

THE SHADOWS OF TERRORISM: BODIES, SPECTERS AND THE SPACES OF WAR

Alejandro Castillejo Cuellar
Universidad de los Andes, Colombia
Direct Action Center for Peace and Memory, South Africa

“He told me [Eugene De Kock] that the purpose of being at Vlakplaas is to hunt and kill the terrorists.”¹

D.O
Former Askari and Vlakplaas Operative.
Gugulethu Seven file,
Truth and Reconciliation Commission Archive, Pretoria

“One showed his albums of color pictures: holidays, weddings – and kills. His 5-year-old son was watching and obviously thoroughly familiar with them as he showed the pictures, six per page, page after page, of bodies with huge gaping wounds. Then another album, and another. Bodies split open, spilling their contents. “I sometimes wonder if there's something wrong in my head.” The boy's undisturbed: “*Show my favorite video, Papa!*” *This video shows the orgiastic final days of killing: prisoners walk miserably between Koevoet soldiers. “Kaffirs!” exclaims the boy. “Terrorists,” corrects the father. Now, the prisoners are on the ground, twitching, bleeding, dead. Hundreds of bodies, now being pulled together and posed in weird postures. When the video is completed, he sends the boy to bed, and continues talking about his experiences*” (Simpson, 1998). Emphasis added.²

In the previous chapter I have presented the constellation of socio-historical events that led to the proclamation of a partial *state of emergency* in 1985 (declared nationwide in 1986). The term, as I pointed out, denotes simultaneously a general historical period, and a particular state of affairs: the crumbling years of the apartheid regime, a “turning point” (a moment of emergence), a “time of crisis,” and so on. “State of emergency” also denotes a particular condition of legal exception. In other words, the

¹ Eugene de Kock, or Prime Evil, as he is known in South Africa, was the head of a hit squad, housed at a farm, Vlakplaas, near by Pretoria.

² I am thankful to Heidi Grunebaum for directing me towards this quotation.

state of emergency, always declared under critical circumstances such as wars or national crises, was a legally sanctioned exception of the law. It is a space of juridical ambiguity in which the government invoked its “constitutional” right to use extreme measures, including force, or what I call *restorative violence*, in order to reestablish what it conceived as “law and order.” However, out of this general space of conflict and turmoil, certain locations or “unrest areas,” usually black residential areas or townships that were “identified” as posing a security threat, were localized on the map by the security and intelligence experts as requiring special attention. If there was a space where this legal exception was applied with particular zeal it was the “unrest areas.” This attention took the form of an increasing militarization in the townships, with greater powers of arrest and search (even if on the basis of vague suspicions) invested on police personnel and the security forces in general.

This was the context, the place and time, in which the “Gugulethu Seven” killings were, in the most literal sense, fabricated. A time also of mounting financial crisis, as international economic pressures against South Africa grew and the increase of defense expenditure rose to levels never seen before (Grundy, 1983; Archer, 1989). The economic, political and social base of the government, since P.W. Botha’s ascent to power in 1977, was geared towards the implementation of an integrated and expensive security strategy for combating communism and terrorism. This effort, from a sharp increase in manpower to the development of military technology, required some kind of consensus about South Africa’s security concerns, not only at the level of the top decision-making state officials gathered around P. W. Botha, but also at the level of the common white electorate that supported Botha’s reform programs. To justify the financial and social expenditure in times of financial scarcity, and to maintain the military budget, the police and the counter-insurgency effort in general had to show successful results in combating the enemy. The killing of these seven youths in Gugulethu fits this picture in a particular way. The television newscasts presented the security forces emerging “confident and jubilant” out of this operation, sending a “chilling message to any would be MK recruits” (Khoisan, 2002). The security forces were perceived as winning the war on the military front.

Of all the “top secret” and other official materials found during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) investigation of the Gugulethu Seven case in 1996, one stands as particularly interesting: a heavily edited police video of the “crime scene,” shot a while after the shooting took place by a video specialist and a police reporter. As I have stressed in the introduction of this book, the ambush was carefully planned and orchestrated by members of the security forces in connivance with undercover Vlakplaas operatives.³ The diversity of elements involved in the process, which included not only the tampering and planting of evidence but also depended largely, as Khoisan suggested, on a generalized “culture of cover up,” crystallized in an apparently unified

³ This orchestration was in the most literal sense. As Colonel Eugene de Kock, commanding officer of unit C1 stationed at Vlakplaas, part of C-Section of the South African Security Police, established during a discussion in a maximum-security prison in Pretoria with TRC investigators, the involvement of his squads in this operation had gone through “official and unofficial channels.” It required the collusion of a large chain of command, from Security Police Headquarters, to the Terrorist Tracking Units, C-Section, Murder and Robbery Unit, and so on.

and concise police version of the incident. The edited police video reported the “facts” that upheld the official version. Additionally, certain images were used by television newscasts reporting that same afternoon on the shooting.

The edited video is a fabrication of a fabrication, shot in a particular manner, with an implicit point of view. As an artifact, it speaks more about how the war against the “communist onslaught” was portrayed to a particular audience, more about apartheid’s “scopic vision,” than about the event itself (Feldman, 1996). In this regard, the video fulfills simultaneously two different, yet closely interconnected functions: on the one hand, it is, like photographs, part of the crime scene investigation procedure as it reports, displays, and establishes “the facts” of the incident. In this sense, it is a forensic video, upholding not only the objectivity of forensic truth but also displaying a will of persuasion. On the other hand, as a response to the social context mentioned earlier, the video was also a promotional and a marketing artifact. One of the findings of the TRC investigative unit was that the “edited police video [not only] showed the celebratory atmosphere amongst police officers involved after the event” but also that “Security Headquarters used [it] to get the cabinet to increase Vlakplaas’ budget, with former minister of Law and Order, Adrian Vlok, personally presiding over the process” (Khoisan, 2002: 73). “P.W. Botha (...) allegedly watched the edited video of the killings and subsequently approved an increase in the budget of police hit squads” (Khoisan, 2002: 20). And, like any other marketing artifact that seeks to convince, to seduce, and to sell, it required a central guiding concept, an implicit viewpoint to be successful. However, despite these two apparently different functions of the video, they both share an inherent will of persuasion, a will of convincing a restricted audience (judges or cabinet ministers), based on the “factuality” of the images, of the lawfulness of the operation, and the “successful” outcome: in other words, the images are immersed in a particular regime of truth.

Given precisely this will of persuasion, in this chapter I will take a closer look at the police video, a particular technology of remembering, in order to understand some of the underlying assumptions on which it was based. The history of apartheid since 1948 has been, among other things, about legally assigning certain places to certain people, establishing a social distribution of wealth as well as suffering. These exercise of social engineering and spatial reorganization informed the dynamics of violence, in different periods, in apartheid South Africa. The video is an opportunity to explore how places and bodies intersected in the context of the conflict. It is therefore one of the sites where notions such as “enemy,” “terrorist,” “violence,” “danger,” and “place” are articulated very clearly. In this context, discourses about the black *other*, the irrational mob, the “unrest area,” and the conflict in South Africa converge.

In order to understand these intersections, it is necessary to look into other sources to find clues to comprehend the video’s central concepts. In this chapter I will look into these other sources as well. In summary, the video replicates the narrative of white colonizers (armed with the law, the gun and the camera) entering into the wild, dangerous black Africa, in order to hunt and kill the animal.

The chapter will be divided in five parts: a brief initial one, describing and summarizing the video itself, with particular emphasis on the ways in which spaces and objects of war were represented by the cameraman through a series of visual practices. It is my contention in this text that the possibility of fabricating the incident (the shooting as well as the video) depended, among other things, on a series of symbolic associations

that, as Thompson has written, were “tacitly accepted by many white South Africans” (Thompson, 1989: 231) In the video, these associations are particularly evident: first, the relationship between the “the black man,” the “wilderness,” and the “order of things,” and second, between the “black man,” the “terrorist,” and the “objects of war.” Taking these associations as self-evident give the video an aura of apparently unshakable veracity. In trying to explore the first line of associations, section two discusses an extended interview I had in 2003 with a former intelligence officer deployed to a small Western Cape town in 1986 whose discourse helped me understand a particular register in South Africa’s dynamics of violence.

The second line of associations will be dealt with in sections three and four. Section three is an analysis of an “information booklet” or a propaganda pamphlet that was part of a larger series of brochures circulated in schools. In this text, “blackness” and “terrorism” are juxtaposed in subtle ways. Section four deals with the objects that, as they were planted on the Gugulethu youths, further reinforce the final police version. Objects such as the AK 47 unambiguously signals, like a metaphor, the existence of the dangerous terrorist, as well as the government’s conceptions about the sources of “violence” in South Africa during the early stages of the emergency period. I will do so by analyzing how these sources of violence were indexed in prohibition signs, displaying “dangerous weapons,” around Cape Town’s public premises.

If the first sections are concerned with how certain associations about the “violence” and “enemy” circulated and were naturalized, the last section deals, as conclusion, with a Gugulethu Seven file photograph that intersects both lines of association discussed during the whole chapter. The image is a condensation and could not be read without the social context of its production. The prior four sections focus on this context. The image is the site where the narrative of the white colonizer taming and subjugating black Africa is most blatantly evident.

In order to understand the Gugulethu families’ demands for what they expressed as “the restoration” of their voice, the clarification of factual “truth,” and reparation of their sons’ “human dignity,” during the process of the TRC, it is necessary to study not only how the Gugulethu Seven were inscribed on the TRC’s discourse on political transition and reconciliation (the subject of this book’s next chapter). First, however, it is fundamental to consider how a particular dynamics of violence and representation in the past determines the forms in which these demands are articulated. The families I had the opportunity to meet remember the incident as an example of humiliation, bodily mistreatment, and unspeakable loss. One of the mothers recalls how the image of “my son being treated like an animal as I watch the TV” haunts her life today. Since the Gugulethu Seven incident was couched in the language of counter-insurgency it was invisibilized and silenced. Let me now briefly turn to the video itself.

A Will of Persuasion

“In proving the commission of crime, theses [video] units play an exceptionally important role, as a *visual account* of events makes available to the courts an indisputable and objective reconstruction of observed events.” Emphasis added.

Adrian Vlok (Minister of Law and Order).
1988. "White Paper on The Organisation and
Functions of the South African Police Force."
Pretoria: Government Printers. Pg 41.

The Gugulethu Seven police video is simultaneously a forensic as well as a promotional tool. I have already stressed the nature of the promotion it sought to accomplish, namely, an increase in budget allocation for police hit squads. As a tool in crime scene research, this "visual account" seeks to show the "indisputable" facts about what happened on 3 March 1986 in the corner of NY1 and NY111 in Gugulethu (NY stands for "native yard"). The manual for the "administration, organization, and control of video cameras and operators" established in 1985, set the guidelines for the use of the equipment and the sorts of events police headquarters sought to "archive:" "riots, roadblocks, bomb explosions," and "scenes of serious crimes, unrest conditions, police operations, smuggling, observations, murder and robbery" (Contree, P. J., 1985: 5; Minister of Law and Order, 1988: 41). In both cases, the Gugulethu video was restricted to very specific audiences: judges and lawyers in a "court of law" (such was the case during the Weaver trial in 1987, cabinet ministers, and security specialists (for intelligence analysis and training purposes). In this particular case, the images were involved in a process of persuading and creating consensus around the nature of the event. It crystallized the signs, symbols, and languages to speak not only about the Gugulethu Seven shooting, but also about South Africa's conflict as a whole. As a matter of procedure, "important incidents" were shown to the general staff at the head office of the South African Police. Unless they were used for court purposes, and not handed in as "evidence," these videos were kept for circulation inside South Africa's police services. Given the fact that it was used as a source of evidence and information by Weaver's defense during the trial, and the fact that, as the existence of "top secret" documents attested, hit squads were involved in the operation, it is likely that the video was not placed in circulation.

The video is, in one phrase, a "visual account," and a reconstruction of the official version of the event. It surveys (aerially as well as on the ground) the entire area, the "crime scene," as it localizes and highlights the "evidence" that fits the general police narrative. The video was not part of the "crime scene research," strictly speaking, rather it was one of its products, for every single object, every single body, and every detail, had already been catalogued and marked as "evidence." The research process that preceded it was in general, as Professor T. J. Van Heerden's *Introduction to Police Science* stated in 1982, "a systematic search of truth [and] a lawful pursuit of persons and objects required to assist in the reconstruction of the true circumstances surrounding an illegal act and a culpable state of mind connected with such an act (Van Heerden, 1982: 182). The "illegal act" was certainly not the police's actions and cover up, rather the "fact" that an illegal group of (black) youths attempted to attacking a police station in one of South Africa's townships during the state of emergency. The state of mind to which Van Heerden makes reference was, in this case, the communist ideology that ANC were said to embrace. By the time the video was shot, all "evidence," the end product of the process of "discovering relevant [objective as well as subjective] information," had already been "identified."

The diversity of elements, of possible fragments of information, of scattered traces of a story, had been connected. Strictly speaking, there was no “factual evidence gathering” process, rather a process of “evidence” construction: weapons, Tokarev pistols, AK 47s, bullet cases, dead bodies, hand grenades, a white mini-bus, bullet holes, and so on, were presented as proof. For example, the police version claimed that its personnel had reacted against the terrorist group who attacked one of the cars where two of them were traveling (Sworn Affidavit, Sergeant A. Grobbelaar, Inquest No. 54/3/86). During the video, an image of the car and the holes on the windscreen were duly accompanied by a background voice, an official narrator, describing, in Afrikaans, the image, translating it, and pinpointing to the “evidence:” “The vehicle that Captain Brazelle and Sergeant Andre Grobbelaar were driving in was fired on with an AK 47. The holes could clearly be seen in the windscreen of the vehicle” (Police video, Cut 3). The visual existence of the holes “proved” the veracity of the official version. An even more dramatic case of fact construction reads: “Look [says a narrator, always speaking in Afrikaans] where the hand grenade exploded, a white spot can clearly be seen. The investigating officer [Leonard Knipe] showed this hole and stated this is where the hand grenade exploded” (Police Video, cut 21). The problem with this statement, and the image it relates to, is that the size of the hole left by the explosion of the grenade does not correlate to the grenade’s destructive power. Had the grenade exploded in that place, the hole would have been larger. The fabrication of evidence, the planting of weapons, in order to assemble all this information into a narrative, required the production of a video that upheld such a version, a fiction with a strong sense of realism.

Broadly speaking, in the most descriptive sense, the video is organized around 26 edited cuts, almost half an hour in total, from 30 seconds to 1.20 minutes long each. All of them are about showing, one by one, the seven dead bodies, each one located in different parts around the area, as well as their wounds, and the firearms that the police allegedly found on them. Zabonke John Konile, Godfrey Jabulani Miya, Zanisile Zenith Mjobo, Themba Mlifi, Mandla Simon Mxinwa, Christopher ‘Rasta’ Piet, Zola Alfred Swelani. There are also images of the minibus, from different points of view, that transported the seven youths and two Askaris who infiltrated the group (and who, as planned, escaped the moment the shooting started). Images also of AK 47 rounds on the street, photos of the scene, of the grenades, and so on, were part of the viewing. There is even an on-site interview with Sergeant Bellingan conducted by the police/reporter. Put together, these images reflect a post-facto, general panorama of the “crime scene.” Instead of describing it cut by cut, I will highlight a series of themes that interconnect in this video which will be further explored in the next sections. These are: firstly, the aesthetics of death, the bodies of the enemies, and what I call the surgical gaze of power; secondly, the problem of categorical overlapping; and finally, the objects of war.

The most striking feature of these images is a particular interest in the bodies of the dead men. At least seventy per cent of the images are concerned with them. The ways these bodies appear to the lens, and the ways in which the technical possibilities of the camera are used to portray the terrorists, developed a repetitive pattern. First of all, the gaze of cameraman usually focuses several seconds on the whole body on the ground, lifeless. It occupies the entire frame, with no specific objects obstructing its gaze. Then, the camera zooms in and concentrates on the face, registering his features, one assumes, for the purpose of identification. However, contrary to routine forensic procedures, the body in question is never clearly identified, neither by name nor by a

number, using other identification, "Mr G", for example. In addition, the background voice indistinctly would describe each one of them using a very general terminology: here is "another body," there is "another black man," and so on. This was not the case for the hundred photographs used during reporter Tony Weaver's trial 1987 that were duly marked: for example, "Look at photo number 35. Do you see a point M marked, between the legs of Mr. M there?" the prosecutor asked Leonard Knipe, who was in charge of the "scene investigation."

After pointing the lens on the face, it then focuses on the wounds, which in many cases can all too clearly be seen. A face full of bullet holes, on the chin, the eyes. The cameraman displays enormous patience, for in some cases the heads were shot more than ten times. "Close-ups of bullet-ridden bodies - jaws blown away, faces grotesquely disfigured - lying in pools of blood" (Sunday Tribune, January 12, 1996). This pattern was repeated one after the other, and in several cases, the video camera would return again and again to one or other body and repeat the process. In this repetition there is more than just a forensic interest.

The body of Piet, allegedly the most experienced member of the group, captured the attention of the cameraman. At one point during the video, a police officer, several meters away, rolls the dead man's body over with a long rope, turning him upside down, dragging the corpse away from the original position and location on the ground. Once again, the camera surveys the body, detail after detail, with bureaucratic monotony, but this time with a particular emphasis on Christopher Piet's barely recognizable face, as the sand adheres to his head, face, and lips, creating a disturbing effect of facial deformation. "The video camera moved for a close-up of a man lying down on his stomach, his arm bent over him. An AK 47 rifle lay trapped beneath the lifeless body of Mrs. Ngewu's son. Police had tied a rope to him and the video operator explained that the body would now be flipped over with the help of the rope, police standing back to watch. It was feared the body lay atop a hand grenade. The rope tightened and, like a rag doll, the lifeless body was jerked onto its back" (Sunday Tribune, January 12, 1996). This "dragging," and the background laughs of the police, is precisely the image that the mothers remember as too disturbing to observe when they watched parts of it on television in 1986, and then again in 1996, during a TRC amnesty hearing: "My son was treated like an animal," she recalled. It is difficult to view this visual text as part of the "crime scene investigation process," as several standard procedures, such as the marking of the different corpses, were not included. Yet it was used during the trial as a depiction of the "crime scene."

The video de-personalizes the bodies, and voids them of any corporeal content: they have no names, no histories, and no identities: they are only, broadly speaking, "identified," by the police's injunction, as terrorists, as "black men." The narrator's descriptive language objectifies the scenario. There is an "aesthetics" of terror, a visual representation of the "evil enemy," in the ways these bodies are depicted, traversed by the eye, and searched through by the camera, like a microscope, like a rifle's scope surveying its target. The cameraman initially steps back and watches from afar, then, in a more invasive manner, the camera crosses the line into a universe of closeness and sensorial intimacy with the "black man's" dead body: always dissecting deformed and destroyed faces, and mutilated corpses, in the most dramatic and even unmediated ways. So close to this otherness is the viewer that one is almost able to glance into the abyss of death. The world of the enemy seems to be a world of ugliness, deformity, and

radical strangeness, particularly if these depictions are compared with those of apartheid white heroes and soldiers wearing military gear commemorated in army journals, propaganda pamphlets, and in most of the country's newspapers. This pattern of representation was certainly not new in the context of South Africa (Erichsen, 2001: 159).

These deformed bodies are, it seems, one of the natural objects of a social space called "black township," "unrest area," "oil spot," space of war, of "necklacings" and "irrational mobs," and of "vigilantism" and "black-on-black violence." The camera inspects this territory with a brutal sense of immediacy and realism. There is a relationship between its forensic and "objective" depiction of the crime scene, its regime of truth, and the realist elements assembled in it. In this regard, it is worthwhile highlighting at least two elements. On the one hand, the video is narrated live. Aside from a narrator who is always describing the scene, and Bellingan's on-site interview, there is also permanent background noise, either the policemen speaking and sometimes laughing, the motorcars' [automobiles'] loud engines, or the wind blowing on the microphone. This is certainly no studio video where sound and images are usually recorded independently and then mixed. Another important mechanism to produce an effect of realism is the use of the camera as the operator walks through the bush. In this case, the camera is a mimesis of the eye, looking all around, trying to maintain the focus. The camera trembles permanently, as the operator, tired of walking, traverses an uneven ground. The gaze is obstructed by leaves and trees, and yet it explores every centimeter of the adjacent area, zooming in and zooming out until, finally, reality is captured. These are images of a live expedition into the bush. One by one, four bodies were found in it.

As I have suggested earlier, the video resembles a "white man's" immersion into the intimacy of the bush, into the spaces of war. As with any immersion it required a process. The first image is telling in this regard: the cameraman stands on the highway, the N2, filming the scene of crime from afar, to be more precise, from outside the territory.

As is well known, apartheid policies segmented the city according to "population groups" in general. In order to do so, urban planners used buffer zones, physical barriers, railway lines, and roads as frontiers and borders between different sectors and social groups. Gugulethu is surrounded by several of these demarcations, Lansdowne Road (south), N2 (north), Duinfontein Road (West), and Borchers Quarry Road and the airport (east). Inside there are subsections: for example, Klipfontein Road divides Gugulethu in two, a canal divides KTC and Nyanga, and a railway line borders Manenberg, a "coloured" area. The thick bush surrounding the site of the shooting extends along the N2 highway (from west to south east); today these buffer zones are mostly informal settlements, New Rest, Kanana, and Barcelona (Christopher, 1994: 107).

At the time of the incident the bush areas were buffer zones. The camera operator, as he stands on the N2 highway, looks towards the township, towards the inside. He locates himself as a foreigner, as an outsider: by filming from and the border itself, the viewer has an outside perspective, the perspective of someone about to enter this territory. And he does. From this point of view, Table Mountain - the "center," the Mother City itself, and the place where it "all started" - is the distant or backdrop to the township. This reference to the mountain, to the European origin of the city, speaks of a distance (physical and cultural) from the center, localizing in the periphery another kind of sociality. However, from "here," Table Mountain is not a table, it does not look like

the famous image of the flat-topped mountain. It is not recognized as such. It is a view from the side. The image then indexes this distance, as a separate space, right from the start. The video is an "immersion" into this peripheral social space, as it speaks about what happens there, and immerses us into the intimacy of unfamiliar territories: a camera inspecting dead bodies, the "huge gaping wounds," are just the extreme forms that this intimacy, this will to see and know, takes after the orgasmic instances of killing, "a visual staging and technological penetration of the body by cameras, bullets, and bombs 'which unite both seeing and killing, surveillance and violence, in a unified scopic regime'" (Hayes, 2001: 144).

The final image ends this immersion: it is an aerial shot from a military helicopter. The chopper flies around the entire area, in circles, probably early in the morning. Bodies have already been taken to the local mortuary, the area has been "cleansed" in a very literal sense, and the casspirs and most police vehicles have left. There is a sense of completeness, of almost simultaneous and "compulsory visibility" from the air, another form of policing, of inspecting and covering a landscape in its entirety (Hayes, 2001: 152). The camera is able to inspect as it wishes. There is only the hostel, a few houses, and the enormous bush area where several bodies were shot. Capt Knipe, soon after the shooting, even washed away the blood on the pavement, leaving no marks, no traces, and no scars, so that, as he said during the Weaver trial, street dogs would not come and scavenge on the remains. This long single unedited shot finishes off with the helicopter flying away from the area and leaving this territory behind.

Finally, there are two interrelated elements that are important to mention here. In the context of the video, as well as the official inquest in 1986, and sworn affidavits by the policemen, there was permanent difficulty in naming the bodies found. In most cases, they were called the "black man" and in others "the terrorist." They are constituents of two different orders of classification, of two different discourses yet, during the emergency years, and probably before, the two terms seemed to converge and even be juxtaposed. They would rarely be called "the deceased," unless, by obligation, in the context of a court of law. There is an obvious category overlap with these terms. Additionally, there was the constant evocation of the AK 47: either one sees the rifle itself everywhere, as a matter of proof as well, or its magazines, its bullet holes, its shells, and so on. The black man, the terrorist and the AK 47 are the main objects of this world. The ambush, and the fatal staging of the killing had all central characters in the theatrics of war.

As I will point out during the next sections of this chapter, this overlapping is not a matter of personal choice, but part of the semantics of war and violence that circulated through different channels and was a constituent of the general counter-insurgency discourse of the mid 1980s. The world represented by the police forensic and promotional video, a scene of hunting and killing, is a world consisting of black terrorists brandishing AK 47s and other Russian-made firearms. This was a world of violent people who, for this reason, required special attention. Let me now discuss the notions of "blackness," "terrorism," and the object of war, the AK 47.

First Vignette: Kaffirs, Bushland and the Order of Nature

"The Bantu are less civilized. The more primitive a people is, the less they are able to control their emotions. At the slightest

provocation they resort to violence. They cannot distinguish between serious and less serious matters. They are less self-controlled and more impulsive.”

Police College Criminology Textbook [1980]
Quoted in Bell and Ntsebeza (2001: 193)

In the summer of 2003 I had the opportunity of conducting a long interview with V. J. Cronje, a Broederbond member, a veteran of the “Rhodesian War,” and a former military intelligence officer deployed to the Western Cape during the crisis of the mid 1980s. I met him through a mutual acquaintance, P.W. Erasmus, also a former military intelligence officer, and a jailer in one of the Western Cape’s infamous solitary confinement sections.⁴ Erasmus, around ten years younger than Cronje, used to brag about his unruly, almost erratic behavior as a military man during the “turbulent years” of the state of emergency. He is a black belt in three different martial arts, an obsessive smoker and a compulsive beer drinker. He is a former freelance military trainer, invited to Israel and Colombia to train, according to him, “underground forces” for an “unbelievable amount of money.” He recalled the days when he “took care” of the prisoners held in detention under sections 28 and 29 of the Internal Security Act of 1982, the sections that allowed the police to hold detainees under “indefinite” and “preventive” detention and “solitary confinement” up to 180 days. Nowadays, ironically, he is a respected advocate at a small town in of a province called the Western Cape. Although it is difficult to confirm whether Erasmus’ connections to Colombia were true or not, there is certainly a documented history of collaboration between counter-insurgency experts (particularly from the United States – via Escuela de las Américas in the 1970s and 1980s – Israel and South Africa) and paramilitary and death squads in Colombia and other parts of Latin America (Rivas and Reimann, 1976). Erasmus’ connections to the Broederbond, as well as his personal history, with which I had contact for over more than a year, lead me to Cronje.

It is certainly difficult to draw any generalizations with regards to any of the core ideological assumptions that guided the Broederbond, an organization that was, in any case, far from monolithic, on the basis of a series of interviews and informal conversations scattered around southern Africa with few former members and conducted over a couple of years. This is not my intention. However, the encounter with Cronje led me to visualize a series of clues that I think are necessary in order to understand the Gugulethu Seven incident and the connections between bodies and spaces in apartheid South Africa. As I have said previously, the heavily edited police forensic-cum-promotional video, which constitutes the vertebral column of this chapter,

⁴ On interviewees’ request, all names have been changed. Verbal permission to quote was granted. The Rhodesian War refers to Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle between the white regime of Ian Smith and the forces of African leader Robert Mugabe (Stiff, 2001:239; Turner, 1998:16). “Afrikaner Broederbond” (AB) or Afrikaner Brotherhood was a conservative organization and a think tank founded in 1918 to promote and protect the Christian nationalist interests of the “Afrikaner community.” As Bell has written, “Most of the government politicians, the generals, judges, and senior police officers in apartheid South Africa, operated in a deeply secret level of the AB (...)” (Bell, 2001: 22).

is a historical artifact that speaks more about the security establishment's assumptions about the nature of what they conceived as "war" and "violence," than about the Gugulethu Seven themselves. In speaking with Cronje, and the men who led me to him, I discovered a shameful degree of blatant racism I had never encountered before. It also left me perplexed as to the sort of simplistic "arguments" used by ideologues of racism in order to legitimize their own actions. It was, in a fundamental way, an encounter with colonial Africa, so to speak, in "post-colonial" times.

I met Cronje in Maun, a small city in Botswana (around 1500 kilometers north-east of Cape Town), the gateway to the Okavango Delta, in January 2003. In order to get to him, and based on a direct recommendation from Erasmus back in Cape Town, I had to book a particular budget Safari Tour with a Johannesburg company. So I did it decisively, knowing that the entire trip could be a failure. Finally, one early morning, we (a German tourist, my visiting brother and I) headed towards Botswana and Zimbabwe from Johannesburg, to experience - as the tourist brochure expressed - "the thrill and the adrenaline of adventure and budget travel in Southern Africa" (African Adventures, 2003). I indeed had a different agenda from my fellow travelers, for my intention was to meet Cronje somewhere along the way although I did not know the precise location. I was instructed by Erasmus not only to wait, as Cronje would introduce himself directly to me or through someone else, but also to maintain a "low profile," as though everything had been a fortuitous encounter. One night, after more than ten hours of uncomfortable travel in a white minibus along the edge of the Kalahari desert during the summer season, with its soaring 45°C temperature, we finally made it to an elegant, almost luxurious lodge in Maun, whose structure, an aligned series of reed huts (the same ones that appear in many postcards depicting "tribal Africa"), resembled the kraals, the homestead and domestic space of so many different African rural populations.

This trip was indeed my first encounter with the crystallization of the imaginary of the *other* Africa, the "tribal," "wild," "rural" Africa, so much the center around which the tourist industry in the sub-continent revolves. During the trip, I had the opportunity of speaking to several Afrikaner men, many of whom were connected to the game park, adrenaline, and adventure travel industry as tour guides, drivers, lodge and hotel owners, parachute trainers, water rafters, base and bungee jumpers, and so on, about Africa in general, but particularly about recent South African political history. It struck me as surprising the extent to which these Afrikaners, many of them - as I came to realize - with a history of involvement in counter-insurgency operations and border wars, "administered" the "game reserve" circuit, the industry that manages the access to "the wild," to the "dangerous," and to the "bush" experience. From South Africa, to Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Mozambique, Afrikaners (many of whom had grown up in farms around the Vaal region and the north of the country) owned tourist companies, lodges, game reserves, or offered tracking services to interested tourists. I could not but wonder whether was there some sort of historical and professional continuities between their "prior" life in "the bush" as soldiers and their current trade as beast hunters whose rifle had been changed for cameras; connections not only in regards to the specific skills learnt over the years in the front, such as survival skills or knowledge of the "wilderness" (including the "blacks") but other, perhaps more subtle ones, such as the adrenaline thrill.

The encounter with Cronje was preceded by conversations that, stimulated by the monotony of Botswana's semi-arid landscape, developed around stories that were presented as histories of dispossession, bodily mistreatment and frustration in the "new South Africa." Comments on what was then the current political situation, the creation and corruption of a new black elite, the black empowerment program, the effects of president's deracialization policy on the life of "whites," the weakening value of the Rand against the U.S. dollar, and finally, as if repeating by memory a litany of complaints I heard on so many occasions, histories of robberies, assassinations and rapes, in other words, the present day "savagery" of the black population against the "peace-loving white community." In one particular case, for example, stories of farmers being killed were related to me, repeating the same pattern: a certain (Afrikaner) farmer (close relative of the teller), living north of the country, was assassinated and his family raped by a group of (invariably "black" or "dark skinned") thugs. Aside from the fact that farmers have been killed, and there are complex reasons for such actions, the intention of the story was not so much to discuss and give some context to a particular state of affairs in contemporary South Africa (for example, the consequence of a history of destitution in the region) but to illustrate the barbaric nature of the black "race" and the levels of social degradation and chaos that the political transition had plunged the country into (Steinberg, 2003).

The final verdict, of course, was that South Africa was now living under some kind of inverted apartheid against the white community orchestrated by the "blacks," now in power. If in the cities stories of carjacking circulated among wealthy residents, for they are the ones that usually make the headlines, in certain areas of the countryside, Natal for instance, the stories were about the killing of farmers. Other forms of violence against the historically dispossessed are less visible. The stories I heard, which testify to the uncanny unpredictability of violence, created an atmosphere of fear that set the stage for my conversation with V. J. Cronje.

In South Africa, particularly among communities that benefited from apartheid's spatial distribution of "safety," terror has acquired a metastatic character through the permanent repetition and circulation of experiences of terror. Like a disease, it spreads rapidly, as it violates the intimacy of people's houses, living spaces, and bodies. Somehow, as in the mid 1980s, the body, its degradation, mistreatment and abandonment has been one of the registers in which the history of South Africa could be read today. The uses and misuses of bodies, and the centrality they have had is a thread that connects the past and the present in a variety of forms. From detention and torture, to influx control and disappearances the decades before, to HIV and the spread of violent crime and rape nowadays, the mistreatment the body is one of the surfaces on which South African history is inscribed. What seems to have changed over time is the nature of such mistreatment.

The atmosphere of the conversation was calm, almost friendly, as the day's heat cooled down and the moon shone with its first night lights. Little by little, friends of the tour guides were gathering around as the discussion with racist diamond dealers about politics gathered momentum. The lodge was a safe place for them to speak, as forbidden topics, such as Zimbabwe's political situation and President Robert Mugabe's polemic on land reform policy were on the table. It was this last theme, the prospect of South Africa becoming Zimbabwe, that triggered Cronje's uninhibited interpellation: "I heard you are writing a book about South Africa. I have something to tell you."

In this section, I will present a few ideas we discussed that late afternoon. Not much time had passed before I realized that the conversation I was having could have not taken place with South Africans (specially if they hold a rather different view), either because the simplicity and almost banality of Cronje's arguments, always echoing Erasmus' and other security personnel I knew, could insult the intelligence of any interlocutor, or because his racism, and the denial of the other's right to be in the world as a human being, was so denigrating, no one would dare listen. Yet, there I was, trying to localize myself in an unstable territory, between my intellectual interests in understanding the forms of violence embodied by the government's repression machinery and the human and political loyalty I felt towards my friends and colleagues who survived it.

In retrospect, Cronje's speech was, in one sentence, a nostalgic recollection of the times when the "savage," or the black man, was politically and militarily contained and spatialized in "townships" and "homelands" (or in the bush). In his rather simplistic view, one of the problems in contemporary South Africa is the fact that "blacks" have exceeded the territories originally designated for them by apartheid designers. Cronje uses the derogative and denigrating term "kaffir" (an Arabic word for infidel) when referring to "blacks," a word, widely used during the apartheid years, with a long history of circulation during colonial times through travel writing in Africa.⁵ With a pontificating, almost benevolent and patronizing tone, Cronje identified himself as a "thinker," as he unpacked his political location and his ambivalent closeness to conservative Afrikaner movements in the country, particularly in the Eastern Cape, a South African province, a place where he eventually invited me to go and speak to more people. Short, almost meditative phrases, encapsulated this man's ideas on racial philosophy. His apparently peaceful character struck me, always displaying some kind of stoic patience towards my inquisitive and annoying questions and comments. He would endlessly speak of the Afrikaners' "tendency" to fragmentation as a community, faction fighting among political and cultural organizations, and the selfish interests of politicians.

Perhaps the most vexing of Cronje's statements during that late afternoon was, I remember with brutal clarity, "you take a kaffir out of the bush, but you cannot take the bush out of the kaffir." The phrase itself was apparently a *locus classicus*, as every one around the table nodded with respect while he repeated it in Afrikaans several times, as if by repetition it would endure on my memory. This phrase established an intimate connection between three different notions central in understanding the dynamics of violence that led to the Gugulethu Seven. Cronje naturalized an order of the world, in which every creature (whites, blacks, and wild animals) had specific, "natural" locations, a specific cartography of difference that informed certain dynamics of violence in South Africa. The Gugulethu Seven could partly be interpreted in this register.

The management of bodies and spaces, of assigning people to locations, was at the core of apartheid (Christopher, 1994). Its architects imagined a world of radical separation between population groups, where borders were defined, enforced legally

⁵ Another close related word, *caffres*, referred to criminals and was widely used during the early XX century in South Africa (Van Heerden, 1982). In Spanish, there is a similar word, *cafre*, and means idiot, moron.

and, if necessary, violently. Taken few years before the period under study, **plate 1** precisely illustrates the connections between spaces and bodies, and what seems to be a determinate and unavoidable will to use violence in order to maintain the border and the difference: "Any kaffir trespassing will be shot."⁶ Another option might have been "Beware of dog." But the choice of words is a significant element. Around Cape Town, even today, expressed in a sanitized language of political correctness, one still finds the same warning, but with a small difference: "Anyone trespassing will be shot." News reporters recorded a number of versions of this violent determination on several occasions during the emergency years. One of them reads, for example, "Is there life after death? Trespass here and find out" (Weekly Mail, August 23, 1985). These phrases do not only refer to ideas about ownership, private property, and territorial integrity. Perhaps, what is most important is the organization of the world implicit in the definition of the frontier. In the case of the first one, as it uses the word "kaffir", it naturalizes and locates "kaffirs" to the indeterminate universe of "the public space," to a universe of indistinct faces and potential danger. Both Cronje's statements, as well as the signs on the farm's barbed wire, are complementary in fundamental ways: the sign emphasizes the border and its violent enforcement, where as Cronje's words describe the objects ascribed to each territory. Border crossing will only be possible under certain social and legal conditions. Terms such as "influx control," and "pass laws," are a reminder of these conditions and the ways they determined the everyday life of people. As I will highlight later in this text, the Gugulethu Seven incident was a particular kind of border crossing exercise.

Cronje's phrase encapsulates both a fear against unmanageable "wild" living inside the confines of human living spaces, and the social production, regulation, and violent reinforcement of spaces, border zones and categories of people within those spaces. Cronje illustrates his theory by recalling a personal childhood "bush experience:" when he was a young boy, his father had found a small lion cub lost somewhere in the wilderness, in the bush. The benevolent father, realizing that the animal had been abandoned by its mother, decided to take him to the farm and keep him as a pet. The lion grew big and strong in captivity and seem to adapt, coexist and even develop some sort of affection for human beings. Cronje nostalgically recalls the reciprocity of these feelings. As a boy, he had developed a special closeness and "friendship" with an animal known for its strength and power (one of the "big five", together with the rhino, elephant, hippo, and buffalo). One day, several meters from the border of what Cronje recalled as "the immense family property," a small herd of antelopes passed by. Suddenly, the lion, "instinctively," crouched down, stealthily, hiding, while watching and inspecting the herd. This happened several kilometers away from the central living space of the farm where all of the family used to live, in a remote area of the farm. It was precisely in this liminal space, at the outskirts, periphery and borderland of the farm's space that the lion reacted "instinctively" and attacked and killed an antelope.

The narrator, somewhat disappointed at what he had unexpectedly seen, an outburst of aggression and killer instinct from his beloved pet, remembered this incident

⁶ Plates 1 and 4 are reproduced with permission of the Mayibuye Center, University of Western Cape, Cape Town. Plate 2 is taken from author's personal archive. No copyright of this pamphlet was found. Plate 3, Cape Town east entrance, taken by the author in November 2004.

almost as an epiphany, an instance of awareness and clarity, an encounter with perennial truths, and a ritual moment when the *natural order of things* and the *laws of nature* had literally been reestablished. Wild animals and human beings belong to different places, to two separate orders in nature, and there is no sense in mixing them as they have different, unchangeable ways of life: a wild animal will always be a wild animal, untamable, on the loose, looming at large in the African savanna, living out of the wilderness, and using violence as a means to survive, to impose itself. Cronje's intention was of course to expose what seemed to him to be a self-evident analogy between the "black man" and the "wild animal." Like the lion, the "black man" may grow up and live among the "whites," yet he will never be able to leave behind the ways of the bush, for, according to Cronje, he is indelibly defined by a sense of ancestral, primitive connection, from time immemorial, to the wilderness, a wilderness that is marked his body with the color of the skin.

Cronje, an expert animal tracker who grew up listening to his father's bush tales, and a seasoned apartheid soldier in the border wars (whose theater of operations was also the "bush areas" around the interstate political frontiers of the "buffer states") claimed that he had learnt about the black man by "knowing" the intricacies and battles between life and death in the wild savanna. It was precisely this intimate relationship he had acquired with the wilderness, this interest in dissecting the other's otherness, what had given him insight into the "black mind," a source of bewilderment as well as terror. He "knew" that, as the training manual bluntly stated, "at the slightest provocation they [the Bantu] [would] resort to violence."

The job of the tracker, like the intelligence officer, the spy or the Askari in times of war, is a complex task. It resembles the work of a detective, requiring invisibility and a mimetic capacity, a preference for small, apparently unimportant details. He depends on the secrecy of his job, as far as the target is concerned, and possesses expert knowledge in a variety of fields. Cronje would recall at length his experiences as tracker in the bush (a knowledge he acquired as a boy and then would consolidate during the war): he knew the habits of the animal (or, in other contexts, the ways of the terrorists), whether they traveled individually or in groups, their routines, schedules, and territories. He knew when and how to approach, strike and kill them, and what their Achilles' heels were, where and when an attack would hurt most. The tracker is a decodifier of the traces of "the savage." It is legitimate to follow the beast, to wait patiently, and to ambush it. It is a struggle of *man* against beasts; it is the strength of civilizing reason, of reasoned violence, against untamed violence and primitive instinct. If the "kaffir", as well as anything deemed pertaining to the bush or his territory, trespasses and abandons his *natural* place, "law and order," that is "natural" law and the order of things are called into question.

The tracker of today found, in the mercenary job of the past, during the Rhodesian and other border wars, a way to maintain the order of the social world, as the struggles for liberation in Africa were viewed as an advent of black barbarism.⁷ Cronje, perhaps unwittingly, using a particular rhetoric device, would describe in almost grotesque and gruesome detail, the death of black soldiers (of "terrorists"), while

⁷ During the Botha years, an expressed aim of the state of emergency was the inalienable responsibility of the government to maintain "law and order."

highlighting – as in a game of oppositions – the death of South African soldiers (or white mercenaries) in a prophylactic, almost aseptic manner, discarding almost any sensorial reference to the dead body. In his narrative, there was indeed a particular aesthetics of death, ugliness and beauty based on what he conceived as the moral fiber of the dead. The deformed black terrorists of his description opposed the idealized description of the South African army warrior. In Cronje, the job of the mercenary and the tracker were juxtaposed.

Cronje, like an old patriarch preaching in a philosophical and meditative tone, would insist: “Listen carefully, you must write this down in your book, it is true.” His desire to expose the “truth” worked as armor against inquisitive questions. His job was not to legitimize his vision of the world, “the truth,” and the particular order of the world that he thought collapsed during and after South Africa’s political process, but to expose it, to present it, to unveil it, in order to illuminate, to bring from ignorance. It was precisely the failure of order, or in other words, the *assignment* of categories of people to spaces, it was due to this ignorance that he had an apocalyptic vision of the future: apartheid in reverse, segregated whites, surrounded by the same voracious blacks willing to swallow and bolt down the country’s money, land, and wealth. His explicit prejudice was directed against black Africans, and not against the blacks living elsewhere, imprinting this territory, Southern Africa, with a distinctive mark.

The conversation with Cronje showed me a series of relationships: between the assignment of bodies to specific places, particularly black bodies to the “townships,” “unrest areas,” and “the bush,” the maintenance of the order of things and the uses of violence to produce and enforce frontiers. During the state of emergency, and even before, these elements were deeply connected and entwined. The Gugulethu Seven, that is to say, the incident that occurred due to the use of certain forms of state violence (in certain places and to certain bodies), is the crystallization of these referents, of these imaginaries about war, about *the other*, about order, and so on. If there were indeed political and historical reasons why the ambush was carried out, and I have already stated them, the specific ways in which it was executed, detailed, named, and recorded speaks more to other registers of action. Cronje was nostalgic of the prior distribution of power and order, the ones he defended as a security intelligence officer, and the practices and discourses through which this power and this order were engraved on the land. The scenario where he worked, as a counter-insurgency expert was a scenario made up of “kaffirs” or violence-prone “blacks” attempting to trespass the territorial integrity of his world and create havoc and chaos. To maintain order required a legitimate discourse on restorative violence that would allow the “hunting down” the sources of chaos.

Let me now, based on some ideas developed in the first chapter and my encounter with this man, take a step further and look at the connections between “counter-insurgency” and the necessity of this restorative violence. The central character in this scenario was the *terrorist*.

Second Vignette: War, Technology and the Prosthetics of the State

“In South Africa the terrorist is communistic and atheistically inspired and *his* aims are well known: *He* aims to overthrow the present government by means of *violence* (...)” (South West

Africa/Namibia Information Service, 1980: 5). Emphasis added.

“There is a terrorist lurking inside every black.”
High School Girl (Quoted in Evans, 1989: 291)

Ideas about the “enemy” and the terrorist could further be explored looking at a widely circulated pamphlet compiled and distributed by the South West Africa/Namibia Information Service, and printed by a Cape Town company in 1979 and 1980. The text gives an overview of the main global tenets that would inform South Africa’s strategic thinking in the near future. It compiles the ideological substratum, and the main discursive framework, on which military actions were inscribed over the 1980s. In this regard, relatively early in P.W. Botha’s tenure, the text, given its direct, almost pedagogic and patronizing language, serves as a background to the policies implemented during the decade. If the Gugulethu Seven police video suggests a series of connections between spaces, violence, and categories of people, the purpose of this vignette is to analyze the pamphlet as a cultural artifact and as a technology of perception, where notions of space and violence crystallize. Terms that are predominantly utilized by the police during the shooting of the film require further unpacking.

During those years, the “total strategy”, to which I referred in the previous chapter, had just started being implemented by P.W. Botha. The South African government needed to inform the general public about the nature, aims and consequences of his strategic policies (and eventually recruit foot soldiers). Aside from informing, the central tenet of this collection of texts and images is to normalize the vocabulary, and hence the language of war, with which the conflict should be represented. The pamphlet is indeed a blend of legal terminology and extra-legal content. In order to view this juxtaposition, it is necessary to read the texts along with the illustrations and photographs. For example, a term such as “enemy” overlaps with that of the “black man,” because the illustrations of the enemies, offered for “clarification,” are always of black men. This juxtaposition was quite evident in the Gugulethu police video where the policemen and the cameraman permanently describe and name the bodies of the dead men as both “terrorist” and “the black man” indiscriminately. In this regard, the booklet gives additional information as to the nature of the “enemy.” Both texts, Cronje’s interpellation as well as the booklet, intersect at a same point: they identify the “black man” as the source of danger. The first establishes what he understands as the natural order on the world, with the black man pertaining to a different one, to a different space. The second also speaks of this other world, but in the language of political turmoil, in the language of the communist onslaught. These two lines of thought intersect, as a series of violent practices displayed, on the morning of March 6, 1986.

I focus on this pamphlet in particular in particular, for it not only gives a good sense of who the category of enemy was applied to, and the textual context in which it was used, but also determines visually who the target was. Therefore, the pamphlet not only defined the vocabulary, as I said earlier, for speaking about the conflict (its participants and interests), but also delimited the sensory experiences that defined the other as a dangerous other. In this context, to use Yazir Henry’s thoughtful phrase “the

skin color as a uniform,"⁸ the pamphlet naturalized the connections between "seeing" a particular kind of other and the strategic importance of this gaze. It was a technology of perception that drew the contours of and framed the target of legitimized violence. In other words, this publication embodied the South African government's "scopic vision" (Feldman, 1990: 101).

In this context, notions such as "communist" and "black" are interconnected in very direct ways so as to constitute these bodies as objects of state repression. If the emergency legislation, scattered throughout a battery of interrelated Acts, (dating as far back as the 1950s, and only crystallized and unified in 1982 with the Internal Security Act) define in broad terms the "enemy of the republic," as I have already presented, then the practices of representation embedded in this document - edited for the purpose of dissemination give a more precise content by establishing a network of referents. To these practices I turn in due course.

In the previous section, I dealt with a former intelligence officer's notions of "blackness" and "animality" in which he naturalized - even if to a simplistic extreme - a particular idea of space and its "constituent" objects by the reinforcement of frontiers. The pamphlet - referring to the same period that Cronje talked about - extended such connections to a point where the black body and the terrorist became a "legitimate" target of violence. What seems to be at hand, embedded in these texts and images, is what Casper Erichsen (2001: 158), speaking about war images in Namibia during the 1980s, has termed the "apartheid vision", a complex juxtaposition of discourses about game hunting and war.

The title of the pamphlet is telling in itself, "Counter insurgency, a way of life," for it presents the idea of a total strategy not only from its macro-political and military sense, but also with regards to the integration of other spheres of community life that are usually of lesser importance for strategic planning. The war against "communist" "terrorism" required an integrated strategy, connecting different economic, political, and military aspects of the country's life. However, in the context of everyday existence among citizens, the integration of family, religious and even educational matters also became part of the counter-insurgency effort. "A way of life" is another way of referring to this integration in which many aspects of life were entwined with broader strategic concerns. From this point of view, counter-insurgency was not something that necessarily lay beyond the life of "communities," reduced to the realm of military specialists, rather it was a fundamental part of the construction of "law and order."

The text is organized along a linear axis, which takes the readers from the *Forward*, introducing them to the causal connections between the "situation" in the country and the origins of such a critical state of affairs, to an enlightened and peaceful future, of law-abiding citizens. At one point in this teleology, it establishes the conceptual bedrock on which the conflict was interpreted: the communist, the total onslaught, moral decay, and so on. Most of these concepts were duly illustrated. Once the alleged necessity of counter-insurgency is established, mainly because there is a total onslaught against the republic, the editors go on to explain the precise and important role that different sectors of society have in the process of combating terrorism: the role of parliamentary politics, for example, voting in favor of P.W. Botha's reformist

⁸ I am thankful to Yazir Henry for discussing and sharing his ideas with me in the fall of 2003.

proposals in areas as diverse as budget allocation, and the military reform. Likewise, the document discusses with certain centrality the role of the family and religious practices as part of the same strategic agenda. Let me now briefly turn to these issues more in detail.

Right from the start, the document establishes the connections between disorder and insurgency, as it defines the contents and contours of social chaos:

“The insurgents (terrorists) have one primary aim and that is to disrupt the existing Government and the law and order of the territory by means of violence, as well as an assault on the spiritual values of the local population. By these means they aim to gain control of the country its people’s and its riches” (South West Africa/Namibia Information Service, 1980: 3; Bureau of Information, 1985; 1986).

It is necessary to highlight several important issues here. On the one hand, the idea of “disruption” mainly refers to the disruption of the political process in South Africa. As is well known, a radical transformation of South Africa’s political process was at the center of the anti-apartheid struggle. Disruption, on the other hand, implies the destruction of the spiritual values of a society.⁹ These values are explained further on in the text as the role of family and faith in the counter-insurgency effort are presented. These values embodied by the family, the smallest unit of the community, and were another site where the war was waged, not only because, under compulsory conscription men came from families at one point during the conflict, but also because a “happy close-knit family group” was seen as the best antidote against a godless communist onslaught. Family socialization stressed the presence of God as a fundamental part in the maintenance of a particular religious “way of life.” And “home” was not only the place where these values were taught, inherited from one generation to the next, but also - in doing so - it became a bulwark against foreign atheistic principles. Ensuring “immunity” from “foreign” values would enable collective survival and a sense of belonging. In this context, respect for “tradition” is a crucial element.

“Tradition” refers to the “strong practice of Christian religion” (SWA/N, 1980:7). In the teleology established by the text, from darkness to light, from the kingdom of chaos to the role of god on earth, Christianity, a particular form of Christianity, is the central driving force. And it is the home (and school) where respect for religion and “respect for others” are learnt. The pamphlet, in a constant process of self-definition and differentiation, permanently draws lines between the world of violence and the world of peace, and between the objects and the bodies encapsulated by those specific spaces. The family is also one of the building blocks of the “national character,” a consequence of nurturing in community members a “sound character,” always on the lookout, aware,

⁹ As the decade progressed, and the strategic changes within the ANC and the government became more evident, the conflict moved from the border areas, the bush wars, and the buffers zones - the main transnational theaters of operation - into the country and the townships, the term “disruption” came to signify, at least for those fighting the liberation movements, a closer sense of existential failure, of the fear of the ungovernable violence within.

as a matter of survival, of the close proximity of degrading foreign influences. In other words, to nurture a nation means, in the most fundamental sense, to mould and to discipline the subject, and eventually, his character.¹⁰

Two pillars of society's stability were structured – in the context depicted by this text – around “tradition” and “family,” and around law and order. “Tradition” and the education of individuals were conceived as part of military concerns. Schools were, in this regard, main areas of influence of military doctrine. As Evans suggested, a series of initiatives reestablished during the early years of the 1980s, such as the cadet program or the veld schools, are “not an isolated anomaly in an otherwise military-free education system. It is [in fact] complimented by a variety of other forms of activity whose prime purpose is to mould the consciousness of white pupils and to educate them to accept the national priorities of an increasingly militarized society” (Evans, 1989: 21).¹¹

The general role of cadet programs, for example, was to help create an “ethos” and a white “consensus on security issues,” a particularly important element, given the increasing intensity of South Africa's conflict, for an entire generation of young pupils who were on the verge of being part of the national defense force. For example, the Cape Education Department's Training Manuals established the curricula for standards 6 and 7, the first two years of high school, in which not only was basic military training incorporated into the school's daily routine (such as rifle change, saluting, intelligence, discipline, and so on) but quite a lot of stress was placed on identifying enemies, understanding their aims, collecting information, and clarifying the nature of the onslaught against South Africa. Pamphlets like the one under scrutiny in this section were part of the materials used to disseminate these arguments and ideas.

Veld schools, a week-long training program in the bush, intended “to lead the pupil to maturity and reinforce the norms, values and morals of our society;” and, indeed, to stimulate the youth to be “better South Africans and better Christians” (Human Awareness Programme, 1986). Part of the curricula established by these schools, as Evans has pointed out, included – with close coordination with the South African Defence Force – “survival, tracking and camouflage” training or “practical field training” for high school kids. These schools, as well as other counseling programs, would channel pupils from schools into military careers in the SADF. In summary, there was a strong and increasing influence of military interests in school life. “Through the cadet and Youth Preparedness Programmes and Guidance Classes, [the SADF] has been able to insert its ideological perspective into the white classroom. It has used the white school as a site of preparatory military training” (Evans, 1989: 297).

¹⁰ I use the gendered *his*, instead of a more neutral option, mainly because the language of the document is gendered, always speaking of men.

¹¹ Some of these initiatives were, for example, Youth Preparedness Programmes, veldschools in the former province of Transvaal, civil defense exercises, school guidance programs, and later in the decade, an emergency anti-terrorist plan. These were also complemented by the establishment, particularly in Afrikaans and dual medium (English and Afrikaans) university campuses, of University Military Units, an institution created by the South African Defence Force. A defunct journal of the SADF, *Paratus*, pinpoints the importance of these programs as they instill a sense of responsibility and love for the country by “train[ing] them in good citizenship” (*Paratus*, July 1979; see also Erichsen, 2001).

In fundamental ways, white South Africans had their life militarized, as the effects of the Total Strategy intended to regulate the formation of subjects and citizens. Other commentators have written regarding this militarization of the everyday, rather focusing on the militarized youth associated with the self-defense units aligned to the ANC (McKenzie, 1996). However, if one takes seriously the general guidelines presented in the information and propaganda booklet, white South Africa was also on a militarizing path in which the influence of the South African Defence Force was more pervasive and all encompassing. Certain kinds of upbringing, family models and religious beliefs, that is to say, elements associated to the sphere of the "intimate," private family life, were integrated into the government's national security concerns. The formation of individuals within these parameters was perceived as a key element in the consolidation of a "happy" and "regulated community," the essence of a "peaceful" community (SWA/N, 1980: 10). A strong will to survive and a "belief in Jesus Christ and God," the sources from which the person's inner strength emanates, a power coming from the "supreme being of almighty God" was central to the military strategy.

The text refers to the "moral infiltration" of the enemy's ideology into the "community." There is not a precise or at least an explicit definition of what or who the members of this "community" are. However, the reader is given some important clues as to who they are. Photographs supplement the written text, as they usually fill in the gaps left out by the words. For example, although pictures of black people appear in several sections of the booklet, the editors had a particular interest in showing "law-abiding" blacks, always displaying a docile and almost servile attitude, and a happy willingness to work and embrace a peaceful life. The main themes in these photos are classroom and adult education activities, as well as work-related themes (a man driving an irrigation tractor in a farm, another welding, and one working on a sewing frame). There is also a boy, or a pupil, praying passionately and almost submissively. The caption reads: "Retention of the Christian belief forms an invincible bastion against insurgency."

However, the majority of the pictures in which "blacks" are the central theme are photos representing and illustrating the enemy: a black man with a long Che Guevara-type beard wearing military gear. Superimposed on his eyes was the hammer and sickle, a sign of affinity and ideological kinship of the insurgent with his "masters." He appears over and over in different formats and on several pages. Yet, most are close-up images of the face, particularly of his lower face, his nose, chin and teeth. These are, in some ways, ID pictures, with the camera's gaze inserting its scopic technology into the details, the minutiae of the guerrilla's face. Repeating a pattern already present in the Gugulethu police video, the gaze of the camera, and the apartheid vision in which these images are inscribed, suggest a peculiar interest in dissecting and scrutinizing the other, as if trying to identify, to pinpoint his immanent alterity, his essential features, an interest in exposing the intimacies of strangeness.

White people, on the other hand, do appear on the book in very specific places. For instance, when referring to the role of the family in the counter-insurgency effort, the photograph depicts three happy, white children posing for the camera, in the background a house, garden, and a neat, clean and sunny neighborhood corner. These children are clearly located inside the realm of the familiar, protective space of the household, the natural place for them to be. While blacks appear in positions of domesticity, associated either with labor or danger, white people are consigned to a

different setting. They are the objects of a different social space. This image certainly gives a hint on who constitutes the family.

Likewise, when speaking about God as an immunity against the onslaught – which is a military as well as a moral onslaught against the most basic and fundamental fabric of the “community” – images of the Dutch Reformed Church, the church of the Afrikaner people, the church of the National Party, came in handy as an example of the “community.” Having as a background an arid, almost desert-like landscape, very few things obstructing the camera’s eye, the church stands, as a central figure-theme, upright, lonely, untouched, with its high bell tower, unscathed, in the center of the frame. The light from an apparent sunset gives the church a feeling of simplicity and authenticity. Traces of late afternoon sunlight, touching on the building’s surface, reflect the light creating an aura of mystification. An intense light emanates from these reflections. It is the church that is the source of this epiphany.

The community, then, is associated with the Dutch Reformed Church, with happy children surrounded by their familiar world, and with black people framed by their workplace. There are other pictures that define the nature of this community, such as an image of a National Party office building. In general, the photographs add to the content and specificity of the ideas exposed during the course of the reading. The centrality of “Christian beliefs” as a counter-insurgency strategy, the role of the family and schools in building up the character of the individual, and hence of the “community” and of the “nation” is reinforced. These are the building blocks, the pillars of what is often referred to as “the maintenance of law and order.” The term not only speaks about the fear of violence and political change but also about other aspects of society.

A content community is also a “regulated community” whose essence, according to the argument, is always to strive for peace. If violence interrupts or disrupts the daily work towards these ideals, then this violence has a source. As such, comes from the terrorist, the insurgent, from a black man who is out of his natural place, a place of abiding domesticity. Counter-insurgency, on the other hand, is a response to the moral degradation. Yet, unlike revolutionary violence, always creating havoc, disruption and chaos, counter-insurgency is legitimate, rationally and strategically used violence. It is another form of “cultural anesthesia” (Feldman, 1996:87). In some ways, it is not even violence, for it does not disrupt. Rather the opposite: it regulates, maintains and upholds the law and order of a world. It is a restorative violence, so to speak, which has been purged of its original chaotic nature. For the terrorist, on the other hand, violence is raw, disruptive, and cold-blooded. For him, “it does not matter how many lives are lost in the process” (South West Africa/Namibia, 1980: 7).

“Counter-insurgency, a way of life” should not only be viewed as developing these few issues. In fact, a lot of the material deals with the role of the economy, of political leaders and authorities and the security forces in the general strategy. There are, of course, notions of community embedded in these particular sections. However, my intention in this section has been to highlight the connections between the notions of violence, terrorism and the black enemy as part of apartheid’s “scopic vision” that was widely circulated through pamphlets, brochures, and booklets for public consumption at a historical period when consensus about strategic issues was a fundamental key of defense policy. In the Gugulethu Seven police video there is a permanent juxtaposition

between the “black” and the “terrorist.” Such overlapping has to be interpreted as part of a broader political and security context.

Finally, it seems important now to introduce a final remark on one of the most significant images of the pamphlet, the front cover photo. As plate 2 shows, it reproduces the visual field of a telescopic sight rifle targeting a black man. He is dressed in military gear, suggesting initially that he is a “soldier.” However, on further inspection of the booklet, the reader may discover that he is not, strictly speaking, a “soldier.” At one point during the reading of the text, the editors establish clearly a particular kind of moral organization of the conflict in which its main participants are located in a hierarchy of good and evil. For example, as could be expected, “national service men” (“our good boys”) are perceived as “soldiers” fighting against the shackles of communism, whereas the “enemy” is not a “soldier” but a “terrorist,” allegedly lacking formal military training, a command structure, having a monopoly on – the use of violence. Therefore, the sights could not be aimed at a soldier, rather at the enemy.

The man is located right at the center of the field of vision, with the sights aiming with deadly and surgical precision at the heart. He seems to have been caught off-guard, looking outside the frame. Two things are important. On the one hand, apparently unaware of the telescopic sight, the black man is directing his own weapon towards someone or something outside the visual field. There is some ambiguity in this image however, for he is not holding a Russian made AK47. The AK47 came to symbolize unambiguously, as will be evident in the next vignette, the threat of violence and terrorism. Nonetheless, this rifle is longer and looks heavier than the AK47 and, in any case, speaks of deadly firepower.

Nonetheless, again, unaware of the vigilant gaze, the terrorist is apparently hiding away, crouched down in the bush, mimicking the naturalness of a real battlefield scenario, in spite of the fact that he looks like he is posing for the camera. Otherwise, the photographer, taking his time, would have shot the photo while showing his back to the enemy, certainly an unwise choice and an unlikely scenario in the din of battle. The body-target, as part of the setting the photographer-soldier was able to encapsulate, is immersed in an atmosphere of sunny, dry, almost desert-like conditions: the man’s hat, the thin grass and low veld bush are some clues in this regard. Additionally, towards the lower left side of the image, the shrub partially obstructs the gaze of the camera-gun from viewing the lower part of the kneeling “terrorist”. Had it not been for this technology of penetration, it would have been even more difficult to locate, identify, and frame the enemy.

A series of questions arise from this image. What constitutes the borders of this telescopic sight, what is beyond, or *outside* of the visual field, and what are the constituents of the *inside* space created by this prosthesis of the eye? As Erichsen has noted, “What the viewer is allowed to gaze at is a reflection of that which the photographer has chosen to depict [or, shall one say, construct] out of a much larger process or context – that which the photographer thought significant” (Erichsen, 2001: 165). In this regard, the initial, introductory front cover has an additional element. The cover is the first encounter of the reader with the text, an encounter with a terrorist indeed. It is, in other words, the beginning of an immersion into “a way of life,” a way of life protected by the destruction of the target.

As shown in plate 2, no specific and contextual information is given at first sight. The man is secluded, and the context that lies beyond the field of vision has literally

been obscured. Perhaps the arm, the telescope sight, like a lantern or a torch, enlightens the darkness in which he lives. The important issue, nonetheless, is that he is a black man and that he is hiding in the bush with a powerful rifle. However, towards the end of the propaganda pamphlet (bear in mind that the last page is the image of the Dutch Reform Church mentioned earlier in this section), the reader finds an half-page color photograph, the "original" picture from which the cover was taken. The field of vision is amplified to include a better view of the setting. There is, in my view, only one additional detail worth mentioning: surprisingly, at the end, after having been socialized and bombarded with the dangers of terrorism and the need for a total strategy, the black man, unexpectedly, has a partner: a white "soldier." The photograph then represents two soldiers in the middle of the bush hiding, in the clamor of war.

The terrorist has gone through some sort of ontological transformation. If, at the beginning of the document, he represented a ruthless and violence prone insurgent, by the end of a reading process that introduced a particular interpretation of South Africa's reality, his tendency to create havoc and chaos had already been tamed, domesticated, and even nullified. The central image re-localizes the black man, suggesting that in the ranks of the army there were also black soldiers, or "moderates." As I have stressed in the first chapter of this book, this is in fact a subtext based on one of the main pillars of the total strategy, known as "winning the hearts and minds," or WHAM program. As Swilling and Phillips have noted, "The counter-revolutionary strategy assumes that resistance is a product of grievances exploited by revolutionaries. It follows that if the revolutionaries are annihilated, the worst of grievances addressed, and the communities re-organized under trustworthy leaders supported by the security forces, then the ultimate political questions will disappear" (Swilling and Phillips, 1989: 145).

The necessity of addressing the underlying social and economic factors that fueled resistance and "unhappiness" required a strategy of reform that would delegitimize the broad social base of the ANC. The only possibility of rendering "the enemy powerless is to nip revolution in the bud by ensuring there is no fertile soil in which the seeds of revolution can germinate (Wandrag, quoted in Swilling and Phillips 1989: 144). Once this started happening, the black population would cross over to the other side.

Major General Lloyd, secretary of the South African State Security Council is quoted in 1988 as saying that counter-revolutionary strategy involved the development of three main areas: the "countering of planned subversion in all fronts," the "elimination of revolutionaries," and the "reform of the environment." This last "soft war" program was the WHAM program. Among the most visible measures taken by the government one finds, for example, infrastructural upgrading, housing development programs, local government reform (such as the implementation of a system of local councilors), the repealing of influx control laws, the legitimization of state structures (involving massive expenditure in propaganda), and the cooption of black leaders and their social base (Swilling and Phillips, 1989: 145; 1990; Davies and O'Meara, 1985; Boraine, 1990; Seegers, 1991).

Suffice it to say that the pamphlet "Counter Insurgency, A Way of Life" falls within the WHAM program in two interconnected areas: on the whole as a dissemination and propaganda instrument and, concerning the ontological transformation of the terrorist into a soldier, as a means of staging the serious possibility of changing sides in the conflict (that is to say, as another form of "cooption," as the

strategists put it). As I have stated earlier, the photo is a visual representation that crystallizes some of the concepts that emanate from the written text regarding the nature of the threat against South Africa during the early to mid-1980s.

The picture establishes and naturalizes a series of connections between specific objects and spaces (and their locations and forms of circulation) in the context of war, of a counter-insurgency war: the black body, the rifle, the veld or the bush, as spaces of war, spaces of confinement. Additionally, the rifle sight (or the eye) is a technology of perception (and of identification) that plays a vital role in dissecting the bush, and in rendering visible and “surveying” the enemy, an *other* who, given the right stimulus and rewards, is capable of an ontological transformation.¹² The telescope is, in other words, an instrument of intelligence, of information gathering. The logic of violence and representation inherent to the police forensic and promotional video alludes to the presence and interconnectedness of all these elements. Let me now turn to other objects, relics of the state of emergency still found in contemporary Cape Town, that would help understanding the nature of violence and the forms it took.

Third Vignette: Relics, Traces, and the Objects of War

In the entrance to some of Cape Town’s stations and other local and national government buildings, one still finds traces of the past, relics of the emergency and war times that refer back to the notions of danger, violence and culture that circulated in South Africa during those years. Plate number 3 shows a recent photograph of an information sign placed at some of these entrances. It reads, in Afrikaans and English, “No dangerous weapons allowed.” A few meters away, on the same pathway, additional written information in the form of another sign, also in English and Afrikaans, was presented to the (mostly black) commuters of the 1980s: “Access to these premises is subject to the provisions of the Control of Access to Public Premises and Vehicles Act 1985,” the year when South Africa’s anti-apartheid struggle intensified, entering into a decisive phase.

The first interesting element in the analysis of these signs today is the fact that they are readable only in the context of a particular historical moment. Out of that time frame, the sign is almost unintelligible. Its meaning, and its capacity to circulate, arises from the its context of enunciation. As time passes by, and new generations, new users and new commuters arrive into the scene,, as I came to realize while conducting *in situ* questionnaires, these signs – once unambiguously representing the official version of South Africa’s war – tend to loose their referential power.¹³ Nowadays, if not almost

¹² The other side of this “transformation,” as far as the liberation movement goes, is of course less euphemistic, and refers to the “turning” of former guerrillas into police informers, Askaris, as has been pointed out. This transformation was enforced with torture and solitary confinement, and aimed at “breaking” the will of the tortured. Along with a policy of cooption and political absorption of social processes there was also a clandestine policy to produce Askaris (Cole, 1987)

¹³ These questionnaires were concerned with the knowledge of commuters regarding the historical significance of these signboards. The younger people, in all “racial” categories, tended to know very little about their meanings. Older people, from the mid-30s on, had at least a clearer idea of the meanings.

invisible to the urban passer-by, the meanings that these signs may have are mostly limited to the generations that endured or experienced those turbulent years. In today's public spaces, such as shopping malls or government buildings, new signs testify to the drastic change in what is legally viewed as the sources of violence and danger: the "no AK47 allowed" signs of the past have transformed into the signs of the "no dogs, no smoking, no skating, no biking, no portable phones and no guns" variety. If the prohibition has changed over time, then what did the former ones refer to? What could they tell us about the nature of South Africa's conflict in general, and about the Gugulethu Seven incident in particular?

In the case of the Gugulethu Seven, there is a permanent reference to one of these symbols, the AK47. Not just any weapon could have been planted that morning. If certain unquestioned associations between black bodies, their "natural" spaces, and violence were established through the mass media, information pamphlets, and education programs as a consequence of a broader militarization of South Africa (as Deborah Posel and others suggested more than a decade ago), then these signs became part of these machinery of political "fact" construction as they reified and naturalized these associations and defined the nature of "public space," among other things, through the implementation and enforcement of laws (Posel, 1989; Evans, 1989; Jochelson and Buntman, 1989; Tomaselli, 1989; Chidester, 1992).¹⁴ Let me very briefly take note of some of the associations implicit in this sign, as they help in understanding the sort of construction - and its set of implicit assumptions - that the Gugulethu Seven police video is based on.

In an interview with Mandela, and other former Umkhonto we Sizwe soldiers, I showed them a photograph of the sign in Cape Town's train station. We were discussing the "wars" between vigilantes called "witdoeke" and ANC affiliated "comrades" in Crossroads, 1986, where he participated actively (Cole, 1989).¹⁵ Mandela's response was straightforward and concise: "Those are traditional weapons," he said, referring to all the images represented in plate 3, except for the AK47, on the upper left corner. The term, together with "cultural weapons," was widely used in the media during the 1980s, and denoted the sorts of "cultural" objects that allegedly accompany Africa's "black" cultures or "ethnicities." Mandela, an experienced soldier himself, had appropriated uncritically the usage of these words, failing to recognize the political dimension of this classification.

The sign normalized at least two forms of speaking about "black" Africa and its relationship to violence and the "public sphere." These two forms of representing Africa were based on the dichotomy between "modernity," represented by the AK47, and "tradition," represented by the panga, the ax, and in particular, the spear and the

¹⁴ Posel's work is based on an analysis of the state's representations of township violence from 1985-1986 in state-sponsored television newscasts, official speeches, and newspapers. She found three permanent "symbols" always associated with "township violence:" the crowd, stone throwing, and flames (Posel, 1989:265). Tomaselli, on the other hand, supplements this analysis by dissecting the visual and verbal process through which the state-run television, particularly in opinion programs, portrays the "devil-like" form of ANC terrorists (Tomaselli, 1989:22).

¹⁵ The term "witdoeke" refers to the white scarf tied around vigilante's arms.

“stick.” “Traditional” referred to, as it is today, actions and objects attached to a particular idea of “primitive,” “backward” African “cultures” and “customs.” Even to this day, “traditional” is a term used to describe, in more politically correct terms perhaps, African “ethnicities:” it locates cultural difference in an entire cartography of otherness. Terms such as “traditional healers” (sangomas), “traditional medicine” (muti), “traditional drinks” (umqombothi), and so on, are part of this cartography.¹⁶ This opposition established a classification, and a set of categories that interconnected violence and culture in a way that created a series of differences inside the concept of “black Africa.”

First of all, as I have already stressed, the “Russian-made AK47” is associated – and the Gugulethu Seven is an example of such association – with the urban township terrorist, the enemy of the former government, the incarnation of the communist threat and the red peril. As presented earlier in this chapter, *he* embodied a particular form of violence that used “modern technology” brought from elsewhere (rifles, hand grenades, mines, guns, rockets, and so on) to inflict pain and create havoc. Ironically, in the urban terrorist there is juxtaposition between “modern technology” (as the rifle, and the camera, were part and parcel of the “colonizing” and “civilizing” project in Africa) and the “non-legitimate” and “violent” uses he puts them to (Landau, 2001).

This rather problematic idea of “modern technology,” as Paul Rogers suggested in connection with the uses of certain technologies in contemporary wars, implied a sense of bodily distance from the target. This is part of its “modern” character, creating the “myth” of a clean, almost prophylactic and surgical war, an efficient, rational way of utilizing limited human and technical resources in order to create a desired effect on the “enemy” (Rogers, 1996: 533). A “terrorist” could be shot down from afar (from tank, a warplane, a missile launcher, or a distant and well equipped soldier) without much intimacy between the dead body (the target) and a single killing body. However, as Rogers argued, despite the myth, there is nothing particularly “clean” about the massive destructive power of grenades, bombs and so on. Rather, what happens is that its destructiveness is “invisibilized” through the mediation of radars and other surveillance and prosthetic technologies in which human bodies are converted into bits of visual information, moving dots on a Cartesian plane representing potential targets. In any case, the use of AK47s implies an appropriation of a “modern,” deadly, efficient, and “clean” technology of war.

This is not the case when looking at the notion of “cultural weapons.” As Tomaselli and Posel stressed, on the other hand, “cultural weapons” are associated with the black crowd, or the mob, and with physical closeness in the act of killing. Photojournalists took plates 4, 5, and 6 in 1986 in Cape Town and other parts of the country. In their work on mass media, particularly the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) as a propaganda arm of the apartheid government, and the construction of stereotypes in South Africa during the emergency years, these authors

¹⁶ The last chapter of this text deals precisely with the discourses about Africa in the context of the tourist industry in Cape Town, as connected to the problem of memory. From an openly racist discourse during the apartheid years to a more politically correct and patronizing idea of Africa, townships embody and make exotic an idealized notion of black Africa, the “site of cultural difference.”

mentioned the relationship between black “mobs” and “cultural weapons” during the urban unrest (for instance, during the conflict in Crossroads, the 8 p.m. news on SABC1 on 10 June 1986 broadcasted a segment on the “heavily armed vigilantes brandishing traditional weapons.” See plate 6, taken on that day, by an unknown photographer). Looking in more detail, there is an association between “cultural” (or “ethnic” weapons) and a subject that is central to understanding the sign at the train entrance: the violent *crowd*, or the threatening *mob*.

Whenever images of “unrest” (or “black violence”) were presented to a broader readership in newspapers and magazines, as well as in state run radio and television, this violence was always cast in a particular light: the main protagonists were, most of the time, raging, uncontrollable mobs, in a frenzy of destruction and killing. Footage of the infamous “necklacings,” in which apartheid surrogates and collaborators were burnt alive, sometimes by cheering crowds (mobs), of masses of people burning tires and barricading themselves on the streets of Athlone and other “unrest areas,” of stoning police vehicles and casspirs (huge armored vehicles), and news of the so-called “black-on-black” violence circulated in the national media in the mid-1980s, before the total blackout of the press in 1986. Whether “vigilantes,” “tsotsis” (“black urban criminals,” according to the Oxford Dictionary) or gangsters, ANC-affiliated “comrades,” or “impis” (Zulu warriors), they were all placed on the same bag, so to speak, in that they represented a tendency, a predisposition to violence.

“Cultural weapons” came to be associated with the actions of vigilantes around the country’s townships and trains, yet the fact that the general term “black-on-black violence” identifies all such “eruptions” and “outbreaks” of uncontrollable behavior, made it more difficult and vague to differentiate from political dissent. The news editor would cancel out and visual or verbal contextual detail by withdrawing any relevant or clarifying information that could lead to a more accurate interpretation of the events. Any aspect, other than replicating the same stereotypes against anti-apartheid activism, was not part of the news.

“Black violence” was, in general, presented as a depoliticized event, having neither a clear political aim nor a clear leadership; it was visually presented as a mass of faceless black bodies (Tomaselli, 1989:25-27). As Deborah Posel suggested, “Actions by the crowd were not seen to be responsive to leadership or the result of considered action. The crowd appeared as a huge sea of faces and bodies un-individuated, with no visible structure or lines of authority. It seemed inchoate, uncontrolled, and unguided by a rational purpose,” “a seething collectivity that swallowed up and engulfed the individual (Posel, 1989: 267).

These forms of presenting and representing the nature of South Africa’s conflict during the mid-1980s was in line with the government’s policy of strict information control. Again, as Hachten and Giffard (1984: 123) have pointed out, since the 1950s the SABC, “controlled by the Afrikaner elites that rule South Africa,” had the monopoly over television and radio. “SABC, through its skillful use of selection, placement, and omission deliberately gives the South African public a distorted and unrealistic picture of daily events – a world view that conforms to the Afrikaner aspirations and fears.” Laconically, Hachten and Giffard summarized the situation: “[T]he ruling National Party has adroitly used SABC as a tool with which to dominate its political opposition

and to reassure its own followers" (Hachten and Giffard, 1984: 200-201, Stewart, 1986).¹⁷ Central to this network of propaganda was the depiction in the government media made of the anti-apartheid struggle.

The idea of an uncontrollable crowd has interesting connections to the way in which security specialists, the SADF and the police, sitting in official media monitoring committees as advisors during, and even before the emergency regulations came in full force in 1986, conceptualized the problem of violence. There is indeed an entire area of knowledge, a "scientific" approach, and a specialty within it, concerned with "collective violence:" "police science." "Crowd," "riot control" and "mobs" figure as one of the main social problems in the "science" of policing, and were indeed a central concern in South Africa (Van Heerden, 1982). The ANC's call to make the townships ungovernable in 1985, and the generalized sense of popular uprising, "disturbances," or "unrest," were read by these experts as variations in scale of the problem of mobs, crowds and policing in the country. A number of publications and conferences held between 1985 and 1987, gathering different sorts of national as well as international security experts (mainly from the United States), attested to the centrality of the subject (Nieuwoudt, 1985; Wandrag, 1985, 1987; Hough, 1985; Jackson 1987, Louw, 1986). *Strategic Review*, for instance, a specialized monthly journal from the conservative think tank, the Institute for Security Studies (housed at University of Pretoria), devoted its October issue of 1985 to the problem of crowds and unrest in the country, "A Police View."

In this particular context, T. J. Van Heerden's *Introduction to Police Science*, published by the University of South Africa in 1982, the same year that the new consolidated Internal Security Act came into force, is a necessary source for understanding the police concept of crowds and mobs. The concept of "cultural weapons," much stressed in the media, was a symbol of traditional, violent, uncontrollable black Africa and was always associated with crowd violence. The prohibition of dangerous objects, "any object, other than a firearm, which is likely to cause serious bodily injury if were used to commit an assault" (Dangerous Weapons Act, 1968), did not only cover the objects themselves (axes, spears or pangas, face to face, "intimate" killing instruments) but also another, equally dangerous, yet more elusive "object:" the crowd, a crowd "traditionally" and invariably associated with these elements.¹⁸ In this sign, there is a particular concept of the other, and of the sources of

¹⁷ As is well known, the apartheid government had at least two interrelated forms of controlling information: coercive and manipulative. The first, based on a formidable network of censorship laws and acts enacted over a period of two decades, determined who and what was allowed to be published and broadcasted by the media (The Publications Act (1974), Prisons Act (1959), Police Act (1958), Defence Act (1957), Internal Security Act (1982), and many others). The second, based on the state's powerful radio television information services, was "manipulative controls" that obliterated any "unfavorable" information, casting a positive light on the government's policies. In this context, the problem of how the nature and extent of township violence should be depicted by the media was a central concern for security experts. This is why the security forces were part of a special committee in charge of "monitor[ing] news on a daily basis" (Hachten and Gaffir, 1984: 155; see also *The Star*, November 5 1985, Marcus, 1990;).

¹⁸ The laws regarding the prohibition of gatherings, as is well known, were another form that the idea of the dangerous crowd took. From the Riotous Assemblies Act of 1956, amended in 1974, that prohibited "public gatherings of twelve or more persons" regardless of whether they had a

violence. This concept was based on a certain kind of “knowledge,” or, to be more precise, at the liminal space between science (and its aura of objectivity) and politics.

Van Heerden’s book was indeed influential, as the many references to his work testify. He contributed with a compendium on a subject that was, as he stated in the introduction, one of the pivotal problem areas in police instruction courses, and forensic and crime scene research around the country. Cabinet ministers, such as Minister of Law and Order Adrian Vlok, quoted him extensively. In his important “White Paper on the Organization and Functions of the South African Police” of 1988, Vlok literally introduces his policy text by citing at length Van Heerden’s essential concept of policing: the maintenance of law and order, a phrase much used, in different forms, by P.W. Botha and his ministers during times of trouble (Botha, 1989: 33-37; Vlok, 1986: 7046).

Let me now briefly highlight a few elements regarding “crowds” that arise from Van Heerden’s text. The theme appears under the subsection “social problems,” and is fundamentally concerned with giving a series of basic definitions. For example, “group behavior” (when connected to policing) is defined as a behavior “unstructured,” “not properly controlled by cultural norms,” and as having an emotional and unpredictable character. The more “casual” the group is, the more these characteristics apply. Serious forms of casual group behavior can take the form of, according to Van Heerden, public riotousness, disorder, unrest, and civil disobedience, concepts with a huge ideological load in South Africa.

Broadly speaking, the author’s presentation concentrates on the “types of behaviours” (civil disobedience, lawful protest, and non-violent civil disobedience), and the “types of groups” that embody such behaviors. He presents, in broad strokes, a general description of these types, with particular emphasis on disruptive behavior. In any case, law-abiding and organized citizens do not necessarily require policing, “a service, [as he presented in his introduction] through which the ideal social order and control is realized” (Van Heerden, 1982: 2). Particular attention is paid to “civil disobedience,” certainly the order of the day in South Africa, an illegal and deliberate violation of the laws “regarded as unfair” for “addressing alleged grievances.” The “unlawful” use of violence, based on the idea that the state has the monopoly over its use for realizing any particular objective, is regarded as “unrest,” as the “ultimate form of riotousness.”

But it is the definition of crowds and mobs that is central to this chapter: peaceful gatherings (or crowds) on the one hand, and disorderly gatherings on the other. The first may be, in general, an unorganized, leaderless group, and may experience some sort of temporal identification, a sense of common purpose experiencing similar emotions. In this context, the individual is not yet swallowed by the mass. This is an important factor, since the degeneration of the crowd into the mob comes when the person loses his individuality. He points out that “physical crowding does not influence the individual, for *reason* remains in control” (Van Heerden, 1982: 233-250. Italics mine). People

“lawful or unlawful purpose,” to Chapter Five of the Internal Security Act of 1982 and its “Measures in Connection with Certain Gatherings,” there was a network of acts (including the ones defining unlawful organizations such as the famous Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 and its successive amendments in 1951, 1962, 1965, 1967) that relate to the unlawful and dangerous nature of certain gatherings.

gathered in casual crowds are law-abiding, self-controlled individuals, despite the fact that they might, if that is the case, gather accidentally, have no unified aim, and no sense of cohesion. Yet they are peaceful in essence. In this theory, “violence,” “identity” (or individuality), and “reason” are interrelated. In this equation, violence is *the other* of reason, and, following this line of thinking, *the other* of the law. However, this theory had a particular context of enunciation, and it cannot be subtracted from its historical moment. As I pointed out earlier, this “other of reason” had a localizable, identifiable name in the South Africa of the 1980s. He, a male, was the irrational and uncivilized other, the threat, the red peril, the enemy, the black terrorist.

Given the proper “precipitating conditions,” any change in the nature of these three vertices radically transforms the nature of the behavior and the group. As emotion intensifies, instability steps in, says van Heerden. Crowds then become aggressive. This aggressiveness is the precursor of “mobs,” an “unlawful congregation for the purpose of committing an unlawful act” (Van Heerden, 1982: 236). In the same way as the counter-insurgency pamphlet’s rhetoric analyzed earlier, mobs experience intense agitation, and “lose their sense of reason and respect for the law.” As individuals inside the group lose their “individuality” (and the sense of moral standards that allegedly comes with individual choice that helps differentiate right from wrong), they tend to become homogeneous, emotional, impulsive, irrational, anonymous, and, cumulatively, abnormal.¹⁹

“The barbarism and irrationality of the group is so strong an influence upon the individual that, no matter how civilized or rational he may normally be, he descends to the level of an animal and does things that he would never do in normal circumstances.”

And he concludes,

“There is no need to debate this point of view. As far as policing is concerned, group spirit has a marked effect upon the behavior of the individual” (Van Heerden, 1982: 233-234).

Robert Thornton, commenting on the Uitenhage Shooting in 1985, has pointed out the extent to which the idea of the mob played an important role in triggering the shooting, as the police, based on their “experience” of “collective violence,” allegedly reacted “legitimately” against the threatening black and “coloured” crowd (Thornton, 1989: 231). Again, in the dynamics of South Africa’s state repression in the mid-1980s, discourses on the violent *other* (both the individual terrorist displaying an AK47, and the

¹⁹ Van Heerden enumerates a series of “stages” describing the kinds of behavior that set the scene for aggressive collective behavior. They are indeed a description of South Africa’s “security situation” of the time. (When the book was written he had not experienced Oliver Tambo’s call for ungovernability.) These were: insulting signs, an increase in violence, unrest directed at testing the police’s capability, unrest in sports facilities, demonstrations aimed at gaining sympathy, an increasing resort to violence and arrest, complaints of police brutality, insults to the police, and outspoken dissatisfaction.

“crowd” brandishing spears and pangas) invariably intersected in a variety of technologies of circulation and identification.

The sign at the station entrance is an interpretative node in this circuit: it defines and identifies, in visual terms, the target of legalized violence: the urban terrorist, as well as the “vigilantes,” two particular forms of violence. In summary, it also speaks of two different, yet interconnected forms of inflicting pain and death. The first, represented by the AK47 and the uses of “modern” military technology, allows an aseptic distance from the body-target. The second one is always connected to mobs, and embedded in “culture,” and “tradition:” the panga and the ax (agricultural tools in the rural areas), and the spear, a ritual artifact. Their “military” usage, so to speak, requires the intimacy of an eye-to-eye encounter, a relation of bodily intimacy between the killer and the dead.²⁰ Together these forms of inflicting death define the general notion of “black violence” during the years of the emergency, when the state run media started propagating this idea.

Although the sign seems to differentiate between two forms of “black violence,” in one of them there is an ambiguity that seems to split the meaning of the sign. In the lower right corner, on the opposite vertex of the AK47, there is an image of two traditional weapons, used by vigilantes around the country. At first sight, the AK47 and these weapons were meant to represent the fighting between “comrades” and “vigilantes” in some of Cape Town’s townships. These are the two forms of black violence I have spoken about. During the 1980s, as well as during the early stages of the “transition period,” these weapons were associated with hostels housing Zulu-speaking people in what was then called by different commentators as the “township wars,” a trail of death that sought to derail the peace process (Marinovich and Silva, 2003). Of the two “cultural objects” represented, one of them is the *spear* or *umkhonto*, a central artifact used during Xhosa rites of passage to adulthood, a process known as “circumcision school.” The spear represents the boy’s new manhood, vested in him by the entire Xhosa community, as he is welcomed into the world of adults. Despite the fact that the spear was associated with “vigilantes,” as I have stressed, and not “comrades” (who, in Cape Town, primarily had a Xhosa background) the term *umkhonto* also refers to the ANC’s military wing, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, the “spear of the nation.” This part of the sign is, then, somewhat ambiguous, for it refers to two conflicting groups. In other words, the prohibition against *umkhonto* is represented in two forms, the spear and the AK47, the first being most often associated with vigilantism.

The designer of this sign made sure that the prohibition against the ANC extended into the “public space,” a potentially dangerous space where the inevitable encounter between different “race groups” takes place, and that it was understood in at least two different languages. The symbols impressed on the metal surface indicate notions of certain bodies being the sources of chaos, and therefore the target of the law.

The sign re-inscribes the idea that certain objects belong to specific spaces. It was precisely the naturalization of the social spaces of war (the “township,” the “unrest area,” or the “bush”), the bodies located by apartheid engineering inside their confines (“black” and “coloured”), and categories of people (the “terrorist,” the “animal,” the “red peril” and the “mob”) constructed by different discourses that allowed the fabrication of the Gugulethu Seven killing.

²⁰ The term “military” refers to the use of these artifacts as weapons.

The video is a second moment of fabrication, a fabrication of a fabrication. This visual document replicates the narrative of the “white man” entering into the “wilderness,” armed with the gun, the camera, and the law, in order to, firstly, “deal” with and exterminate a dangerous *other*, and secondly, to maintain what he views as the natural order of things. There is one piece of evidence that came to light during the process of the TRC where all these strands converge. Let me now turn to it.

Epilogue: Death and the Technologies of Remembering

“As for his [the colonized person's] death, it mattered little if this occurred by suicide, resulted from murder, or was inflicted by power. (...) His corpse remained on the ground in unshakeable rigidity, a material mass and a mere inert object (...)” (Mbembe, 2001: 27).

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) investigative unit was in charge of unveiling the circumstance that led to the perpetration of past human rights violations. This process involved, among other things, setting up small research teams who were responsible for finding and retrieving, from a variety of locations and archives, vital information pertaining to specific cases. One team, headed by Zenzile Khoisan, had in its hands the case of the Gugulethu Seven. Their search led them to the seizure of materials from the Gugulethu and Bishop Lavis police stations in 1997, and the retrieval of important files from the Wynberg Magistrate Court, Newspaper House, Thomas Boydell Building (South African Police Services building) and other Cape Town venues. Despite the fact that other important files disappeared, such as reports from the former Attorney General's investigation, cell registers, and South African Police documents, other important materials were found. Among them was the “police video” discussed in this chapter. Additionally, the team found, ironically, with official inquest documents, a disturbing and polemic photograph that was, simultaneously, a piece of death squad memorabilia, a technology of memory, an signature of authorship, and ownership. Let me briefly discuss this picture as a way to conclude this chapter.

Right in the center of this image, Superintendent Willem Sterrenberg – one of the officials who participated in the shooting and former commanding officer of the Riot Division in the Western Province - is standing few centimeters away, on the right hand side, from Christopher Piet's lifeless body, which seems to have been thrown, almost disposed of, on the ground. The policeman, as well as the dead man, is posing for the camera. Even Piet's body was moved from its original position. Of all the possible angles Sterrenberg, or the photographer, might have chosen to shoot the photo, he decided to stand up straight against a background of the scene. Other views might not have been so appealing, for the area at the time, was mostly a bushy wasteland with only few houses and the Dairybelle hostel nearby. At the very least, this image conveys a particular view of the whole incident: what was worth showing and in which ways, and what was not deemed to be important enough or worthwhile showing so as to displace it beyond the limits of the frame and the eye. In my view, the things unsaid as well as the objects unseen are central to understanding this image and the context of its production.

Behind this image lies a will of remembering, and archiving. The video was not part of the police's crime scene investigation procedure, although it was found with forensic materials. In this sense, it is not portraying any kind of "objective evidence," as the policeman or the investigator was inserted into the frame, making the "observed" part of the observation. From the point of view of forensic research, this sort of "reflexivity" establishes a sense of vagueness and ambiguity on the scene that "contaminates" the investigative procedure: the "evidence" (be that "dead bodies," "wounds" or "bullet cases") should properly be highlighted and duly numbered, "exhibit 1," "exhibit 2," and so on (Van Heerden, 1982).

This was not a forensic photograph, indeed, but a personal one. It was not produced for massive circulation, perhaps, like the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter, only for the purpose of family viewing. In any case, there was a will of remembering, a will of evocation, as the image was placed and located in safe place, to be viewed only under certain circumstances. Jacques Derrida has written in *Mal d'Archive. Une Impression Freudienne*, on the "privileged topology" that the exercise of "archiving" implies, in that, to "archive" means, implicitly, to "locate" spatially a "reservoir," a particular kind of place, invested with an authority, with someone holding the power of interpretation, of controlling, and of organizing it. But the "archive," from the Greek word *arkhé*, also refers to a particular temporality: the beginning, or the origin. The power of the archive resides also in its status as the fundamental source, and on the assumption that that which is not in the archive either never existed or never happened. The archive is a way of countering oblivion. Yet, as time passes by, that which is consigned and "remembered" disappears precisely into oblivion.

"Privileged" in the sense that, in order to produce this "space," it requires a "will of consignment," Derrida suggests, not only in the sense of "gathering" or "assigning a residence" or a place, but constructing a community of symbols, as the genealogy of the term "consign" suggests, in which the terms of interpretation, at least to a certain extent, are ascertained. The exercise of "consigning tends to coordinate a [dispersed] corpus into a system (...) in which all elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration" (Derrida, 1995: 3. Translation mine). Behind Liebenberg's photograph there is a will of consignment, indeed, of encapsulating the image and its context around a series of texts. In locating this photograph away from view, and other materials as well, in the "untouchable" and well guarded and difficult to access safe of a South African official building during the emergency years, he, or the policemen concerned with the usage of this "archive," certainly restricted the access to these materials. In doing so, they created the limits of interpretation. Some of these pieces of paper, in the most pragmatic sense, needed to be hidden as the entire history of death squad operations in South Africa could one day be unveiled. The materials were *consigned* or gathered around the official version, a version that required certain silences as well. Sterrenberg's memorabilia, although of a different nature compared to the remaining forensic materials, is part of this will of consignment, as a personal object.

In this image, Christopher has been subjected, subordinated, reduced to the ground, where he looks smaller (his head and shoulders are barely perceptible from the camera's close range view) compared to the policeman's massive body. He has been the object of state violence. He is face up, with his arms and hands twisted downwards in such an unusual and strange manner that he does not look like a human being. His waist and chest are slightly contorted towards his left side, replicating the unnatural postures

of a wretched and abandoned dummy. From Christopher's corpse, from his deformed head, a pool of thick, coagulating and drying blood is forming on the dusty ground. His black Rastafarian hair, as I said, is out of the camera's view. (He was called the Rastafarian).

Behind them, 20 meters away across the street towards the right hand side, there is a two-story building, Dairybelle hostel, the living quarters or housing compound originally built for migrant workers. It is, indeed, early in the morning, and a sunny day. March is always sunny in Cape Town, the end of summer, with its vast and endless blue sky. The morning shadows of the trees posted along the adjacent street are elongated. There is also, on the same ground where Christopher lies dead, the shadow of a fence that closes off an empty lot of "do not trespass" private property. Today the area is full of shacks, an ocean of informal settlements. He died in this frontier.

One might say that the photograph is an analogy of a divided space. One, beyond or outside the frame, is the wasteland, the bush, where other black bodies, the terrorists, lay dead. Divided by the shadow-fence, on this side and within the frame, where Christopher's body was slain, one sees an inhabited space, an urban space, with the traces of human activity, buildings and cars, and a dead black body. Ironically, the seven of Gugulethu died around this border, between the wilderness of the bush and the township, a secluded "space of war," and otherness (Chidester, 1992:192). As Thompson has already stressed in connection with the Uitenhage shooting, these places "exemplified boundaries, the maintenance of which the architects of government policy equate with 'rest' as opposed to 'unrest,' 'order' as opposed to 'violence,' 'law' as opposed to 'chaos'." These symbolic oppositions are by now tacitly accepted by most South Africans" (Thomson, 1988: 227).

The rationale of the police ambush rests on the assumption that certain kinds of border crossing (at least those that violate naturalized associations between spaces, bodies, and categories of people in apartheid South Africa) legitimized violent enforcement. For instance, the excuse fabricated by the police was that these youth represented a danger to the "community" as they were going to attack a police station. They died, as the magistrate, Hoffmann, stated in his inquest report in 1986, "in the course of South African Police activities for the purpose of combating terrorism" (Hoffmann, 1986:2). During the entire operation, from the moment of the Askari infiltration into the township (including the "training" of these youth), to the point when they died, what was fabricated and staged - aside from the politically dead enemy in times of increasing criticism to P.W. Botha's policies - was a scenario of border crossing: of a small, illegitimate black crowd trespassing violently to a forbidden territory, the police station, the seat of power and authority, the enforcers of the law and order. It was staged, in other words, as another form of chaos subverting order. The shadow-fence is a subtle reminder of this rationale, certainly a microcosm of the broader country.

Towards the upper left hand side of the image's background, several blocks away from the scene of death, is a crowded corner, the border of the police zone, with all the natural objects in this particular world, sealing and cordoning off the "crime scene:" an enormous, self-imposing cassis securing the perimeter, two ambulances parked at one side of the road, three motorbikes in the other, and a couple of police cars parked by the hostel. Aside from the people standing far away from Christopher's corpse, the scenario is depopulated, like a scenic photograph: nothing obstructs the camera's gaze, no other indiscrete or inquisitive eyes are around (aside from the photographer and

Sterrenberg's eye looking straight at the camera), no disturbing passers-by, no other object within the frame that could divert the view from the main "theme" of the image. Sterrenberg, posing for the future, dressed in khaki military uniform and standing with an informal, almost casual pose, looks relaxed, almost tranquil, rather uncanny, considering what had happened on that morning. His shoulders and arms hang freely as a small, almost timid smile appears on his face. Christopher looked like a hunted creature. "John Sterrenberg [was] posing over a body like a hunter over his trophy" (Khoisan, 1997: 66).

The image resembles the century-old, safari-like images of white colonizers penetrating, with rifles and cameras, the Dark Continent. Here one encounters Superintendent Sterrenberg after penetrating the spaces of war, the black, sealed-off township, a space of otherness that lives under a permanent state of exception. Sterrenberg has left this statement of sovereignty, his signature over the war zone, over the dead body, which "remained on the ground in unshakeable rigidity," with no possibility of contestation or reply. Christopher Piet was defined as a dead man and a black terrorist, as an object of state power, by the master's injunction and authoritative violence. This time, the person did not comply, did not recognize the authoritative voice.

As has been pointed out in this chapter, there have been a number of associations between notions of danger and skin color. The police video, for example, shows a permanent overlapping in terminology, as the dead men are sometimes called by the cameraman "the black man," and other times "the terrorist." It was the police's authoritative voice, and the discourses on the origins and locations of violence inside South Africa, that "framed" and defined Christopher Piet's body as a site of death, and his killing a signature of power and ownership of his body. Through the Group Areas Act and the network of security-related acts (and their respective bureaucracies and institutional practices), as well as through the network of official and unofficial spaces of confinement such as townships and torture cells, the state - under certain circumstances - defined the location of the ownership of the body under its scrutiny and surveillance. This power was so overwhelming, as Chidester has noted, that, ironically, during hunger strikes carried out by a group of detainees held under security regulations 1989 the prospect of death and self-immolation reinstated, to some extent, the prisoner's sense of ownership over his own body (Chidester, 1992). The government finally released a number of them. The life of Gugulethu youths were appropriated, literally and the discursively.

The ambush organized by the security establishment and undercover Vlakplaas operatives was indeed an exercise of appropriation of this sort, and hence an exercise of "invisibilization." Taken to its logical extremes, it is a consequence of apartheid's "scopic vision," a vision that defined the nature of the *dangerous other*, an *other* whose "alterity" is consubstantial to, and cannot be dissociated from the technologies of perception that drew its contours and assigned its contents. In other words, the killing of the Gugulethu Seven was one of the "social forms of administering the other" that arise during the crumbling years of the state of emergency (Castillejo, 2000: 156). Between the cover of the counter-insurgency brochure discussed in the previous section, and Sterrenberg's personal portrait and war memorabilia there is a temporal continuity: before and after triggering the rifle. After the operation, and after the corpses were taken to the local morgue, Captain Leonard Knipe duly cleaned the blood on the street.

Late in the afternoon of March 3 1986, several of the mothers, who had just arrived from their work as domestic workers, helplessly watch the images and the news coverage of the shooting. From speaking with them and reading their testimonies there are three elements that arise as thematic threads that continue unraveling over two decades. First of all, one of them recognized the body of her son being dragged around "like an animal" by the "boers." This was Christopher Piet. This maltreatment, this desecration, has endured in their personal memories. Secondly, the entire event, cast in the language of counter-insurgency and authoritative violence by the state media on television, institutionalized the silence around the event, by creating a language and an interpretative matrix to speak about it. In this regard, the images of defilement and bodily reinforced this sense of voicelessness that overwhelmed the mothers for more than a decade. This voicelessness, in its most radical expression, took central stage during the Weaver trial, a place where the accusations against their sons could have been contested. But the trial was mostly held in Afrikaans, not in Xhosa, their home language. They never understood what was said about their kin, and therefore they never spoke. Finally, from the beginning, based on eyewitnesses' reports and the experience of living under permanent state of exception, the Gugulethu Seven was viewed by township dwellers and political organizations as a set-up, as a fabrication of government agencies. This fact mobilized a large crowd during the following week's service, making it one of the largest political funerals during those years. The institutionalization of voicelessness also meant the institutionalization of falsehood. The necessity of unveiling truth, of knowing what had happened, and holding the responsible accountable was also a permanent concern.

During the following decade these thematic threads came to the light in different ways. From the point of view of the families and relatives, they linked up with South Africa's political process, creating the space to articulate what was veiled and silenced in the past. It was the language of "restoration" (or "reparations," in the political discourse of the TRC) and "sacrifice," in which "the past" was reinscribed, and "recovered," that allowed a new articulation. Hence, rewriting the past implied the necessity of, first, "restoring human dignity," in order to counter the defilement of the dead person, and the effects of a "dehumanizing" system like apartheid. Notions such as "humanity," "dignity," and "violence" were part of this arena. Second, the "restoration of voice," expressed frequently by the necessity of "consultation" (as part of the process of monument construction, for instance). Finally, the "restoration of truth." To the problem of "restoration," as it is connected to the Gugulethu Seven during the TRC and post-TRC period, I will dedicate the next part of this book.