrest, assault and the crossfire of bullets and shot. Young children who, out of natural curiosity, have been drawn to watch burning barricades or other incidents of unrest, have been pursued by the police or soldiers, assaulted and sometimes arrested and accused of being perpetrators of the incident . . . In many townships armed police and army units conduct frequent patrols on foot and in the heavy armored vehicles known as 'casspirs' and 'hippos.'
>
> (Lawyers Committee for Human Rights 1986: 29–30)

Children, daily violence, the streets-as-playground, armed vehicles lurking about residential neighborhoods – this is a significant cluster of phenomena that the Lawyers Committee report claimed was brought together to make up daily township life. One visually striking aspect of the states of emergency period of the 1980s, and into the early 1990s, was that the spirit of township life turned dark whenever 'ugly brown vehicles' regularly patrolled the streets and menaced residents. These were the police and army APCs painted 'bush khaki' for the war on the border, that were increasingly doing time putting down unrest in-country after 1976. The bullying presence of armored trucks, daily roadblocks, and random teargas attacks on houses left township children obsessed with the art of war, with uniforms and Hippos and guns. In response, militant youths barricaded roads with rocks and debris, dug trenches to ambush Buffels, and pulled the reinforcement wire from burnt tires to string across roads and 'clothesline' cops on motorbikes. They fashioned crude gasoline bombs and other missiles to hurl at Casspir and Buffel APCs. What happened in South Africa in some respects resembled what happened in Israel, where Palestinian children became famous for their resistance against impossible odds by tossing their hand-held stones at Israeli tanks during the first *intifada*. The child comrades of South Africa committed similar acts of provocation and resistance against armored cars that for them, too, were representatives of the war machine of a government they opposed. And, similarly, the other kids on the block considered these acts heroic. They were a means to distinguish oneself from the crowd by brazenly committing acts that the rest of the crowd mostly dreamed of (Bonner and Segal 1998: 116–17).

According to a number of eyewitness and participant reports, the act of taunting the police had become a kind of dangerous game already at the moment of the initial street protest against the Bantu education system by schoolchildren in Soweto on June 16, 1976. The description of events that day by Jon-Jon Mkhonza, one of the Soweto march leaders, clearly relates a tense element of play in the face of danger:

> Students were scattered, running up and down . . . coming back, running . . . coming back. It was some kind of game because they were running away, coming back, taking stones, throwing them at the police . . . It was chaos. Whenever the police shot teargas, we jumped the wall to the churchyard and then came back and started discussing again.
>
> (Bonner and Segal 1998: 85)

Clearly the violent unrest across South Africa after 1976 was a game-like performance whose primary actors were very often young children. Many comrades were teenage children, and many other children were innocent victims caught in the crossfire. From this perspective the uprisings were a kind of child's play – a game of chase gone seriously awry – and the random violence let loose after confrontations with police was the unleashed wrath of children, frustrated at their childhood games and provoked to fury. For South Africa's children growing up during the 1970s and 1980s, their understanding of the images of violence around them was more multivalent than a simply heroic view of righteous comrades in the revolutionary struggle might allow. As we examine this police vehicle, this violence, and its sign, we should also not fail to recognize that most in the post-Soweto generation were not student leaders or comrades, nor the likes of a Jon Jon Makhonza. They were average children caught up in the daily conflagration in the segregated black residential areas during South Africa's 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s. Many, like Miriam Mathabane, were only reluctant comrades. That did not mean they were not against the racist system, nor in general support of those who made resistance their full-time occupation. Rather, they were school kids caught up in a revolutionary moment. Mathabane was only one of the many children caught up in, indeed often excited by, dramatic confrontations with the heavy hands, the whips, the guns and armored trucks of the law during the states of emergency. These children were objects of surveillance for the police, but they in turn were watching and sizing up the police.

Young Agrippa Nhlapo was not a comrade as a child, but he was not pro-apartheid. As a school kid in Soweto he felt caught in the middle of events of the 1970s and 1980s. He eagerly attended art workshops at the Open School, a multiracial and progressive cultural education program that offered alternative education to the youth of the 'lost generation.' Despite their reservations about fighting in the street, Nhalpo, Mathabane and other children often participated in the anti-apartheid movement during the later 1980s and early 1990s. In Nhalpo's case he made murals for labor and community organizations. He was born with full use of only one arm, which in itself probably served to keep him off the front lines of street battles. His intelligence, street smarts, and manual dexterity, were put to other creative use as he grew from young boy to young artist. During 1995 he was staying in Troyeville, a bohemian suburb of Johannesburg, and was a business partner of the painter Andrew Lindsay who painted murals for community organizations. Once, when I asked him, tape machine in hand, about his school days, the conversation took an interesting turn that I reproduce here in full:

Peffer: You grew up, post-1976, in Meadowlands [in central Soweto], so there must have been a lot of street fighting and political activity going on in the township.

Nhlapo: Yeah. There was a lot going on.

Peffer: Were you ever involved in those things?

Nhlapo: No, I wasn't really involved, but I remember in '76 when there were uprisings. You know, it was the first time I saw things happening like people burning things down, like shops and offices. To me, I was only excited then because now I wouldn't be going to school. I'd be staying at home having a lot of holiday – We were also excited as soon as we started to see the cars that we called Hippos, for the first time. Everyone, like people who were making [toy] cars, also started making the Hippo itself.

Peffer: In wire?

Nhlapo: Yeah, in wire. There were many people making those. And we started making them very big. You could actually drive them when you were inside.

Peffer: Really?

Nhlapo: Yeah, they were big ones.

Peffer: Why? Just because you saw it coming down the street and it was a strange kind of truck, so you imitated it in wire?

Nhlapo: I think it was that we had never seen it before, and now we saw it for the first time.

Peffer: And you made one yourself.

Nhlapo: And then we started making these cars. In that year the schooling was really disrupted, I think, for six months. We only returned to school in the following year. That was in 1977. We had a lot of time to play. And so making Hippos and playing with them was really something new and we made them for a long time. Everyone wanted a Hippo. For people like me who were already into making things, it meant I was having a lot to do in those days.

(Nhalpo, July 1995)

Nhlapo told me that many of the children in the townships made wire toys when he was growing up, as they still do today. But it struck me as bizarre that they would make wire cars to ride in that resembled the police trucks that kept them under surveillance and harassed them, or even that 'everyone wanted a Hippo.' In order to approach this strange phenomenon it is necessary first to consider the world of toy trucks more broadly. According to Nhlapo, when he was growing up the young boys who were particularly adept at making things were asked by friends and neighbors to make trucks and cars with wire for other children, for a small payment. Thus the better toy makers among them could earn individual distinction for their talent, and they could also earn small pocket change.

One indication of the popularity of these wire toys in the late 1970s was the 1979 edition of the anti-apartheid literature magazine *Staffrider*. In an effort to

attract younger readers to the magazine, and also to provide reading exercises for children who had missed a year or more of school because of the uprising, *Staffrider* ran a short story, 'Vusumzi and the Inqola Competition' by Marguerite Poland (Figure 8.6). In the story, young Vusumzi competes for 'manly' status among his friends by making the finest looking, most ingeniously constructed wire car. He uses bits of real tire for wheels, and discarded tiny springs for the suspension. The editors at *Staffrider* clearly meant to tap into a ready interest in wire cars among all of South Africa's children.

In Africa, as elsewhere, the materials used to make handmade toys depend largely upon local availability and individual ingenuity. Writers often make the mistake of isolating and categorizing wire toys solely according to the materials and formal techniques of their manufacture, and indeed each novel medium brings its own technical demands and its own potential for innovative design. But in terms of content, what is made of wire in one place may be made of pop-tops and cut up fruit boxes, or canvas and bamboo in another. All of these toys belong to a wider category of objects that, as Patricia Davison has described them, 'fulfill a positive recreational function in communities subject to poverty and stress. From materials that might otherwise have been relegated to the garbage heap emerge small vehicles as inventive and well-designed as they are fun to use' (Davison 1983: 50).[22] Davison relates the manufacture of African

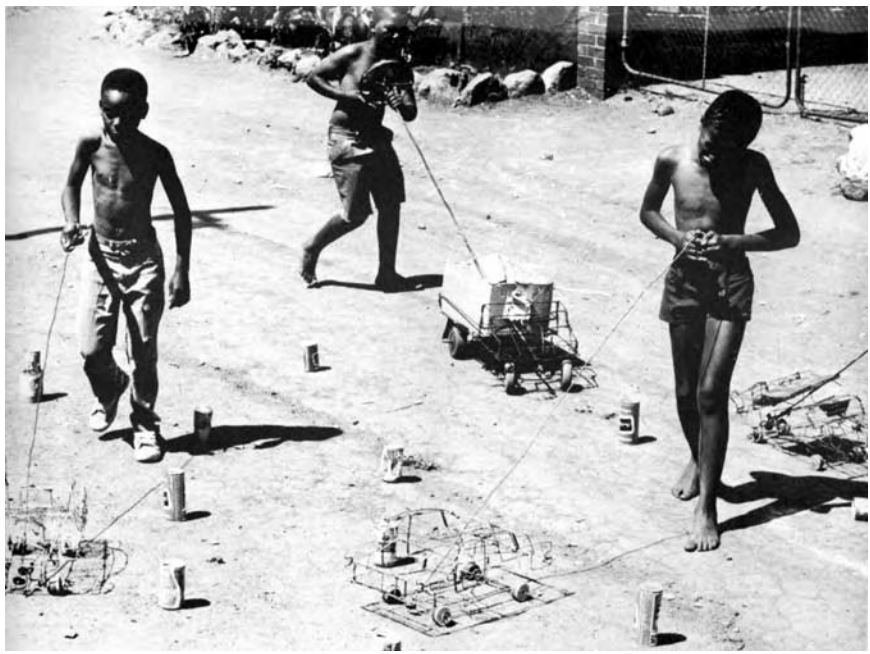

Figure 8.6 Children steering wire cars through an obstacle course of Black Label beer and Coca-Cola cans. Image from 'Vusumzi and the inqola competition,' *Staffrider* 2 (2) April–June 1979 (courtesy *Staffrider*/Andries Oliphant).

children's toys from found materials to the older history of toys made from materials found in nature, whether wild grasses, shells, corn cobs or clay. She sees modern wire cars as signs of industrialized Africa's aspirations in the present era. They are 'substitutes' for the traditional clay bovine figurines that used to represent the most crucial symbolic element in the economy and culture of southern Africa's cattle-herding native peoples (ibid.: 52). In isiZulu wire cars are called *inqola*, 'wagon/car,' and are often driven by hand from above and behind, using a thin steering wheel attached to a sturdy wire or stick and secured to the front axel of the toy.

According to Davison, Southern African construction materials for home-made toys are still 'found around' as they were in pre-modern times (ibid.: 50). Today these materials include stiff wire untwined from packing boxes or coat hangers, used for structural elements. Copper extras begged from hardware shops, and plastic-coated telephone wire, are used for decorative touches and finer work. Bits of cloth, bicycle inner tube, or empty tins are made into wheels. Just as they change according to locale, the range of available materials also changes over time, and this affects the look of the toy cars made. When the history of images shifts dramatically, whether through the technology of war or the mass marketing of new types of automobiles, the kinds of toy cars desired by children also changes.[23] And so the phenomenon of hand-constructed army vehicles in wire was widespread among South Africa's children after 1976, in the black neighborhoods of Johannesburg, Cape Town, Pretoria, and other cities and rural towns. But the production of wire army trucks by children did not merely mirror the state of siege under which the children lived. These toys' functional representations of violence, and their response to the experience of violence, were a curious combination of competition and identification.

In her classic book, *Resistance Art in South Africa*, Cape Town-based artist Sue Williamson included an image of two homemade Hippo toy trucks as the frontispiece to her section titled 'Confrontation and Resistance' (Williamson 1989: 99). These and other toy trucks were exhibited in a show of handmade toys at the South African National Gallery in 1989 (Figure 8.7).[24] The toy Hippos are built upon a basic wire frame and are wrapped in cut tin sheeting that is painted camouflage. They have wheels made of a variety of leftover parts from other toys and (what appears to be) a discarded container for snuff tobacco. They also have khaki colored cloth covering both the passenger section and the engine compartment. Real Hippo trucks also had canvas tops, but the advantage with the toys was that things usually hidden inside (whether motors or soldiers) could be exposed and re-covered for the curious viewer.[25] The manufacture and use of this kind of toy helped explain the secret internal life of what were really dangerous things for the little boys and girls who played with them.

The artist Titus Moteyane began his career by making toy cars in wire when he was a boy. According to Elizabeth Rankin he also made miniature versions of armored vehicles when he observed them, 'during the school boycotts of 1976 and the violent confrontations with police and army' (Rankin 1994: 156).[26] Rankin claims Moteyane's toy cars were 'a reflection of his dreams and

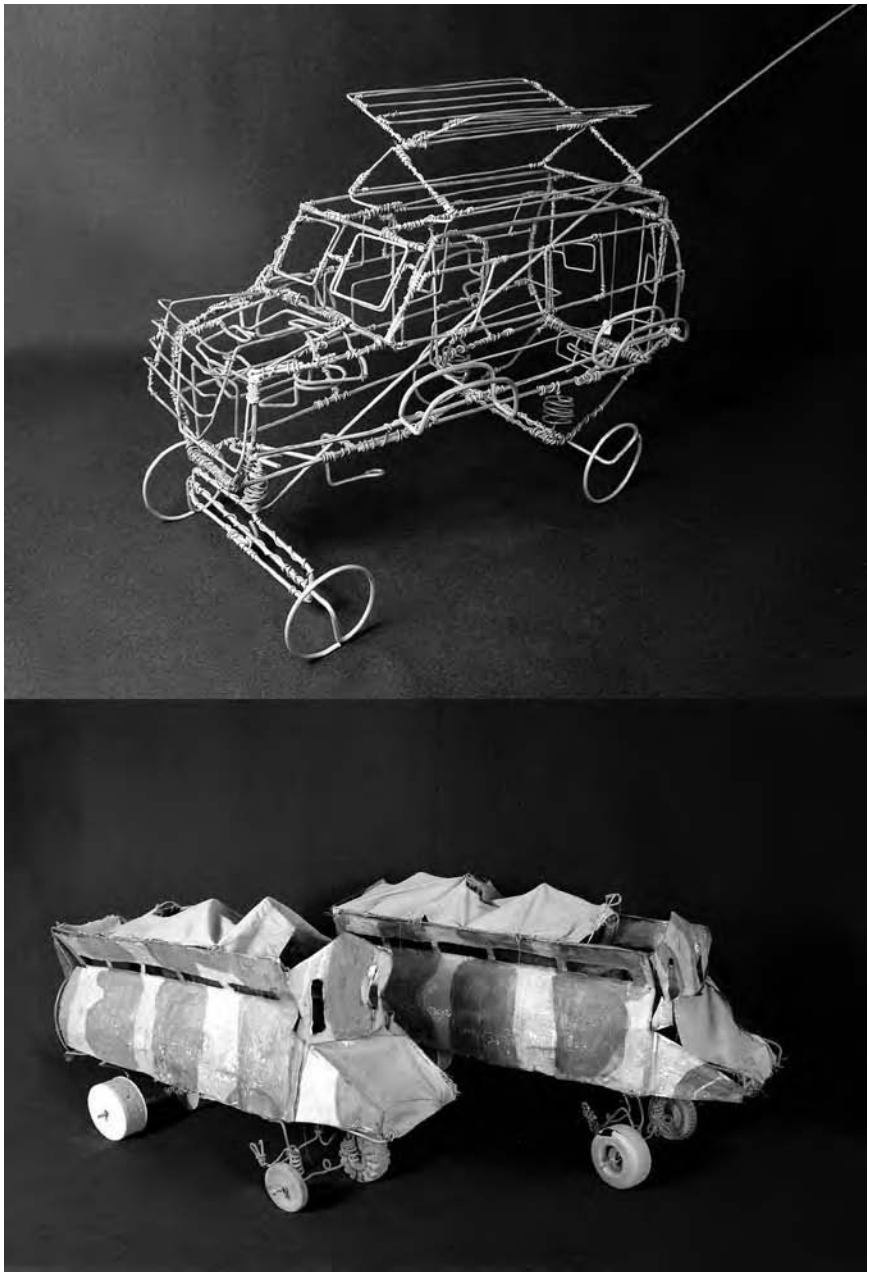

Figure 8.7 Two toy Hippo APCs (anon.), and a wire Casspir (by Xolela August), *c*.1986 (courtesy Iziko, South African Museum, Cape Town).

aspirations, his wish to possess one and the power it symbolized for him' (ibid.: 156). Again, as with Agrippa Nhlapo's comments on his own toy trucks and Hippo go-carts, I found Titus Moteyane's comment puzzling at first, and then fabulous. The brutal, heavy-handed use of the law choked their days with teargas, and crashed through their nights to bring horror into their homes. Did the boys and girls of '76 and '85 also desire to play at being the aggressive men in uniform? Is that how they handled the brutality of the misuse of the law and its cruel machines: by making those machines, in miniature, with their own tiny hands? Interestingly, neither Nhlapo nor Moteyane mentioned anything about making toy police trucks just to smash them up, like the comrades attempted to do to the real things. They only claim to have wanted to play with them, or to possess power through them.

'The toy world presents a projection of the world of everyday life; this real world is miniaturized or giganticized in such a way as to test the relation between materiality and meaning,' claims Susan Stewart in her seminal study of the figure of the miniature, *On Longing* (1984: 57). Following Stewart (and Moteyane), we might conclude that township boys made toy Hippos by hand, in order to *handle* the power the Hippos symbolized for them, to *test* it – to *play* with it, and to gain mastery over it. Was this also a classic example of sympathetic magic?[27] Did it correspond to the notion that a representation, if manipulated properly, might influence the character of its original, or transfer the power perceived to rest within the original to the one who manipulates the representation? According to Rankin, Moteyane wished to acquire the power represented by real cars and real army trucks. Magic or not, clearly there was a strong sense of creative visualization at work in the making of these toy trucks. They were not only simple, tiny, mimic versions of the world of adults, nor were they merely childish and unconscious emulations of the oppressor. In the black townships of South Africa, toy armored trucks were products of the imagination that turned vehicles of state terror into objects for mastery.

Perhaps sensing the potential uses of play for positive identification, the South African Defense Force handed out plastic toy troop carriers to township children as part of an image polishing campaign in 1985. As reported in the Committee on South African War Resistance's publication, *Resister*, in 1986:

> In August [1985] the SADF launched a campaign to improve its image, specifically to present the army as a force independent of the police and not responsible for repression. 'Know your Army' leaflets were distributed and toy plastic Buffel and Casspir troop carriers were handed out to black schoolchildren. Complaints offices were established in townships to hear reports of army misconduct, but these were boycotted. An SADF spokesman concluded that there were no complaints against the army.[28]

It is possible that these store-bought toys were used by the township youth in the same manner that the wire and tin trucks were. It is likely too that, as with the army complaints department cited above, this effort at psychological

operations in the townships missed its mark. First, there was no guarantee that the plastic toys would not be incorporated into some pre-existing township game. Also, the way that a mass-manufactured toy is handled differs radically from the way a child interacts with a toy made at home from materials 'found around.' The act of making a homemade Hippo, Buffel, or Casspir tended to invert the usual order of alienation from the products of labor that is characteristic of industrialized societies like South Africa's. The child makers of these toys (as with the mocking nicknames for APCs and the struggle songs) de-alienated the *image* of the agents of state-sanctioned violence by bringing it in close and making it their own. Stewart observes that model-kit type mechanical toys 'produce a representation of a product of alienated labor, a representation which itself is constructed by artisan labor. The triumph of the model-maker is that he or she has produced the object completely by hand, from the beginning assembly to the "finishing touches"' (1984: 58). This is a crucial point, since those doubly alienated by apartheid's curious formulation of the capitalist system were the black consumers in South Africa whose children likely made wire cars. Black workers manned the factories for Armscor. Their labor produced the guns, munitions, uniforms, and trucks used by the South African armed forces to lay siege to black neighborhoods. In South Africa, especially during the states of emergency, African industrial workers were not just sold back the alienated products of their labor – sometimes they were even attacked, and their desires suppressed, by the work of their own hands. Handmade toy APCs inverted this order of things, even more than in Stewart's example since they were not constructed from a store-bought kit.

It would be a mistake to see these wire trucks, as most commentators on the subject of African toys have, as appropriating materials and icons of the modern world in order to resist modernity itself.[29] To do so is to view Africa as perpetually back in time, existing in a simpler economic mode characterized at its most authentic by use value and *bricolage*. It is more useful to understand wire toys today as critical elements *within* a modern economic and technological world, that sometimes address *modern* inequities. Seen as a metaphor and not just as a mirror of their world, these mechanical toys made by the children of Nhalpo and Moteyane's generation de-alienated the industrial products of a heavily militarized, racialist, capitalist society. Wire township toys were homemade, from found and familiar materials, and made by hand mostly for personal use. These elements all stood in dramatic contrast to the machined materials, factory labor, and military use of real-world army trucks.

The making of these toys derived from a desire to know, to understand and make sense of the very thing that violates. The children thus identified themselves with the signs of their own oppression, in a process partly related to what Anna Freud has described as 'identification with the aggressor.' Freud claimed it is normal, especially for children, to react to objects of anxiety by imitating them. In the case of toy police trucks the anxiety of a neighborhood under siege by police coalesced around the object of the police armored truck, which summed up the township predicament and imitated it in miniature. The toy

police truck was put through its paces in elaborate miniature towns drawn with sticks on the ground, or on the very real streets of Soweto if one was lucky enough to ride in one of Agrippa Nhlapo's Hippo go-carts. As a handmade toy the armored truck was in the hands of the kids and as such became part of the imaginary play world under their control, a place they could own and manipulate and shield, even while making a microcosm of a real world that threatened their safety. The small makers of these tiny trucks reversed the real order of the streets where, at least during the 1980s, the world and its police cars really was beyond their control. Thus the psychoanalyst's label 'identification with the aggressor' is insightful, but it only partly explains the making of these toys.

The trucks were obsessed over in minute but selective detail, such as the mechanical workings of rack and pinion steering as mentioned by Davison, or the spring shock absorbers in the story of the inqola competition (Figure 8.8). Their observational realism left out other details in favor of showing off the more ingenious and individualistic use of materials and the techniques of construction.[30] Wire cars are often see-through, or have parts that can be opened or pulled back to reveal the insides of the thing. The whole composition is thus usually left abstract, and firmly in the domain of the fantasy world of children who retain control over the ultimate form of the car. It is up to the child makers to fill in the blanks with imagination, to complete the story of what to make of, and what to do with, these infernal machines. Making a toy police truck see-through also helped make sense of the real thing. What is manipulated, tested, and challenged when children make these kinds of toys is therefore not a simple reflection or reenactment in miniature of the real world. It is, rather, a reflection upon the child's relationship to the real world. These toys do not reflect, they *reflect upon*. What they hold in the balance is the meaning of the world of authority and its signs, and its machines for war.

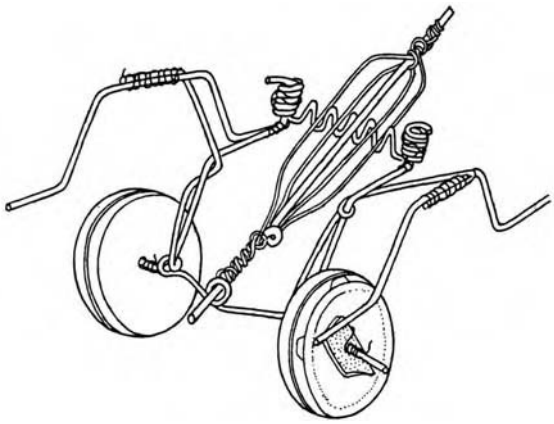

Figure 8.8 Front wheels of wire truck with rack and pinion steering (courtesy Patricia Davison).

Did anyone think at the time that by singing *nayi imello yello* its words might come true? Or that by some trick of sympathetic magic the real 'Hippos' could be commandeered by the people who as children had imitated them in wire? By 1994 the country had changed hands, and I was driving with friends in Soweto to the state funeral of Joe Slovo, white leader of the South African Communist Party. Slovo had also been head of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the army of the African National Congress, which had only recently been merged with the regular South African Defense Force. Cars and busses crammed with people streamed past us. Then we saw them. Mello-Yellos and Casspirs, and Hippos and Buffels painted that ugly bush war brown. They were speeding toward Orlando Stadium with scores of singing schoolchildren holding on to the outside (Figure 8.9). They were 'riding staff' on these armored trucks, township slang for 'getting a free ride' by hanging on the outside. They were heading to the funeral of a comrade and hero from their days of battling with the police. And these kids were still singing 'Nayi imello yello' but this time the other, the enemy, was a memory:

> Here comes mello yello,
> We'll be ready.
> Mother don't cry,
> because we'll gain victory over them.

Figure 8.9 Children 'riding staff' to the funeral of Joe Slovo in Soweto on January 15, 1995 (photo by John Peffer).

The scramble for Africus

When homemade-type toy cars leave the local economy of the neighborhood and the home and enter the tourist economy, the relationship of chosen materials to stylistic innovation and the potential for symbolic resistance are also altered. In the tourist economy the great demand for toys made from wire has led in some areas to the standardization of the materials used. Commercial sources for wire are found so as to keep up with demand for these toys, which are now bought by middle-class collectors as examples of ethnic art. One example of this trend is Africars™, a million Rand-plus crafts company specializing in commercial production of uniformly-shaped popular car models made of brightly colored vinyl-coated wire and pre-made plastic wheels. These are sold in the USA, Australia and Britain, as well as by cooperatives and street vendors in South Africa who present them as 'African toys.' Africars is owned by the Dreyer family, white farmers living in the Free State. According to their website,

> When the cars were initially manufactured, it was in an unskilled fashion, with about five employees. Today the employees are skilled, producing 2,000 to 3,000 handmade wire Africars that are replicas of popular marques, per month. There are 15 employees today, including a fulltime traveling representative.[31]

Africars does not make police trucks. Yet, these white former farm owners have made their former black farm workers' children's toys into big business. In a sense they have put these black families back to work making their own children's toys, except now they are made assembly-line style, by adults, as ethnic curios, and as a commodity for expatriate sale. At Africars the wire toys cross over from child to adult, from hand to factory, and from the personal to the public domains. There the symbolic, structural, and economic forms of violence from the old South Africa all return disguised as re-skilling poor people to work for a new South Africa.

Another cross-over from the personal to public domains took place on the grounds of the first Johannesburg Biennale in February 1995, in the Newtown area close to the central business district. This cross-over posed some poignant challenges to the kinds of structural violence that have continued into the post-apartheid era even after the demise of the police state. The Biennale initiative was launched at a time when the revolutionary struggle had ended and its images were becoming part of an expanding export economy in the realms of academia, art, and tourism. The event itself was intended to reinvigorate the visual arts and to herald the end of South Africa's seclusion from world art trends, a situation endured during the cultural boycott that was imposed by the United Nations in 1960. In the words of Christopher Till, Johannesburg Director of Culture during the late apartheid years and the Director of the Biennale, it showed that Johannesburg was indeed an 'international city' (Till 1995). Over

60 countries were represented. In an effort to claim international status for the Biennale, for South Africa, and for Johannesburg the event was named 'Africus: Johannesburg Biennale' in most of the official literature. This name angered members of the public, the press, and some of the local participating artists who thought that, considering the recent struggle for democracy, perhaps another more Afrocentric term would have been more appropriate for a South African art event. Instead the organizers opted for 'Africus,' a Roman word for the lands of north Africa.

One unique aspect of the Africus Biennale was its highly publicized outreach program, incorporating black artists from township 'community' schools. This township outreach program was emphasized in publicity, and in presentations to participating countries and to corporate and nonprofit organization sponsors, as holding promise for positive promotion potential. At the event itself it took a lot of looking to find the work of these artists. In terms of South African representation, black rural visionary sculptors and white university-trained conceptualist artists seemed to dominate. This division of labor was a species of structural violence, as it only re-created an old and false stereotype that frames art in terms of a spurious definition of race, where white artists are the 'intellectuals,' and black artists are 'intuitive' or colorful, and represent the 'community.'

A tremendous flow of money was poured into the Biennale, much of it left over from the apartheid-era cultural affairs budget, and the international attention that the event attracted was massive. Some artists bemoaned that the Biennale dried up the last bit of funds for the arts left in the old government-subsidy coffers. Interestingly, those middle-class artists and curators who had already been given access to overseas travel and connections and university education under apartheid were in the best position to take full advantage of the situation. Many of the top names in South African art presently on the international circuit, most of these white, really started clicking in 1995. There was plenty of maneuvering room, too, for ambitious young art students to get themselves included as exhibiting artists or as catalogue editors. After being hailed as the rationale for expenditure, the 'community' artists were mostly relegated to the back rooms and the fringe exhibitions. Then, a Mello-Yello was rolled right into the middle of this potentially volatile scene.

Since the 1980s a loose collective of young men from the Germiston industrial area south of Johannesburg had been making a small business of their art at the Katlehong Art Centre. In their thirties by 1995, they continued to use their boyhood skill at making wire toys to produce new and unique designs for the area craft markets. Some of the artists from the Katlehong Art Centre, using a grant from the Biennale, constructed a huge Casspir out of tubular steel and canvas, and placed it outside in a corner between exhibition halls for the duration of the event. As it hovered there, spectators could not be sure whether it was an affront to the whole event or just another art installation. It was based on the wire sculptures that children make, but this one was a striking full-size replica of a police vehicle, painted yellow with a light blue stripe around the middle. For the most part it stood silently in the grounds of the Biennale, protecting art from

unsavory elements. Its presence in town was a bit shocking, since these kinds of vehicles (whether toy or real) were rarely seen in the central city, which was coded as 'white' space under apartheid. Occasionally the artists made their installation even more obtrusive by tying a rope to its face and dragging it around the Biennale campus. Thus they occupied the space of the Biennale by using an image that epitomized the former military occupation of the black townships.

Theirs was not a Casspir, nor a Mello-Yello, not really. It was a gigantic wire car, a giant miniature. The collective from Katlehong had taken the kind of toy that helped them handle the violence of their township home, and made it into a spectacle for an international art fair in downtown Johannesburg. As a sort of billboard for third-world ethnic tourism this giant wire police truck shared some of the semantic qualities I have discussed in reference to mass-produced Africars. Tourists, as I was told repeatedly in South Africa, were only interested in 'the struggle, the lion, and the Zulu.' For Biennale visitors, then, the big toy Casspir signified 'the struggle.' It also represented 'children's crafts,' even though it was made by grown men. The Katlehong collective was clearly hoping to round up some big art business with their giant toy. They were also somewhat frozen in time, keeping themselves in a state of suspended animation by continuing to model children's games long into their adulthood. As such they were appropriate, if unfortunate, representatives of the larger generation of children who had missed out on school and on growing up without the threat of terror during the two decades of civil war that had swallowed so much of their lives. Their Casspir reproduced, this time as art world theatre, the somewhat masochistic relationship of township residents and police under apartheid. In her writing on 'the gigantic,' Susan Stewart paraphrases Guy DeBord in claiming that 'the spectacle in mass culture exists in a separateness which locates history outside lived reality at the same time that it locates lived reality within the realm of consumer time, outside the time of production' (Stewart 1984: 85). Following this idea, we could conclude that the gigantic toy Casspir displaced the lived time of apartheid's violence and masochism and horrific machines into the shallower image world (and the de-historicizing time frame) of spectacle and of commodities on display at the Biennale. Still, as a giant miniature the Katlehong Art Casspir also retained some of the multivalent quality of competition and identification characteristic of the small toys handled by township boys that were used to domesticate the frightening unknown and to work through the frustration of childhood desires during a state of siege.

The presence of this mocked-up version of the apartheid war machine on the grounds of the Biennale can also be read as commentary on a state of affairs that these men from Katlehong perceived to still be in place, including in the art world. The gigantic toy from Katlehong, placed in the context of the adult and cosmopolitan art arena, was, in my view, also a giant reflection upon the blinkered self-aggrandizement of the Africus Biennale enterprise itself. If that is more projection on my part than intentionality on theirs, at the least is it safe to say that the artists from Katlehong themselves meant to use the art event as a public

forum to broadcast their social concerns. Victor Mpopo, one of the Casspir builders, told me he wanted 'to depict the armored vehicles once used to crush the people . . . to show the international curators how the people are [living], and get them involved.' He wanted these curators to see the conditions he and his fellow artists are living in (and to support their work with funds for the Katlehong Art Centre): 'The outside world doesn't know these were used against people . . . In the township these armored vehicles are the only thing in the mind. Even a small boy knows the vehicle and what happens – you run away.'[32]

These artists believed that the Biennale curators and officials benefited but 'the people' weren't helped so much, and that few groups were properly represented by the selection (which did of course include them). The sculpture was vandalized after the Biennale, and I was told by the artists that part of it had been spotted (some wire figures of policemen from inside the truck) in a 'Chicken Liken' fast food commercial on TV. I was informed the vandalism and the fast food advertisement were part of an elaborate conspiracy – one in which the police and the Biennale officials were involved – to crush the hopes of the young black artists of Katlehong. Rebellious, and hungry, these men were determined to resist the remnants of the old political system and also to fight for a position in the rapidly expanding art market.

The biggest problem for the Biennale groundskeepers was the size of the mock Casspir. It simply would not go away. It was too big to be moved, and the artists, having not found a buyer for it, were unable to and uninterested in transporting it all the way back to Katlehong. They just left it standing in a field next to the Biennale buildings. Then one day it disappeared. I came into the Newtown cultural district after hearing the earlier stories of vandalism, wanting to see it for myself. Where could such a huge thing have gone? I found it in the Electric Workshop, an industrial building converted into an exhibition space (Figure 8.10). There it stood, alone, at the back of the empty hall like a discarded party favor, painted Day-Glo pink, with big black lettering scrawled in graffiti on one side: 'PRISCILLA QUEEN OF THE CATERERS.' These words were a playful reference to a recent Australian movie about transvestites on a road trip across the outback in 'Oz.'[33] Here the old-school apartheid rubbish was recycled, and re-seen. No longer yellow, and much more mellow, the war machine was domesticated back into (mostly) white society, this time as a policeman's prop done up in drag for the gay-pride ball.[34] Gay Pride '95 was the hottest event on the Jo'burg club circuit that weekend, and this pink hippopotamus of a transvestite police van was all made up and ready to party.

Postscript, and conclusions for the struggle and the image

Did homemade Casspirs and Hippos put some joy into the state of terror in South Africa's black townships after 1976? If they did, they achieved this in part by momentarily imagining something marvelous in the place of the truly horrific menace of the armored cars of the police. After 1976 the state had turned the townships, more than ever before, into highly policed zones. New methods for

Figure 8.10 'Casspir,' by the Katlehong Artists Collective, re-painted for the gay pride ball, September, 1995 (photo by John Peffer).

urban onslaught and new machines, like the Hippos, were introduced to daily terrorize and 'pacify' the residents in the black locations. Children ran from these monstrous vehicles of state repression. They also viewed the 'Hippos,' in particular, as fascinating technological beasts. In a paradoxical way, as Agrippa Nhlapo told me excitedly, the Hippo could be seen as responsible for terrorizing the youth, but equally well for liberating them from former paternalistic constraints of the family, from the hated Bantu education system, and from authority in general (Nhlapo, September 1995). These children under duress were able to have a little fun with the image of their oppressors. It should not be forgotten that for the average citizen the awesome technical aesthetic of the armored personnel carrier could be the cause of some excitement and visual pleasure, as well as terror-bringing. Still, we should not forget that children's fantastic solutions to the immediacy of violence in their environment, if repeatedly frustrated (for instance by real police aggression), might lead to more destructive forms of identification with the aggressor.[35]

In this chapter I have traced some of the movements of images of South African armored trucks through various media and different social contexts, marking the ways that audience and interpretation have shifted. My primary interest has been to note those instances when real-world violence has been displaced into visual and verbal signs, and the image of the oppressor is de-alienated in the process. There are images like that of the armored truck that in art or in song may stand in for forms of violence that are not depicted fully.

Such common types of references to the violence of the war machine, in South Africa and elsewhere, are something whose interpretation is not necessarily as transparent or stable as some progressive activists would wish. The sign for violence displaced onto the figure of the war machine may be useful as a tool for protest (and for private resistance), but it also must always be understood as contingent, strategic, and ultimately co-optable. While it is still in play, the image of violence is up for grabs, and the struggle continues.

In our present moment the violence of the state, whether in Africa or Asia or America, threatens to repeat the cruel games of the past. Now that the 'Cold War' has been replaced by the 'War on Terror,' how long will it be, for instance, before the children of Iraq play with model humvees as a way to handle living under a state of siege? That may not happen, if only because former technicians from the South African arms industry now work for Force Protection, a company in South Carolina that manufactures an armored personnel carrier with an unoriginal name: the 'Buffalo.' The Buffalo resembles the Casspir and it is being phased in for urban patrol work in Iraq (Lasker 2005). Iraqi militants are already making a game of it, though for South Africans this may seem like *déjà vu*. A recent *Washington Post* report on the 'new' Buffalo neglects to mention the direct South African connection, perhaps because any perceived link between the apartheid occupation of the black townships and the 'liberation' of Baghdad might prove embarrassing. The report does state that 'Fliers have appeared in Baghdad's Sadr City neighborhood instructing militants to "kill the Buffalo"' (Spinner 2005: A19).

Notes

1 This chapter is dedicated to Andrew Meintjes, photographer and inventor (1955–2004). My gratitude to Louise Bethlehem, Ruth Ginio, Sue Williamson, Mpho Mathebula, Abrie Fourie, Tumelo Mosaka, and Susan Greenspan for comments on earlier drafts; to Shaoqian Zhang, Amber Travis, and David Easterbrook for research help; to Veronica Stevens (at TheBiggerPicture.co.za) for assistance in tracking down images and rights; and to Skip Cole for inspiring me long ago to look further into the matter of wire toys from Africa. Research conducted with a Fulbright IIE dissertation grant contributed to this chapter.

2 Kwela is also the name for South Africa's pennywhistle jazz of the 1950s, whose notes spiral and 'climb.' For expanded definitions, see the illuminating entries for 'nylon', 'kwela-kwela', and 'mellow-yellow' in Silva *et al.* 1996.

3 Judy Seidman (1978: 126) also uses the term 'nylon' for a police van, in her poem written for the children of '76, titled 'Soweto': 'A playground/ Where hippos bark/ And nylons rip into the crowd/ And children die/ For hope to be born.'

4 The Saracen, made by Alvis Limited of Coventry UK, was also used by British troops in Northern Ireland during the 1960s. The name 'Saracen' refers broadly to the European term for 'Arab' Muslim fighters during the Crusades. For an early report on the events at Sharpeville see *Guardian* (1960).

5 Following the Afrikaans Medium Decree in 1974, mandatory study of Afrikaans and its use as a primary means of instruction in schools (in addition to English and an African language) became an impossible burden for black students. Black students were already frustrated by the large class sizes, restricted subject matter, and poor facilities allotted to them under the Bantu Education Act of 1953.

6 Pamela Reynolds (2000) claims the term 'lost generation' is too paternalistic, if not facilely sympathetic, and serves only to elide a more nuanced history of community relations surrounding these youth of the 1970s and 1980s. For other sensitive accounts of the 'young lions' during and after apartheid see Scheper-Hughes (2004), Mathabane (2000), and Ramphele (2000).
7 This paragraph borrows substantially from 'The Evolution of Policing Strategy' in Cawthra (1993: 7–44).
8 Large areas of Namibia and Angola are off limits today because the landmines laid down during the Cold War era are still in the ground. For further information on the global problem of landmines see www.mineaction.org.
9 The UN arms embargo against South Africa became mandatory in 1977.
10 The precursor to the Hippo was the Hyena, a smaller anti-mine troop transporter developed in 1972 for use by South African forces in South West Africa and Rhodesia. Except for the Casspir, the custom was to name these trucks after wild animals from the South African bush country. According to Peter Stiff (1986), actual wild elephants and hippopotami fared less well than the trucks that took their names in the minefields of Southern Africa's border wars. Further details on the Hippo, Buffel, and Casspir APCs may be found in Stiff (1986), Heitman (1988), and Foss (1990).
11 'Casspir' is an anagram of SAP and CSIR, a merging of the bodies involved in the development of the vehicle: South African Police, and Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, a government research and development unit.
12 For further official propaganda that foregrounds the image of the war machine, see the *South African Panorama* issues for April 1982, January 1984, May 1988, November 1988, and August 1989.
13 See for instance the lone picture of a Hippo truck on page 3 of *The Star* newspaper (Johannesburg) for June 18, 1976, which carried the caption, 'A police "Hippo," a personnel-carrying anti-riot vehicle, moving towards Soweto.'
14 Afrapix was a collective of freelance photographers in South Africa that operated between 1982–92 and was committed to nonracialism and to ending apartheid.
15 The subject of censorship in South Africa comprises a minor literature. For an introduction to the subject see Merret (1994), Brink (1983), and Coetzee (1996). For the intersection of progressive art and popular media against state censorship see Solomon *et al*. (1991); and The Poster Book Collective (1991).
16 For a number of significant chapters on the politics of representation during the 1980s in South Africa, and examples of art and literature from that period, see Bunn and Taylor (1987).
17 According to Sue Williamson (personal communication 2004), these trucks were also called 'Yellow Pages' in the Eastern Cape, a humorous name when one considers that phone books were commonly stolen from public phones for use as toilet paper in the townships.
18 Additional verses, Mpho Mathebula. Translation, Selope Maaga, Mpho Mathebula and the author, with assistance from Tumelo Mosaka. Greg Marinovich and Joao Silva (2000: 84), record another version of this same 'freedom song,' but do not credit their source: 'Here comes mellow yellow, yes ma, people are going to cry/ Here comes mellow yellow, yes ma, it brings troubles/ Mama, please don't cry/ Mama don't cry.'
19 According to Bonner and Segal (1998: 113), the *toyi-toyi* was a martial exercise that evolved into a taunting, celebratory dance at ANC rallies in South Africa.
20 A remarkable sculpture by Billy Mandindi, 'Fire games' (1985), is in the collection of the South African National Gallery (Iziko). It depicts the township landscape as a small game board, with guard towers and police trucks in the corners. Miniature coffins, a factory or prison and the words 'jail,' 'bank,' 'hell,' 'pass,' and 'go' fill the spaces in between. See Williamson (1989: 135).
21 My gratitude to Moona Enwezor for suggesting the relevance of Anna Freud's formulation for the study of images from apartheid's townships.

22 Davison claims that wire toys are important outlets for environmental tensions. Her article does not directly mention the making of model police trucks by African youth.
23 See, for instance, the wide range of styles, materials, and construction techniques for homemade African toy cars illustrated in Delaroziere and Massal (1999), Harms (1978), Lombard (1978), and Sieber (1980).
24 My gratitude to Emma Bedford and Sue Williamson for their aid in tracking down these images.
25 The open section near the top front of both toys may be where a steering wire (now lost) was once inserted. There is evidence of a connecting element for such a device on the front axles.
26 Moteyane grew up in Atteridgeville, in one of the many segregated black towns outside of the capital, Pretoria. He is best known for his brief moment of fame in the South African art world, when his work was included on Ricky Burnett's *Tributaries* exhibition for BMW in 1985. By then he had moved on from making wire cars to constructing large model Concorde and Pan Am 747 planes. He constructed these from metal sheet scrap and paint, covering a wire armature similar to the wire cars of his youth.
27 For a historiography and extension of the study of sympathetic magic to questions of culture contact and modern technology, see Taussig (1993).
28 From 'Police, Amy and the State of Emergency: The Killing Machine,' *Resister*, 41, January 1986, as reproduced in Cawthra *et al*. (1994: 106–7).
29 This is the position of most authors on the subject of African toys. For example, see Lombard (1978). See also Brett (1986) (who cites Lombard), and Seriff (1996) (who cites Brett).
30 This is also noted in Seriff (1996), and Brett (1986).
31 Accessible via the website: www.proudlysa.co.za.
32 Here and below, I paraphrase liberally from my group interview with the artist collective in Katlehong township. Earlier wire art from the Katlehong Art Centre may be seen in Museum of Modern Art, Oxford (1990: 83).
33 See Stephan Elliott, writer and director, *Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, 1994.
34 The extent to which the anti-Apartheid movement was anti-authoritarian and against intolerance more generally as much as it was anti-racist is often forgotten. There are many examples of white artists who refused to serve their mandatory time in the military, or made a mockery of their service. Wayne Barker claims he marched like Charlie Chaplin until given a discharge for being insane. Willem Boshoff spent his time during office duty typing out long treatises on pacifism in cryptic form. The End Conscription Campaign, whose membership included many young artists, especially in Cape Town, was prominent in the progressive United Democratic Front movement of the 1980s, and produced many of its more striking posters. Many gay South Africans too saw the struggle as offering the potential of a future more tolerant society. Being gay was not considered an excuse not to serve in the army. Gay conscripts were sometimes placed in a special *moffie* barracks and were treated in humiliating ways. ('Moffie,' lit. 'glove,' is Afrikaans slang for a foppish man.) Recent art by Clive Van den Berg, Drew Lindsay, Steven Cohen, Hentie Van der Merwe and others has critically engaged the issues of homosociality and violence in the army and in South African society generally.
35 For an exploration of the problem of mob violence in post-apartheid South Africa and its relation to popular justice and the history of duress among the 'young lions' of the struggle, see Scheper-Hughes (2004).

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9 Childhood in the shadow of violence

Kathorus, South Africa

Vanessa Barolsky

Introduction

> I saw about four people being killed in front of my eyes and as a young person I never got any counselling . . . And somehow my life wasn't ending there, I'm growing up. And some of these bad memories I take them, I grow with them . . .
>
> (Focus group 4, June 8, 2005: 11)

This chapter explores the experience of the child within the context of the conflicts of South Africa, a country which, despite its apparently extraordinarily redemptive recent past, continues to be scarred by the violence of its history. This is not redemption from violence or through violence but within violence. As Vogler and Markell ask, 'To survive violence, to find a way forward under its weight: is this less or more radical than to dream of overcoming violence in a final exceptional stroke?' (Vogler and Markell 2003: 3).

South African children have experienced extreme violence. According to Duncan and Rock, during the period from mid-1985 to 1989, between 8,000 and 9,000 children were killed, 1,000 wounded, 18,000 arrested for protesting and 173,000 were awaiting trial (cited in Lockhat and van Niekerk 2000: 295). However, to impute from these statistics of violation an inevitable pathology does little justice to the complexity of the subject-making processes of children in the context of atrocity and in the context of the transition from war to peace.

This analysis therefore investigates these complexities of subjectivity and negotiation of subjecthood among children from the Kathorus[1] sub-region of the East Rand, within a broader context of transition from a period of atrocious violence to an experience of contemporary Ekurhuleni, 'place of peace'. It explores how these interviewees, as subjects and authors of atrocity, have attempted to navigate the intricacies of subjecthood in the transition from war to peace, and examines their own efforts and aspirations to inscribe themselves in new regimes of power and new forms of social citizenship. The chapter explores these complexities of subjectivity *through* the narratives of children as they attempt to weave meaning and continuity over carnivals of cruelty, to link past

and present. It asks how children hold on to, let go, recover, let slip, develop and dream redemption in the shadow of violence.

A silent body: the politics of atrocity

This analysis understands the internalized violence of the period 1990–94 in South Africa, the violence of which the children in this chapter speak and attempt to interpret, as part of what Humphrey has described as a 'politics of atrocity' (Humphrey 2002). While the South African narrative of political violence has sought to constitute a radical disjuncture between power and violence, this chapter understands the extremity of violence of the immediate pre-1994 period, not as an aberration of the conventional 'rationalities' of political power, but as fundamentally constitutive of power. It is constitutive, in particular, of a specific articulation of power, what Foucault initially conceptualized of as 'sovereign power' (Foucault 1977) which effects in spectacles of atrocious violence against the body radical re-configurations of power. In these re-configurations of power are inhered radical re-configurations of meaning, critically a re-making of the social world in the nation-state-in-the-making where the contours of meaning, of membership, of citizenship and statehood are profoundly fluid and contested. In these contexts, excessive violence against the body can become a critical source of social signification, the body is remade as a political sign (Humphrey 2002) symbolising new, if deeply fragile and tenuous forms of power. This is a politics that inscribes and symbolises power in wounds carved on bodies, and one that is premised on the silence of the body constituted through atrocity. This understanding is significant for the evaluation of the narrative work of the children upon whom this chapter focuses.

Contrary to popular expectations, the opening up of the political process in South Africa was accompanied by a dramatic escalation of, rather than decline in, political violence. Between 1990 and 1994, political violence claimed the lives of approximately 14,000 people in South Africa nationally while during the preceding five years, 1984–89, no more than a quarter of this number died as a result of political conflict (Coleman 2002: 256). On the East Rand, approximately 3,000 people lost their lives over a period of four years after the opening up of the South African political process in 1990 and the un-banning of formerly prohibited organisations (Shaw 1997: 13).

Within the South African context, the politicized violence of the pre-election period appeared to constitute a particularly 'radical problem of understanding' in the words of political analyst André du Toit (1993: 2). Contemporary social analysts struggled to articulate the meanings of the violence, to grasp its significations, its rationalities, its forms of intention. Why were people turning to violence at the very moment when a democratic political process appeared imminent for the first time; why were the forms that violence was taking so profoundly transgressive, so spectacularly 'excessive'?

The four years between 1990 and 1994 were therefore marked by an apparent dichotomy between the co-operation and compromise taking place at a national

level, and the conflict ravaging many townships. The brutality and desperation of local politics often seemed far removed from the negotiations being held between national political parties. However, the processes of violence and negotiations were in fact integral to each other; the bloody war fought in local contexts secured the conditions of national peace. As Simpson argued at the time, negotiations became a means of working out the details of the transfer of power, while local political struggles became a means of attaining meaningful political control (Simpson 1993).

The 'dichotomy' of violence and negotiations and the 'radical problem of understanding' which the cruelties of this time presented were located within a profoundly instrumental understanding of the relationship between power and violence, an understanding in which violence could only be perceived of as an instrument of power, an object, wielded, weapon-like, in unproblematic service of power. Yet this was merely a strategic form of violence. In South African discourse, however, a purely strategic understanding of violence usurped the social narrative, what Du Toit referred to at the time as the 'master-narrative' of violence. Violence which did not manifest in strategic relation to power was rendered 'irrational', 'senseless', beyond investigation.

That social analysts, victims and witnesses alike, struggled to make sense of the atrocities of the pre-1994 period, is unsurprising for as Humphrey argues, 'while all violence threatens normative reality . . . excessive violence shakes the very foundations of both self and social existence' (Humphrey 2002: 3). The horror of atrocity thus produces a profound problem of comprehension, an unanchoring of meaning. Critically, for our purposes, the disjuncture of meaning precipitated by atrocity, founded on the silent bodies of its victims, creates a legacy of suffering that in the wake of violence can be appropriated for power, distorted by power.

South African President Thabo Mbeki, in a Letter from the President published in ANC Today in September 2004 marking ten years of South African democracy, recently claimed the East Rand as epitomizing the extraordinary nature of the South African transition and the cessation of violent political conflict as a result of the establishment of democratic governance in 1994 after 350 years of civil strife between colonized and colonizers:

> In 1994, areas such as KwaZulu-Natal and the present Ekurhuleni (East Rand) had been at the epicentre of the violence that claimed thousands of lives, as the apartheid system approached its demise. As we hold our 10th Anniversary elections in 2004, the masses of the people in both these areas would not allow anybody to drag them backwards into a situation of violence and war.
>
> (Mbeki 2004: n.p.)

It is against this background, the instrumentalization and political appropriation of the meaning of the experience of atrocity that this chapter attempts to hold onto the materiality of the child's experience as well as the ambiguity of this

experience in history, and to offer in witnessing this child's story, a more complex narrative. In the South African context, the complexity of the experience of atrocity and the memory of atrocity is harnessed, as Mbeki's comments illustrate, in support of categorical oppositions between a violent political past and a putatively pastoral present, oppositions which attempt to appropriate the silent body of trauma as the basis of contemporary political banality, a caricatured imagining of ourselves and our history.

These political appropriations of pain for power are made possible by the profoundly silencing effect of pain on the individual. The silencing effect of pain is significantly exacerbated if the pain we seek to recover was experienced in childhood, a phenomenological experience not easily represented in language, as evidenced by the testimony of the Kathorus interviewees. At the end of an interview in which three young people recounted stories of involvement in, and witnessing of, extraordinary violence more than ten years ago, they were asked whether they had shared these experiences with parents or family members. The collective negative response was emphatic: 'You know with us – we're coming from different families. But what we're saying is one; we're only saying no; as if we've planned it but we've never planned it' (Focus group 4: 13). In the experience of these young adults recollecting their childhood, pain has foreclosed the possibility of language. The dead body cannot speak at all. The 'body in pain' (Scarry 1985) struggles to 'speak' this pain in language, it screams, shouts, cries. How then to 'sign' pain? What cultural referents embody pain, what words form pain – hit, kick, stab, shoot, burn, kill? 'Assault', 'grievous bodily harm', the language of law, of institution appears long, leaden, vacant of the substance of terror. What words do children themselves use? They talk in elisions, they use the language of desire, of the ordinary, 'they did not want boy children' (Focus group 4: 1), 'they did not want to see boys' (Focus group 4: 4). Or they put words together to sign obliterative types of death, 'they were burnt down' (Interview E: 4), 'you gonna explode' (Focus group 3: 6).

In contexts of war, pain develops its own lingo, its own slang, it appropriates banalities of meaning of noun and verb and makes them designate terror: 'they light her' (Focus group 4: 11), 'the other two were necklaced'[2] (Focus group 4: 2), they were 'putting tyres' (Focus group 3: 6), 'drink petrol' (Focus group 3: 6). They put words together to form strings of horror, 'cut off heads of two' (Focus group 4: 2). They also use words, which indicate, refer to but do not describe the phenomenology of pain, 'they mutilate him' (Focus group 4: 4).

While pain precipitates a crisis of individual communication, it also precipitates a crisis of individual subjectivity. It contests, as Humphrey argues, 'the very basis of our phenomenological attachment to the world and our apprehension of it' (Humphrey 2002: 2). The experience of pain involves an 'unmaking of the world for the individual' (Scarry 1985 cited in Humphrey 2002), radically disputing forms of subjectivity based on the ordinary flows of everyday life, the discourses of culture, the norms which we assume regulate this 'everyday'. The narratives of the children in this project reflect this struggle of apprehension in

the wake of an experience of atrocity which has 'unmade' the everyday and in this unmaking, unmade the child.

Unmaking the child

> You know it's a story the things happening in this location, I will never forget it. Really people were dying like flies. People were eaten by dogs. Nobody took that body . . . when it's on our side or on the IFP side, people they are dying like dogs. And it was a sad story, you see old women dying, burning, putting tyres, drink petrol – you drink it after that we give you a cigarette. You know what is going to happen, you are gonna explode.
>
> (Focus group 3: 6)

The world that is described in this project is a world of extremis, a space, a place of seemingly irrevocable terror, a place in which the human is made animal, desacralized, mere flesh for dogs, the definitive boundaries of meaning which atrocity attempts to sign in the body, flowing away as the body's corporal identity dissipates. In respondents' narratives, gunfire rips across schoolyards and children flee and hide. They escape towards school gates, out of homes, they flatten themselves under desks, they conceal themselves in their homes, pressing small bodies to mattresses on floors as bullets shatter windows above. They play and stumble over corpses, they witness the conflagration of neighbours ritually set alight in 'necklace' murders: 'so they captured four Zulus; and then cut off heads of two and then the other two were necklaced' (Focus group 4: 2).

The everyday as we assume it appears to fall away, to retreat, to develop irrelevance. There is a radical disordering of the social world and a displacement of the 'ordinary' which re-emerges, as Das and Kleinman have observed, as something 'uncanny', something which has to be retrieved and recovered, not assumed or taken for granted. When 'the grounds on which trust in everyday life is built seem to disappear,' a feeling of extreme contingency results: 'everyday life is then something that has to be recovered in the face of a scepticism that surrounds it like a ditch' (Das *et al*. 2000: 8). The impact of war and of atrocity on the everyday, and the remaking of the everyday in the shadow of war, is palpable in the narratives of interviewees. School, sleep, play, the ordinary routines and physical spaces of childhood, are radically shattered and disputed by war.

The home, the conventional metaphor of childhood safety, is irrevocably reconfigured in this everyday as a site of war. This disputation of the ordinary, of the home, contests in war the meaning of childhood itself. Here, the putatively vulnerable, the putatively protected, namely the child, becomes the site of atrocious spectacles of violence:

> So they shot my brother and then asked my mother where the other boys were. She said there were no other boys, it was just that one . . . They left and then my brother was killed . . . Those things were still in my mind.
>
> (Focus group 4: 4)

The spaces and interstices of the home are reconstituted in war: its drainage, its ceilings, its gates, the family car, the refrigerator, now hiding places for weapons. The place of school as a space and site of the everyday in the ordinary realm of the child is also radically disputed: 'At Extension Two I only went to school for three days and then on the fourth day they said there was a schoolboy in school uniform and he was shot dead' (Focus group 4: 1).

This is a violence that also disputes the 'time' of the everyday. It inflects with fear and horror the ordinary times of childhood sleep and childhood play, contaminating the spaces of the childhood day. Thus the space of sleep is inscribed by violence, compelling children to lie prone on the floor to protect themselves against hurtling bullets or burning petrol bombs: 'We were no longer using the beds, we were sleeping on the floor with wet blankets' (Focus group 4: 2). As much as this is a violence, which violates sleep, it also violates play; it assaults the space of play with atrocious death:

> We were in the bush – it was myself, and four of my other friends. We liked playing with sling-shots, and as we were running one of my friends fell over a dead body. We went to call the elders and they said we must no longer play in the bush because a lot of things happened.
>
> (Focus group 4: 5)

It is a violence that does not allow play:

> I was told that by two o'clock I should be at home, I shouldn't go to the street, I shouldn't go to play with my friends . . . Then I sat there, and then it went on, there was just war, not understanding what it is all about.
>
> (Focus group 4: 7)

It is a violence, which reconfigures play, which constitutes war as play in the everyday of the child: 'then burning tyres every day just for fun' (Focus group 3: 3).

Making meaning and subjecthood in the wake of war

If the politics of atrocity attempts a radical constitution of the body as object, divested of self and voice, a subjecthood foreclosed by pain, if atrocity in these apocalyptic moments attempts to re-sign meaning through the silent body, how in the wake of atrocity do children attempt to take back meaning, how do they 're-do' meaning in the wake of violence, how do they recover the meaning of this silent body of atrocity? Critically it is through the recovery of voice, of language, of words that the silencing effect of atrocity, its divestitures of voice, the crisis of individual communication which it precipitates can be disputed. It is in this retrieval of voice that the redemptive possibilities of narration and the witnessing of narration are located.

Yet, these narratives of atrocity when recovered often appear pock-marked, scarred, artificial. What emerges in the witnessing of the experience of atrocity

seldom speaks a seamless narrative; however, as this project demonstrates, the emancipatory possibilities of narration and the witnessing of that narration lie less in the content of the story delivered, its inevitable inconsistencies of fact and circumstance, but in the process of the investiture of meaning, the weaving and re-weaving of meaning in and around the experience of atrocity that carries so much power for recovery.

The witnessing of the interviewees in this project reflect the struggle to deliver in narrative, memories divulged, often not in linear accounts but spat out, undigested, urgent, peppered through difficult attempts to render accounts of life in and around terror. The need to tell, to be heard, overtakes a measured account of events in chronological time. The experience of atrocity often appears inserted randomly, half-glimpsed in story lines which leap from one atrocious witnessing, participation or victimization to another and back again, completing previous stories, remembering new ones, 'It was a very sad story' (Focus group 3: 4), 'I would like to say a story' (Focus group 3: 11), 'it's many things' (Focus group 4: 1), 'a lot of things happened' (Focus group 4: 5). There is also much that the written word struggles to reflect and which was so significantly present in the interviews conducted for this project, in particular the sound of narratives, the cadences, the tenor, the raw delivery of unassimilated memory, the still-present terror, the silences, the anger. There is also the body of trauma, its gestures and its empty gazes, falling beyond the visibility of the page.

A mutable subject

Whatever the difficulties of these attempts to narrate and make meaning of the experience of atrocity, the narratives reflected here make evident that it is this process of investiture of meaning in the experience of atrocity which is critical to the shaping of childhood subjectivity in the wake of the experience of atrocity. The ways in which children make sense or fail to make sense of their roles in war shapes complex forms of subjectivity, of identity and citizenship. The narratives here reflect these delicate calibrations of subjectivity and subjecthood.

In their study of township youth, Straker *et al*. have thus argued that it is the difference in *meaning* attributed to the experience of violence, rather than the difference in the extent of empirical exposure to violence, that determines its affect (1996: 56). Violence to which meaning could not be assigned or which was experienced as 'senseless' was experienced as 'problematic'. Violence, however atrocious, which could be invested with purpose, the purpose of political liberation in particular, could literally be 'transcended', offering the possibility of a redemptive purpose *in* violence.[3]

In the interviews conducted for this project, children locate themselves in a complex array of subject positions in relation to the experience of violence. In their own narratives, children emerge as victims, subjected to violence, 'innocent', vulnerable, traumatized, drawn into horror that sits ineradicably in consciousness. Such narratives reflect children as powerless witnesses to violence, silent observers of extraordinary spectacles of horror, for whom the event

appears unmediated, like an experience out of time, out of meaning. The most intimate of losses, the loss of brother witnessed first hand, is recounted almost as an afterthought, an incident, a 'what next?' in an unfolding narrative: 'My one brother was hidden. But they found one and they hit him against the wall, at a corner of a house and he died. What else? It's many things' (Focus group 4: 1).

Here the experience of violence has remained frozen in time and memory, an experience of inassimilable horror, dredging grief but presenting no particular meaning in the present. It is offered to interviewers as a gift, a burden of memory that might make possible the 'lightening' of the weight of trauma and the yoke of memory on individual psyche, born invisibly on downward shoulders.

Many of the narratives also reflect the incomprehension, the naiveté of childhood in the face of the radical disputation of meaning by violence, 'nobody knew that there would be war … we were still young, we never had to think about war' (Focus group 4: 6), 'I knew nothing about war and guns; differences between IFP and ANC. I was not interested in those things, I would be a kid' (Focus group 3: 2–3), 'so somewhere somehow we were involved' (Focus group 4: 1).

However, the narratives here also reflect children as active participants in, and perpetrators of, violence. In these narratives the child emerges not only as the abject victim of atrocity, but as its perpetrator in a context where war has remade the social and in this context has remade the child. Children are armed, classrooms in schools are set aside for weapons. Adult teachers cower under violent attack, while boys shoulder their weapons for defence. In this defence they maim, injure and commit atrocity. Sometimes this experience of perpetration is reflected on with anguish, in terms of newly constituted subjectivities, which abhor murder and embrace the conventions of 'human rights' of the post-1994 democratic order: 'I think there are things, which we did which we shouldn't have done. There are innocent people who were killed, innocent people who were injured' (Interview, C: 12). In other instances, the experience of perpetration is recounted blandly, a catalogue, a disembodied narrative, dully recounted, emotionally void: 'Rapes, house-breakings and killings which didn't have a good reason. They didn't go with this whole thing which was going on … those people were executed' (Interview, E: 4). The gun, however, was not only a harbinger of naked power, of the ability to kill, but was for many children a means to win affirmation, to make out of the anonymous child a hero, a defender, a soldier:

> as young people during that time if I come across a bullet I would take it and put it in my pocket. And then if I come across those guys from my location who would be having guns … I would take a bullet and say I got this … after that I would feel as a hero, and they would make sure that; 'ja boy you are a hero'.
>
> (Focus group 4: 10)

Thus in the narratives of these survivors of atrocity, it is evident that the way in which the experience of atrocity has been assimilated into subjectivity and con-

sciousness differs from child to child. While for some children atrocity remains un-ameliorated by meaning, for other children the ideological framings of political struggle, the resources of political consciousness have made possible the mediation of the experience of trauma, through the construction of an assimilable narrative in and around this experience. This process of incorporation, of investiture of meaning in atrocity, requires an intricate narrativizing and renarrativizing of events, a constitution of cause and effects, of motives and intentions into a putatively coherent whole in which the experience of trauma has logic, meaning, inevitability and political identity.

The narratives of the child-soldier, children who were involved in informal defensive structures, what were known as self-defence units (SDUs) established across the East Rand as conflict intensified, reflect in particular these 'political' investitures of meaning in the experience of atrocity. The story of trauma in these narrativizations constitutes atrocity as an experience of battle, an experience, particularly, of manhood in battle. The perpetration of killing, the witnessing of atrocity are reflected in these narratives in terms of the sequences of battle, evoking the subjectivity of a soldier in combat, the martyr in sacrifice to community, not the child in abject victimhood.

The story of D[4] a young member of a defence structure in Katlehong, still in primary school at the time of the outbreak of political conflict on the East Rand, speaks to some of these processes of identity formation in the context of war. The protagonist who emerges here is not a child who experiences atrocity but a soldier with extraordinary battle skills, a soldier with a combat name, 'Scorpion', which masks and refutes the identity of the child. The narrative of atrocity unfolds less as an account of horror than a cinematic battle of antagonists and the heroic struggle of its central protagonist, D. In his narrative D emerges as a wily combatant engaged in the courageous tasks of battle, gathering arms for strategic 'operations', lying in wait for 'targets' (Interview, D: 4), the violence of his actions is embraced and claimed unequivocally as the bravery of a soldier, not the shame of the perpetrator or the abjection of the victim.

Attending a mass funeral after the killing of five students and a teacher at a Katlehong high school, D recalls his initial struggles to make sense of the unfolding conflict with its exhortations to war and violence:

> the speakers were saying these people killed our children, now it's the time for the community to attack, left, right and centre . . . So as a young person . . . I was like; what do these people mean that we have to attack left, right and centre?
>
> (Interview, D: 1)

D later participated in an attack on a taxi, in which the passengers, including a pregnant woman and her small child, died a gruesome death. Nearly three weeks of violence followed which reportedly left 50 people dead with a further 350 casualties (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2001: 131). D's narrative reveals a deeply complex subjectivity in which the horror of atrocity witnessed, his own

implication in atrocity, the valorization of this atrocity and the bewilderment of a child intermesh concurrently:

> that time it was not clear who we were fighting. What we know it was the taxi people . . . we threw stones, until it crashed . . . and that guy was killed, and he was burnt. That was the first time I saw a person burn.
>
> (Interview, D: 1–2)

On entering secondary school, D started to construct new subjectivities, new ideological framings, which could begin to make sense of his experience of violence in terms of the paradigm of political contention. In this narrative, clearly delineated antagonists and protagonists emerge out of the confusion of violent experience: '[W]hen I was in secondary that's when I started to be in political activities . . . that's when violence became clear that there is an IFP[5] organization fighting against the ANC' (Interview, D: 2).

As D fashioned new subjectivities around the experience of violence, he developed new subjectivities as an actor, a combatant in the conflict. He speaks with pride of his growing prowess in the instruments and skills of war, his abilities as combatant to kill in defence of a dying community: '[P]eople they were dying each and everyday, we wanted to protect our community. So by that time I think I was . . . confident in using a gun' (Interview, D: 4). This is a boy subject who in combat eschews the trivialities of youth, the pursuit of teenage sexuality, even its idle chatter, this is a protagonist who willingly submits himself to the disciplines and deprivations of a soldier, who offers his very identity, his intrinsic boyhood, his virginity to battle and through the offering of innocence to battle becomes fully man:

> we had rules – like you don't have to talk . . . basically you don't have to sleep with a woman. When you slept with a woman you have to go back and they wash you . . . you were supposed to be a young boy with a potential to be a man.
>
> (Interview, D: 4–5)

Thus the constitution of atrocity as an experience of battle, not childhood trauma, also constitutes a male subjectivity, a masculine identity, profoundly invested in and shaped by the experience of violence and the valorisation of violence, an experience of masculinity in which women are made object, property in war, abject to the totalizing power of the gun. As another male combatant explains:

> You know during those days, you can find young girls . . . actually that was a rape because no one was allowed to have sex with a young age . . . sixteen years . . . we are taking advantage . . . So if I want a girlfriend I might choose anyone, and say 'I want that one'. I say 'come here, if you don't like I slap you', she is crying and then I take [her] over to my place and do that,

> she'll sleep over. Because the family won't be worried so much because they know that 'if my child is with these SDUs nothing can happen'.
>
> (Focus group 3: 15)

The good citizen after 1994

How is subjectivity, which has been constituted in war, reconstituted in contexts of ostensible peace? How does the memory of trauma, of atrocity and death, mutate, shift and change in these contexts, how does it do so in contexts of continued suffering? How does memory change contexts itself, reconfiguring the social fabric in terms of subjectivities scarred by a legacy of atrocity? Is this memory, this experience of atrocity, left behind as a dark past, unremembered, fenced off from the conscious present, or does it become imprecated in the contemporary everyday? In what ways do the survivors of atrocity attempt to negotiate and make meaning of their survival, or fail to make meaning, and how do these investitures and failures of investiture speak to the nature of contemporary experience in Kathorus and in South Africa as a whole?

The process of subject making often appears far more complex in a democratic context. Interviewees reflect a struggle with the return of possibilities in this environment, new burdens of choice open up, the incontestable meanings of war retreat, the world appears far more diffuse, malleable and complex. The community recedes, the individual steps forwards, new forms of alienation emerge. Multiple possibilities of purpose and action become available:

> [I]t was a very frustrating moment; because . . . in our heads we thought we're gonna die, but before I die I want to fight for my community. Suddenly there's a change of heart now, there's a future, ANC has won the votes . . . now there are lots of challenges.
>
> (Interview, D: 12)

A new set of problematics emerges around how to engage as a citizen of peace, a 'good' subject in the new democracy, in a world fundamentally redefined. How to replace the duty to kill with the duties of good citizenship? What are the rights and obligations of such a subject, the subject of peace? How do new institutional contexts, new social framings interact with personal subjectivities in the attempt to constitute these moral citizens of the democracy, how do former combatants, those implicated in and subjected to atrocity, engage with the problematic of 'moral' citizenship in terms of the experience of atrocity, and confront the demand for integration into a new democratic environment?

This process of subject making in the democratic context may appear benign but it is not neutral. Foucault has charted shifts in the economies of punishment in Western European society from the spectacle of violence performed by a sovereign king designed to engender horror and subjection in crowds gathered at the scaffold, to a far more subtle form of social discipline, disciplinary power. This form of discipline seeks not only to punish the citizen, but to constitute the

citizen, a certain type of citizen, the 'good citizen'. In this context power takes on a new relation to individuals. It is internalized, rather than enforced from above in spectacles of physical violence. The individual carrying the norm in personal conscience becomes the guarantor of power, rather than the punitive force of law.

The narratives charted below speak to some of these efforts towards the constitution of a new form of subjectivity, which inscribe the good citizen of the democratic society in networks of power, which would not, ideally, always require the punition of law. Obviously, the process of inscription of the 'South African' as a new type of citizen invested with a particular form of conscience, articulated perhaps most cogently in the democracy's founding constitution, is unevenly incorporated in individual subjectivity and is still profoundly contested. Nevertheless, these narratives speak to the manner in which South African citizens themselves negotiate with and attempt to inscribe the experience of atrocity within the context of new subjectivities, wrought in the post-1994 context that would abhor the spectacle of violence as arbiter of order. H, a former child combatant and local youth leader in Phola Park,[6] talks of some of the processes of the constitution of the 'good citizen', the 'rehabilitated' citizen and the possibility of the reclamation of the repudiated subject, fallen, through the experience of atrocity, beyond society and beyond norms. He argues for the possibility of change in terms of the life of J, another former child combatant, implicated in and witness to appalling atrocity during the 1990s and who, like many others, carried this atrocity into democracy, becoming involved in violent crime and drug abuse after 1994. In the prospect of change lies the possibility of renewal in terms of the norms of peace, the skills of peace, the expertise of good citizenship:

> I . . . believe that he would change somehow . . . he managed to pull out and he is okay. He is doing the right thing . . . he is good J now. He is good. He has been through a lot, he knows all the tricks . . . And you know we started afresh to restructure his life . . .
>
> (Focus group 4: 17)

'Good' young citizens develop new sensitivities to the calibration of legality in a democratic society and willingly inscribe themselves in new regimes of regulation. They 'retool' themselves in a manner appropriate to the democratic context. They abandon the gun and the expertise of the gun, and acquire instead the skills of economic advancement. These skills, like the techniques of the gun, become embedded in identity, constituting a new citizen of peace, a citizen bureaucratized, qualified and contained:

> [T]he computer literacy is no longer regarded as part of the qualifications, but part of ability. In other words it's computer, driver's licence, it's your ID, and what else? Those we don't regard them as qualifications, they form part of your identity.
>
> (Interview, Matema, April 26, 2005: 3)

The ascription of roles and identities in a democratic context is far from simple. While there are institutional framings of the kind of subject who may be recovered, in delineating the possibility of this recovery, the boundaries of good citizenship are demarcated in opposition to the spectre of failed subjects who have not divested themselves of the carnage of the past or 'reworked' themselves in accordance with the qualifications of new citizenship: '[T]hey want certain qualifications. You don't have any qualifications. The only thing that you have is the experience to fight, you can shoot' (Focus group 3: 7). The hero of war in his or her failure to become a successful subject of peace embodies war in peace, violence in harmony. This individual becomes in peace a reviled memento of the past, a laughing stock: 'you are a laughing thing now when you pass by'(Focus group 1: 20). The subject who refutes the subjecthood of peace is made object: 'Personally he feels useless that he became a killer at a young age' (Focus group 5: 10). These 'lost subjects' of the present are configured now as a contemporary social problem, the 'abnormal', the 'criminal'; personifying, in their failure of subjecthood, the lingering contamination of violence: 'I'm just kind of fighting that point [that we are mad] because there is a point of saying that we're the lost generation' (Focus group 1: 5).

What is the inheritance that this experience of war leaves us? Against the political appropriations of the meaning of this atrocity, are the experiences of contemporary children:

> There is not one young person who has not been affected by the past violence . . . This was never sorted out and, come '94, when we were speaking of the rainbow nation, people forgot their pain. But, this is still acted out, in a mad kind of way.
>
> (Interview, Khosa, April 20, 2005: 1)

Memories of war inscribed in landscapes experienced as sites of war, memories of atrocity instilled in subjectivity as trauma, continue to configure the experience of the present for many young Ekurhuleni residents, a present that continues to retreat in face of the intensities of the past: '[Y]ou will find that during that time of war a lot went on, and now is the [present] and that person still dwells in the past' (Focus group 3: 17).

Recovering the child

What conclusions can be drawn from this tracing of the narratives of children around the experience of atrocity in South Africa? In many ways the narratives reflected here dispute the notion of conclusion, point instead to a continuation, a continuation of investment of meaning in the experience of atrocity, a continuation of the trauma of this atrocity, the legacy of suffering which it has invoked and a continuation of the process of suffering itself which, in the post-1994 context, layers along with the possibilities of this democracy, new sufferings, new violations and new depredations. The child as subject of war and

subject of peace, continues, and in the continuing from a state of war to a state of 'peace' grows into a complex, difficult subjecthood and adulthood under this shifting weight of context. The mind shaped by war during childhood cannot forget the blood of which it was born, often does not know how to forget, to forgo this more putrid past. In these difficulties of forgetting is an intrinsic refusal of the banal political appropriations of this blood of history for triumphalist aspirations and complacent social narratives.

Despite the ongoing social suffering of the contemporary child, the narratives I have documented attest to hope and possibility, the redemptive possibilities which exist in the shadow of violence, in the making meaning of violence, in the appropriation and re-appropriation of subjecthood in and around violence, in the disputation of the silence of the bodies constituted through atrocity, in the disputation of the distorted narratives invested in these silent bodies. These narratives thus attest not only to a continuation of suffering, but to a continuation of healing, a continuation of hope, the salving of subjectivity and ultimately the salving of the social, through the process of witnessing, and through the capacity of children to make of their own violation something malleable and redemptive.

Notes

1 Kathorus refers to a collection of three townships, Katlehong, Thokoza and Vosloorus, located in the former sub-region of the East Rand adjacent to the greater metropolitan area of Johannesburg, South Africa which have now been incorporated into the municipality of Ekurhuleni, meaning 'Place of Peace'. Ekurhuleni is one of South Africa's most industrialized areas and was the site of some of the most extraordinary levels of politicized violence during the four-year period preceding South Africa's first democratic elections.
2 Colloquialism referring to a form of violence which usually involves placing a tyre soaked in petrol around the victim's body and setting it alight.
3 Straker *et al*. accordingly write of young people who 'saw this violence as having a clear political objective and thus imbued it with transcendent meaning' (1996: 53).
4 Not a real name. All participants in this project were interviewed in terms of the principles of anonymity and confidentiality.
5 IFP is an acronym for the Inkatha Freedom Party, a regionally based cultural organization, which re-launched itself as a national political party in 1990 after the opening up of the political process and in this context became involved in a direct political contest with the recently unrestricted African National Congress.
6 Phola Park is a large informal settlement adjacent to Thokoza township, which is one of the three townships comprising the former 'Kathorus' sub-region of the East Rand.

Focus groups and interviews

Focus group 1 (Focus group with male SDU members, Katlehong) April 12, 2005.
Focus group 3 (Focus group with young male residents of Phola Park and Thokoza) May 24, 2005.
Focus group 4 (Focus group with young male and female residents of Phola Park) June 8, 2005.
Focus group 5 (Focus group with young male and female residents of Katlehong) April 26, 2005.

Interview, C, SDU member and social worker, Katlehong, March 25, 2005.
Interview, D, young SDU member, Katlehong, June 23, 2005.
Interview, E, SDU leader, Katlehong, April 20, 2005.
Interview, Khosa, D. (2005, April 20) Youth Programme Manager, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation. Personal interview.
Interview, Matema, C. (2005, April 26) Inspector. Katlehong police. Focus group interview.
Interview, Ramokgopa, T. (2005, January 18) Director, Khanya Family Centre. Personal interview.

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10 To Live, With It

Adam Sitze

> Rights aren't created by codes and pronouncements but by jurisprudence. Jurisprudence is the philosophy of law, and deals with singularities, it advances by working out from singularities.
>
> Gilles Deleuze, 1988

> People are already thinking about establishing a system of law for modern biology; but everything in modern biology and the new situations it creates, the new courses of events it makes possible, is a matter of jurisprudence.
>
> Gilles Deleuze, 1990

'Denialism' is the name that South African HIV/AIDS activists have given to President Thabo Mbeki's refusal to concede that HIV is the cause of AIDS, and to the biopolitical effects of this refusal in South Africa since 1999 (Cameron 2005: 117). Many activists have rightly opposed Mbeki's denialism on the basis of accepted scientific norms, calling Mbeki's flirtation with pseudoscience by its name. But as indispensable as scientific literacy is in the struggle against denialism, denialism is not reducible to Mbeki's distortion of science. If denialism is, at root, a name for *the power to refuse poor people living with HIV/AIDS the power to live*, then we are obliged to conclude that denialism describes a global situation involving a *host* of institutions of corporate and state sovereignty (Sitze 2004: 769–811). On this view, the problem posed by denialism cannot be restricted to the malicious stupidity of unscientific theory; nor can it be limited to the active inaction of a single executive branch. On the contrary, denialism must be understood as a violent political rationality that is constitutive of the same capitalist globalism praised so ecstatically and unthinkingly by the neoliberal advocates of financial and telecommunicative connectivity. Denialism is violent because it marks a consensus, mostly unspoken, but occasionally explicitly articulated, among globalism's most powerful institutions, to let poor people with HIV/AIDS die. The existence of this consensus is no conspiracy theory: as Anne-Christine D'Adesky has shown, it came into being through a set of datable decisions made at definite points within the bureaucracies of specific corporations, states, and international organizations (D'Adesky 2004: 319–24). These decisions were not necessary or inevitable; they were not the result of natural

forces. They were grounded in a specific theory about the value of 'naked life' in and for capitalist political economy, and they would not have been effective if the extra-legal forces specific to institutions of sovereign power had not imposed them.[1] Denialism's deadly effects are certainly empirically verifiable, but because denialism's primary force derives from the principles of a specific political economic rationality, empiricism alone will not be sufficient to grasp its violence. Denialism is an instance of what Étienne Balibar calls 'cruelty without a face' (2002: 143), Michel Foucault calls 'indirect murder' (2003: 256, cf. 254), and Warren Montag calls 'market death' (2005: 14–17). To contest its dominance today requires not only pragmatic political action but also a dispute over its most basic political economic and ontological principles.

Implied in this dispute is a fundamental question about late modern conceptions of the relation between law and life. The strongest and most principled argument against denialism is that it violates the right to life of poor people living with HIV/AIDS (Achmat 2004: 76–84). This argument remains imperative today – moral law obliges us to offer it in our own voice – yet it also entails a very definite risk. The claim to the right to life, when lodged in opposition to denialism, amounts to a claim to a right to have access to the means of health (or, more precisely, to antiretroviral treatments capable of supplementing the body's immune system). This claim implies a specific concept of life, namely, that an intact immune system is a bare necessity of life itself. This concept of life is, in turn, adjacent to the main premise of human rights discourse, namely, that the preservation of human life is, at root, a sacred duty. To be immune is not only to be safe and sound, unscathed by any damage; it is also to be inviolable, sacrosanct, holy. Immunity marks the limit at which religious salvation and biological good health become indistinct (Derrida 1998: 49–51, 69–70, 72–3). But just as the concept of sacred human life is less *the antidote* to the sovereign power to kill with impunity than *that power's most productive biopolitical principle* (Agamben 1998: 83), so too does the paradigm of immunity expose the right of life to its opposite. Insofar as claims to the right to life remain modeled on the right of immunity, those claims risk not only *recapitulating* but also *capitulating to* the principles of the same institutions of sovereign power that today so liberally exercise the power to let die. This risk may *only* be a risk, in that it is not an inexorable inevitability. But its fundamental status requires us to think carefully about the way in which we understand the theories and practices of civil disobedience that have characterized the struggle for access to HIV/AIDS treatments; and its adjacency to the problem of *homo sacer* obliges us to raise a number of questions that press the limits of contemporary human rights discourse. Is there a way to understand struggles over the right to life that would not be grounded in, modeled on, or derived from the privileges of sovereign power? What kind of living, and what kind of politics, might be at stake when the identity of life and immunity can no longer be presupposed?

* * *

To enter into this question, let us first step back and consider the problem of immunity on its own terms. Immunity is one of the basic modern concepts available for understanding the life at stake in the right to life itself. For the discipline of immunology, which, not insignificantly, emerged at a moment of high imperialism, the living organism was, as it was for nineteenth-century physiology more generally, an open system that constantly internalized its outside (Haraway 1991: 203–30). To live was to maintain the homeostasis of this open system, which is to say, to secure its constancy and stability in the face of the constant threat of toxins the incorporation of which could slow or even shut the living system down. Immunology took as its object of knowledge that set of highly flexible and diverse subset of systems within the living organism that function to preserve life by means of antitoxins. Immunology conceived of the relation of toxins to anti-toxins not only as a constant war within the organism itself (replete with invasions, mobilizations, and so on), but also as an encounter in which the definitive limit of the organism itself could be established. Anti-toxins not only preserve the homeostasis of the organism but also secure its identity. The immune system is that subset of the living organism that decides friend from enemy through a constant *polemos* of a microscopic scale (see Bateson and Goldsby 1988: 25–34, and Waldby 1996). From immunology, we receive a concept of life that remains with us today. Life, for immunology, is the achievement of relative security in an environment that is threatening to the degree that life itself must remain open to it.

Immunology's specifically jurisprudential significance is that its study of the living organism is modeled on the legal concept of exemption (Arthur Silverstein 1989: 1, 5). Exemption has a distinct place and function in the logic of sovereignty. In his 1978 lectures on the theme of 'Security, Territory, and Population,' Michel Foucault offered a concise definition of sovereignty based on the concept of 'the fisc,' which is to say, the sacred common good that is both *the subject* and *the object* of the sovereign political community. Tacitly citing Ernst Kantorowicz's argument that, with the nascent sovereignty of the secular state, the fisc that had formerly belonged to the Church, 'finally became a goal in itself' (Kantorowicz 1957: 189), Foucault argues that political sovereignty is defined by a perfectly circular logic.

> What characterizes the end of sovereignty, the common and general good, is in sum nothing other than submission to sovereignty. This means that the end of sovereignty is the exercise of sovereignty. The good is obedience to the law, hence the good for sovereignty is that people should obey it. This is an essential circularity.
>
> (Foucault 2000: 210)

In his 2003 book *Jurisprudence of Emergency,* Nasser Hussain gives a decisive twist to this circularity. Hussain shows how the self-evidence that guards the intelligibility of the tautology 'rule of law' is stripped away once we understand law in relation to the logic of empire (2003: 3–5, 11, 13, 16). By studying the way colonial jurisprudence is structured around the anticipation of law's own

failure, Hussain shows how colonialism not only brings law's circularity to the surface but also turns it inside out. Because colonial law must revert to emergency clauses, martial law, police powers, and extra-legal administrative apparatuses more regularly than metropolitan law, we find in the colony a more intense and more explicit manifestation of a contradiction that in the metropole remains only more or less latent.[2] In the colony, we find that metropolitan law's internal circularity is only valid or credible under conditions where extra-legal institutional supports (such as corporations, police and military forces, and bureaucracies) already administer sovereignty.[3] The outside of law is here its internal substance; the subject of sovereign power no longer coincides with its object. Hussain's genealogy of sovereignty explains why Agamben is able to argue that 'the sovereign *legally* places himself outside the law' and that '[t]he law is outside itself' (1999: 161). Sovereignty, for both Hussain and Agamben, is not so much *a self-referring circle* as *a Möbius strip*, a plane the outside of which is continuous with its inside. Translated back into Foucault's discussion of the fisc, this approach to sovereign power acquires a very specific meaning. If the essential circularity of sovereign power consists in its departure from and return to the fisc, then the sovereign power the circularity of which turns inside out – that is to say, the sovereign power that, particularly under colonial conditions, places law outside itself – will gain its sense precisely by its relationship to immunity.

Perhaps even more than the sacred, then, immunity provides sovereignty with its most basic paradigm. Émile Benveniste suggests that the adjective *immunis* originally described a gesture of refusal in a gift economy. The *munus* at the root of *immunis* indicated a gift given by a magistrate that one was dutifully obliged to reciprocate (1969: 96). A *communitas*, in this sense, is nothing other than an ensemble of people who have *munia* in common, or, put differently, an ensemble of people who are bound by relations of reciprocity (ibid.: 96–7; Derrida 1998: 72–3). *Immunis*, by contrast, describes one who does not fulfill his or her obligation to so reciprocate. In this relation of gift without return, Benveniste suggests, *immunis* has parallels to other gift economies, such as *hostis* (which gives rise to 'hospitality' and 'hosting,' but also to 'hostility' and 'parasitism') and *gratia* (which gives rise to 'gratitude,' 'gratuity,' and 'grace' [ibid.: 96, 199–200]). *Immunis* retains its relation to the gift in its contemporary iterations. In a political sense, immunity names the privilege of participating in the fisc without also being subject to the laws that define that participation (such as, for example, the modes of taxation Achille Mbembe describes in his analysis of private indirect sovereignty, 2001: 89–94). As one of the basic privileges of modern political governance, immunity is then a name for a nonreciprocal relation of power: it designates the privilege to receive without giving and to give without receiving. To call this nonreciprocal relation a 'privilege' is to emphasize that the immune is that which avoids the risk of reversibility to which every power relation remains vulnerable insofar it is a relation of power and not a relation of violence (Foucault 2000: 340–42). Immunity, we might even say, is *an exemption from the reversibility that is the mark of any real act of resistance* (Balibar 2004: 106). Approached in this manner, immunity marks an extremely

interesting threshold for the analysis of violence, nonviolence, and power. Insofar as relations of immunity are, more precisely, non-reciprocal relations, the immune can no longer be considered a relation of power. Yet even though the violation of law implicit in the exercise or conferral of immunity is similar to an act of violence, since its force cries out for some form of legitimation, immunity cannot be considered an act of violence either: it need not entail a relation of instrumental force.[4] Neither a relation of power nor an act of violence, immunity is perhaps only *that form of non-relation which emerges where there is no longer a way to distinguish between relations of power and acts of violence*. Though this formulation may sound abstract, it actually describes a very concrete phenomenon. Because immunity establishes the conditions of possibility for acts that are as nonreciprocal as they are nonlegitimate, immunity is the institutional precondition for the capacity to kill with impunity, which is arguably the hallmark of both post-colonial and metropolitan sovereignty.[5] Immunity is perhaps even the basic form of *privilege itself*, if by 'privilege' we mean the legal distinction of being without (*privi–*) law (*legium*).[6] Sovereign states grant this privilege not only to those elected public officials whose salary is paid by taxes and whose duty it is to maintain the fisc and to represent the common good, but also to the police and security forces who are charged by the executive to keep the peace even, and especially, in the absence of law.[7] Because it is very often these same police and security forces whose privileges of immunity facilitate their commission of crimes against humanity – because *assumptions of immunity* very quickly turn into *presumptions of impunity* – immunity understandably remains among the most contested and important problems in international humanitarian law today (see Simpson 2004: 87). If sovereign power is that power which is capable of placing itself outside of the same law it applies, and if the fisc is law's internal point of application whenever and wherever it regulates the *salus publica* or public good, then sovereign power will be precisely a power of immunity: it will be a power to remain exempt from the same law it also applies (see, for example, Butler 2004: 61).

* * *

Antonio Negri has argued that current global governance depends for its power upon a specifically biopolitical relation between law and life (Negri 2005: 29, 32, 39). The struggle against denialism, as a struggle for the right to have access to the means of immunity, implies a relation of this type not only in its pragmatic politics but also in its very principle. The immunological approach to life stands in stark contrast to the concept of life that emerged with the discipline of virology in the 1950s and 1960s. The claim of virology is that viruses are a new and singular form of life. 'Viruses have no metabolic systems, they have no intrinsic motility, they cannot respond to stimuli, and they do not grow in the normal usual sense. The ability to maintain genetic continuity, with the possibility for mutation, is the only basis for considering viruses to be alive' (Hughes 1977: ix). Viruses can only replicate their genetic material by becoming a func-

tional part of the cell they infect. With the emergence of the concept of the virus, a new limit concept for life appears, and with that new limit concept, a new definition of life itself. For virology, the basic unit of life is no longer cellular, but genetic; the sufficient condition of life is no longer movement, growth, or mitosis, but replication. Whatever can transmit its genetic information through replication must be considered alive (ibid.: 78, 91, 101, 106).

With the isolation of the HI retrovirus in 1983 and 1984, the immunological and virological concepts of life entered into relation. HIV lives by becoming immune from the immune system. It turns itself into a part of the immune system's own replication of DNA; it disables the life secured by the immune system by entering into that system from its very center. It consists of a set of nonliving molecules that acquires its only attribute of life–replication – by disabling the very system that maintains the constancy and identity of its host (see Bateson and Goldsby 1988: 51–61). The immediate and initial relation between the HI retrovirus and the immune system is thus a relation of mutual exclusivity. The HI retrovirus's capacity to live is directly opposed to the immune system's capacity to exempt the complex organism from an environment that is, as a rule, hostile to life. Understood from the limited perspective of the biological sciences, then, someone living with HIV could only be someone whose capacity for life is deficient and diminished. Unless someone living with HIV is able to slow or stall the virus's replication, the virus will cut life short, ending a *bios* before its time.

This ability has existed at least since 1989, when years of effort on the part of AIDS activists culminated in the release of AZT (Treichler 1999: 278–314). During the 1990s, antiretroviral treatments became even more effective and even less toxic. With the emergence of these *supplemental techniques of immunity*, it became both possible and valid to say that HIV/AIDS was no longer necessarily a death sentence. Yet the potentialities of these techniques have been undercut by the social, legal, and political conditions into which they emerged. The purely technical program of the chemical compounds that constitute antiretrovirals – to slow or stall the replication of the HI virus wherever they come into contact with it – has been restricted by the very corporations that produce these compounds for the purpose of profit. Under these circumstances, in which corporations limit the life-saving potentialities of antiretrovirals simply in order to claim antiretrovirals as property, we must rethink what we mean by immunity. Under conditions where immunity is not only a *supplemental power to live* but also a *commodity in a global marketplace* and *a hallmark of sovereign power*, immunity becomes a metonym for what Foucault called 'biopower,' which is to say, the sovereign power to make live.[8] Where there is no rigorous way to distinguish HIV/AIDS as a *medical condition* from the *political economic conditions* that, artificially correlating health and profit, directly affect the rate of HIV's replication in the bodies of those living with it, the very notion of the immune system undergoes an irreversible change. The deficiency of a given immune system can no longer be thought exclusively as the object of the biological sciences. The possibility that someone with HIV/AIDS might die can only be thought today in relation to a global *dispositif* of law and life in which some,

more than others, acquire the supplemental power to live. The immune system today is not only a biological fact, but is also, perhaps even primarily, an effect of the unequal distribution of biopower by the laws of neoliberal capitalism. The events that define the critical thresholds of the immune system can no longer be limited to victories or defeats in microscopic wars between toxins and anti-toxins. The necessary condition for the study of the immune system is now an understanding of the cold violence of modern racism – which is to say, the sovereign power *to withdraw the means of immunity altogether*, or, in a word, the power *to let die*. In contemporary South Africa, where the difference between private insurance and public health-care repeats without much difference the racially defined privileges that constituted the more recognizable hot racism of apartheid (see Achmat 2004: 76, 81; Cameron 2005: 110), the immune system becomes the object of a very definite political struggle. It designates that set of power relations in which *the laws of the deregulated market* and *the extra-legal powers of the sovereign state* directly touch and constitute *the condition of life itself*. HIV/AIDS is here not only a medical condition. It is more fundamentally a *biopolitical condition* the very substance of which is constituted both in its quality and in its quantity by institutions of state and corporate sovereignty.

* * *

> Human rights are axioms. They can coexist on the market with many other axioms, notably those concerning the security of property, which are unaware of or suspend them even more than they contradict them: 'the impure mixture or the impure side by side,' said Nietzsche. Who but the police and the armed forces that coexist with democracies can control and manage poverty and the deterritorialization–reterritorialization of shanty towns? What social democracy has not given the order to fire when the poor come out of their territory or ghetto? Rights save neither men nor a philosophy that is reterritorialized on the democratic State. Human rights will not make us bless capitalism . . . Human rights say nothing about the immanent modes of existence of people provided with rights.
>
> (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, 1991)

By approaching the problem of immunity in this manner, we become able to name the principles of security, protection, health, and exemption that are shared both by *a certain form of law* (sovereignty) and *a certain form of life* (the subject of immunology); and to grasp this sharing on *a single plane of immanence* in order to discern the threshold at which it becomes *a relation of violence*. We are also in a position to understand how South African HIV/AIDS activists succeeded in turning this relation of violence into *a relation of democratic dispute*; and to recognize that this dispute implied *a refusal* of the notion that immunity is a gift or privilege and *an affirmation* of a singular, and decidedly non-sovereign, concept of the right to life.

In 2003, the leading institutions of global mass media focused considerable

attention on TAC chairperson Zackie Achmat's pledge not to take ARVs before they became available in the South African public health-care system.[9] Precisely because of the hagiographic quality of this attention, which obscures the character of the TAC as a broad grass-roots movement, it is has become necessary to re-think Achmat's interventions on the basis of his own writing. By the latter, I mean the texts Achmat published on sex, politics, and representation around the same time he founded the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality. Even as the very best of the recent hagiographies take pains to include mentions of Achmat's six months as a male prostitute, they for some reason treat as unspeakable his years as a critical theorist (see Powers 2003: 54). The implication of this foreclosure is that one cannot both *be* a martyr (as the hagiographies assume Achmat is) and *offer a critical theory of* martyrdom (as Achmat has done in his writing), as if the aura and authenticity of political sacrifice would be somehow conjured away by an explicit account of the mechanisms by which such effects are produced.

In an odd way, this implication is entirely consistent with the arguments of the refused texts themselves. In his 1994 'Off The Control Track: Power, Resistance, and Representation in South African Documentaries,' Achmat offers 'a theorization and critique of ideas which invoke suffering, sacrifice, and death as necessary for liberation' (2004 [1994]). He focuses, in particular, on the matrices of power and knowledge that, prior to any pure source of popular memory, make possible the documentary filmic narration of the anti-apartheid struggle as an 'unarmed people prepared to confront the mightiest military force on the African continent with the power of *their own death*' (ibid.: part I, emphasis in original). His critique of this matrix is that, by configuring death as sacrifice, it recuperates from death a surplus value, in the form of the signifier of the martyr, that documentary film essentially enjoys and exploits. The immanent power of these signifiers, Achmat suggests, is their capacity to haunt – to 'possess' the subject that witnesses them.[10]

At the close of Achmat's chapter – which, like his 1995 'My Childhood as an Adult Molester,' ends with an explicit emphasis on beginning[11] – his text takes a meta-critical turn. As if the chapter had been directed, all along, against the Greco-Roman-Christian metaphysic that translates martyrdom into witnessing, substitutes testimony for witnessing, and derives protest from testimony, Achmat's critique of the content of anti-apartheid documentaries enters into a re-theorization of the way that martyrdom is inscribed in the testamentary form of protest documentary itself. Acknowledging that the 'mimetic approximation to truth' that defines the documentary form is 'derived from the experience of suffering, repression, and death,' Achmat suggests that this mimeticism is *itself generative of* the sacrificial cycle of violence it claims merely to represent. The documentary emphasis on martyrdom, he argues, 'may in fact be the constant reinvention of the originary trauma of colonial wars and conquest, racial domination, gender and class inequalities, projected onto martyred bodies' (2004 [1994]: Part V). Quite unlike René Girard, from whose analytic of mimeticism Achmat maintains a studied distance, Achmat argues that insofar as documentary film derives its power of truth from what he calls 'the power of one's own

death,' the correlation of attestation and conscience that defines its mode of truth production will necessarily *require* death, in the form of the reproduction of the martyrs on whose behalf it then claims to bear witness. Achmat suggests that this derivation of truth and politics from death becomes especially intolerable under conditions where imperialist fantasies of African nihilism find their rhyme in the African state's exercise of a certain denialism:

> Living in Africa on a continent which signifies death and destruction in the imperialist imaginary, it is imperative to uncouple sacrifice from resistance. Faced with the denial of state responsibility for the basic conditions of life in villages, towns, and cities across the continent we cannot indulge the genocidal fantasies of sacrifice. Hence, it is disturbing to read filmmakers who insist upon valorising sacrifice and torture as a necessity for the pastoral reinvention of Africa.
>
> (Achmat 2004 [1994]: Part V)

To oppose the pleasure principle inscribed in documentary attestation, Achmat turns to Foucault's argument, in the final chapter of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, that 'death is power's limit.' His reading of Foucault is precise and subtle, and I would like to read over Achmat's shoulder in order to draw out what I feel are its implications. In the chapter to which Achmat turns, Foucault begins by discussing '*patria potestas*' (Foucault 1990: 135). Without going any further, it is already worth noting that, in the political philosophies of Kant and Hegel, the notion of 'testament' receives its intelligibility from the same Roman laws of patriarchal inheritance that give rise to the modern concept of state sovereignty (Kant 1996: 34, Hegel 1967: 177–80). The codes of *patria potestas* that give the father the right to decide on the life or death of the son also stipulate the conditions under which the will of the father can survive his death. Testaments are designed to guarantee primogeniture (the institution so opposed by the early Marx): the *testis* in 'testament' presupposes the *testes* of the *patria potestas*.

The stakes of Achmat's critique of documentary attestation become clearer once read alongside Foucault's inquiry into the limits of *patria potestas*. His critique becomes intelligible as a challenge to documentary film to think beyond its capitulation to the nihilism inscribed in the patriarchal concept of testament. To frame images of death as signifiers of martyrdom is not only to locate the truth, test, or touchstone of political struggle in death. It is also to come into possession of the images of the dead as if they were nothing more than properties invested with a certain political value – as if the dead have merely left behind their images in a last will and testament the validity of which it falls to documentary film to execute as a kind of 'estate.' But by placing this kind of value on death, Achmat seems to argue, documentary film also unwittingly turns death itself into a value. It exorcises the power immanent to the images of the dead (the power to possess the living) even as it teaches the unhaunted living to value life as nothing more than a potential political death. Documentary film would thus remain under the sway of *patria potestas* to the extent that its ethics of

attestation derives its understanding of death from a property-based notion of inheritance. Resistance to *patria potestas* would, in turn, require a departure from documentary film's capitulation to and recapitulation of the testamentary poetics grounded in this understanding.

Why else might Achmat be reading *The History of Sexuality* in 1994? A moment of political transition, 1994 also marked a juncture where confession and testimony were becoming the dominant regimes of intelligibility for the narration of apartheid. Whether in the managed spectacles of the Truth Commission or in the spate of biographies and autobiographies that emerged in the 1990s, discourses on the transition from apartheid became governed by the regime of truth Foucault has called *exomologesis*. Though *exomologesis* can be roughly translated as 'recognition of fact,' Foucault treats it as a 'technology of the self' designed to purify the soul from sin through a self-revelation (*publicatio sui*) that is simultaneously a self-renunciation (the most extreme form of which is martyrdom). Like any technology of the self, *exomologesis* is a distinctly collective act; whether in its medical or juridical form, it unfolds as a dramatic ritual of penitence that reconciles the penitent with the community and the community to itself. Foucault's inquiry into *exomologesis,* which advances his discussion of confession in Volume I of *The History of Sexuality*, approaches it as a specifically pastoral power, a mode of subjectivation that binds the subject to itself through various practices of self-knowledge: publicly disclosing one's wounds in order to be cured; bearing witness against and refusing oneself in order to make a break with one's past; and re-affirming the fact of one's fidelity to the principle of salvation through truth (see Foucault 'On the Government of the Living' 1997: 81–5 and 'Technologies of the Self' 1997: 242–5).

Returning to Foucault's comments on *exomologesis* helps us re-read the opening of Achmat's 1995 'My Childhood as an Adult Molester,' which renders testimony decidedly indistinct from the most uncensored fantasy (1995: 325). This preference not to deliver straight testimony marks a departure from the disciplines of self-revelation that otherwise dominated the production of discourse about apartheid in the mid-1990s. Achmat instead locates the truth of politics, and the politics of truth, in a joyful militancy that affirms even death itself – though in a very cautious way. Reading Foucault's remarks on the nature of contemporary sovereign power, Achmat suggests that while 'death is the limit of power, sacrifice brings a different power relation to bear on the symbolism of death. The private moments of death become timeless public images of sacrifice.' Against *exomologesis*'s relentless imperative to confess and testify publicly, Achmat concludes his chapter by calling for forms of documentary film that 'ensure[s] that death once again becomes the limit point of power and an eternal moment of privacy.' This may seem like an odd point with which to conclude an ending that is supposed to double as a beginning. But read alongside Foucault's argument in *The History of Sexuality*, the affirmative kernel encrypted in it becomes clearer. If we keep in mind that, for Foucault, death is the limit not to power *per se*, but the limit to political sovereignty vested with a power 'to *make* live or to *cast out* into death,' we can follow the way in which

Achmat's affirmation of a private death is a line of flight from the sovereign concept of life as immune system.

This flight becomes vitally important when we consider the 1999 utterance that, in its various iterations over the last four years, has become globally known as Achmat's 'pledge.' 'I will not take expensive treatment until all ordinary South Africans can get it on the public-health system. That probably means that I will die a horrible death, even though medical science has made it unnecessary' (quoted in Powers 2003: 56). As we know, the force of Achmat's performative culminated felicitously in his ingestion of ARVs in early August 2003, days after the Mbeki administration caved to the TAC and announced that the government would soon roll out a universal ARV plan. But in making and keeping his pledge even though – especially while – his life hung in the balance, didn't Achmat contradict everything he wrote in 1994? As his own life and possible death became the object of numerous documentaries, didn't he surrender to the very metaphysic of martyrdom, protest, and testimony against which he earlier wrote so passionately? Didn't Achmat's refusal to take ARVs require him to subject himself to the very sovereign power against which he protested, namely, the power to let die?

The hagiographies imply exactly this. But to re-read Achmat's 1994 and 1995 texts is to gain a new angle from which to understand his pledge. The latter, like the former, consists of a departure from the entire catalogue of transcendental and essentially nihilistic powers collected under the rubric of *patria potestas*. Up to and including martyrdom. Though Achmat made a pledge referring to the possibility of his own death, it would be a mistake to presume this pledge expresses a desire to protest or bear witness through or to the 'power of one's own death.' Recalling that Achmat is a dedicated reader of Bataille, and a writer for whom life, sex, and politics are inextricable, let me conclude by dwelling on the singular politics of his pledge. To do so is to wonder whether, prior to its utterance, perhaps even as its condition of possibility and as the source of its power, that pledge was not subtended by a secret, cautious pact with the virus itself. What kind of pact? In 1993, Alexander García Düttmann argued that the anxiety of living with HIV/AIDS is, in part, that the virus undermines the ontological distinction between life and death. 'One no longer lives and has not yet died, because one has died already and nevertheless lives on, because life and death merge beyond recognition' (1996: 2). Under political conditions where death marks power's limit, wouldn't this indistinction paradoxically amount to *an edge*? Wouldn't it yield a power to protest sovereign power from just beyond, or just before, the limit that defines its jurisdiction? Supposing it were even possible for a virus to sign a pact, that is to say, to keep its promise, wouldn't one of the effects of that pact be a chance to take part in a combat against the sovereign power of immunity without also having anything to do with the limits sovereign power inscribes in life? Signing a secret pact with the virus would not here be a matter of using the 'power of one's own death' as an instrument of political leverage. It would be a matter of cautiously opening a relation to death that nevertheless did not derive its political power from death.

Part of the power of such a pact would derive from giving oneself over to the virus, surrendering to its replication, but on one critical condition: that its host gain from that replication a new power. This power would be neither a power of one's own death nor a power to represent death. It would instead be a paradoxical power that derives its specific modality from the ontological indeterminacy of the virus itself: from a virus that is neither dead nor alive, the power to live without dying on the terms of sovereign power.

Pledging to remain without ARVs until the poorest have access to them would then be a way of introducing a promise, and therefore the political itself, into the relations between people living with HIV but without ARVs. Letting his body embody a wrong that itself calls for justice would be a way of affirming the same HIV-positive political community his pledge posits. Putting his life on the line would be neither stoicism nor *satyagraha*,[12] but a way of drawing on the virus to redefine the line between life and death itself: to re-create the diagnosis 'positive' in and as a name for the affirmation of life with HIV. The pledge would not, then, be a pact of the sort that binds one to oneself in solipsistic moral consistency (promise-keeping).[13] It would be a process of individuation defined by a protest of the condition of the dead, the not-yet-born, and the living dead.[14] To iterate the virus's own potency in and as the power of that pledge would be to transcribe the very power of the virus into a power of truth the most powerful effect of which – treatment – would amount to the virus's recession. To enter into a cautious ensemble with the virus that was, at the same time, a combat against it, would certainly be to realize the essence of the constitutional right to life in a singular way. But it would also imply a constituting power that exceeds the rights named in South Africa's new constitution.

Étienne Balibar has counseled that radical democratic political struggles today will succeed or fail to the degree that they are able to bring *the institution of the border* under democratic control (2002: 85; 2004: 10, 49, 108–9, 113–14, 117, 176–7). By 'the institution of the border' Balibar does not mean to refer to a phenomenon of a merely cartographic or even spatial order (2002: 43–4, 2004: 109). To sign a pact with the virus in order to add power to litigation against the executive branch demanding access to ARVs for pregnant women with HIV/AIDS would be, precisely, to open up democratic control over *the ontological border that is natality* as well as *the ontological border that is fatality*. It would provide a specifically *pandemocratic* response to the question of how to institute the 'mobile line' that will always determine the limits on access to the means of health (Foucault 2000 375). This response would no longer be indebted to the logic of immunity for its basic concept of life: it would no longer conceive of life as a privilege limited only to those graced by sovereign power. It would derive its power instead from that contingency which has the potential to touch all (*pan-*) people (*demos*). To respond in this way would be to turn the virus back on itself, to make it work on itself, to convert the virus's own power into a potential for the virus to be maintained in privation – to live, with it.

Who knows whether this pact, in fact, exists. Perhaps I have just imagined it. But what is clear enough is that, grasped hagiographically, the truth-force of

Achmat's pledge cannot but be misrecognized as the martyrdom from which Achmat, in 1994, urged flight. On these terms, it would remain intelligible merely as a particularly bold and forcefully instrumentalist form of dissent, objection, or complaint. But other visions of protest are possible. From Zackie Achmat one can learn that *protest* also signifies 'promise' and 'affirmation,' and that *to protest* and *to live* are undeniably the same.

Notes

1 On 'naked life,' see Michel Foucault (1990: 135–59; 2003: 239–64), Giorgio Agamben (1998), Achille Mbembe (2001; 2003), and Warren Montag (2005).
2 Under post-colonial conditions, this relation of exception to rule returns like a boomerang into Europe itself, as demonstrated by the French states of emergency in 1955 and 2005. See, on this point, Étienne Balibar (2004: 42, 138).
3 According to the history of South Africa that appears in T.J. Van Heeden's 1976 *Introduction to Police Science* (Van Heeden 1982), martial law was declared immediately upon the arrival of Dutch colonists in 1652. Only subsequently was martial law transformed into 'the fiscal' that would then constitute the sovereign right of use (its *dominum utile*) of the Dutch East India Company until 1796. At the outset of a book that presents itself as 'the first scientific publication on police science to appear in South Africa,' we thus find a reminder that *martial law is the form of law in which colonialism institutes itself* (1982: v, 28). H.R. Hahlo and E. Kahn, meanwhile, observe that 'the history of the Union up to 1940 was punctuated by periodical episodes of the "lamentable necessity" of martial law,' and that the Public Safety Act of 1953 so completely absorbed these same emergency powers that it left martial law, in effect, outmoded (1960: 134, 145). Because of the red thread that therefore connects colonialism, martial law, and the Public Safety Act, we may therefore consider Cicero's maxim *salus publica suprema lex* ('the health, welfare, safety, or security of the people is the highest law'), on which the Public Safety Act was based, to be the direct genealogical heir of colonialism. On the way in which colonial techniques remain a problem for the contemporary South African police, see John Brewer (1994: 332–3).
4 See, on this point, Hannah Arendt (1958: 205 and 1970: 52).
5 See, on this point, Mbembe (2001: 26, 46) and Giorgio Agamben (1998: 71–4).
6 See, on this point, Andrew Dyck (2004: 478) where *privilegium* is defined as a 'legal enactment concerning a specific person or case and involving an exemption from common rules.'
7 Writing of South African legal history in 1960, Hahlo and Kahn note that 'the Statute Book is studded with Indemnity Acts' (1960: 147, n61). Indemnity, in this context, refers to qualified immunity from liability or damages. Hahlo and Kahn mention the Indemnity and Undesirables Special Deportation Act, No. 1 of 1914 (ibid.: 147), the Indemnity and Trial of Offenders Act, No. 6 of 1922 (ibid.: 146), and the Police Amendment Act No. 43 of 1958 (ibid.: 135), while Gavin Cawthra discusses the Indemnity Acts of 1977 and 1985 (1986: 249; 1993: 48). We may also mention, in this connection, the Indemnity Act of 1990, Indemnity Act 61 of 1991, and the Further Indemnity Act of 1992.
8 In this biopower we find a continuity, not a discontinuity, between modern and ancient forms of sovereignty. The power to make live, as Foucault argues, emerges in the place once occupied by the sovereign right of pardon, that is to say, the power to substitute legal immunity for punishment and so to let the guilty party live. See, on these points, Foucault (2003: 243, 253–63).
9 See Donnelly (2003: D1); Driscoll (2003: 8); Innocenti (2003: 42); Rosenberg (2003: 20); Carroll (2002: 8); Steinglass (2002: D1).

10 'In the case of sacrifice and martyrdom, this image we possess of those martyred, and to which nothing is opposed other than the sacrificing of lives in the battle against apartheid, is also one that possesses us' (Achmat 2004 [1994], Part V).
11 In 'Off the Control Track,' Achmat clarifies that his concluding section 'is really only a beginning' (2004 [1994], Part V), while he concludes 'My Childhood as an Adult Molester' with the sentence, 'It was the beginning of a life of sex and politics' (1995: 341).
12 The authority of which, as Partha Chatterjee points out, is 'derived entirely from a moral claim – of personal courage and sacrifice and a patent [*sic*] adherence to truth. So much so that the supreme test of political leadership was death itself' (1993: 109.).
13 'I am not the only one,' Achmat said of being without antiretrovirals to Tavis Smiley in a November 14, 2003 interview, available online at www.npr.org/features/feature.php?wfId=150614 [accessed April 4, 2004]).
14 Achmat responding to a question about 'the Defiance Campaign' by clarifying that it is 'the Christopher Moraka Defiance Campaign' and by repeating the testimony Moraka gave, two months before his death from AIDS, against Pfizer. Here testimony and protest, mourning and mobilizing, merge to the point of indistinction. See Weissman and Achmat (2001: 29).

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